

# SON OF GOD . . . SUFFERING SERVANT

## COMMENTARY ON MARK

### **THE AUTHORITY AND MIGHTY WORKS OF THE SON OF GOD VS. THE REDEMPTIVE MISSION OF THE SUFFERING SERVANT**

Paul Apple (Aug. 2014, rev. Dec. 2023)

For each section:

- Thesis statement                      ... to focus on the big idea
- Analytical outline                    ... to guide the understanding
- Devotional questions                ... to encourage life application
- Representative quotations          ... to stimulate deeper insight

**Mark 1:1 “*The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*”**

**Mark 8:29 “*And He continued by questioning them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Peter answered and said to Him, ‘You are the Christ.’”***

**Mark 10:45 “*For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.*”**

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## BACKGROUND NOTES

**Greg Herrick:** The Gospels are unique in the ancient world in that there are no other literary documents quite like them. Comparison to other literature of the period, say Greco-Roman biographies, is helpful, but in the end, the nature of the four Gospels cannot be contained within such literary models. For one thing, the Gospels are heavily influenced by OT language, concepts, and customs, thus framing the understanding and proper interpretation of Jesus in light of his own words set against OT and contemporary Jewish messianic hopes. In short, the Gospels are a synthesis of history and theology all packaged in a literary structure designed to enhance the proper understanding and significance of the teaching and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. Further, they were written primarily for Christian religious communities with specific questions. They are, in the end, Christian documents, explaining, defending, and applying the deeds and teaching of Jesus to the needs of several distinct, yet related Christian communities.

**Wil Pounds:** **Author** -- John Mark, was not an apostle (Acts 12:12f; Col. 4:10; Acts 15:37-39; Philemon 24; 2 Timothy 4:11; 1 Peter 5:13; Mark 14:5f; Acts 10:36-42), but the son of Mary, a woman of wealth and position in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12). His cousin was Barnabas, the discipler and encourager and early companion of the Apostle Paul (Acts 13:2; 4:36; Colossians 4:10). Mark was a close friend of the Apostle Peter and the interpreter for Peter (1 Peter 5:13). Most scholars agree that Mark received much of his information from the eye witness of the Apostle Peter. With this authority as the source of information the Gospel was never challenged in its inclusion in the Canon. John Mark accompanied Paul and Barnabas on the First Missionary Journey, but dropped out and returned to Jerusalem. Therefore, Paul refused to take John Mark on the second journey (Acts 15:38-40). Ten to twelve years later we find him with Paul (Colossians 4:10; Philemon 24). In the end Paul will ask Timothy to pick up Mark and bring him along with him to Paul in Rome, for he has found him useful for ministry (2 Timothy 4:11). Mark would have been one of the last individuals to have seen Paul before he died.

**Van Parunak:** Strong evidence that this is the first of the gospels to reach its present form. Both Matt and Luke appear to draw from it. Would have been written before AD 60; perhaps as early as 50.

**Daniel Wallace:** The biggest problem for this early date—apart from the Olivet Discourse—is the theme of suffering in Mark. Several scholars make much of this, arguing that the only *Sitz im Leben* which fits this gospel well is sometime after the Neronian persecutions of 64 CE began. Mark does indeed seem to indicate that his audience was undergoing suffering and persecution (cf. 8:34-38; 10:30; 13:1-13). But does this mean that it all started with Nero? The evidence within the gospel is insufficient to indicate this. And further, there is a good deal of evidence that Nero's pogrom was simply the crystallization and government sanction of popular sentiment toward Christians. Even in Nero's first years of reign (54-59), the Christians were labeled as misanthropes because of their refusal to join in pagan festivals. Tacitus, for example, in his description of why Nero blamed the Christians for the great fire in 64 CE, spoke of "the notoriously depraved Christians (as they were popularly called) . . ." Further, he stated that "despite their guilt as Christians, and the ruthless punishment it deserved, the victims were pitied. For it was felt that they were being sacrificed to one man's brutality rather than to the national interest." What Tacitus' comments show is that *the Christians in Rome had been*

*persecuted for some time before the official persecution of 64 CE.* Just because it was not a governmentally-sanctioned persecution did not make it less painful to the Christians involved. In light of this, it is absolutely unnecessary to see the Neronic persecution as prior to the writing of Mark.

**Daniel Wallace:** *Mark wrote his gospel as a prelude to Paul's intended visit to Rome. . . . we see that there is a good bit of circumstantial evidence which suggests that someone from Paul's circles had penetrated Rome with the gospel before he wrote Romans. Further, there is independent evidence that Mark wrote his gospel in the mid-50s. When considering the *raison d'être* for the production of this gospel, it is easy to see why Mark would be so highly motivated to get back into Paul's good graces and precede Paul to Rome. All the data fit the supposition that Mark went to Rome in the early to mid-50s, with Peter's sermons and Paul's mission in the back of his mind. He then composed the gospel for the Roman Christians.<sup>38</sup> In this light, it is no wonder that Mark's gospel looks so Pauline in respect to the OT Law—even though he got it from Peter in large measure.*

**Stedman: Structure** -- There is a brief introductory section that presents the credentials of the servant in the first 13 verses of chapter 1. Following that is the ministry of the servant, from chapter 1, verse 14, to chapter 8, verse 30. The rest of the book is concerned with the ransoming work of the servant.

In the section of the ministry of the servant two things are stressed primarily. First, the authority of the servant. . . . As a second emphasis, the Gospel of Mark highlights the various attitudes toward our Lord that became apparent as his ministry among men developed. A servant is always affecting people. As he performed his ministry and went about doing good, men developed certain attitudes toward him.

Now we have the introduction of the second theme. *He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many* (chapter 8, verse 31):

*And he began to teach them that the son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. {Mark 8:31 RSV}*

From here on, our Lord's face is set toward Jerusalem and toward the cross. He is going now to be the offering of God, the sacrifice, the servant who gives himself completely for the ransom of those he came to save. The revelation of his program is given in this verse. He came to suffer, to be rejected, to be killed, and after three days, to rise again. That is the way he is going to do it.

**Baxter:** We only need to read Mark two or three times, and his uppermost purpose captures us. He wants us to see *Jesus at work*. It is as though he says: "Look! What Jesus *did* proves who He *was*. What He *wrought* authenticates what He *taught*. The *mighty works* verify the startling *words*. Watch Him at work, and marvel at this supernatural Wonder-worker! *That* will convince you. . . . Mark is the camera-man of the four Gospel-writers, giving us shot after shot of unforgettable scenes. . . . the perfect balance is sustained throughout between human servanthood and Divine lordship. The lordship is on every page, yet everywhere the Lord is the SERVANT –

of the Divine will and of human need; the authorized and empowered Sent-One (ix. 37), expeditious, swiftly executive, dominating every situation, yet unobtrusive, compassionate, and in all things obeisant to the supreme Will . . .

**Constable: 10:45 = key to understanding the book:**

First, the Son of Man came. That is the Incarnation. The Son of Man was God incarnate in human nature. His identity is a major theme in this Gospel, as it is in all the Gospels.

Second, the Son of Man did not come to be ministered unto, but to minister. That is service. This Gospel also has much to teach disciples about service to God and to our fellow men.

Third, the Son of Man came to give His life a ransom for many. That is His sufferings. Mark's Gospel stresses the sufferings of the Suffering Servant of the Lord. Mark is the Gospel of the Servant of God.

**Mark Copeland: SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GOSPEL**

**A. AN EARLY GOSPEL...**

1. Probably the first one written
2. All but 31 verses are quoted in the other gospels
3. Leading many to conclude that Matthew and Luke based their gospels on Mark

**B. A CONCISE GOSPEL...**

1. The shortest of the four gospels
2. Luke has 1151 verses, Matthew 1071, John 879, Mark 661
3. Mark's entire gospel can be read aloud in 1.5 hours

**C. A FAST-PACED GOSPEL...**

1. Over 40 times he uses a word translated "*straightway*" or "*immediately*"
2. Two-thirds of the verses begin with "*and*"
3. The present tense is used frequently (e.g., *they come...He says...He sends...*)

**D. A VIVID GOSPEL...**

1. Mark presents "lively little touches" not found in the other gospels - Hendriksen
2. "...he wrote with all the graphic distinctiveness and vividness of an eyewitness - Erdman
3. It may have been Peter's reminiscences, or perhaps his own, that account for such details

**E. AN EVANGELISTIC GOSPEL...**

1. It opens with "*The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ...*" - Mk 1:1
2. It closes with "*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature*" - Mk 16:15

**Hiebert:** The busy worker pictured in this gospel was the mighty Servant of Jehovah who, as the Son of God, revealed His power over the visible and the invisible world. In recounting the story of His amazing deeds and arresting teaching, Mark let the record produce its own witness to His unique and striking personality. His mighty and beneficent ministry proclaimed the fact that in Him "*the kingdom of God is at hand*" (1:15). Mark's purpose was not merely to tell the story of a great religious teacher but to proclaim Jesus Christ as the saving event announced in the

Hebrew prophets and expected in Judaism. His basic purpose was evangelistic, to win converts to the Christian faith.

### **NIV Study Bible: Recipients of Gospel of Mark –**

The evidence points to the church at Rome, or at least to Gentile readers. Mark explains Jewish customs (7:2-4; 15:42), translates Aramaic words (3:17; 5:41; 7:11,34; 15:22,34) and seems to have a special interest in persecution and martyrdom (8:34-38; 13:9-13) -- subjects of special concern to Roman believers (and to Peter as well; cf. 1 Peter). A Roman destination would explain the almost immediate acceptance of this Gospel and its rapid dissemination.

### **David Malick: Purposes of Mark**

#### A. To encourage Roman Christians:

1. To demonstrate in an active way how to suffer during persecution--as Jesus did! Jesus is constantly presented as one who speaks and acts meaningfully in the context of crisis. This “present” aspect of the gospel (tenses, “immediately”, and miracles *et cetera*) was for this purpose
2. To demonstrate how to be a disciple to Christians in Rome:
  - a. Mark explains Jewish customs (Pharisees 7:2; the preparation day 15:42)
  - b. This is portrayed through many of the portraits of Jesus and the Twelve
  - c. Jesus as Messiah is being portrayed as caring for his children--the disciples
  - d. Jesus teaches about discipleship in light of his death and resurrection

#### B. To fight the emergence of heretical, theological teachings

#### C. To emphasize Jesus as a servant:

1. Jesus proclaims himself as a servant 10:45
2. Matthew identifies Jesus as King, Messiah, but Mark focuses upon Jesus as servant:
  - a. He is the Servant of YHWH
  - b. Mark emphasizes what Jesus does rather than what Jesus says as in Matthew

**David Malick: Structure** -- There is a dominate movement of Jesus toward the cross. From Mark 8:31 onward Jesus and his disciples were “*on the way*” (9:33; 10:32) from Caesarea Philippi in the north through Galilee to Jerusalem in the south. The rest of the narrative (36%) is devoted to events of the Passion Week (11:1--16:8). Mark has been called a Passion story with an introduction.

### **Daniel Wallace: Outline --**

In some ways, the book divides neatly into two halves: Jesus’ ministry in Galilee (1:1–8:21) and Jesus’ journey to and ministry in Judea (8:22–16:8). Clearly Peter’s confession at Caesarea Philippi is the turning point, regardless of whether the Gospel has two halves or seven parts. Up until 8:21 it is clear that Jesus’ ministry is as the servant of the Lord, while after 8:21 it is more focused: he is the *suffering* servant of the Lord. In our approach, the geography plays an important role: hence, there are six major sections (seven, if the opening section is included).

#### I. The Beginning of the Servant’s Ministry (1:1-13)

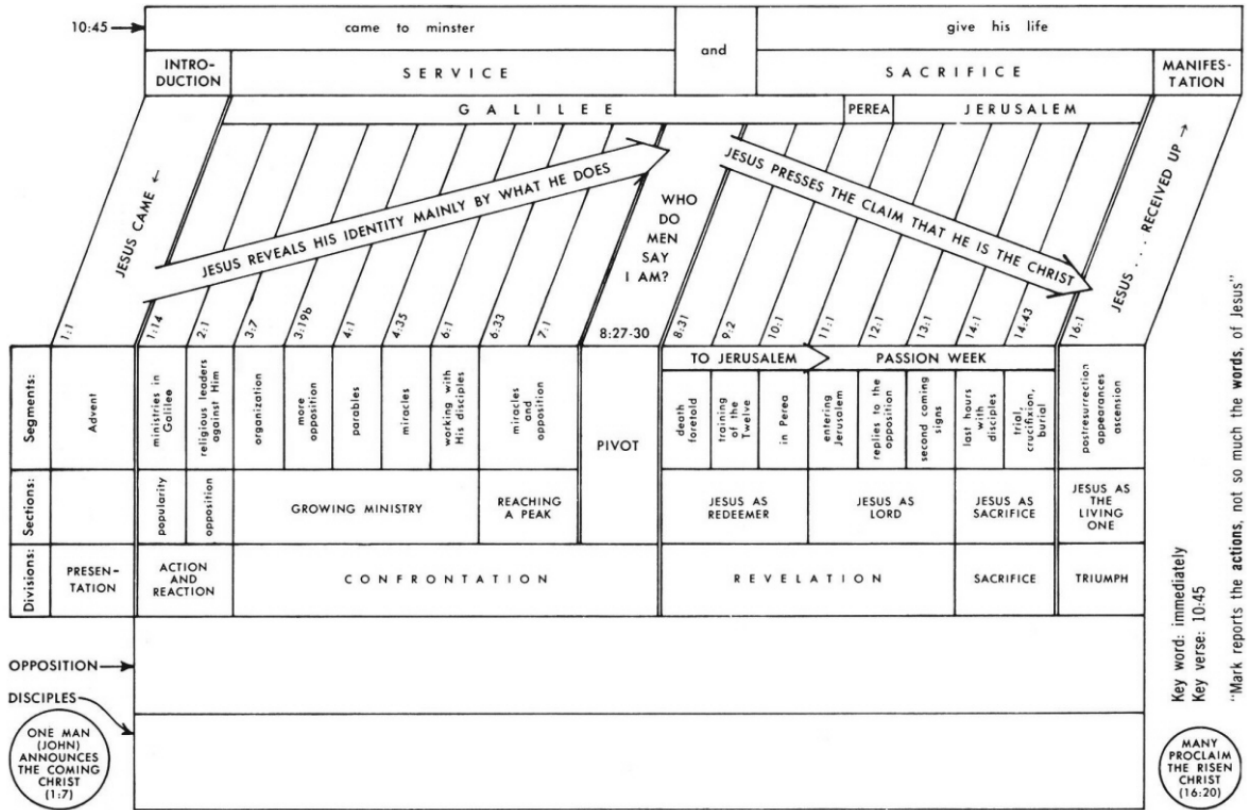
#### II. The Servant’s Ministry in Galilee (1:14–6:6a)

- III. The Servant's Withdrawals from Galilee (6:6b-8:21)
- IV. Revelation of the Servant's Suffering at Caesarea Philippi (8:22-38)
- V. The Suffering Servant's Journey to Jerusalem (9:1-10:52)
- VI. The Suffering Servant's Ministry in Jerusalem (11:1-13:37)
- VII. The Culmination of the Suffering Servant's Ministry: Death and Resurrection (14:1-16:8)

**Parunak:** Basic structure chiastic, but with many embroideries across the sections. 2-3 and 11-16:8 are major opposition sections that each divide about the leaders' scheming.

- a) Lord's & Church's ministry begins 1:1-45 16:9-20
- b) Mortal Opposition from Temple 2:1-3:6 14:1-16:8
- c) Mixed Allegiance in Galilee & Jer 3:7-35 11-13
- d) Travels in Galilee & to Jerusalem 4:1-8:26 8:31-10:56
- e) Confession of Jesus as Christ 8:27-30

**Jensen's Survey of the NT**



View in larger format at [http://www.preceptaustin.org/sites/www.preceptaustin.org/files/images/mark\\_overview.png](http://www.preceptaustin.org/sites/www.preceptaustin.org/files/images/mark_overview.png)

Charles Swindoll:

# MARK

**Introduction and Preparation**  
**A brief introduction sets Jesus's ministry in motion.**

John the Baptizer prepares the way.  
 Jesus is tempted in the wilderness.

*CHAPTER*  
 1:1-13

**The Servant at Work**  
**An unbroken chain of events reveals Jesus helping people in need.**

Because people are in darkness, He enlightens.  
 Because people are sick/afflicted, He heals.  
 Because people are without hope, He encourages.  
 Because people are in bondage to satanic control, He liberates.  
 Because people are sinful, He forgives.

*CHAPTERS*  
 1:14-8:30

**The Servant Rejected . . . Then Exalted**

**A growing discontent among the authorities leads to Jesus's suffering and death.**

He presses the claim, "Messiah."  
 He spends more time alone with His disciples.  
 He comes into open conflict with His enemies.  
 He is hated, deserted, tortured, crucified, and buried.  
 He is raised bodily from the dead!

*CHAPTERS*  
 8:31-16:20

<b>Emphasis</b>	Service to others	Sacrifice for others
<b>Scope</b>	Ministry to the multitudes	Ministry to the Twelve
<b>Sections</b>	Action . . . reaction . . . confrontation	Revelation . . . crucifixion . . . exaltation
<b>Theme</b>	Jesus is the Suffering Servant, who gives His life to save the world.	
<b>Key Verse</b>	10:45	
<b>Christ in Mark</b>	Jesus suffered and died so that salvation would be available to all people (10:45).	

**OUTLINE OF MARK –  
SON OF GOD . . . SUFFERING SERVANT**  
**THE AUTHORITY AND MIGHTY WORKS OF THE SON OF GOD**  
**VS. THE REDEMPTIVE MISSION OF THE SUFFERING SERVANT**

**Key Verses:**

**Mark 1:1 -- Title of the Book**

*“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”*

**Mark 8:29 – Testimony of Peter**

*“Thou art the Christ”*

**Mark 10:45 – Testimony of Jesus Himself**

*“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served,  
but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”*

**(1:1-13) FOREWORD: PREMINENCE OF JESUS CHRIST AND PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY**

**(1:1) Title** – Marking the Epic Watershed of the New Age – The Gospel of the New Kingdom Ruler

*“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”*

**A. (1:2-8) The Preeminence of Jesus Christ Heralded by John the Baptist – Highlighting His Ultimate Authority**

*“One is coming who is mightier than I”*

1. (:2-3) Preeminent by Virtue of the Divinely Promised Forerunner –  
Prophecy of John the Baptist
2. (:4-5) Preeminent by Virtue of Focus on the Forgiveness of Sins  
Mission of John the Baptist = Baptism of Repentance for Forgiveness of Sins
3. (:6) Preeminent by Virtue of the Uniqueness of the Forerunner --  
Description of John the Baptist
4. (:7) Preeminent by Virtue of the Testimony of John the Baptist --  
Distinction Between John the Baptist and Jesus Christ
5. (:8) Preeminent by Virtue of the Superior Baptism Administered by Jesus

**B. (1:9-13) The Preparation for the Ministry of Jesus Christ – Highlighting His Ultimate Authority  
Transition from the Ministry of John the Baptist to the Ministry of Jesus Christ – 2 Major Events:**

1. (:9-11) Preparation in Terms of Divine Approval for Character and Ministry of Jesus Christ –  
Baptism of Jesus Christ by John the Baptist
2. (:12-13) Preparation in Terms of Persevering Victory Over Satan and Sin and Temptation --  
Testing of Jesus Christ in the Wilderness

**I. (1:14 – 8:26) THE AUTHORITY AND MIGHTY WORKS OF THE SON OF GOD**

**A. (1:14-20) The Launching of His Public Preaching Ministry and His Program of Personal Tutelage –  
Highlighting His Ultimate Authority**

1. (1:14-15) The Launching of His Public Preaching Ministry – the Gospel Message in the Context of  
the Kingdom Calls for Repentance and Faith
  - a. Transition in Public Leadership – from John the Baptist to Jesus Christ
  - b. Significance of Galilee as Launching Point
  - c. Core Ministry = Preaching the Gospel
  - d. Kingdom Focus in Fullness of Time



- e. Call to Action = Repentance and Faith
- 2. (1:16-20) The Launching of His Program of Personal Tutelage = Key Strategy for Discipleship and Evangelism – Calling of Initial Disciples to Follow Jesus
  - a. (:16-18) Calling of Simon and Andrew to Discipleship
  - b. (:19-20) Calling of James and John to Discipleship

**B. (1:21 – 2:12) The Priority of the Spiritual Ministry of Jesus Christ**

- 1. (1:21-45) The Amazing, Authoritative Teaching Ministry of Jesus Christ Must Take Priority Over Healing Miracles and Casting Out of Demons
  - a. (1:21-28) Manifest Authority of Jesus Christ
    - 1) (:21-22) Teaching with Amazing Authority
    - 2) (:23-27) Rebuking Demons with Amazing Authority
    - 3) (:28) Spreading Reputation in Light of His Manifest Authority
  - b. (1:29-45) Widespread Preaching and Healing Ministry of Jesus Christ – 2 Incidents:
    - 1) (:29-38) Healing of Simon’s Mother-in-law Causes Crowd Control Issues
    - 2) (:39-45) Healing of Leper Causes Crowd Control Issues
- 2. (2:1-12) The Authority to Forgive Sins Must Take Priority Over Physical Healing – The Healing of the Paralytic
  - a. (:2:1-4) Demonstration of the Authority of Jesus Christ in Proclaiming Truth – Broken, Desperate Sinners Always Need Forgiveness of Sins
    - 1) (:1-2a) Jesus Attracts a Curious Crowd
    - 2) (:2b) Jesus Proclaims the Authoritative Gospel = God’s Instrument of Salvation
    - 3) (:3-4) Jesus Is the Only Answer for Desperate Sinners
  - b. (2:5-11) Confirmation of the Authority of Jesus Christ to Forgive Sins – Spiritual Healing Always Trumps Physical Healing
    - 1) (:5) Spiritual Healing of Forgiveness of Sins
    - 2) (:6-7) Complaining Blasphemy of the Ignorant Scribes
    - 3) (:8-11) Confirming Miracle of Physical Healing
  - c. (2:12) Recognition of the Authority of Jesus Christ in Obedience and Praise – Genuine Miracles Always Glorify God and His Ultimate Purposes
    - 1) Undeniable Miracle
    - 2) Unexplainable Miracle
    - 3) Unparalleled Miracle

**C. (2:13 – 3:6) The Authoritative Presence of the Promised Messiah Upsets the Status Quo – Leading to Confrontation and Controversy with the Established Religious Leaders**

- 1. (2:13-22) Devotion to Jesus Replaces the Harshness of Separatist Prejudice and Legalistic Tradition with the Celebration of Joy of the New Messianic Age
  - a. (2:13-17) Compassionate Outreach Trumps Separatist Prejudice – Jesus Attacked for Close Association with Exploiters and Sinners
  - b. (2:18-22) Devotion to Jesus Trumps Legalistic Tradition – Jesus Attacked for Encouraging Feasting over Fasting
- 2. (2:23 – 3:6) Sabbath Controversies Provide Opportunities for the Lord of the Sabbath to Rebuke Spiritual Pride (Manifested in Legalism and Hard Hearts)
  - a. (2:23-28) Authority Over the Sabbath – Priority of Basic Needs – Eating in the Grainfields – Rebuke of Legalism
  - b. (3:1-6) Authority Over the Sabbath – Priority of Compassion – Healing of the Man with the Withered Hand – Rebuke of Hard Hearts

**D. (3:7-35) 4 Challenges Jesus Faced Due to His Growing Popularity Amidst Growing Opposition -- Balancing Ministering to the Multitudes and Personal Discipleship for Leadership Development**

- 1. (3:7-12) Ministry Popularity Can Attract People for the Wrong Reasons – Interaction with Huge

## Crowds and Unclean Spirits

- a. (:7-9) We are Amazed at the Popularity of Jesus
- b. (:10) We are Reminded of the Power of Jesus
- c. (:11-12) We are Surprised at the Paradox of Jesus = Silencing Testimony About His Identity
2. (3:13-19) Ministry Popularity Must Not Crowd Out the Priority of Developing Ongoing Leadership
  - a. (:13) Setting for the Commissioning of the 12 Apostles
  - b. (:14-15) Scope of Ministry – 3 Key Functions
  - c. (:16-19) Specific Selection
3. (3:20-30) Ministry Popularity Leads to All Sorts of Unjustified Attacks
  - a. (:20-22) Two Unjustified Attacks
  - b. (:23-27) Refutation of Religious Leaders
  - c. (:28-30) The Curse of the Unpardonable Sin
4. (3:31-35) Ministry Popularity Creates Conflict Over Maintaining Spiritual Priorities
  - a. (:31-32) Close Ties to Physical Family Members
  - b. (:33-35) Greater Ties to Spiritual Family Members

## E. (4:1-34) 4 Parables Unlocking the Mysteries of the Kingdom of God Regarding its Reception and Growth

1. (4:1-25) 2 Parables Related to the Reception of the Kingdom of God:
  - a. (:1-20) Parable of the Soils – The Reception of the Kingdom Depends on Your Heart Condition –
    - 1) Seed on the Path -- Hardened Hearts vs. Spiritual Life
    - 2) Seed on the Rocky Ground -- Shallow Hearts vs Spiritual Perseverance
    - 3) Seed Amidst Thorns -- Distracted Hearts vs. Spiritual Devotion
    - 4) Seed on the Good Soil -- Fruitful HeartsAside: Introduction to teaching methodology of parables
  - b. (:21-25) Parable of the Lamp – The Reception of the Kingdom Depends on Your Attentiveness to Divine Revelation – to the Extent that You Listen Well You Will Be Blessed With Additional Spiritual Insight
2. (4:26-32) 2 Parables Related to the Growth of the Kingdom of God:
  - a. (:26-29) Parable of the Growing Seed – The Mysterious Growth of the Kingdom Can Only Be Attributed to the Sovereign Work of God
  - b. (:30-32) Parable of the Mustard Seed – The Surprising Rapid Growth of the Kingdom Will Bring Blessing to All Nations – Especially When Viewed From Such Insignificant Beginnings
3. (4:33-34) Postscript – Methodology of Teaching in Parables

## F. (4:35-5:43) 4 Realms of the Dominion of the Lord Jesus Demonstrated

1. (4:35-41) Dominion Over the Forces of Nature Demonstrated – Confidence in the supreme authority and providential care of our sovereign Savior should embolden our faith
  2. (5:1-20) Dominion Over Demons Demonstrated – The compassionate Savior demonstrates His dominion over the destructive power of depraved demons
  3. (5:25-34) Dominion Over Disease Demonstrated – Healing the Woman with Chronic Bleeding
  4. (5:21-24, 35-43) Dominion Over Death Demonstrated – Raising the Daughter of Jairus
- Application: It is never too late to trust in Jesus for deliverance

## G. (6:1-6) 4 Sobering Insights Regarding the Inevitability of Rejection

1. (:1-2a) Rejection Hurts Most When There is an Expectation of Positive Acceptance
2. (:2b-3) Rejection Takes Offense Because of Moral and Spiritual Blindness Despite Overwhelming Evidence
3. (:4) Familiarity Breeds Contempt
4. (:5-6) Unbelief and Rejection Deny People the Benefits of Potential Ministry

## H. (6:7-56) 4 Lessons of Faith the Apostles in Training Needed to Master Regarding the Sufficiency of Jesus

1. (:7-30) Trust in the Victorious Power of the Lord Jesus – Initial Training Mission vs. Opposition from Herod Antipas in the Beheading of John the Baptist
2. (:31-44) Trust in the All Sufficient Provision of the Lord Jesus – the Feeding of the 5000
3. (:45-52) Trust in the Calming Presence of the Lord Jesus = the Antidote to Fear and Anxiety – Abide in Jesus for apart from Him we can accomplish nothing
4. (:53-56) Authentic Faith is Very Different From Superficial Attraction for the Hope of Physical Benefit (being fed or healed)

**I. (7:1-23)** The Authoritative Presence of the Promised Messiah Upsets the Status Quo – Leading to Confrontation and Controversy with the Established Religious Leaders

1. (:1-13) Exposing Self Righteous Religious Tradition – Religious Tradition Creates Hypocrites in the Sight of God by Undermining the Authority of God’s Word
2. (:14-23) Exposing Self Righteous Legalism – The Source of True Defilement is the Depraved Heart of Every Man

**J. (7:24-37)** Foretaste of Gentile Faith – Outsiders Can Become Insiders – Jesus Graciously Extends His Healing Power to Desperate Gentiles – In Recognition of Remarkable Faith and Evoking Remarkable Testimony

1. (:24-30) Region of Tyre – Healing of the Demon Possessed Daughter – Response to the Remarkable Faith of the Desperate Syrophenician Woman
2. (:31-37) Region of Decapolis – Healing of the Deaf and Dumb Man – Evoking the Remarkable Testimony of the Awesomeness of Jesus’ Saving Power

**K. (8:1-26)** Focus of Spiritual Vision -- Our Eyes of Faith Need Clear Vision of the Power and Sufficiency of Our Savior

**(8:27 – 9:13) HINGE: REINFORCING THE IDENTITY AND MISSION OF JESUS CHRIST – THE SON OF GOD – THE SUFFERING SERVANT**

[Chiastic structure]

**A1. (8:27-30)** Clarity Regarding the Person of Jesus Christ – The True Identity of Jesus (Corroborated by His Authority and Mighty Works) Constitutes the Ultimate Litmus test for Spiritual Vision

**B1. (8:31-33)** Clarity Regarding the Mission of Jesus Christ – The Redemptive Mission of Jesus Christ Can Only Be Embraced By Relinquishing Human Autonomy and Submitting to Divine Lordship –

Passion Prophecy #1 and Rebuke of Peter

*"If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves, take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake and for the sake of the gospel will save it."*

**C. (8:34-38) Challenge Regarding the Heavy Cost of Discipleship – Cross-Bearing**  
Allegiance to His Person and Mission (Including Rejection and Suffering)

**B2. (9:1)** Reassurance Regarding the Mission of Jesus Christ – The Heavy Cost of Discipleship Pales in Contrast to the Mighty Display of Power in the Coming Kingdom of God

**A2. (9:2-13)** Reassurance Regarding the Person of Jesus Christ – The Son of Man Must Suffer in Order for the Son of God to be Seen in the Full Radiance of His Glory -- Transfiguration

## **II. (9:14 – 16:8) THE REDEMPTIVE MISSION OF THE SUFFERING SERVANT**

### **A. (9:14-10:52) The Suffering Servant Characterizing Greatness in the Kingdom –**

Final Training of the Twelve

[Another chiasmic structure]

1A. (9:14-29) Faith Healing of Demon-Possessed Son – Jesus Dealing with Spiritual Power Failures and Doubts on the Part of the Twelve

2A. (9:30-50) The Pathway to Greatness in the Kingdom Requires the Perspective of the Cross – Three Lessons to Reinforce the Perspective of the Cross

a. (9:30-37) Lesson on Status – Greatness in the Kingdom Must Be Measured from the Perspective of the Cross

Passion Prophecy #2 and Correction of the Disciples

*"Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all."*

b. (9:38-42) Lesson on Sectarianism – The Pathway to Greatness is Respecting Diversity in Kingdom Ministry from the Perspective of the Cross

c. (9:43-50) Lesson on Saltiness – Be Pure . . . Be Potent . . . Be Peaceful – The Pathway to Greatness is Protecting yourself Against the Cancer of Sin While Positively Impacting Others for Christ and Promoting Peace among Believers

3A. (10:1-12) The Problem of Hard Hearts – Kingdom Life Requires Simple Obedience – Hard Hearts Complicate Simple Commands in the Case of Divorce and Remarriage

#### **4. (10:13-16) Entrance Into the Kingdom Requires Childlike Neediness and Dependence**

3B. (10:17-31) The Problem of Conflicted Hearts – Kingdom Life Requires Devoted Faith with its Corresponding Abundant Rate of Return – Rich Young Ruler

2B. (10:32-45) The Pathway to Greatness in the Kingdom Requires the Perspective of the Cross = Suffering and Sacrificial Service – not Self-Seeking and Self-Promotion

Passion Prophecy #3 and Correction of the Disciples

*"Whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all. For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

1B. (10:46-52) Faith Healing of Blind Bartimaeus – Jesus Dealing with the Lack of Insight of the Twelve Regarding Greatness in the Kingdom

### **B. (11:1-12:44) The Suffering Servant Confronting the Hypocrisy of Established Judaism**

1. (11:1-11) Triumphal Entry?? The Reception That Wasn't – Excitement Over Jesus That Stops Short of Worshiping Him as King Quickly Fades Away – Day 1 of Passion Week

2. (11:12-33) Two Object Lessons (Acts of Judgment) with Two Corresponding Application Lessons -- Jesus condemns the hypocrisy of an unfruitful nation with its empty religious system and the hypocrisy of its exploitative religious leaders – Day 2-3 of Passion Week

a. (:12-14) Object Lesson #1 – Cursing of Fig Tree

b. (:15-19) Object Lesson #2 – Cleansing (Judgment) of the Temple Corruption

c. (:20-26) Application #1 – Believe in God and Pray in Faith with Spirit of Forgiveness

d. (:27-33) Application #2 – Jesus is Greater Than the Temple – Respect His Authority -- Attack by chief priests, scribes and elders (beginning of series of interrogations trying to expose Jesus and trip him up)

3. (12:1-12) Teaching in Parables – Message of Coming Judgment – Rejection of Christ means loss of kingdom inheritance and the unleashing of the wrath of God (against the wicked religious leaders of Judaism) – Day 3 of Passion Week

4. (12:13-44) Confrontational Dialogue with Religious Leaders – Establishing the Wisdom and Authority of Jesus – Day 3 of Passion Week

- a. (:13-17) Questioned by Pharisees and Herodians – Issue of Consistency – Hypocrisy of Pitting Spiritual Loyalties Against Civil Responsibilities -- payment of poll tax
- b. (:18-27) Questioned by Sadducees – Issue of Absurdity – Hypocrisy of Using Convoluted, Hypothetical Examples to Try to Mock Spiritual Truth – resurrection in the after-life
- c. (:28-34) Questioned by Scribe – Sincerity is No Guarantee of Authenticity
- d. (:35-44) False Teachers Must be Exposed as Religious Frauds – 3 Fatal Flaws
  - Wrong Christology
  - Wrong Motivation
  - Wrong Evaluation Metric

**C. (13:1-37) The Suffering Servant Commanding Vigilance in Anticipation of End Time Events – Mt. Olivet Discourse – Day 3 of Passion Week**

7 Reasons to Be On Alert:

- 1. (:1-2) Destruction – Judgment of the Temple is Coming (70 AD)
- 2. (:3-8) Deception and Discord – Timing and Signs can be Misinterpreted
- 3. (:9-13) Danger – Pressure in the Form of Persecution [but don't be Anxious]
- 4. (:14-20) D-Day -- Abomination of Desolation followed by Great Tribulation period
- 5. (:21-27) Deception – in the Form of False Messiahs and False Prophets vs. True Cosmic Signs – Culminating in the Glorious Return of Christ to be United with His Persevering Elect
- 6. (:28-31) Discernment of the Signs – Parable of the Fig Tree – Certainty of Fulfillment
- 7. (:32-37) Day of Accountability Undisclosed – Parable of the Doorkeeper

**D. (14:1-15:47) The Suffering Servant Completing His Redemptive Mission**

- 1. (14:1-11) Bethany and Betrayal – Day 4 of Passion Week
  - How Extravagant is Your Devotion to Jesus Christ
- 2. (14:12-72) Passover / Garden / Trial – Day 5 of Passion Week
  - a. (14:12-26) The Sufficiency of Christ and Centrality of the Cross are Anticipated in the Celebration of Passover but Realized in the Institution of the Lord's Supper
  - b. (14:27-31) The Falling Away – Failure Does Not Have to be Final
  - c. (14:32-42) Grappling in Gethsemane
  - d. (14:43-52) Abandonment Leaves Jesus All Alone
  - e. (14:53-72) Unjust Treatment of the Son of God – Part 1
- 3. (:15:1-47) Pilate / Cross / Burial – Day 6 of Passion Week
  - a. (15:1-21) Unjust Treatment of the Son of God – Part 2
  - b. (15:22-41) The Crucifixion
  - c. (15:42-47) The Burial

**E. (16:1-8) The Suffering Servant Consummating His Redemptive Victory – Our Approach to the Reality of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ Should Leave Us in a State of Awe and Amazement**

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Excellent article: *DOES MARK'S GOSPEL HAVE AN OUTLINE?*

- By **Joel Williams** --- Source: JETS 49/3 (September 2006) 505–25

Mark's Gospel is like a path on which readers can travel, walking with Jesus and experiencing his life, death, and resurrection. As with any journey, this one has a starting point, travel time, and a destination. It begins with the preparatory work of John the Baptist and with Jesus' baptism, moves continually forward toward Jesus' crucifixion, and ends with an empty tomb. If Mark's Gospel is like a path, then an outline of the book is like a road map. It guides the traveler along the path, identifying important turns, intersections, and points of interest. Any map is a simplified representation, so that it does not replace the journey itself but helps the traveler to make sense of the trip. In the same way, an outline is not a substitute for the reading of Mark's Gospel itself but is an attempt to offer guidance about the significant divisions, turning points, interconnections, and developments in the story. This article argues for an overall outline or map of Mark's Gospel, one that takes seriously the narrative shape of Mark and pays close attention to narrative features such as character, setting, and plot, as well as to the patterned arrangement of episodes. Mark's Gospel is a historical narrative, but it is still a narrative, which has implications for the structure of the book.

Does Mark's Gospel have an outline? Some have objected to the whole idea of an outline for Mark's Gospel, if by an outline we mean an identifiable structure made up of discrete units with obvious divisions. Joanna Dewey expresses the objection clearly. According to Dewey, Mark's Gospel is like an oriental carpet with crisscrossing patterns. It is an interwoven tapestry made up of multiple overlapping structures and sequences that serve to bridge breaks in the narrative rather than create them. Mark's Gospel is too complex. It contains more patterns than can be expressed in an outline, especially since an outline will necessarily highlight certain patterns and by doing so obscure others. By its very nature, an outline also identifies breaks in the narrative and divides the text into separate sequential units. According to Dewey, Mark's Gospel does not divide easily because it consistently bridges breaks through interconnections, repetitions, and anticipations, so that different events and episodes are interwoven into a unified narrative. For Dewey, Mark's Gospel does not have a clear overall structure. Instead it consists of forecasts and echoes, repetition with variations, resulting in the type of narrative that meets the needs of a listening audience. Since Mark's Gospel consists of overlapping patterns, different interpreters will create different outlines depending on which patterns they emphasize. In Dewey's opinion, various outlines tell us more about their creators than about the Gospel of Mark and its structure. . .

Nevertheless, although an outline of Mark's Gospel has certain limitations, it is not without merit, and perhaps the metaphor of a road map can help to clarify its purpose and value. A road map does not identify every possible back road or dirt path, nor does it point out every conceivable building or destination. Normally, a road map displays the most prominent roads and points of interest. An outline is not an exhaustive explanation of all possible relationships and transitions within Mark's Gospel. Instead, an outline attempts to exhibit some of the more important structural patterns and turning points in the narrative.

[http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS\\_49-3\\_505-525\\_Williams.pdf](http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/49/49-3/JETS_49-3_505-525_Williams.pdf)

TEXT: Mark 1:1-20

TITLE: INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST ACCORDING TO MARK

**BIG IDEA:**

**A DISCIPLE CAN FOLLOW NO GREATER MASTER THAN JESUS CHRIST, THE ULTIMATE KINGDOM AUTHORITY FIGURE = THE SERVANT KING**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Perspective in this Gospel account is that of **John Mark** – the former deserter who was restored to faithful service

**Constable:** The Mark in view is the "John Mark" mentioned frequently in the New Testament (Acts 12:12, 25; 13:5, 13; 15:36-39; Col. 4:10; Phile. 24; 2 Tim. 4:11; 1 Pet. 5:13; et al.). He was evidently a relative of Barnabas, and he accompanied Barnabas and Paul on their first missionary journey, but left these apostles when they reached Perga. Mark became useful to Paul during Paul's second Roman imprisonment, and was also with Peter when Peter was in Rome. Peter described him as his "son," probably his protégé. . . Mark probably wrote this Gospel sometime between A.D. 63 and 70.

Church met in home of his mother – Acts 12; he was a cousin of Barnabas

Approach we will be taking is more of a **rapid overview** – that is how Mark writes his account; Significance of connective: “*straightway*” -- moving us through the ministry of Jesus in rapid fire succession – one incident right after another in abbreviated form; not exegeting every nuance; not always getting the expanded accounts from the other synoptic gospels – but moving along at a very fast clip – does not include the extended teachings of Christ related in the other gospels; more event oriented

**Constable:** Mark used a forceful, fresh, and vigorous style of writing. This comes through in his frequent use of the historical present tense that expresses action as happening at once. It is also obvious in his frequent use (41 times) of the Greek adverb *euthys* translated "*immediately*."<sup>14</sup> The resulting effect is that as one reads Mark's Gospel, one feels that he or she is reading a reporter's eyewitness account of the events.

Many great leaders have arisen over the ages; attracting significant bands of followers; enjoying various levels of impact in society – both in terms of importance and in terms of duration.

Confucius ... Socrates ... Jewish rabbis ... John the Baptist ...

Think through this morning what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ.

**A DISCIPLE CAN FOLLOW NO GREATER MASTER THAN JESUS CHRIST, THE ULTIMATE KINGDOM AUTHORITY FIGURE**

**(:1) TITLE OF THE BOOK – MARKING THE EPIC WATERSHED OF THE NEW AGE – THE GOSPEL OF THE NEW KINGDOM RULER**

*“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”*

God has been silent for over 400 years in terms of His prophetic voice.

All of the OT points to the fullness of times when God would send forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law.

- Direct prophecies of the OT
- Types and pictures

**James Edwards:** For Mark the introduction of Jesus is no less momentous than the creation of the world, for in Jesus a new creation is at hand.

What an exciting juncture in human events to come to the point of the Incarnation – the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God –

This is epic; this is huge; you hate to miss the beginning of a great movie – here we are in on the beginning of the story of this new age

Beginning implies that there will be something more that comes after; there will be the coming of the Holy Spirit (details in Acts); there will be the second coming of Jesus

Truly *Good News!* Came to bring salvation ... not judgment

**Cranfield:** The word "gospel" also had a pagan background associated with the emperor cult. The birth of an heir to the throne, his coming of age, and his accession to office were announced as "good news"—"gospel," *euangelion*. The early Christians, therefore, connected the "gospel" of Jesus Christ with the "gospel" of the *true* ruler of *God's* kingdom.

Cf. **MacArthur** comments on background understanding of "gospel"

No question about the identity of this great leader – the promised Messiah; the historic Jesus of Nazareth; decisively proclaimed as the *Son of God*

Name = Jesus

Title (not a last name) = Christ, Messiah, Anointed One – King

Lineage = Son of God -- not the son of some human king

Gospel story builds towards a climax with the confession of Peter that Jesus is the Christ --

Unique emphasis of Gospel according to Mark: many commentators call it the Portrait of a **Servant** – but I find the initial emphasis to be on the **Authority** of Jesus Christ; man of action doing the will of His Father; [Jesus refers to Himself as the "*Son of Man*"] – **Servant-King** blend is the emphasis

**Stedman:** I have just spent two weeks in Mexico with the Wycliffe Bible Translators, and I have realized anew that the Gospel of Mark is the most translated book in all the world. No other book appears in as many languages. Almost all Wycliffe translators, after they have reduced a language to writing, begin their translation of the Scriptures with this gospel. I am sure that the fact it is the shortest of the gospels has something to do with that decision! Bible translators are human beings like the rest of us, and no one wants to start with a gospel as long as Matthew or Luke. But it is also a fact that Mark is particularly suitable for introducing to the Scriptures people of all backgrounds, classes, and tribes. It is the one gospel of the four which is aimed at the Gentile ear.



## **I. (:2-8) PREEMINENCE OF JESUS CHRIST HERALDED BY JOHN THE BAPTIST – “ONE IS COMING WHO IS MIGHTIER THAN I”**

### **A. (:2-3) Preeminent by Virtue of the Divinely Promised Forerunner -- Prophecy of John the Baptist**

*“As it is written in Isaiah the prophet,  
‘Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way;  
The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make ready the way of the Lord,  
Make His paths straight.’”*

Quotation combines in some fashion Exodus 23:20, Malachi 3:1, and Isaiah 40:3.

**Van Parunak:** The texts quoted:

- 1) 1:2a quotes Exod. 23:20, God's promise to send an angel before the nation Israel when they leave captivity in Egypt.
- 2) Mal 3:1 picks up this phrase from Exod and extends it, so all of 1:2 may also be considered a quote from Mal.
- 3) 1:3, from Isa. 40:3, which in its original context describes the preparation of a road for the Jews to return to Judaea from the Babylonian captivity.

*Desert* = wilderness of Judea west and north of the Dead Sea; place where God characteristically met with His people and called His servants – like Moses = type of Christ

What is involved in making ready the way of the Lord?

**Stedman:** That is why the prophet Isaiah said John's message would be like a great bulldozer, building a highway in the desert for God to come to the isolated stranger in the midst of the wilderness. Without a road you cannot drive out into the desert in order to help somebody. You must have a road, a highway in the desert. John was God's bulldozer to build that highway. You know how roads are built -- exactly as Isaiah describes in Chapter 40. "Every mountain shall be brought low, and every valley shall be lifted up; the crooked places shall be made straight, and the rough places plain," {cf, Isa 40:4a}. That is what repentance does. It brings down all the high peaks of pride that we stand on and refuse to admit are wrong. It takes the depressed areas of our life, where we beat and torture and punish ourselves, and lifts them up. It takes the crooked places, where we have lied and deceived, and straightens them out. And it makes the rough places plain. Then God is there, at that instant of repentance. Beautiful imagery, is it not?

**Hiebert:** The point of the whole quotation is that John's preparatory ministry, in fulfillment of prophecy, authenticated Jesus' Messiahship and prepared for the beginning of His official ministry as the Messiah. . . Roads in the East were generally poorly maintained. A coming king would send ahead of him a representative to assure that the roads had been adequately prepared. Spiritually, this was John's advance task. He was to remove hindrances in the hearts of the people so that they would be ready to receive "*the coming One*."

Cf. work by advance team of Secret Service agents on behalf of the President

### **B. (:4-5) Preeminent by Virtue of Focus on the Forgiveness of Sins Mission of John the Baptist = Baptism of Repentance for Forgiveness of Sins**

*“John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And all the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people*

*of Jerusalem; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.”*

You can't get a more critical issue than how to resolve man's basic sin problem; people today like to minimize or deny that issue altogether ... but since the Fall, it has been even more important than any physical healing

Remarkable phenomena – why would all these people be attracted to such a strange prophet at such a remote location for such a humbling baptism??

**Stedman:** It is evident that John spoke to a universal need in their lives. We do not have to guess what it was, because it is still around. It is exactly the same need that grips people's hearts today. They were victims of a syndrome that every human being suffers from today -- just as they did then. The syndrome consists of three elements: sin, guilt, and fear. Those always go together.

is sin? Well, basically and fundamentally, sin is self-centeredness, that's all. We commit sins because we are thinking of ourselves, loving ourselves, indulging ourselves, looking out for ourselves, taking care that no one get ahead of us. That is the essence of sin -- self-centeredness. We are all victims of it. There is not one of us who does not struggle in this area. We find ourselves trapped in it constantly. That is the curse which hangs over our whole human race. We were made by God to be vessels to convey his outgoing love, to reach out with it to everyone around us. Somehow that has become twisted, so that now -- instead of reaching out -- we reach in, and we love ourselves first.

And sin always produces guilt. Guilt is dislike of ourselves. We do not like the fact that we hurt others -- and we know we do. We feel responsible because we see the damage we do in other people's lives by our self-centeredness, and we feel guilty about it. We learn to hate ourselves to a considerable degree. That is why psychologists say that the great problem humanity wrestles with is self-hatred. Carl Menninger wrote a book, *Man Against Himself*, in which he documents that this is what we do. We hate ourselves. We do not like ourselves. We lose our self-respect. That is guilt.

Guilt is always accompanied by fear, because fear is self-distrust. Fear is feeling unable to handle life anymore, being aware that there are forces and powers we are unable to control, and which eventually are going to confront us. We are not able to handle them, and so we run from them. Even in the Garden of Eden, as soon as Adam and Eve sinned they felt guilty, and they hid in fear. It has been the history of the race ever since. Fear looms up, that uncertainty about the future, and we become fearful, timid people, afraid of what will happen next. We are walking on eggs all the time, afraid of being accepted or rejected, afraid of what people will do to us -- and especially, finally, afraid of what God is going to do to us. That is an inner torment the like of which there is no equal.

A baptism characterized by repentance; a change of mind leading to a change of behavior

### **C. (:6) Preeminent by Virtue of the Uniqueness of the Forerunner -- Description of John the Baptist**

*“And John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist, and his diet was locusts and wild honey.”*

1. His simple ascetic dress

2. His simple ascetic diet

2 Kings 1:8 – similarity to prophet Elijah; characteristic of a Nazirite

**Constable:** This description of John would have identified him as a typical "holy man" of the ancient East who lived in the desert. His clothing was woven "camel's hair" held in place with "a leather belt" (cf. 2 Kings 1:8; cf. Mal. 4:5-6). This is how prophets typically dressed (cf. Zech. 13:4). His diet consisted of dried "locusts" and the "honey" of "wild" bees. This was clean food for the Jews (cf. Lev. 11:21-22). John may have been a lifelong Nazirite, or he may simply have lived an ascetic life out of devotion to God (Luke 1:15). His personal appearance and behavior, in addition to his divine anointing, must have encouraged the Jews who came to him to abandon self-indulgent living—in preparation for Messiah's appearing.

**Ron Daniel:** Preaching repentance prepares people for a Savior who can forgive their sins. John's appearance and attitude show us that he was in no way conformed to the world. He didn't eat delicious dinners or wear comfortable clothing. The book of Romans tells us, **Rom. 12:1-2** *"I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, {which is} your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."* You shouldn't be conformed to this world. You should be a non-conformist. But that doesn't mean making your appearance so outlandish

**D. (:7) Preeminent by Virtue of the Testimony of John the Baptist --  
Distinction Between John the Baptist and Jesus Christ**

*"And he was preaching, and saying, 'After me One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals.'"*

**Van Parunak:** His strength: "mightier than I." Singles out the Lord not for superior holiness, or piety, or honor, but for his power, his strength. Cf. Luke 11:21-22, the Lord in combat with Satan. Continues the political sense of the good news. The mighty king who can destroy our enemies has finally arrived.

**E. (:8) Preeminent by Virtue of the Superior Baptism Administered by Jesus**

*"I baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."*

Water baptism can only symbolize what only the Holy Spirit could accomplish in terms of the inward reality of cleansing from sin

Future baptism will include fire

**HIS PREMINENCE HIGHLIGHTED HIS ULTIMATE AUTHORITY**

**II. (:9-13) PREPARATION FOR THE MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST --  
TRANSITION FROM MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST TO MINISTRY OF JESUS**

## CHRIST – TWO MAJOR EVENTS

### A. (:9-11) Preparation in Terms of Divine Approval for Character and Ministry of Jesus Christ –

#### Baptism of Jesus Christ by John the Baptist

*“And it came about in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him; and a voice came out of the heavens: ‘Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well-pleased.’”*

Jesus was the only man who didn't need to be baptized and repent of His sins; yet He submitted to the baptism to fulfill all righteousness

Marked the dividing line between his early years of private life and his entering into his public ministry as the Messiah

Great Trinitarian passage

Perfect, sinless Lamb of God who fulfilled all righteousness and could die as a substitute for our sins

**Van Parunak:** Matt and Luke use a vanilla verb for "open." Mark uses the verb "to rip apart." A sudden, violent action. Points us in two directions:

1) Past, to the nation's request in Isa. 64:1 for a direct intervention of God in their problems (see 63:15-64:5). Mt and Lk in fact use the word from Isa in the LXX, anoigw, but Mark comes closer to the semantics of Heb. QR(.

2) Future, in 15:38 of the veil in the temple. Only two occurrences in Mark.

3) Thus the Baptism and the Crucifixion round off one another. The first rips open heaven as God sets forth on his work of salvation (Isa 59:16). The second rips open the veil so that man can enter in to fellowship with God. Reinforces our understanding that the ministry of Christ is bracketed by these two events.

**James Edwards:** The baptism signals the confirmation of Jesus' Sonship and the commencement of his servanthood.

**Stedman:** First, Jesus' being baptized was **an act of identification**. Jesus was associating himself with us. He took our place but he began with his baptism, not the cross. This was the first step leading to that relationship in which he was ultimately to be made sin for us, i.e., actually become what we are. This was the first sign of his intention to do so, when he took the place of a sinner, and was baptized with a baptism of repentance and confession of sin.

I like the way Dr. H. A. Ironside explained this: He said that we are like paupers who have accumulated so many debts that we cannot pay them. These are our sins. These tremendous claims are made against us, and we cannot possibly meet them. But when Jesus came, he took all these mortgages and notes and agreements we could not meet and endorsed them with his own name, thereby saying that he intended to pay them, he would meet them. This is what his baptism signifies, and is why Jesus said to John the baptist, "...thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all

righteousness," {Matt 3:15b RSV}. He declared his intention to meet the righteous demands of God by himself undertaking to pay the debts of men. So the baptism was clearly an act of identification.

But it was also, as you will note from Mark's account, **an empowering moment**: "And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove..."

The third aspect of his baptism is that it was a **sign of assurance to Jesus**.  
[and validation to those around watching and hearing]

**Hiebert**: The dove was preeminently the bird of sacrifice for the Jews. Jesus was empowered for that self-emptying service as the Servant of the Lord to which He had committed Himself.

### **B. (:12-13) Preparation in Terms of Persevering Victory Over Satan and Sin and Temptation -- Testing of Jesus Christ in the Wilderness**

*"And immediately the Spirit impelled Him to go out into the wilderness.  
And He was in the wilderness forty days being tempted by Satan;  
and He was with the wild beasts, and the angels were ministering to Him."*

**Hiebert**: He went with a strong sense of the Spirit's compulsion upon Him. Since the object of His Messianic mission was to "destroy the works of the devil" (1 Jn 3:8), Jesus recognized that His acceptance of the Servant vocation made the encounter essential. It was the initiation of His mission to overthrow the devil. His miracle-working ministry of authority over the demons was based on the victory won in this encounter.

**Constable**: God allowed Satan to tempt Jesus for two reasons: to show that He would not draw away from the Father's will, and to demonstrate His qualification for His mission.

**James Edwards**: Israel was in the wilderness forty years (Deut 8:2), Moses was on Mt. Sinai forty days and nights (Exod 34:28), and Elijah was led for forty days and nights to Mt. Horeb (1 Kgs 19:8). In each instance the wilderness was a proving ground, a test of faithfulness, and a promise of deliverance. The same contrasts are present in Jesus' temptation, for in the wilderness Jesus is both tempted by Satan and attended by angels.

Place of abandonment, loneliness, terror; harsh environment; no food or water

**Stedman**: Mark records one other thing about Jesus' temptation. Despite the fact that he was without human help, and assailed by the tempter in all these ways, nevertheless he was not alone. He was sustained by a ministry of comfort which came in unusual ways: He was with the wild beasts, and the angels came and ministered to him. Do not read "wild beasts" as though he were afraid of being attacked by them. Leopards, lions, bears, and other wild animals were all around throughout that wilderness area. But Jesus was not afraid of them; he was with them, Mark says. They were his companions. They comforted him and helped him. I can picture Jesus, his body cold from hunger, snuggled up between two mountain lions, ministered to physically by the animals. ???

**Hiebert:** More likely, the presence of these wild animals was an added element of terror for Jesus. The first Adam succumbed in an environment that was beautiful and friendly; the last Adam maintained His purity in an environment that was desolate and hostile. . . This angelic ministry (in contrast to the wild beasts) attests the human weakness of the incarnate Christ, but it also bears witness to His Sonship.

## **HIS PREPARATION HIGHLIGHTED HIS ULTIMATE AUTHORITY**

### **III. (:14-15) PREACHING MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST LAUNCHED – GOSPEL MESSAGE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE KINGDOM CALLS FOR REPENTANCE AND FAITH**

**A. Transition in Public Leadership** – from John the Baptist to Jesus Christ  
*“And after John had been taken into custody,”*

**B. Significance of Galilee as Launching Point**  
*“Jesus came into Galilee,”*

Skipped over earlier events of youth of Jesus and his early time in Judea

**C. Core Ministry = Preaching the Gospel**  
*“preaching the gospel of God,”*

**Van Parunak: The Activity: Preaching**

Distinguish "preach" <2784>, 1:15, from "teach" <1321>, 1:22.

**a) Preach**, doing the work of a herald, getting the attention of people who don't know what's going on. Supported today by the gift of the evangelist.

- 1) John does it in 1:4,7
- 2) Jesus does it only in 1:14, 38, 39.
- 3) Afterward, done only by
  - a> those healed by the Lord (usually translated "publish"), 1:45; 5:20; 7:36,
  - b> or disciples, 3:14; 6:12; 13:10; 14:9; 16:15, 20.
- 4) Moral: importance of working through disciples!

**b) Teach**, instructing those whose attention has already been gained. Supported today by the gift of teaching.

- 1) The disciples are only said once to have done this (6:30).
- 2) Once (7:7) it occurs in a quotation from Isaiah.
- 3) The other 15 times are all of the Lord Jesus, in chh. 1, 1, 2, 4, 4, 6, 6, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 12, 14.

**D. Kingdom Focus in Fullness of Time**

*“and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand;’”*

**Hiebert:** His presence as the personal embodiment of the kingdom produced an unavoidable crisis. Men’s response to Him determined their relationship to the kingdom. His presence also precipitated the conflict of righteousness with evil. His miracles and His power over the

demonic world established the presence and triumph of God's kingdom over the kingdom of Satan. In Him, the kingdom of God invaded this present evil world and has established a present, spiritual reign in those who accept Him as their Sovereign.

#### **E. Call to Action = Repentance and Faith**

*“repent and believe in the gospel.”*

**Constable:** The Jews needed to make a double response since the kingdom of God was at hand. They needed to "repent" and "believe." These two words call for successive actions, but the action is really one act that involves two steps taken almost simultaneously. Repenting involves turning from something, and believing involves embracing something else. For example, a drowning man who is clinging to a scrap of wood needs to do two things when a lifeguard reaches him. He needs to release the wood and entrust himself to the lifeguard.

**Van Parunak:** Repentance is a change of mind about ourselves. We cannot be God's people if we are sinful; we cannot expect our sins to be forgiven until we acknowledge that we have them. We must declare moral bankruptcy before we can enjoy the riches of heaven. Throughout the NT, repentance is the first step to salvation: Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 11:18; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20; 2 Tim. 2:25; Heb. 6:1.2 2 Pet 3:9. The NT gospel does not begin with "God loves you." It begins with "You are a sinner, under the judgment of God, and you must repent."

### **HIS PREACHING MINISTRY HIGHLIGHTED HIS ULTIMATE AUTHORITY**

#### **IV. (:16-20) PROGRAM OF PERSONAL TUTELAGE = KEY STRATEGY FOR DISCIPLESHIP AND EVANGELISM --**

##### **CALLING OF INITIAL DISCIPLES TO FOLLOW JESUS**

##### **A. (:16-18) Calling of Simon and Andrew to Discipleship**

*“And as He was going along by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.’ And they immediately left the nets and followed Him.”*

**Hiebert:** Mark's gospel gives no indication of any previous acquaintance with Jesus, but from John 1:35-42 and 3:22-30, it is clear that they had already accepted Him as Messiah and even assisted Him in His work. The call now given them was a call to intensive training as His disciples.

**Wiersbe:** Jesus did not invent the term '*fishers of men.*' In that day, it was a common description of philosophers and other teachers who 'captured men's minds' through teaching and persuasion."

**Book:** *Training of the Twelve*

**Hendriksen:** Their decision to side with Jesus exhibits *his* greatness: the impelling force of his influence over the minds and hearts of men, so that when he calls they follow immediately.

**James Edwards:** Three aspects determine the call to discipleship. First and most importantly, Jesus is the unqualified subject of the call. . . For Mark, the act of following Jesus entails a risk of faith, and faith must be an act before it is a content of belief. Only as Jesus is followed can he

be known. . . A second characteristic of the call to discipleship is that it is a call to service . . . requires a fundamental change of perspective, to have in mind the things of God rather than self (8:33). . . This service is costly . . . Finally, the call of the four fishermen indicates that the essential work of Jesus consists in forming a fellowship. . .

**B. (:19-20) Calling of James and John to Discipleship**

*“And going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were also in the boat mending the nets. And immediately He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went away to follow Him.”*

Why 2 sets of brothers?

**Constable:** The main point, however, is the immediacy of their response to Jesus. This reflects Jesus' great authority over people.

**HIS PROGRAM OF PERSONAL TUTELAGE HIGHLIGHTED HIS ULTIMATE AUTHORITY**

He was the Ultimate Master ... they were the Ultimate Apostles ... Foundation for the Church

**CONCLUSION:**

We call ourselves followers of Jesus Christ.

- What marks us as genuine disciples?
- How do we respond to the authority of the Son of God?
- Have we received the good news of the gospel in such a way that our lives have truly been transformed?

\* \* \* \* \*

**DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) Do we exhibit the mindset of John the Baptist in exalting the **preeminence** of the Lord Jesus = “He must increase but I must decrease?”
- 2) Have we fully submitted to God’s work of **preparation** in our lives so that we can enter into the ministries that He has for us with His power and in obedience to Him?
- 3) Do we faithfully **herald** the gospel message of repentance and faith?
- 4) Are we **following Jesus** in His call to make us fishers of men?

\* \* \* \* \*

**QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:**



**Constable:** Most of the early Christian tradition says Mark wrote in Italy, and specifically in Rome. This external testimony finds support in the internal evidence of the Gospel itself. Many indications in the text point to Mark's having written for Gentile readers originally, particularly Romans. He explained Jewish customs that would have been strange to Gentile readers (e.g., 7:2-4; 15:42). He translated Aramaic words that would have been unfamiliar to Gentiles (3:17; 5:41; 7:11, 34; 15:22). Compared to Matthew and Luke he used many Latinisms and Latin loan words, indicating Roman influence. He showed special interest in persecution and martyrdom, which would have been of special interest to Roman readers when he wrote (e.g., 8:34-38; 13:9-13). . .

Mark implied that faithfulness and obedience as a disciple of Jesus will inevitably result in opposition, suffering, and perhaps death. This emphasis would have ministered to the original readers who were undergoing persecution for their faith. . .

Mark had a theological (Christological) as well as a pastoral (discipleship) purpose in writing. It was to stress the true humanity of the Son of God. Whereas Matthew presented Jesus as the Messiah, Mark showed that He was the human servant of God who suffered as no other person has suffered. Mark stressed Jesus' complete obedience to His Father's will. This emphasis makes Jesus an example for all disciples to follow (10:45). One wonders if Mark presented Jesus as he did, in order to balance a tendency that existed in the early church, by Docetists and others, to think of Jesus as divine but not fully human. . .

The superscription refers to Jesus as '*the anointed one, the son of God.*' At the end of the first half of the story, Peter acknowledges Jesus as '*the anointed one*' [8:29] and at the end of Jesus' life the centurion identifies Jesus as '*son of God*' [15:39]. The first half of the gospel emphasizes the authority of Jesus to do acts of power. The second half emphasizes the suffering of Jesus in filial obedience to God. Although the characterization of Jesus is consistent throughout, there appears, nevertheless, a clear development in the portrayal of Jesus from one half of the gospel to the next. In the first step, he serves with power; in the second, he serves as the one who suffers. (Rhoads and Michie)

**Stedman:** Mark is very easy to outline, because the author gives us certain natural divisions, as we will see as we go along. It falls readily into two halves.

The first, Chapter 1 through Chapter 8, Verse 26, is **The Servant Who Rules** -- the authority of the servant.

The second, from Chapter 8, Verse 27 through to the end, is **The Ruler Who Serves**.

**MacArthur:** No doubt Mark had come to Christ listening to Peter preach way back when he was young. No doubt Peter was the first great impactful spiritual influence on his young life. Peter was responsible for his conversion. There is consistent historical testimony that goes all the way back to the first century that after Paul left his first imprisonment in Rome, after he had been there with Mark, after he had written Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon, he left Rome, was let out of prison, came back at a later time, but in the middle period of time, Peter went to Rome. Peter went to Rome. The consistent historical testimony is that Peter spent at least a year there, maybe more than a year and he was in Rome and he was preaching constantly the gospel day after day after day after day. He died in Rome as a martyr in the summer or the autumn of the years 64 A.D., right at the time Nero burned the city and blamed the Christians and launched the persecution. And while Peter was there, he sends greetings and he says, "So does my son, Mark." Mark was with Peter in Rome.

**MacArthur:** It's a very old word [gospel] and it was a very familiar word both to Jews and to Gentiles long in usage and rather specific in its meaning. Yes, the word euangelion means good news, joyous message, glad tidings. But it had a more technical usage both in the minds of the Jews and the Gentiles as well. And remember now, Mark is writing from Rome to Roman Christians and Roman non-Christians, primarily then a Gentile audience. It's important then to consider how they would understand this word since he doesn't define it for them.

But let's, first of all, wonder how the Jews would understand it. There certainly were Jews among the Christians. There were certainly Jews among the non-Christians who would read and have read and continue to read this book. So what does gospel mean to them? How does it connect to them?

Well, it is used in the Greek version of the Old Testament called the Septuagint, the Old Testament written originally in Hebrew but there is a Greek version of it in which the word euangelion is the best translation of the Old Testament word. For that, I would take you back to listen carefully to Isaiah chapter 40...Isaiah chapter 40. This is a very important chapter, by the way, Isaiah 40, because it looks forward to the coming of Messiah in the far-distant future. It also looks forward in the near future to the children of Israel being released from captivity and going back to their land. That is why chapter 40 begins, *“Comfort, O comfort My people, speak kindly to Jerusalem, call out to her, her warfare has ended, her iniquity has been removed. She has received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins. Her punishment is over, it's time for restoration.”* That's what Isaiah is saying and that looks in the near future from Isaiah's vantage point to the return of the Babylonian captivity and from the far viewpoint to the future coming of Messiah.

Dropping down to verse 9 in that chapter, we read this, *“Get yourself up on a high mountain, there's an announcement coming. Find the highest point to make the announcement so you can be heard by most people. O Zion, bearer of good news.”* There is the word in the Septuagint euangelion, good news. *“Lift up your voice mightily. O Jerusalem, bearer of good news, lift it up, do not fear. Say to the cities of Judah, ‘Here is your God. Behold the Lord God will come with might, with His arm ruling for Him. Behold, His reward is with Him and His recompense before Him.”*

It is announcing the good news of the arrival of God. That is its usage. It refers to the **ascent of God to rule**, the Lord God will come with might, with His arm ruling for Him. When you're talking about good news, you're talking about, this is the best news possible. Remember now, these are people who are captive. They are being told there is coming a restoration. The punishment and chastisement is over. You're going back and the Lord is going to ascend again into His throne and He is going to rule over you. In the forty-second chapter...or the fifty-second chapter of Isaiah, we find a similar usage of this in the same context. Verse 7, Isaiah 52, *“How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news. Again this is the same good news who announces peace, who brings news of happiness, who announces salvation. And what is going to bring happiness and peace and salvation? Say to Zion, ‘Your God reigns.”*

So while the word euangelion might have some broad meanings, its technical meaning was to describe the very best news possible which was the ascent of a new king, the ascent of a sovereign to His throne over His people to produce salvation and peace and happiness. That is the way the Jews would view it and that is the way it is used there by Isaiah. Both passages consider then the return of the Jews from Babylonian exile when they go back to their land and God again will dwell in Zion, God again will ascend to His throne, a new temple will be built

which is like God's palace in which He dwells. And during the time of captivity, remember the temple had been destroyed, as it were, God's palace had been turned to rubble, the people had been carried away. God had dwelt with the exiles in Babylon, according to the prophet Ezekiel. "But the day would come," says Isaiah, "when the people will go back and God will go back with them and ascend to His throne." This will happen in the near future, and it did in the great return of the Jews from Babylonian exile and the rebuilding of the temple and God again taking His place as the sovereign over His theocratic nation Israel.

So it is a word of **enthronement**. It is the word of the good news of a sovereign ruler taking His throne. And the imagery is of God, the God of Israel, the only true God establishing His throne in Jerusalem and the near fulfillment that happened in the return from Babylon and the far fulfillment, that is the Messianic promise, that the King will come in the future and establish His kingdom in Israel and set up His rule and His throne there. And that will happen when Jesus returns and sets up His millennial Kingdom.

So the word has reference to the arrival of a king, the ascent of a king in Jewish usage. What about pagan usage? How would the Romans understand that word since they didn't necessarily have any Jewish history?

Well, let me read you an inscription. This is an inscription from the Roman world, the date is 9 B.C. Okay? Before Christ. This is the inscription, "The providence which has ordered the whole of our life....translated in to English, obviously....showing concern and zeal has ordained the most perfect consummation for human life by giving it to Augustus, by filling him with virtue for doing the work of a benefactor among men and by sending in him, as it were, a Savior for us and those who come after us to make war to cease, to create order everywhere, the birthday of the God Augustus is the beginning for the world of the euangelion, of the gospel that has come to men through him." How interesting. They used the word euangelion on that occasion in that inscription to describe the arrival of Caesar Augustus. Caesar Augustus is by the providence, it says, the one who will bring to us the work of a benefactor, the work of a Savior, make war cease, create order everywhere. It is the arrival of a god.

The good news then is that Augustus Caesar has arrived. That actual inscription was dedicated to him, apparently, on his birthday. And then it is a technical term again to refer to the ascendancy of the triumph of an emperor.

So the Jews and the pagans would both see that word as signifying the arrival of a new monarch and that would signify the arrival of a new era, and the new era would be an era of order and peace and salvation and blessing. So Mark chooses a word that spreads itself across Jew and Gentile and indeed he is about to write the history of a new king...a new king. The good news is about to be told. At least this is the beginning of the good news. The story is still being written for the King has not fully taken His throne, which one day He will in an earthly way, and finally in the New Heaven and the New Earth as an eternal King. But Mark will begin to tell the story of the arrival and ascendancy and establishment and enthronement of the new King who is far more glorious than all other kings and His name is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He is the new King.

This is the story of the new King who has arrived who is about to inaugurate His Kingdom and bring a new era of salvation, blessing, peace and order to the world. One historical writer says, "The parallel between evangel or the gospel in the imperial cult and the Bible, is Caesar and Christ. The emperor on the throne and the despised Rabbi on the cross confront each other. Both are gospel to men. They have much in common, but they belong to two different worlds." . . .

He proves Himself to be the divine King, the Son of God, by His words and His deeds in the first half of Mark's gospel. He proves Himself to be the Son of God and the promised King in the second half by His death and resurrection. So at first it's His deeds and words that prove who He is, and the back half it's His death and resurrection that prove who He is. And in the very middle, the very summit of the book, Peter makes the confession, "You are the Christ," or better, "You are the King." You are exactly who You claim to be.

And so, this is a book about the arrival of the greatest King ever, the new King. The new King introducing a new Kingdom and a new era for the world. And it's only the beginning of the story because the story will go on through all of human history and finally be consummated in the New Heaven and the New Earth when He will rule and reign forever and ever. So Mark establishes then what this book is about in his opening sentence.

**Van Parunak: Our Lord's titles:**

a) Jesus: the human name "Joshua." Means "Jehovah is savior."

b) Christ = Messiah, the anointed one, prophet, priest, and king.

1) First occurrence is Peter's confession in 8:29. Comparatively rare throughout the gospel; the only other references to Jesus are 9:41 (by our Lord) and 13:21; 14:61; 15:32 (on the lips of unbelievers!).

2) There is another title that is used more extensively throughout the gospel, and that refers to the same promised deliverer: "son of man," used by the Lord 15x of himself between 2:10 and 14:62. This last reference gives the clue to the meaning of this title, by drawing it from Dan. 7:13, where it describes the one to whom an everlasting kingdom is given.

c) "Son of God." Indicates his deity. Like "Christ," a rare title in the book.

1) 1:11; 9:7; used by God himself at the baptism and transfiguration.

2) Used twice by demons in referring to him (3:11; 5:7; cf. 1:24). They recognize his divine authority.

3) The only human in Mark to recognize Jesus as the son of God is the centurion at the cross in 15:39. NB: shows orientation of the gospel toward the gentiles, and in particular to the Romans; this Roman soldier grasps what the Jewish leadership cannot accept.

**Van Parunak: Where does he come from?**

In the midst of the activity described in 1:4ff (note the durative aspect of *egeneto* Iwannhs baptizwn), a particular candidate shows up for baptism. (About 70 miles from Jerusalem to Nazareth; map is about 150 miles high.)

a) Geographical emphasis: from Nazareth of Galilee.

b) Contrast with 1:5, "all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem."

c) John's influence is focused on Judea, the southern part of Israel. From Mark's perspective,

Jesus is the only Galilean who makes his way to John to be baptized! (We know from John 1:37ff that the baptist had galilean disciples, including Andrew and John the evangelist, but Mark wants to emphasize the difference.)

d) Compare the general movement of Mark, from Galilee in 1-8 to Jerusalem in 11-16. Original ferment of revival activity in the south, under John; then a lone galilean comes, is baptized, and (14-15) returns to the north bearing the message of the gospel.

e) But when Jesus returns to Jerusalem, what does he find of all those who were baptized in 1:5? Widespread opposition and rejection; betrayal and death.

f) Lesson: Outward response is not sufficient; must be marked by an inward change. Signing a decision slip, going forward at a revival meeting, or even receiving baptism does not in itself save one. Baptism is commanded of those who are already saved, but many have received it and yet remain in their sins.

TEXT: Mark 1:21-45

TITLE: *THE PRIORITY OF THE AMAZING, AUTHORITATIVE TEACHING MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST*

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE AMAZING, AUTHORITATIVE TEACHING MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST MUST TAKE PRIORITY OVER HEALING MIRACLES AND CASTING OUT OF DEMONS**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Last week we saw the transition from the ministry of John the Baptist, the one heralding the arrival of the Messiah, to the launching of the public ministry of Jesus Christ. Today we are going to see that public ministry in operation. What did it look like? What did Jesus Christ come to do?

What is most striking in these opening chapters in Mark's Gospel, is the **manifest Authority of Jesus Christ**. That authority is displayed in a variety of arenas and settings. But that authority is absolute; it is astonishing; it is amazing; it is unparalleled; it is like nothing that mankind has ever seen. His authority was seen first of all in His teaching; also in His ability to command evil spirits to obey Him; in His power to heal diseases; in His power over nature so that even the wind and the seas obeyed Him; in His authority over the Sabbath and over man-made regulations that had obscured God's true intentions for His law; in His power even over death. What amazing and astonishing authority!

It is easy for us to get all caught up in the healing miracles of Jesus and how He had power to cast out evil spirits and even raise the dead. But we are going to see in today's passage that those miracles were always of secondary importance. They were not the focus for Jesus. Despite some of the abuses of charlatan so-called faith healers today – they are not supposed to be our focus.

What was the focus for Jesus? We will see clearly in our text today.

**THE AMAZING, AUTHORITATIVE TEACHING MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST MUST TAKE PRIORITY OVER HEALING MIRACLES AND CASTING OUT OF DEMONS**

**I. (:21-28) MANIFEST AUTHORITY OF JESUS CHRIST – TEACHING AND REBUKING DEMONS WITH AMAZING AUTHORITY**

**A. (:21-22) Teaching with Amazing Authority**

1. Characteristic Activity of Teaching in the Synagogue

*“And they went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and began to teach.”*

Luke 4:16-31 – Capernaum = initial base of operations for ministry of Jesus in Galilee  
Remember, He had been born in Bethlehem but grew up in Nazareth so that He was known as a Nazarene. But He made Capernaum the base of his ministry operations in Galilee.

**James Edwards:** Capernaum was propitiously situated for a ministry in Galilee. It lay adjacent to the Via Maris, the main trade route between the Mediterranean coastal plain and Damascus in the

north. It was also as distant as one could be in Galilee from the major Hellenistic cities . . . where Herod Antipas made his capital, so that Jesus was able, at least initially, to avoid interference from political and religious leaders . . . The commercial advantages of a location on a major trade route surrounded by fertile lands and plentiful fishing destined Capernaum to an enviable degree of economic prosperity.

**MacArthur:** It had a Roman garrison because it was a potential area of crime because there was so much action, so much trade, so much travel traffic. It had a customs tax office as well. It belonged in the tetrarchy of Herod Antipas, on the border of his brother Philip's domain.

Significance of the **synagogue** – buildings where Jews could meet for worship and prayer and the public reading and study of the Word of God; assembly place; gathering place; first built during the Babylonian Captivity; impossible to go to Jerusalem to worship in the temple; at least here you would find the people with the most serious interest in God's revelation; they met on the Sabbath = Saturday – from sundown Friday night to sundown Saturday night – special regulations about what you could do and could not do on the Sabbath

Jesus wasted no time in getting about His Father's business

We see His priority right away = **Teaching** – explaining the truth of God's revelation; making that connection from the mind and heart of God to the mind and heart of man

**1 Cor. 14** – Paul teaching about spiritual gifts – Where does he put the focus?? On the gifts of healing and miracles?? No but on teaching and edification – that is what is essential for men to respond and obey God

## 2. Unusual Response Due to His Unique Authority

### a. Unusual Response to His Teaching

*“And they were amazed at His teaching;”*

They listened – He held their attention; they were not distracted or bored or disinterested; They were amazed – quite something since every Sabbath they had been coming all of their lives and hearing a wide variety of invited speakers; they had been exposed to large doses of God's Word and explanations by various scribes and religious leaders

But now they are amazed

**MacArthur:** There are a number of New Testament words that can be translated amazed or astonished or wonder. This is the strongest, *ekplesso*. One lexicon says, this is what it means, “To strike a person out of his senses by strong feeling.” He, in the vernacular, blew their minds. Never heard anything like it. Never heard anything like it.

### b. Reason for the Unusual Response

*“for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.”*

Why were they so amazed?

**Constable:** The word is *explessonto*, meaning that Jesus' words astounded or overwhelmed the people. A distinguishing feature of Mark's Gospel is his references to people's emotional reactions (cf. v. 27; 2:12; 5:20, 42; 6:2, 51; 7:37; 10:26; 11:18), even those of Jesus (6:6). It was Jesus' great authority that impressed them. He was, of course, not a mere scribe (teacher of the law) but a prophet, even the greatest Prophet ever to appear. Jesus proclaimed revelation directly from God, rather than just interpreting the former revelations that God had given to others, and reiterating the traditional rabbinic interpretations of the law.

**Jesus spoke the Truth** without equivocation – He had the correct interpretation – not just one option that he could offer more support for than the other three options; His word was the final and supreme word on the subject. No higher court of authority; He could explain the truth in ways that were understandable; He could illustrate the truth with the best illustrations

Cf. court cases where you bring in expert witnesses to speak to some aspect of the facts

- Maybe someone in the area of psychology
- Maybe a DNA expert

Both sides have their experts who disagree in their conclusions – although they are dealing with the same evidence

Jesus trumped all other experts – the ultimate authority

**Stedman:** **J. B. Phillips** entitled a book, *The Ring Of Truth*. That is an apt description of how Jesus taught. His words had that ring of truth, acknowledged by all who heard him speak. It was self-authenticating truth, corresponding to an inner conviction in each person who heard him, so that they knew that he knew the secrets of life.

**Jesus spoke with Conviction**, with passion, with intensity – you can imagine the tone of His voice, the inflections, the emotion – the truth meant everything to Him; most charismatic speaker ever; the ultimate communicator

**MacArthur:** *Exousia*, rule, dominion, jurisdiction, full right, power, privilege, prerogative. He just spoke with this absolute conviction, objectivity, authority, dominion, as if He were in charge and as if this was the truth and that was it. And it says in verse 22, “Not as the scribes...not as scribes.”

**Jesus connected with the Heart** – He had the right application of the truth

Message commanded Obedience ... not just intellectual interest

So different from how the scribes of His day taught the people

**What type of Authority did Jesus have?** Somewhat of a mystery to us because it involves His relationship within the Trinity as well as His dual nature as fully God and yet fully man ...

Operating in dependence upon His heavenly Father

Had laid aside the independent exercise of His own authority

Look at His command to His disciples after His resurrection – “*All authority has been given unto Me*” so now I command you – does that represent a change where now He is exercising His own authority

What is clear is that Jesus in His public ministry is manifesting the unique and absolute authority of God



## **B. (:23-27) Rebuking Demons with Amazing Authority**

### 1. (:23-24) Spiritual Warfare Between Wickedness and Righteousness

*“And just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying, ‘What do we have to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are-- the Holy One of God!’”*

Intensity of demonic activity and miracle working when Jesus was present on earth; not intended to be normative

Evil wants to be let alone; it does not want the Light to shine on it and expose it for what it is

**MacArthur:** Demon possession has always been around, but it never was so manifest in all biblical history as it was during Jesus' earthly ministry, and to a small extent to the Apostles extended ministry because He delegated power over demons to the Apostles as well because Satan disguises himself. And as I said, demons sit in every religious service. They stand in every false religious pulpit. They put on the garb of spiritual leaders. But in Jesus' day, they were exposed with wildness, physical deformity, convulsive seizures, torment, self-mutilation, nakedness, screaming...they always screamed in His presence.

- because of the authority of His Word
- because of the authority of His judgment
- because of the authority of His purity
- because of the authority of His power

Look at how different their reaction was from that of the people when they were in the presence of Jesus; the people were amazed and did not know what to make of Him; the demons were fearful because they understood who he really was (**James 2:19**)

Do we really understand that Jesus is the *Holy One of God*?? How can we continue to entertain sin and evil and wickedness in our lives? We are followers of the Holy One of God; we are Christians; we need to walk in the path of holiness

**Constable:** The title "*Holy One*" was a popular designation of God in the Old Testament. Isaiah called God the Holy One about 30 times (Isa. 1:4; 5:19, 24; et al.). Whereas people referred to Jesus as "Lord" (7:8), "Teacher" (9:17), "Son of David" (10:47- 48), and "Master" (10:52), the demons called Him "the Holy One of God" (1:24), "the Son of God" (3:11) or "the Son of the Most High God" (5:7).

### 2. (:25-26) Dominion of Jesus Christ

*“And Jesus rebuked him, saying, ‘Be quiet, and come out of him!’  
And throwing him into convulsions, the unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice,  
and came out of him.”*

**Wiersbe:** We expect a servant to be *under authority* and to *take* orders, but God's Servant *exercises* authority and *gives* orders—even to demons—and His orders are obeyed.

**MacArthur:** it is essential that if Christ is to come and establish His Kingdom, He must overpower the current ruler who is none other than Satan. He must have cosmic authority, authority that is beyond human authority, that is beyond this temporal world. He must have

power that extends into the universe. He must have power over all the evil forces that exist in the universe. This is necessary if He is to rescue sinners from bondage to this evil power. . .

The evil spirits, the demons know why the Son of God has come. They know the battle is on. They know the kingdom has arrived because the King is present. And they are well aware that this could mean that their destruction is imminent. So more than any other time in history, they escalate their activity in the realm of Judaism. They don't want to expose themselves but they can't help it when confronted by Jesus. And His invincibility over them becomes manifestly obvious.

### 3. (:27) Growing Amazement at the Manifest Authority of Jesus Christ

*“And they were all amazed, so that they debated among themselves, saying, ‘What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.’”*

Jesus just speaks the word and commands obedience – no superstitious rituals and chantings and weird practices – look at how witch doctors operate –

Look at how the attention goes back to **His teaching** – that is His priority – everything else was designed to authenticate Jesus as the true Son of God; the one who was speaking Truth from God

Good reason to study the **Commands of Christ** – He commands; we need to obey

### **C. (:28) Spreading Reputation in Light of His Manifest Authority**

*“And immediately the news about Him went out everywhere into all the surrounding district of Galilee.”*

**Stedman:** When Mark says "*at once*," he does not mean in a few days or a few weeks; he means in a few hours. This was such a remarkable situation that within hours the word had spread like a flame all through the area. By evening, they were bringing the sick and demon-possessed into the city to be healed by Jesus, as we will see in a few moments. The word had gone out like wildfire that here was one who could command the spirits of darkness, and they would obey.

Events to follow are happening at once ... same day

## **II. (:29-45) WIDESPREAD PREACHING AND HEALING MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST -- TEACHING MINISTRY OF JESUS MUST TAKE PRIORITY OVER HEALING AND CASTING OUT OF DEMONS – 2 HEALING INCIDENTS FOR THE GREAT PHYSICIAN**

Chiastic structure:

- A1 Healing of Simon's Mother-in-Law
  - B1 Crowd Seeks Healing
  - B2 Widespread Preaching and Healing Ministry
- A2 Focus on Specific Leper

### **A. (:29-38) Healing of Simon's Mother-in-Law Causes Crowd Control Issues**

### 1. (:29-30) Clinical Opportunity

*“And immediately after they had come out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law was lying sick with a fever; and immediately they spoke to Him about her.”*

**James Edwards:** The healing of Peter's mother-in-law in vv. 30-31 is less exceptional than the majority of Jesus' miracles and might have been eclipsed by seemingly more significant works and wonders. The story, however, has the ring of a personal reminiscence and likely is included because of Peter's influence.

### 2. (:31) Compassionate Healing

*“And He came to her and raised her up, taking her by the hand, and the fever left her, and she waited on them.”*

Jesus rebuked the fever

**Van Parunak:** *"She ministered unto them."* The verb only occurs 5x in Mark:

a) 1:13, the angels in the wilderness, emphasizing his deity.

b) 10:45 (2x): "the son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." Phil. 2, "in the form of God ... took upon him the form of a servant." He did not have a retinue of servants, as would an earthly king. Thus the last two occurrences are all the more noteworthy:

c) Here and 15:41, devout women who provided hospitality and sustenance for him. Their offering of domestic ministry found favor in his eyes. It seems humble and insignificant, but it was the one ministry that he was pleased to accept.

### 3. (:32-38) Crowd Control Issues

*“And when evening had come, after the sun had set, they began bringing to Him all who were ill and those who were demon-possessed. And the whole city had gathered at the door. And He healed many who were ill with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He was not permitting the demons to speak, because they knew who He was. And in the early morning, while it was still dark, He arose and went out and departed to a lonely place, and was praying there. And Simon and his companions hunted for Him; and they found Him, and said to Him, ‘Everyone is looking for You.’ And He said to them, ‘Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby, in order that I may preach there also; for that is what I came out for.’”*

Man of Action is also a Man of Prayer

**Constable:** Peter viewed the healing ministry of Jesus as primary, as did many of his companions. Jesus viewed it as only a small part of His larger mission. He had "come out" from God to fulfill this mission. Peter encouraged Jesus to stay where He could not escape pressure to perform miracles (cf. John 7:3-5). Jesus chose to move on to other parts of "Galilee," where He could present the gospel (v. 14) and His claims (v. 15), since *"that is what"*—as He said—*"I came out for."*

**Stedman:** What a contrast this is with some people today. There are healers who go about advertising their healing campaigns, and try to bring out the crowds on that basis, emphasizing the spectacular in what they do. But you see nothing of this in the Bible. Even with the apostles,

the physical healings that went on in their ministries were played down, just as in Jesus'. They never advertised them. There is no record in Scripture of people giving public testimonials in order to increase the crowds, or of being "zapped by the power of God," or any of the theatrics you see so much of today. These are totally unbiblical. . .

Why did Jesus seek the Father's face like this, in these hours of pressure? The only answer we can come to is that he wants to make clear that the authority he had was not coming from him. This is what our Lord is trying to get across to us so continually in the Scriptures -- that it was not his authority by which he acted; he had to receive it from the Father.

I do not know any more confusing doctrine in Christendom today -- one which has robbed the Scriptures of their authority and power in the minds and hearts of countless people -- than the idea that Jesus acted by virtue of the fact he was the Son of God, that the authority and power he demonstrated were due to his own deity. Yet he himself takes great pains to tell us this is not the case. "The Son by himself can do nothing," {cf, John 5:19}. Why do we ignore his explanation, and insist that it is he, acting as the Son of God? He tells us that "it is not I; the Father who dwells in me, he does the works," {John 14:10}. And all the power that Jesus manifested had to come to him constantly from the One who dwelt within him.

**James Edwards:** "Seeking" connotes an attempt to determine and control rather than to submit and follow. In this respect, seeking for Jesus is not a virtue in the Gospel of Mark. Nor are clamoring crowds a sign of success or aid to ministry. Here, as elsewhere in Mark, enthusiasm is not to be confused with faith; indeed, it can oppose faith.

**Hiebert:** The preaching was central; the miracles were the appended seal authenticating the message. Jesus was determined not to allow preoccupation with the miracles to obscure the message.

## **B. (:39-45) Healing of Leper Causes Crowd Control Issues**

### 1. (:39-40) Clinical Opportunity

*"And He went into their synagogues throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out the demons. And a leper came to Him, beseeching Him and falling on his knees before Him, and saying to Him, 'If You are willing, You can make me clean.'"*

**MacArthur:** Now the fact that he came to Jesus is a shock...it's a shock. He's not supposed to do that. Outcasts were forbidden to come near anyone. The rabbis said...at least one rabbi that I read said, "Upwind a leper can come within six feet of a person, downwind, 150 feet." Josephus wrote that "Lepers were treated as if they were living dead men, corpses." In Israel they were barred from the city of Jerusalem all together, and all walled cities. And if they did enter any other place, they had to keep those distances. If a leper came near a synagogue, he would be rejected and sent to a small holding room until they could deal with him later. Rabbis used to pride themselves in avoiding lepers. One rabbi said, "He wouldn't eat an egg purchased on a street where a leper had walked." Another rabbi prided himself at throwing stones at lepers.

### 2. (:41-42) Compassionate Healing

*"And moved with compassion, He stretched out His hand, and touched him, and said to him, 'I am willing; be cleansed.' And immediately the leprosy left him and*

*he was cleansed.”*

Nobody ever touched a leper back in those days

**James Edwards:** Surprisingly, the response of Jesus is no less scandalous than the leper's audacity. In the face of such an intrusion, one would expect an observant Jew to recoil in protection and defense. But with Jesus compassion replaces contempt. Rather than turning from the leper, Jesus turns to him; indeed, he *touches* him, bringing himself into full contact with physical and ritual untouchability. The outstretched arm of Jesus is a long reach for his day . . . for any day. It removes the social, physical, and spiritual separations prescribed by the Torah and custom alike. The touch of Jesus speaks more loudly than his words; and the words of Jesus touch the leper more deeply than any act of human love.

**Van Parunak:** Some evangelicals focus unbiblically on the love of the Father for the lost, while some reformed churches equally unbiblically assume an attitude of haughty condemnation of the wicked. The Scriptures rather emphasize the compassion of the Son, a compassion that we are to emulate. It should matter to us that people are lost and dying in sin. Our hearts should grieve for them, and that grief should move us to reach out to them.

### 3. (:43-45) Crowd Control Issues

*“And He sternly warned him and immediately sent him away, and He said to him, ‘See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a testimony to them.’ But he went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the news about, to such an extent that Jesus could no longer publicly enter a city, but stayed out in unpopulated areas; and they were coming to Him from everywhere.”*

**Constable:** Mark is the only evangelist who recorded that "*compassion*" moved Jesus to heal this pitiable man (v. 41). However, his version of this miracle stressed what the leper did after Jesus healed him. Jesus had "sternly warned" (Gr. *embrimaomai*) the cleansed leper not to tell anyone what Jesus had done for him (vv. 43-44; cf. vv. 25, 34; 3:12; 5:43; 7:36; 9:9). Only Mark used this strong word. It stresses the forcefulness and authority with which Jesus instructed and sent the cleansed leper to the priest. Jesus wanted to avoid becoming known simply as a miracle worker, which might lead to pressure to avoid the Cross. However, the man disobeyed Jesus, even though he probably thought he had good reason to do so, namely, to bring praise to Jesus. His disobedience to Jesus' word frustrated His work rather than advancing it. Jesus needed to minister to people, but the leper's action forced Him to spend more time in uninhabited, solitary places (Gr. *eremon*, vv. 4, 35).

**MacArthur:** Now the Old Testament gave a prescription. Leviticus 14, that when a leper was thought to be cured, there was a process the leper went through, a process of examination and a process of offerings and sacrifices that were to be done at the temple. So Jesus is upholding the Law. He upheld the moral law, and He upheld also the...we could call it the medical law, or the health part of the law which protected the nation Israel from contagious diseases. So He says you've got to follow the prescription according to Leviticus chapter 14. Go to the priest, go to the priest...the priest, as we note when you read through Leviticus 13 and 14, are the ones who are the health officials in the nation.

Now the ritual is very interesting. Here's kind of how the ritual goes. The leper is examined by a priest, two birds are taken and one is killed over running water, in addition they're taking cedar, scarlet and hyssop, these things are taken together with the living bird, dipped in the blood of the dead bird, then the living bird is allowed to go free. The man...this is all symbolic...the man washed himself and his clothes, shaves himself, seven days are allowed to pass and then he's reexamined. He must then shave his hair again, his head, his eyebrows, certain sacrifices are then made consisting of two male lambs without blemish, one ewe lamb, three tenths of an amount of fine flour mingled with oil and the restored leper is then touched on the tip of the right ear, the right thumb and the right great toe with mixture of blood and oil. Finally examined for the last time. And if the cure is indeed real, he is allowed to go with a certificate that he is cleansed. So He says, "Go do that." . .

You know, this was the first sign that the Galilean ministry was being ground down...ground down, eventually to a halt. And one of the grinding stones was the hatred of the leaders and the other grinding stone was the massive popularity of the people. In between the two, they were just grinding down that ministry to a stop. Jesus could no longer publicly enter a city but stayed out in unpopulated areas.

### CONCLUSION:

What is our response to the amazing and astonishing Authority of Jesus Christ?

Have we fully embraced His teaching?

Have we responded in faith and repentance to His gospel message?

Are we fully committed to obeying His commands without hesitation?

Are we in the process of discipling others to also obey and follow Jesus?

Healing miracles and exorcisms performed by Jesus were truly spectacular. But His teaching should be what fully grabs our attention every day.

\* \* \* \* \*

### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Where do the faith healers of today seem to put their focus?
- 2) Why did Jesus not want the evil spirits to speak concerning Him?
- 3) How can we increase our compassion for not just the spiritual problems but also the physical ailments of those we come in contact with?
- 4) How can we make prayer more of a priority so that we live in dependence upon our Heavenly Father and are directed by Him daily?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Keathley:** Remember the purpose statement of Mark in Mark 1:1 where he lays out that he will

prove that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. In the first half of the book, the emphasis is on showing Jesus to be the Messiah. The climax is when Peter makes the statement in 8:29, “*You are the Christ*” (i.e. Messiah) In the last half of the book, Jesus is shown to be the Son of God. The climax of that section is when the centurion looking at Jesus hanging on the cross says, “*Truly this man was the Son of God!*” So it helps to understand the context of the whole book as we look at this miracle.

**James R. Edwards:** James Edwards clarified the divine authority of Jesus, as Mark recorded it in many places, that demonstrated His deity "The Authority of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 37:2 (June 1994):217-33.

**MacArthur: 6 Realities about the Healings that Jesus Performed:**

- 1) He healed with a word or a touch.
- 2) He healed instantly
- 3) He healed totally.
- 4) Jesus healed everybody.
- 5) He healed organic disease. He didn't heal lower back pain, or heart palpitations or headache, or some other invisible ailment. He reversed paralysis, palsy, things that were undeniably supernatural.
- 6) He raised dead people.

The purpose of all these miracles whether it is healing disease, ending death, casting out demons, feeding multitudes, walking on water, whatever it is that was miraculous was done in order to validate the fact that Jesus is the Son of God and therefore not only does He have supernatural power, but what He says is true. After all, the most important thing to Jesus was the message. Look at Mark 1:38, “He said to them, ‘Let's go somewhere else, to the towns nearby that I may preach there also, for that is what I came for.’” Or as Jesus said on another occasion, “I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” He came for the purpose of causing sinners to hear a message that would lead them to repentance and salvation, and in the language of verse 38, that meant to preach the Kingdom, to preach the gospel, to preach salvation. That's why He came. All the miracles did was validate the message.

**Van Parunak:** Chiastic overview of 1:21-45 (following Dideberg & Moulon Beernaert)

	Capernaum	Galilee
	<u>Sabbath</u>	<u>First Day</u>
a) Teaching & Healing	21-27	40-45
b) "All Galilee"	28	39
c) Intervention of Disciples	29-31	35-38
d) Mass Healings		32-34

**Van Parunak:** Points of comparison between this healing and the events in the synagogue in 1:21-27:

- a) Each shows the Lord's authority in a specific domain.
  - 1) This healing asserts Jesus' authority among men, as the Christ.
  - 2) The exorcism (1:25) shows his authority among the spirits, as the Son of God.
- b) Each sets up the approaching conflict with the Jewish hierarchy.
  - 1) By sending the leper to the priests, the Lord is inviting them to come to Galilee and check him out; leads to the inquisition of 3:22 ("the scribes that came down from Jerusalem").

- 2) The explicit comparison with the scribes in 1:22 sets the stage for a motivation of envy (15:10).
- c) Each involves both miracle and teaching, unlike the center section, which is only miracle.



TEXT: Mark 2:1-12

TITLE: AUTHORITY TO FORGIVE SINS – HEALING OF THE PARALYTIC

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS TRUMPS ALL OF GOD’S MANIFOLD BLESSINGS – ONLY GOD CAN FORGIVE SINS**

**INTRODUCTION:**

This new section in Mark extends to 3:6 and continues the theme of highlighting the **authority** of Jesus while introducing the new dynamic of the **mounting opposition** on the part of the religious leaders. There are 5 separate incidents that Mark records – not necessarily in chronological order – that combine these ideas of authority and conflict. Today we will look at the first account. Mark’s readers were certainly facing opposition and persecution as well because of their identification as followers of Christ. Their courage would be fortified by seeing their Master not shrinking back from these confrontations but facing His enemies head on.

The significance of this first incident in 2:1-12 focuses on the forgiveness of sins = the greatest need for all of mankind. That is why the gospel message itself must always take precedence over any form of social humanitarian aid. Yes, people are hungry and need to be fed. Yes, people are hurting and need to be fixed. But most importantly, people are separated from God because of their sin and headed for an eternity of suffering in hell. What everyone needs as the highest priority is forgiveness of sins.

People can deny the problem; people can try to ignore the problem and distract themselves with the pleasures and affairs of this world; people can try to introduce their own work-oriented, performance-based human solutions; but in the end, all of mankind will stand before the judgment of God to give account for their sins. Jesus Christ came for the purpose of providing forgiveness of sins. But we must come to God on His terms. *Jesus Christ is the The Way, The Truth and The Life.*

**Matt. 1:21** angel of the Lord appearing to Joseph – *“She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”*

**John 1:29** at the baptism by John the Baptist – *“Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”*

**Acts 13:38** *“Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you and it is granted to all those who believe.”* When you believe the gospel, you receive forgiveness of sins.

**Ephesians 1:7** *“In Him,”* that is in Christ, *“we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us.”* That is the message of Christianity, God will forgive your sins.

**THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS TRUMPS ALL OF GOD’S MANIFOLD BLESSINGS – ONLY GOD CAN FORGIVE SINS**

[Also found in Matt. 9:2-8 and Luke 5:17-26]

## **I. (:1-4) BROKEN, DESPERATE SINNERS ALWAYS NEED FORGIVENESS OF SINS - DEMONSTRATION OF THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS CHRIST IN PROCLAIMING TRUTH**

### **A. (:1-2a) Jesus Attracts a Curious Crowd**

#### 1. Hometown Buzz

*“And when He had come back to Capernaum several days afterward, it was heard that He was at home.”*

Must have been exhausted; looking for an opportunity to recharge His batteries; the buzz had died down – but did not take any time for it to re-ignite

Constant pressure of the crowds; add to that the new pressure from the mounting confrontation with the religious leaders – eager to protect their turf; upset at this new teaching and the popularity of this new miracle worker

Not necessarily attracting attention for the right reasons  
Remember: a prophet does not have honor in his home town

**Hiebert:** The house may have been Peter’s, although some think that the reference is to the house where Jesus lived with His mother at Capernaum.

Base of His ministry operations on the shores of the Sea of Galilee

#### 2. Standing Room Only

*“And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room, even near the door;”*

Why did they come? Variety of reasons –certainly curiosity was prominent

### **B. (:2b) Jesus Proclaims the Authoritative Gospel = God’s Instrument of Salvation**

*“and He was speaking the word to them.”*

Jesus came as a Light to those in Darkness

Good Shepherd gives His sheep exactly what they need for nourishment

Remember His charge at the end of John: If you love Me, feed my sheep with the Word of God

**Luke 24:27** – finished his ministry on earth with the same priority of **speaking the word** – here to the disciples on the road to Emmaus – *“Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.”*

We already saw in Mark 1 – **THE AMAZING, AUTHORITATIVE TEACHING MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST MUST TAKE PRIORITY OVER HEALING MIRACLES AND CASTING OUT OF DEMONS**

### **C. (:3-4) Jesus Is the Only Answer for Desperate Sinners**

*“And they came, bringing to Him a paralytic, carried by four men. And being unable to get to Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him; and when they had dug an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic was lying.”*

Access to Jesus is Key – we take it for granted

Look at the Activity of the faith of these men

Think of the desperate condition of the paralytic – how humbling to be so dependent; unable to go anywhere on your own

**Hiebert:** They ascended the flat roof of the house, either by means of an outside stairway or over the roof of an adjoining house. The flat housetop was generally used for various purposes. The house apparently was a modest one-story building.

**Constable:** quoting Wessel -- The roof itself was usually made of wooden beams with thatch and compacted earth in order to shed the rain. Sometimes tiles were laid between the beams and the thatch and earth placed over them.

Quite a commotion and disruption  
House was not handicapped accessible

## **II. (:5-11) SPIRITUAL HEALING ALWAYS TRUMPS PHYSICAL HEALING – CONFIRMATION OF THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS CHRIST TO FORGIVE SINS**

### **A. (:5) Spiritual Healing of Forgiveness of Sins**

*“And Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, ‘My son, your sins are forgiven.’”*

Blesses the paralytic way beyond his expectation or imagination;  
He was only looking for physical healing – any connection here between his disability and his sin?

No forgiveness apart from faith and repentance

**Keathley:** Their faith is demonstrated by their creativity, boldness and persistence to open the roof. They allowed nothing to stop them. . . Sometimes God acts in a person’s life because of another’s faith. It might be the faith of a grandmother or a neighbor who prays that causes God to work in a person to bring them to Christ.

**Hendriksen:** Jesus never took sin lightly. He never told people, “Do you have a sense of guilt? Forget about it.” On the contrary, he regarded sin as inexcusable departure from God’s holy law (Mark 12:29, 30), as having a soul-choking effect (4:19; cf. John 8:34), and as being a matter of the heart and not only of the outward deed (Mark 7:6, 7, 15-23). But he also offered the only true solution.

### **B. (:6-7) Complaining Blasphemy of the Ignorant Scribes – Two Questions --- Why/Who**

*“But there were some of the scribes sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, ‘Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but*

*God alone?”*

**MacArthur: Pharisees** [Luke’s account]: -- it comes from a word meaning *separated*. These are the guardians of the populous form of apostate Judaism. They're the fundamentalists, legalists, architects, and promoters of salvation by works, salvation by self-righteousness. This is the system that dominated the people. Yeah, they believed in the Old Testament, they believed in resurrection. They believed in angels. They believed in demons. They believed in predestination, human responsibility, written Law, oral Law. They believed in the coming of Messiah, the Messianic Kingdom. They were non-priests, they were lay people. They were devoted to keeping the people loyal to the Old Testament Law, and more importantly, the tradition that a complex set of regulations that they had developed that sort of became a wall around the Law with the idea that it was protected and what it did was obscure it and put something else in its place. Couldn't see the Law anymore, all you could see was the regulations that were around the law. And, of course, it was a damning system because no one could be saved by keeping the Law. . .

Now, within the group of the Pharisees, there was also a group called **scribes**. If you drop down to verse 6, you can see some of the scribes are sitting there also. Now the scribes were the theologians that belonged to the Pharisees' system. The Pharisees were the preachers and teachers of the system, the theologians sort of put it together. They were the scholastics, they were the scholars. Not all scribes were Pharisees. Not all Pharisees were scribes.

**Liefeld:** Mark has already mentioned the “*teachers of the law*” in 1:22, where their teaching is contrasted with Jesus’ authoritative teaching. Here they become directly involved with Jesus. Luke (5:17) says that they had come from “*every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem.*” Obviously they were there out of more than curiosity; they hoped to be able to ensnare him on some theological point. Jesus’ statement about forgiveness gave them their opportunity.

### **C. (:8-11) Confirming Miracle of Physical Healing**

*“And immediately Jesus, aware in His spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves, said to them, ‘Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, Your sins are forgiven; or to say, Arise, and take up your pallet and walk? But in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins’ -- He said to the paralytic—‘I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home.’”*

- Turns around the Why questions and asks them a Why question
- Answers the Who question in terms of His identity
- 

The fact that Jesus knew what they were thinking should have given them pause about His identity; should have made them question the validity of their complaint.

**Scott Grant:** Mark also portrays Jesus as a Spirit-endowed prophet who is able to discern the reasoning of the scribes. Jesus won’t let them get away with their silent deliberations. He saw courageous faith in the four men but perceives only cowardly reasoning in the scribes. He both surfaces their reasoning and challenges it.

**MacArthur:** Blasphemers don't know what people are thinking, only God does. First Samuel 16:7, “*The Lord looks on the heart.*” First Kings 8:39, “*For you know the hearts of all men.*”

First Chronicles 28:9, "For the Lord searches all hearts and understands every intent of the thoughts." Jeremiah 17:10, "I the Lord search the heart." Ezekiel 11:5, "I know t he things that come into your mind, every one of them."

**Hiebert:** It was not merely a question of His ability but His authority or moral right to do so. The forgiveness of sins is a moral issue; its exercise has to do with moral rights and liabilities. To claim that right falsely would indeed make Him guilty of blasphemy.

**Constable:** Jesus used the title "Son of Man" when He spoke of His sufferings and death (8:31; 9:9-13, 31; 10:33, 45; 14:21, 41). He also used it when speaking of His future return in glory (8:38; 13:26, 32; 14:62). Thus He used this title to blend the concepts of the Suffering Servant and the Messiah in His listeners' minds. It also connected and identified Him with mankind as the Son of Man. Still, He was the Man with "authority on earth to forgive sins," the Judge.

**MacArthur:** There's a secrecy factor in His ministry and Mark points it out again and again and again that Jesus is trying to slow down the stampeded, the rush. He's trying to be able to do what He needs to do to go to town to town to town to preach the message of salvation, the Kingdom. And the crowds, just as they get bigger and bigger, become obstruction. And they get Messianic expectations out of proportion out of reality and sometimes they even try to force Him to be a King and He has to escape. So I think **Son of Man** was a title that certainly had a Messianic indication in the seventh chapter of Daniel, but for the most part didn't heighten the Messianic expectation and it did demonstrate His wonderful humility.

**Van Parunak: his claim:** "the son of man has power on earth to forgive sins."

a) First use of "son of man" in the gospel, the Lord's favorite term for himself. Drawn from Dan. 7:13,14 to emphasize his place as the one to whom the Father has given all authority on earth.

b) "On earth" is important. The old amillennial teaching tends to spiritualize the Lord's impact, but it is real and concrete and tangible.

### **III. (:12) GENUINE MIRACLES ALWAYS GLORIFY GOD AND HIS ULTIMATE PURPOSES --**

#### **RECOGNITION OF THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS CHRIST IN OBEDIENCE AND PRAISE**

##### **A. Undeniable Miracle**

*"And he rose and immediately took up the pallet and went out in the sight of all;"*

Response of obedience to the 3 very specific commands of Jesus.

This was not a miracle done in secret.

This met the criteria we discussed last week for the miracles of Jesus

- Instantaneous healing
- Complete healing
- Irreversible healing

##### **B. Unexplainable Miracle**

*"so that they were all amazed and were glorifying God,"*

“all” used in a general sense; not that every single person was glorifying God; the scribes and Pharisees were probably fuming inside that their critical, complaining spirit had been exposed in a season where there should have been joy and rejoicing

### C. Unparalleled Miracle

*“saying, ‘We have never seen anything like this.’”*

Luke adds the note that great fear came upon all of them.

### CONCLUSION:

**Acts 3** – parallel healing takes place at the hand of Peter and John (remember that Mark relied largely on the eyewitness testimony of Peter).

Peter had something to offer by way of the blessing of God that far surpassed silver or gold ... Not just the physical healing of the lame men ... but the forgiveness of sins

**3:19** – same gospel message of repentance and faith that Jesus preached – “*so that your sins may be wiped away*” – that is the issue that must be addressed

When it comes to counting our blessings ... when it comes to petitioning God for His help in our circumstances of life ... let’s put at the top of our praise list – Thanksgiving for the ultimate gift of all – The Forgiveness of Sins.

\* \* \* \* \*

### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why do we spend so much time worrying and complaining about our physical ailments when we should be rejoicing in our forgiveness of sins?
- 2) How can we take advantage of the privilege of access to our Heavenly Father – look at the extreme measures these men took to gain access to Jesus.
- 3) To what extent is our life characterized by proclaiming the gospel to others?
- 4) What should be the impact on our lives of being amazed at the ultimate blessing of forgiveness of sins?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Hiebert:** The opposition [from the religious leaders] manifested itself in a series of charges against Jesus, coming with mounting intensity. The scribes were offended by His claim to forgive sins (2:1-12), His fellowship with publicans (2:13-17), His supposed neglect of ascetic duties (2:18-22), and His violations of their Sabbath regulations (2:23-3:6).

**Constable:** Mark next recorded five instances in which Israel's leaders opposed Jesus, evidently not in chronological order. These occurred during the Galilean ministry of Jesus. Mark appears to have grouped them so his readers would see that opposition from leaders, particularly religious leaders, was something Jesus had to contend with and overcome. His readers were probably facing similar opposition, and this section should encourage and help all Christians experiencing conflict because they are trying to fulfill God's mission for them.

**Ryrie:** quoted by Constable -- The main purpose of the miracles was to teach, to reveal. Christ used miracles to demonstrate his deity (Mark 2:7), to support his claims to being the messiah (Matthew 9:27), and to serve as illustrations of deeper spiritual truths (see John 6:32-35). But the miracles also remind us of the consequences of sin—sickness, blindness, death—and of the power of the Lord to do something about those consequences. That is why many of his physical cures illustrate so well the spiritual salvation he secured when he died and rose from the dead

**Keathley:** This is a turning point in Jesus' ministry. Up to this point, the healings were merely physical. Now we see that the physical healings really point to a deeper spiritual reality which is the ultimate healing - the forgiveness of sins. The last miracle, the cleansing of the leper, pointed to this because leprosy was the model disease for the problem of sin. But here we have the forgiveness idea directly stated.

**Scott Grant:** **Martin Lloyd-Jones**, one of the 20th century's most noted preachers, told of when he, as a guest, preached a sermon at the University of Oxford chapel. Immediately after he finished, the wife of the principal came rushing to him and said:

Well, do you know that you are literally the first man I have ever heard in this chapel who has preached to us as if we were sinners. All the preachers who come here, because it is a college chapel in Oxford, have obviously been taking exceptional pains to prepare learned, intellectual sermons, think we are all great intellects. To start with, the poor fellows often show that they do not have too much intellect themselves, but they have obviously been straining in an attempt to produce the last ounce of learning and culture, and the result is that we go away absolutely unfed and unmoved. We have listened to these essays and our souls are left dry. They do not seem to understand that though we live in Oxford, we are nevertheless sinners.

Lloyd-Jones ignored a popular way of dealing with sin—intellectualism, which fathoms itself too smart for God—and went straight to the heart of the matter. The real problem is that we're sinners. The real solution is forgiveness.

Structure:

A Many hear Jesus teach (1-2)

    B Jesus forgives paralyzed man (3-5)

        C Scribes ponder two questions (6-7)

        C' Jesus asks two questions (8-9)

    B' Jesus heals paralyzed man (10-11)

A' Everyone sees Jesus heal (12)

**Zeisler:** These men evidently had heard him talk about himself. He said the Son of Man had come to seek and to save that which was lost. He said the Shepherd would leave the ninety-nine in the pen and go out and find the one that was still lost and desperate. He said he was the Physician who had come for the sick rather than for the well. I am sure that throughout his

teaching in these opening days in the Galilean ministry, Jesus repeatedly made the point that needy, broken, hurting, and desperate people were the very ones for whom he had come and on whom his ministry was focused, that he was God's representative to meet their need. . .

Jesus has the authority to forgive sins because he is God the Son, born into the human family. He lived a sinless life. At his baptism his Father spoke from heaven and said, "You are My son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11). At his Transfiguration his Father spoke from heaven and said, "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!" (Mark 9:7.) He gave up his life voluntarily as the sin-bearer and was raised again on the third day. That is why he has the authority to tell people like us that our sins are forgiven, and no one has the right to challenge him. The guilt trips that we hold on to are a denial of his authority to set us free.

**MacArthur:** Now, we're only in the second chapter of Mark, but our Lord has already demonstrated His authority over disease, hasn't He? Over all kinds of diseases. He has demonstrated His authority over demons. They must obey Him. He has demonstrated His authority in teaching, by proclaiming the truth and doing it in ways that had never been done before. He has authority over disease. He has authority over demons. He has authority over the realm of truth. Now He wants us to understand that He has authority to forgive sins...authority to forgive sins. This is what is at the heart of this unforgettable miracle. . .

Now you need to understand something, folks, and this is going to be true through His ministry. Crowds were no measure of ministry success. Crowds were no measure of spiritual success. Never does Mark say the crowds were coming to Jesus in repentance and faith. Never says that. Generally they are curious. That's why I called this first point, "The curious crowd." They're spiritually passive. They're spiritually indifferent. They're spiritually uncommitted. They want the healing, like in John 6, they want the food. But they really are not seeking anything spiritual from Jesus in general. There are, of course, some true followers and true believers, but they are a small minority. They are the few. The crowd really functions to obstruct Jesus more than anything, to make it difficult for Him to teach because of the clamor of the people who want their physical needs met, because of the crush. If He's on the shore, He has to get in a boat and go offshore, just to get some breathing room from the e crowds. They make it hard for Him to minister, hard for Him to teach.

**James Edwards:** Mark returns the action to Capernaum where, in a sequence of five compact narratives, he offers insight into the authority of Jesus. Each story reflects daily life in and around Capernaum, and, with the exception of the first story, each is approximately the same length. . . In each story Jesus runs afoul of the religious authorities, primarily the Pharisees (2:16, 18, 24; 3:6) but also scribes (2:6) and Herodians (3:6). In each episode Jesus supersedes the Torah and the tradition of the elders, showing what happens when the Messiah goes public, exploding the customs and conventions of the day.

**Hendriksen:** The struggle increases in intensity. At first the scribes merely "*reason in their hearts*" (2:6, 7) against Jesus. Next, they complain about him to his disciples (2:16). Afterward they became bolder and protest to Jesus himself; yet not immediately because of what he is doing but because of what he is allowing his disciples to do (2:24). But in the third chapter they begin to scheme how they may destroy him (verse 6), and charge him with being in league with the devil (verse 22).



Of course, the conflict could not be avoided; for he stressed love, they legalism; he God's holy law, they law-burying tradition; he freedom, they bondage; he the inner attitude, they the outward act. How they hated to surrender to him their prestige, their hold on the public!

TEXT: Mark 2:13-22

TITLE: *LIFE IN THE NEW MESSIANIC AGE UPSETS THE STATUS QUO*

**BIG IDEA:**

**DEVOTION TO JESUS REPLACES THE HARSHNESS OF SEPARATIST PREJUDICE AND LEGALISTIC TRADITION WITH THE CELEBRATION OF JOY OF THE NEW MESSIANIC AGE**

**INTRODUCTION:**

If you are someone who likes the status quo – who likes things to continue on as they always have – this message should be unsettling to you. If you like to live in the bubble of your own little comfort zone ... if you have some legalistic tendencies based around religious traditions handed down from generation to generation, this message should raise your blood pressure. Certainly the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day took offense at some of His surprising practices. These self righteous religious leaders were characterized by **separatist prejudice** and **legalistic tradition**.

**James Edwards:** Jesus is in a standing debate with Pharisaism, primarily over the issue of tradition. The essential difference is especially evident in Mark 7:1-23, in which Jesus accuses the Pharisees of overvaluing oral tradition and undervaluing the intent of the law itself. By Jesus' day the original fervor and vitality of Pharisaism had calcified into a formalism at myriad points of practice and observance, in which conformity to legal prescriptions replaced the disposition of the heart, thus distorting the true intent of the law. Believing that Torah was prescriptive for all of life, the Pharisees wove an increasingly intricate web of regulations around it, whose purpose may have been to honor Torah,. But whose effect was a confining and even crushing burden on human existence.

Our passage today finds us in the middle of a series of incidents showing the increasing **intensity of attacks** against Jesus as He ministers in Capernaum – his home base of operations on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. The authority of Jesus continues to be demonstrated on a variety of fronts as He casts out demons, heals the sick, teaches with power, heals the outcast leper and then emphasizes the priority of the **forgiveness of sins** in the healing of the paralytic.

Life will never be the same in this new Messianic Age. There is certainly continuity in terms of the people of God in OT times being children of Abraham by faith just as under the New Covenant the only way to come to God is by repentance and faith. But with the incarnation of Jesus Christ and the introduction of the New Covenant we have progressed to a new understanding of what it means to be devoted to God in this Messianic Age. Certainly in contrast to the unsaved religious leaders of the establishment, the teaching and practices of Jesus were shocking.

**DEVOTION TO JESUS REPLACES THE HARSHNESS OF SEPARATIST PREJUDICE AND LEGALISTIC TRADITION WITH THE CELEBRATION OF JOY OF THE NEW MESSIANIC AGE**

## **I. (:13-17) COMPASSIONATE OUTREACH TRUMPS SEPARATIST PREJUDICE -- JESUS ATTACKED FOR CLOSE ASSOCIATION WITH EXPLOITERS AND SINNERS**

### **Transition (:13) – Expanding Public Ministry / Priority on Teaching Ministry**

*“And He went out again by the seashore; and all the multitude were coming to Him, and He was teaching them.”*

Crowd control issues forced Jesus to find venues that could accommodate His public teaching ministry

Continued to put the priority on teaching and preaching

### **A. (:14-15) Practice of Jesus Regarding Close Association with Exploiters and Sinners**

#### **1. (:14) Calling of Levi the Tax Collector to Discipleship**

*“And as He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting in the tax office, and He said to him, ‘Follow Me!’ And he rose and followed Him.”*

Toll booth on the road that ran from Damascus through Capernaum to the Mediterranean coast

No going back for a tax collector to his prior profession (not like a fisherman who could easily take up his craft again)

**Goins:** Levi is almost universally identified as the author of the gospel of Matthew because there Matthew identifies himself as the tax collector who is called by Jesus and who responds to the invitation (Matthew 9:9-10). . .

Levi has tremendous need. If anybody struggles with sin issues, it’s this guy! First, he is a tax collector. Tax collectors were despised by the Jews because they turned against their own people and collaborated with the army of occupation, the hated Romans.

Second, tax collectors gouged their fellow citizens, and because of that most of them were very wealthy. They were hated, so they were isolated from normal social life in Israel.

Third, tax collectors were outcasts from synagogues and the temple because they were unclean. They weren’t allowed to take part in any of the spiritual life in the nation. They were rejected by all the religious leaders.

**Constable:** The Jews despised tax collectors because they worked for the Romans and because they often extorted money for Rome from their fellow Jews. Levi worked for Herod Antipas since he lived in Capernaum. . . The taxes Levi collected at his "tax booth" included: export and import fees, sales and custom taxes, and various tolls. Levi gave up a lucrative business when he chose to follow Jesus. A fisherman might return to fishing, but a tax collector could not return to his job, since many people competed for this career—even though it involved social ostracism.

**Stedman:** Levi evidently was Matthew's given name. It is likely that Jesus is the one who changed his name to Matthew. He renamed several disciples. He said to Simon the son of Jonas, "You shall be called Peter," i.e., "rock". He nicknamed James and John, the sons of Zebedee, "sons of thunder." So it is very likely (although Scripture does not say so) that it was Jesus who

changed Levi's name to Matthew, which means "gift of God." Perhaps that is how Jesus thought of him.

## 2. (:15) Eating and Drinking with Tax Collectors and Sinners

*“And it came about that He was reclining at the table in his house, and many tax-gatherers and sinners were dining with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many of them, and they were following Him.”*

Best way to take the pronouns -- Jesus was reclining at the table in Levi's house (Luke 5:29) – *“Levi made him a great feast in his house”*

Jesus was actively showing Levi how to be a fisher of men – on the job training; not text book study

Many disciples present here – not just the five He had called as part of the inner apostolic circle

**Stedman:** This evidently was a farewell dinner Matthew gave for his friends, his tax-collecting buddies. He was saying farewell to his work and friends, and leaving to follow One who would travel from place to place. It was also an opportunity to introduce them to his new found Lord. It was therefore a normal, natural occasion of festivity and joy as they gathered together for this feast.

**Constable:** Eating a meal together meant something in Jesus' world that it does not mean today in the West. Hospitality was a sacred duty in the ancient Near East. When someone invited someone else to eat with him, he was extending a pledge of loyalty and protection to that person. To accept an invitation to dinner implied a willingness to become a close friend of the host. Jesus' acceptance of table fellowship with "sinners" (i.e., outcasts) conveyed by action the forgiveness that He gave verbally in 2:5.

**Scott Grant:** Tax collectors and sinners are outcasts from the synagogue, the place of worship. They can't go to the synagogue, and probably wouldn't want to, anyway. Jesus, however, goes to them. He enters Levi's house and dines with his people. He steps into Levi's world.

## **B. (:16) Complaint of the Jewish Religious Leaders – Erroneous View of Separation and the Blinders of Prejudices**

*“And when the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax-gatherers, they began saying to His disciples, ‘Why is He eating and drinking with tax-gatherers and sinners?’”*

**MacArthur:** Well, the call of Matthew in the community of sinners leads, thirdly, to the contempt of the self-righteous...the contempt of the self-righteous. The Pharisees can't let this go, they're always around, always dogging the steps of Jesus. You do remember, of course, that they never leave Him alone, they are absolutely relentless.

There will always be certain groups or certain individuals that you have great difficulty connecting with – people that you can't imagine will ever come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ – You will be surprised at how God specializes in saving the Unsaveable!

I don't like churches that limit their target congregation to one particular group of people:

- Church of converted Jews
- Church of mainly college age students

Church needs to be all-inclusive – no distinction in Christ between Jew and Gentile; all races and economic statuses are welcome; not a place for prejudice

**Van Parunak:** Don't confuse with NT command not to eat with sinners (1 Cor. 5:9-13), where the motive is not our own purity but the reform of the sinner (v.5).

**C. (:17a) Proverb by Way of Illustration**

*“And hearing this, Jesus said to them,  
‘it is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick;”*

This doctor makes house calls! He takes the initiative to reach out to the sick.

Can't always be preaching to the choir; can't stay in the holy huddle; can't just immerse ourselves in the fellowship bubble

Jesus not associating with sinners in such a fashion that they corrupt His life; but rather as a physician must come in contact with the sick and hurting in order to heal them

Also can't expect to have much of an impact on the self righteous religious experts until God breaks them in some form or fashion

**Stedman:** We meet people today who are "self-sufficient," who think they do not need God at all. I have long ago learned that the best way to treat them is to smile and be friendly, and let them go their way. Life itself will teach them they are wrong. Sooner or later the bottom will drop out and all their dreams of self-reliance will collapse about their feet. Then is the time you can talk to them; then they will be listening.

**Goins:** Jesus turns the question back on the Pharisees in the last phrase in verse 17. He is saying repentance is impossible for self-righteous, respectable, spiritually self-sufficient people. You see, the gospel has nothing to say to people who really believe they have it all together spiritually. Jesus is suggesting that tax collectors and sinners are much more open to truth. They know their need better than the well-trained professional religionists.

**Wessel:** Jesus' call is to salvation; and, in order to share in it, there must be a recognition of need. A self-righteous man is incapable of recognizing that need, but a sinner can.

**D. (:17b) Rationale**

*“I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”*

**Stedman:** I love the words of **C. T. Studd**, that brilliant young Englishman who gave away a fortune, that he might go out to the forests of Africa. He put his philosophy this way:

Some like to dwell  
Within the sound  
Of church and chapel bell.  
But I want to run a rescue shop  
Within a yard of Hell.

That was the philosophy of Jesus, too.

## **II. (:18-22) DEVOTION TO JESUS TRUMPS LEGALISTIC TRADITION – JESUS ATTACKED FOR ENCOURAGING FEASTING OVER FASTING – THE PRESENCE OF THE PROMISED MESSIAH CHANGES EVERYTHING**

### **A. (:18) Practice of Disciples of Jesus and Complaint of Jewish Religious Leaders – Erroneous View of Ascetic Practices and the Baggage of Tradition**

*“And John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and they came and said to Him, ‘Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?’”*

**MacArthur:** Now frequently, conflict with Jesus and the leaders of Israel, the Pharisees and the scribes, is built around questions. Those questions seem most of the time to have to do with Jesus' contrary behavior. Either He's violating one of their laws, traditions, or He's doing something on the Sabbath that He shouldn't be doing, or there's some behavior in which His disciples are engaged, which is a breach of their tradition. This launches the conflict, and that is the case here. . .

In Luke's version, Luke says the disciples of John often fast and offer prayers and the two were linked together. And the disciples of the Pharisees do the same. Why don't You do that? But the truth of the matter was, there was only one fast in the Old Testament required. That's right. In the entire Old Testament, there's only one required fast. According to **Leviticus 16:29 to 31**, it was required that on the **Day of Atonement**, Yom Kippur, they fast. In fact, it says in that text, "You're to humble your soul, or afflict your soul, and the Hebrew word used there is commonly used of restraining or refraining from eating. Only one fast is prescribed, only one fast is demanded.

However, there are many occasions in the Old Testament where people fasted voluntarily, and always connected with sorrowful, heart-breaking prayer. You read about that in Esther 4. You read about it in Isaiah 58 . . . You read about it in 1 Kings 21; Joel chapter 1. And through the years, the Old Testament and the intertestamental period, and up until the time of Jesus, people did voluntarily fast to pray, as people do even now. Christian people do when they are exercised over something that captures their heart to such a degree that they have no interest in eating. But in the Jewish history, you can find one day fasts, you can find three-day fasts. You can find seven-day fasts. You can find twenty-one day fasts. You can find even 40 day fasts, such as Exodus 34, Deuteronomy 9, and 1 Kings 19, and that's what Jesus did. He was fasting 40 days when He was tempted in the wilderness. So there are examples of voluntary fasts.

**Grassmick:** the Pharisees promoted voluntary fasts on every Monday and Thursday (cf. Luke 18:12) as an act of piety

**Hendriksen:** possible that both groups were fasting for the same reason – John was an ascetic . . . He emphasized sin and the necessity of turning away from it. It is not inconceivable, therefore, that he may have encouraged fasting as an expression of mourning for sin, the very reason which the Pharisees probably also gave for much of their fasting (cf. Matt. 6:16).

**Goins:** Fasting in the Old Testament was a very private and personal thing before the Lord. But in the first century religious tradition, the legalism of the Pharisees has gone way beyond that.

They fast often and publicly because they want everybody to know it. They make everybody else feel inferior to their zealous, religious discipline. John's disciples are in mourning because of his imprisonment, and they are very impressionable. They look up to these spiritual giants, the Pharisees, and are influenced by this carnal religiosity that requires fasting.

**B. (:19-20) Rationale – Wedding Feast Metaphor**

*“And Jesus said to them, ‘While the bridegroom is with them, the attendants of the bridegroom do not fast, do they? So long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.’”*

**John 3:28-30**

**Goins:** Relationship to Jesus brings joy. A love relationship with the bridegroom means spontaneous devotion to him. Love doesn't demand performance of religious ritual or observance. Jesus is saying, “You can't make my disciples fast.” He says the behavior of his disciples isn't motivated by duty or obligation or Pharisaical legalism, but by love and devotion to him.

Religious law demands external piety, but God's love creates internal authenticity. Religious law controls behavior, but God's love changes hearts. When the love of Jesus Christ is what constrains us, then life becomes a beautiful tapestry in which the good and the bad, the difficult and the wonderful, the tears and the laughter, receiving and giving, repentance and celebration are all woven together. There is a balance in all these things in the Christian life. It is absolutely normal and respectable to be spontaneous, because God's amazing, joyful blessings are being poured into our lives.

**Scott Grant:** The prophets predicted that the coming of the kingdom of God would be like a wedding in which God, the bridegroom, would marry his people (Isaiah 54:5, 62:4-5, Hosea 2:14-20). With the presence of Jesus, the kingdom is coming, and the divine-human wedding is imminent. The day that Jews had been fasting for has come. If ever there was a time for joy, this is it.

Early prediction of Christ's death on the cross

**Wiersbe:** Jesus was not suggesting that His absence from earth would mean that His followers would have to replace the feast with a funeral! He was only pointing out that occasional fasting would be proper at a future time, but that joyful celebration should be the normal experience of believers.

**C. (:21-22) Two Illustrations (Metaphors)**

**1. (:21) Old Garment vs New Garment**

*“No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; otherwise the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear results.”*

**Scott Grant:** The final two illustrations both concern something old being unable to adapt to something new. . . The prophets not only compared the new age to a wedding, they also said it would feature new garments and new wine (Isaiah 52:1, Joel 2:18-19).

**Goins:** He says, “You don’t patch this new arrangement for living in me onto the old arrangement of living under religious tradition and law. You always wear new, good-looking clothes to a party. New fabric isn’t used to repair old garments. It would be silly. It would look bad, and you would eventually ruin the garment anyway, because it is very old and weak, so you would have wasted a perfectly good piece of brand-new fabric in the process.” Jesus came to clothe us in new garments.

In a beautiful Messianic prophecy, Isaiah anticipates the new party clothes that we get to wear, because we are the bride and Jesus is the bridegroom. **Isaiah 61:10** (NIV):

“I delight greatly in the LORD;  
my soul rejoices in my God.  
For he has clothed me with garments of salvation  
and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness,  
as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest,  
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.”

**Edwards:** Both parables are about the relation of Jesus, of Christianity indeed, to **traditional Judaism**. The parables illustrate the radical posture and presumption of Jesus. Jesus is the new patch and the new wine. He is not an attachment, addition, or appendage to the status quo. He cannot be integrated into or contained by preexisting structures, even Judaism, Torah, and the synagogue. He is, of course, neither ascetic nor anarchist, and thus he participates as a human being in human structures. . . . The question posed by the image of the wedding feast and the two atom-like parables is not whether disciples will, like sewing anew patch on an old garment or refilling an old container, make room for Jesus in their already full agendas and lives. The question is whether they will forsake business as usual and join the wedding celebration; whether they will become entirely new receptacles for the expanding fermentation of Jesus and the gospel in their lives.

## 2. (:22) Old Wineskins vs New Wineskins

*“And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and the skins as well; but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins.”*

**Constable:** the messianic age that Jesus would introduce would render the old traditional forms of Judaism obsolete. Judaism had become "old," and Jesus was going to set up a "new" form of God's kingdom on earth that would be similar to a new garment (cf. Heb. 8:13), the messianic kingdom.

A "garment" symbolized the covering of man's sinful condition in Old Testament usage (e.g., Gen. 3:21; Isa. 61:10). The Jews were to lay aside "the old garment" of the Mosaic dispensation, and put on "the new" of the messianic age. Judaism had also become rigid and inflexible because of the traditions that had encrusted it, like old goatskins that contained wine. Jesus' kingdom could not operate within those constraints. It would be a new and more flexible vehicle for bringing joy ("new wine") to humanity.

**Goins:** In the Old Testament wine is a symbol of joy. At the final Passover meal Jesus celebrated with his disciples, he chose wine as a symbol of this New-Covenant arrangement for living in relationship to God. This new life that he offers, life in the Holy Spirit, is powerful, dynamic, exhilarating. It’s like new wine, which is still in the process of fermentation. It is much too



volatile and active and strong to be enclosed in stiff, rigid, old forms of traditional religion. There is a basic incompatibility between the old and the new. Hebrews 7:18-19 contrasts the old arrangement and the new arrangement: "On the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness (for the law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope through which we draw near to God." Religious prejudice and tradition restrict and inhibit. In the traditions of religion you keep God at arm's length. But God wants to draw us close to him. And he wants to help us learn to live a life of acceptance and openness to other people no matter what their lifestyle choices, to embrace a life of freedom and flexibility in Jesus Christ.

## CONCLUSION:

**Doug Goins:** Hopefully, we're becoming more and more like Matthew. You have only two choices. You follow Jesus like Matthew, which leads to celebration, or you end up being like the Pharisees, standing outside looking in, being grumpy, critical, judgmental, and accusing. It's a pretty simple choice. You follow Jesus into a life of increasing freedom and joy and spontaneity and flexibility, or you become stiff and rigid and resentful and resistant to the work of the Spirit. I want to be more like Matthew, this converted tax collector, and the great thing is that God really does have wonderful plans for our lives if we choose to follow him that way.

\* \* \* \* \*

## DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Who are some people that you think will never respond to the gospel call? Are you praying for their salvation? What prejudices do we need to overcome?
- 2) How can we increase our contact with those who need the gospel?
- 3) Are we characterized by joy and celebration or by harsh criticism and legalistic separation and adherence to tradition?
- 4) How can we increase our devotion to Jesus and fix our eyes continually on our bridegroom.

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Stedman:** Mark brings together four incidents which reveal the refusal of Jesus to be boxed in by purely human regulations, and his deliberate provocation of controversy in order that the true nature of freedom might be made evident. . .

This is what we Christians need to see again. Jesus is commenting here upon the drastic changes in the character of worship which occur when people discover the reality of relationship with Jesus Christ. Church services, for far too many centuries, have been borrowed from an Old Testament concept of worship, and have presented a scene of solemnity and silence and ritual. This predominated in the Roman Catholic Church, and it has been carried over unthinkingly into

Protestant churches as well, so that even today we suffer from the attitude that a church service ought to be a time of silence, when everyone sits in supposed awestricken solemnity before God. But this is not the picture Jesus came to give. "No," he says, "instead of the fast, it is a feast; instead of the sackcloth, there is a robe; and instead of solemnity, there ought to be joy."

One reason why so much of the church today is written off by people who have come to see what Christians are like is that they are turned off by the morbidity and dullness of what we call worship. In many church services across this land today the diet is what can only be described as predictable pablum, dished-up Pollyanna, as dull and unexciting as can be! Many services are so totally predictable that, without being present, you can look at your watch and, at any given moment, say what is happening. The preaching which comes forth is so shallow and repetitive that people have turned off their ears and no longer listen. Why they subject themselves to coming at all, I do not understand! I honestly do not blame those who do not come. Church people complain that men are out playing golf and boating on Sunday morning. But until the church recovers the excitement and joy of a wedding feast, and the people are gladsome of heart, they cannot be blamed for not coming. When the church does recover what Jesus has indicated here, then the meetings will be full again. . .

Fresh relationships require new expressions. When you are going on in the old way -- and everything has the tendency to get old after awhile -- and when it gets old, the quality of relationship is affected. The warmth and joy often departs. When that happens, and then something brings a new awakening, a fresh sense of the presence of God, then do not try to express it through the old forms. It will not work. The new is too powerful, and will destroy those old forms which try to contain it. You cannot do it that way. . .

The principle our Lord is illustrating here is that tradition must never be permitted to destroy relationships. That is what often happens. We have to fight tradition. Jesus fought it in his own day. It was the most pernicious and subtle foe he encountered. Everywhere he turned he found himself in face-to-face combat with the rigid traditions of the past -- the dead hand of the past locking in the present. He was ever opposed to that. And so we must learn to become the foe of traditions which violate relationships.

**MacArthur:** Let's imagine for the sake of illustration that the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, the Savior, the Messiah had come into the world in our time, to our country in the year 2009. He had come for the reason that He came then, to be a sacrifice for sin. If indeed He had come at this time in this place, to die, He would have been killed for the opposite reason that He was killed in first century Israel...the very opposite reason.

Then and there in first century Israel, He was rejected, He was despised, He was hated and He was murdered. And the reason? He was not religious enough. That was the reason. By standards of the Jewish religious leaders, predominantly the Pharisees, He was not holy enough...if holy at all. He was not righteous enough, if righteous at all. He was not demanding enough, He was not legalistic enough, He was not condemning enough. He was not tolerable...intolerant enough. He was not judgmental enough. He was not separatistic enough. He was sub-par to a dominantly religious world view.

Now if Jesus came today to our country in our time, He would be way too holy, far too righteous, too demanding, too legalistic, too condemning, too intolerant, too judgmental and far too separatistic. And our generation would kill Him for that...the very opposite, two different

perspectives, two different societies in two different times. Our culture is highly secular and extremely immoral. Their culture was highly religious and extremely moral.

We would hate Jesus for condemning good people. They hated Him for forgiving bad people. The Jewish leaders very soon into our Lord's ministry began to develop a deadly hatred for Him. The motive was the very thing I just said, He was not holy enough. In fact, He was so unholy that they conclude that He did what He did by the power of Satan. He was so unholy that He was energized by hell itself.

They condensed this viewpoint down into a mantra and they called Him with scorn, "the friend of sinners." That was the worst they could say about Him. That was the most scornful epithet they could come up with. The friend, in fact, of tax collectors and sinners. . .

This was the issue that led to the rejection of Jesus. The outrage was t he one who claimed to be the most holy and the most righteous, Son of God. The one who claimed to be the Lord of heaven and the Messiah was comfortable with sinners. Separation defined the Pharisees. Never were they willing to be in the company of sinners. In fact, the rabbis used to say, "You don't even go near a sinner, even so much as to teach that sinner the Law." The parable of Luke 18 where the Pharisee and the tax collector go to the temple to pray. The Pharisee stands and prays like this, to himself, by the way, it says. "God, I thank You that I'm not like other people, swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector." There was nothing but disdain for sinners, the category of sinners. Jesus was so comfortable with sinners.

**Scott Grant:** Jesus is not opposed to fasting, just fasting that fails to recognize the new age (Matthew 6:16-18). Later, disciples are seen as fasting in the book of Acts, but they are not mourning the exile (Acts 9:9, 13:3, 14:23, 27:9). There remains in our day a place for mourning—and for fasting in connection with mourning, repentance, and seeking guidance. The new age has dawned with the coming of the Messiah, but we still live in the shadow of the old age. If it was appropriate for the disciples to mourn on the day of Jesus' crucifixion, it is appropriate for us to mourn both in memory of that day and for the sin that placed him on the cross. Those who mourn for such reasons will be comforted (Matthew 5:4). . .

I wonder sometimes if we're more intent on using the Bible as a manual for life than seeing it as a love story. If it's a manual, then God is a kind of spiritual mechanic who knows how to fix the engine of your life—not a very compelling story, if it's a story at all. If it's a love story, then Jesus is the bridegroom and we're the bride, and if we see his beaming face—and Paul tells us that we can—then our faces will beam as well (2 Corinthians 3:18, 4:6).

**Van Parunak: The command:** "*Follow me.*" Three such specific invitations in Mark: 1:17 (the fishermen), 10:21 (the ruler), and 2:14 (Levi). All are informed by a general invitation in 8:34, which lays down two preparatory steps.

1) Deny self. The Lord will not have us if he does not have all of us. The multitudes following him wanted Jesus in addition to their own comfort, security, and self-respect. But the Lord calls us to forsake the things that are precious to us, so that he is sovereign in our will and our daily life. The fishermen did this when they left their nets, their boats, their families. The rich young ruler failed on this point when he refused to leave his riches.

2) Take up cross. Not yet explicit at this point in the history. Only in 8:31 does Jesus "begin" to explain his coming death to the disciples, and immediately after this he requires them to take their place with him. "Deny self" means that we must choose between ourselves and the Lord; "take up cross" means that we must choose between the Lord and the world, which will hate us for our love for him.

TEXT: Mark 2:23-3:6

TITLE: LORD OF THE SABBATH

**BIG IDEA:**

**SABBATH CONTROVERSIES PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE LORD OF THE SABBATH TO REBUKE SPIRITUAL PRIDE – (MANIFESTED IN LEGALISM AND HARD HEARTS)**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Today we will study two incidents that are tied together by the common theme of Sabbath controversies. For us in the church age, the controversy surrounding the Fourth of the Ten Commandments is whether or not the OT regulations still apply. Are we still under obligation to remember the Sabbath day and to keep it holy? Many Christians would substitute the Lord's Day, the first day of the week, for Saturday and view themselves under a similar obligation as the Jews. Certainly the establishment of the Sabbath as a day of rest traces its roots back to Creation when the Lord rested on the seventh day. So the general principle of there being value in working for six days but taking one day for refreshment and rejuvenation seems beneficial for mankind. But Moses made specific application of the rules surrounding Sabbath day observance to their relevance to the Jewish nation – **Ex. 31:12-17**.

Without getting into a long discussion on the subject, it would seem that Christ has been the fulfillment of the law. Our worship does not focus around the temple and the sacrificial system. The veil in the temple was torn from the top to the bottom. The church is not an extension of Israel. The only one of the Ten Commandments not repeated in the NT as part of God's abiding moral law would be the Fourth Commandment. Col. 2:16-17 speaks explicitly about maintaining our freedom in worshiping Christ as opposed to falling into legalistic practices of spiritual pride where we judge one another on the basis of external rules and regulations regarding worship practices. Now that the reality of Christ has arrived ... don't embrace the shadows and the types of OT times. The message of Hebrews would be along the same lines. (cf. Rom. 7:4; 10:4; 14:5; Gal. 4:10-11)

But having said all of that, I still see value in emphasizing worship and the gathering together of the saints on one special day each week just like the first century Christians did and just as we are commanded in **Hebrews 10:25** not to forsake the regular assembling together – I just don't view our Christian practices as obedience to the Sabbath regulations.

**MacArthur:** He abolished the Sabbath. After His death and resurrection, there is no more Sabbath. The seventh day of the week disappears from all religious calendars. We now meet on the first day of the week, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Sabbath was a shadow, we have the reality in Christ. Hebrews chapters 3 and 4 says Christ is our rest, we have entered into the rest the Sabbath portrayed, a rest to come. Christ is that rest, we don't need the shadow, the substance is here. And so Colossians 2 verses 16 and 17 says, "Don't let anybody hold you to a Sabbath." The Lord of the Sabbath has nullified the Sabbath, it's gone.

Enough about us – what about Sabbath controversies for the Jews back in the time of Christ? We have to understand how important the Sabbath was as a mark of differentiation just like circumcision and temple worship. This was connected with their national pride. Keeping the

Sabbath was making a statement that “We are the people of God.” But just as with many of the OT laws – they had tacked on so many onerous and burdensome regulations that they had suffocated the true divine intent of the Sabbath.

These two historical incidents are the last of a series of five that Mark has strung together with the common theme of both highlighting the **authority** of the Lord Jesus and the **growing opposition** on the part of the Jewish religious leaders. What started as an underground current of charges and accusations has mushroomed into active conspiracy with the design to put Jesus to death by 3:6.

## **SABBATH CONTROVERSIES PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE LORD OF THE SABBATH TO REBUKE SPIRITUAL PRIDE – (MANIFESTED IN LEGALISM AND HARD HEARTS)**

### **I. (2:23-28) AUTHORITY OVER THE SABBATH – PRIORITY OF BASIC NEEDS – EATING IN THE GRAINFIELDS -- REBUKE OF LEGALISM**

#### **A. (:23) Practice of Disciples of Jesus**

*“And it came about that He was passing through the grain fields on the Sabbath, and His disciples began to make their way along while picking the heads of grain.”*

We read this verse and nothing leaps out at us in terms of **outrageous behavior** on the part of the disciples ... they were traveling along; they were hungry; they legitimately plucked some wheat or barley and fed themselves without putting a sickle in their neighbor’s field per **Deut. 23:25** – What’s the big deal??

*“When You enter your neighbor’s standing grain, then you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not wield a sickle in your neighbor’s standing grain”*

But it was a big deal to the Pharisees. You can pluck an ear of corn ... but don’t get in your John Deere Harvester and steal the crop for yourself.

Actions constituted blatant defiance of the rules of the Sabbath that the Pharisees were so zealous about enforcing – they viewed these actions as **working** on the sacred day of rest

**MacArthur:** In the *Talmud* there are 24 chapters of Sabbath laws. There are 24 chapters of Sabbath laws and one rabbi said he spent two and a half years studying one chapter to figure out all the minutia, things like you could lift something up and put something down, but only from certain places to certain places. You could lift it up in a public place and put it down in a private place, or you could lift it up in a private place and put it down in a public place, or you could lift it up in a wide place and put it in a legally free place and on and on and on.

No burden could be carried that weighed more than a dried fig, or half a fig carried two times. If you put an olive in your mouth and rejected it because it was bad, you couldn’t put a whole one in the next time because the palate had tasted the flavor of a whole olive. If you threw an object in the air and caught it with the other hand, it was a sin. If you caught it in the same hand, it wasn’t. If a person was in one place and he reached out his arm for food and the Sabbath overtook him, he would have to drop the food and not return his arm, or he would be carrying a

burden and that would be sin. A tailor couldn't carry his needle. The scribe couldn't carry his pen. A pupil couldn't carry his books. No clothing could be examined lest somehow you find a lice and inadvertently kill it. Wool couldn't be dyed. Nothing could be sold. Nothing could be bought. Nothing could be washed. A letter could not be sent even if it was sent via a heathen. No fire could be lit. Cold water could be poured on warm, but warm couldn't be poured on cold. An egg could not be boiled even if all you did was put it in the sand.

If you've been to Israel, you know there are times in the year when the sand is so hot you could boil an egg. That was not allowed. You could not bathe for fear when the water fell off of you it might wash the floor. If a candle was lit, you couldn't put it out. If it wasn't lit, you couldn't light it. Chairs couldn't be moved because they might make a rut. Women couldn't look in a glass or they might find a white hair and be tempted to pull it out. Women couldn't wear jewelry because jewelry weighs more than a dried fig. A radish couldn't be left in salt because it would make it a pickle and that's work. No more grain could be pickled than you could put in a lamb's mouth. It goes on and on.

Laws about wine, honey, milk, spitting, writing, getting dirt off your clothes, you could use only enough ink for two letters, not two written letters, two alphabetic letters. You could have a wad in your ear but you wouldn't put false teeth in your mouth.

What was forbidden? Sowing, plowing, reaping, binding sheaves, threshing, winnowing, sifting, grinding, kneading, baking, washing wool, beating wool, dying wool, spinning wool, putting on a weaver's beam, making threads, weaving threads, separating threads, making a knot, untying a knot, sewing two stitches...on and on and on. You talk about heavy laden...the system was oppressive and it was all unscriptural and horribly ungodly and brutally unkind.

**Hendriksen:** What they were doing was entirely legitimate. As long as the traveler did not thrust a sickle into a man's standing grain he was permitted to pick the heads or ears (**Deut. 23:25**). . . shocked disapproval . . . The underlying reasoning of the Pharisees was as follows: Was not work forbidden on the Sabbath day (Exod. 20:8-11; 34:21; Deut. 5:12-15)? Had not the rabbis drawn up a catalogue of thirty-nine principal works, subsequently subdivided into six minor categories under each of these thirty-nine, all of which were forbidden on the Sabbath?

## **B. (:24) Complaint of Jewish Religious Leaders**

*“And the Pharisees were saying to Him,*

*‘See here, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?’”*

Interesting that the Pharisees are following along in close proximity to Jesus and His disciples – looking for some misstep so they could accuse Him of wrongdoing; always having a critical, judgmental, harsh spirit

They want to call Jesus to give an accounting to them of the actions of His disciples  
You guys are going around breaking our precious rules; if left unchallenged you will undermine our entire religious system; this is a matter of grave importance

**Hiebert:** The pedantic 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. The disciples were guilty of working on the Sabbath!

**Edwards:** Amplifying Exod 35:1-2, the Mishnah lists thirty-nine classes of work that profane the Sabbath, including those we might expect, such as plowing, hunting, and butchering, and those we would not, such as tying or loosening knots, sewing more than one stitch, or writing more than one letter . . .

### **C. (:25-26) OT Illustration**

*“And He said to them, ‘Have you never read what David did when he was in need and became hungry, he and his companions: how he entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the consecrated bread, which is not lawful for anyone to eat except the priests, and he gave it also to those who were with him?’”*

Jesus turns to those who pride themselves as being experts in knowing the OT and throws an OT illustration at them to stump them

**Hendriksen:** The twelve loaves represented Israel’s twelve tribes and symbolized the constant fellowship of the people with their God. The Israelites were, so to say, guests at his table, were consecrated to him, and by means of the offering of these presentation loaves gratefully acknowledged their indebtedness to him. . . The point is this: If David had a right to ignore a *divinely ordained ceremonial provision* when necessity demanded this, then would not David’s exalted Antitype, namely, Jesus, God’s Anointed in a far more eminent sense, have right, under similar conditions of need, to set aside a *totally unwarranted, man-made Sabbath regulation*? After all, to a considerable extent the rabbinical Sabbath regulations amounted to misapplications of God’s holy law.

**Constable:** The incident Jesus referred to is in **1 Samuel 21:1-6**. Mark was the only evangelist to mention that "Abiathar" was the "high priest" then. This seemingly contradicts the Old Testament since *Ahimelech*, the father of Abiathar, was the high priest then according to the writer of 1 Samuel. The best solution to this problem seems to be that Jesus referred to Abiathar because he was the better-known priest during David's reign. The phrase "in the time of" or "in the days of" probably means "during the lifetime of" rather than "during the high priesthood of."

**MacArthur – 1 Sam. 21** -- Every Sabbath...every Sabbath, hot bread was brought inside the tabernacle to a golden table. Twelve loaves of hot bread were placed on a golden table inside the tabernacle in the presence of God, symbolizing the need for the twelve tribes to have fellowship with God.

The following Sabbath, the bread that had sat there for a week would be removed and more hot bread would be brought in to keep that symbol fresh. According to Leviticus 24 verses 5 to 9, this is called the bread of the presence. There were two rows, two piles of these twelve loaves. The old bread on the Sabbath when it was removed was to be eaten by priests only. . .

The actual priest at the time was Ahimelech, but he was soon replaced and Abiathar had a lengthy priesthood during the time of David. So he is the one whose priesthood dominates that era. And they ate the consecrated bread which it is not lawful for anyone to eat except the priests, and he also gave it to those who were with him. The priest was very, very wise. He understood that no ceremony should survive while some person dies. Ceremony is ceremony, ritual is symbolic. You don't save a ceremony and lose a person. It has its place, but mercy triumphs over ritual and ceremony.



**Edwards:** The appeal to David in our passage begins to define Jesus' authority as the royal Son of God anticipated since the reign of David

Point of the illustration is not to institute situation ethics or a pragmatic approach to keeping God's laws as if anyone has the authority to decide for themselves what laws to keep in what situation – not making law keeping subjective and experience-based

This was about Christ as the fulfillment of the authority figure of David

#### **D. (:27-28) Rationale**

*“And He was saying to them, ‘The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Consequently, the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.’”*

Sabbath was gift from God to man – provides rest from the rigors of labor and opportunity for concentrated worship

Certainly God has the authority to make application as to what is appropriate on the Sabbath

**Scott Grant:** The Pharisees have set themselves up as authorities over the Sabbath. On the other hand, Jesus, as the Son of Man, claims that he is in authority over the Sabbath. Therefore, he has the right to interpret it and even reinterpret it in order to rescue it.

**MacArthur:** Now when Jesus called Himself “Lord of the *Sabbath*,” He struck the severest blow at the Pharisaic system because the Pharisaic system, the system of works, merit, self-righteousness, achievement, attainment, of spiritual relationship with God through ceremony and ritual and external law-keeping found its focal point in the Sabbath. Every seventh day of the week was the main day for Pharisaic religion. . .

cf. **John 5:16** *“For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus because He was doing these things on the Sabbath.”* Wow! How horrible to heal somebody on the Sabbath. Sabbatarian tradition was their domain and they were fanatical, I mean fanatical about it...way beyond Scripture. Scripture gives no restrictions for the Sabbath other than you don't work, and that was a mercy. But they invented endless, impossible rules, restraints, restrictions for Sabbath conduct and they made every one of those rules as restrictive as possible. And the idea was that the more deprivations you have, the more holy you become. And then they guarded their rules fiercely, demanding that every person in the whole nation observe them all.

**Stedman:** By this he underscores the principle which must govern our lives as believers: human needs always take precedence over rules. Hunger is healthy, and therefore holy. It is wrong to make rules which stop men from satisfying the basic needs of their lives. This is why we need to examine the systems of our day. It is easy to focus on a single act and say, "That breaks a rule." Yes, but why is it broken? That is what society and the church must ask. Did we force this individual, by means of the system in which he lives, to do something illegal in order to satisfy a basic need of his life? If so, then there is something wrong with the system. This is what Jesus was forcing them to examine. The Sabbath was made to restore men, but when it became a burden and a hindrance, then it was wrong. Those man-made regulations needed to be broken, and our Lord broke them. . . Rules are orderly ways to meet needs. That is what they are for. And they are perfectly right in that way. But when a rule actually ends up opposing the meeting of the need, then the rule has to go. Our Lord is the first to make that clear.

**Hendriksen:** The Sabbath was instituted to be a blessing for man: to keep him healthy; to make him helpful, hence happy, to render him holy, so that he might calmly meditate on the works of his Maker, might “delight himself in Jehovah” (Isa. 58:13, 14), and look forward with joyful anticipation to the Sabbath rest that remains for the people of God (Heb. 4:9).

## **II. (3:1-6) AUTHORITY OVER THE SABBATH – PRIORITY OF COMPASSION -- HEALING OF MAN WITH WITHERED HAND – REBUKE OF HARD HEARTS**

### **A. (:1-3) Confrontation Initiated**

#### 1. (:1a) Familiar Setting

*“And He entered again into a synagogue;*

Mark not presenting a strict chronological record – but ties these two incidents together around the theme of sabbath controversies

#### 2. (:1b) Pressing Need

*“and a man was there with a withered hand.”*

According to Luke (physician) – it was his right hand = even more debilitating handicap

Jewish tradition says that he was a stonemason and could no longer perform his craft – reduced to begging for his subsistence

#### 3. (:2) Critical Antagonists

*“And they were watching Him to see if He would heal him on the Sabbath, in order that they might accuse Him.”*

Jesus could have waited until the **next day** – this was not a life-threatening situation that had to be dealt with that day

#### 4. (:3) Dramatic Confrontation

*“And He said to the man with the withered hand, ‘Rise and come forward!’”*

**Constable:** Rather than avoiding a conflict, Jesus provoked one.

Cf. Parents exercising discipline over their children – sometimes good to be on the lookout for a confrontational situation where the child is obviously bucking the authority of the parents – don’t try to avoid such a situation – use it to press home the teaching point

### **B. (:4) Rationale**

*“And He said to them, ‘Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save a life or to kill?’ But they kept silent.”*

**Stedman:** "You're concerned about the Sabbath, aren't you? Let me ask you: whose thoughts are nearer to the purpose of the Sabbath -- yours or mine?"

The heart of the Pharisees was inclined towards killing Jesus – what an attitude to have in the midst of Sabbath worship in the synagogue; yet they viewed themselves as the experts in sabbath law

Wisdom of Jesus puts to silence the accusations of His critics

### C. (:5) Compassion in Action

*“And after looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, He said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored.”*

Only time that anger is specifically attributed to Jesus – righteous indignation – but even here coupled with grieving at the condition of their hearts

Jesus does not even touch this man – does not even have to raise His hand – how could you accuse Jesus of working on the Sabbath here?

Consistent failure on their part to recognize His identity and authority

**Hiebert:** Their obstinate and willful resistance to the truth indicated that a process of hardening was taking place, rendering their heart, their inner moral being, more and more unresponsive.

**MacArthur:** Angry at what? Unbelief, rejection, angry at their devastating apostate religion, angry at their spiritual pride, angry at this gross iniquity. This is the severest of sin's expressions to reject the gospel, to reject grace and goodness. They were merciless, compassionless, brutal, hard-hearted, proud, self-righteous. Yes God is angry with sin, so is Jesus. But it's so amazingly followed by this statement, “Grieved at their hardness of heart.” Anger, *orge*, a very strong word, indignation, wrath would be synonyms. It's used in Romans 13 of vengeance, punishment. He was furious. But it also says He was grieved. That means to fill sympathy. These are the juxtaposed attitudes of God as He looks at the obstinate unbeliever, angry and grieved at the same time. Grieved at their *porosis..porosis*. It's a word translated hardness. It's used of marble, hard-hearted. By the way, it's used to refer to the disciples in chapter 6 verse 52 and chapter 8 verse 17, so there are times when even His disciples were hard-hearted. But here it's a settled, permanent condition and it both makes Him mad and angry and sad. He is angry at their unbelief and their rejection and He is sad at the consequence, the necessary condemnation that is to come.

**Scott Grant:** Jesus reacts to the Pharisees' silence in two ways. First, he's angry with them because they've turned the Sabbath into a national badge of loyalty and thereby rendered themselves both insensitive to human suffering and oblivious to the in-breaking of the kingdom. Second, he grieves for them because they are resolutely opposed to the healing that he would bring to their hardened hearts. He's not only angry with them because of what they do to others; he also grieves for them because of what they do to themselves.

### D. (:6) Opposition Intensified

*“And the Pharisees went out and immediately began taking counsel with the Herodians against Him, as to how they might destroy Him.”*

**Wessel:** The term probably refers to influential Jews who were friends and backers of the Herodian family. This meant, of course, that they were supporters of Rome, from which the Herods received their authority. They joined the Pharisees in opposition to Jesus because they feared he might be an unsettling political influence in Palestine.

**Scott Grant:** The Pharisees have no power to arrest Jesus, so they conspire with the Herodians, supporters of Herod Antipas, who ruled Galilee under Roman aegis. The Pharisees would normally find themselves on the opposite side of the political aisle from the Herodians, who collaborated with Rome. But, as the old saying goes, politics makes strange bedfellows. The Pharisees believe that Jesus must be stopped at all costs, including the cost of playing nice with political enemies.

**Constable:** This verse is the climax of this whole confrontation section (2:1—3:6). Faced with the most convincing arguments and actions about Jesus' deity, the Pharisees chose to reject them. Furthermore, instead of simply leaving Jesus alone, they took steps to kill Him. As the gospel story unfolds, it becomes increasingly clear that Jesus' enemies opposed Him because He constituted a threat to their authority. That motivation is evident here, too, because "the Herodians" were supporters of Roman authority over Palestine. Together, the Pharisees and the Herodians "feared he might be an unsettling political influence in Palestine." These two groups had little in common except their common enemy, Jesus.

**Van Parunak:** Thus their real motive is not the Sabbath violation, which though capital (Ex 31:15) would be of no concern to the secular Herodians. Rather, what the two have in common is the threat that Jesus posed to the status quo and the privileged position they occupied in it, the Pharisees as the religious elite, the Herodians as the party in civil power. Cf. the opposition of the temple and the palace to Jeremiah.

Application: Whether 600 BC, AD 30, or today, government and organized religion are the two greatest foes of the things of Christ, and we should be wary of those who think that gaining political power is any way to promote truly spiritual motives.

## **CONCLUSION:**

The Lord of the Sabbath is the one who has redeemed us from the curse of the law. In Galatians 3:10-14 the apostle Paul is telling us that everyone who does not keep the Law perfectly is cursed by it. The reason is that no one can obey the Law perfectly. In fact, there were over 600 laws the Jews had to keep to be right in the eyes of God. The breaking of even one commandment put a person under condemnation. Trying to achieve salvation through obedience to the Law is futile. Then imagine the burden of self-righteousness imposed by man-made regulations like those the Pharisees piled on.

We need to examine our own hearts to see where we are exalting ourselves over others in spiritual pride. We need to ask the Lord to give us His heart of compassion towards others so that we don't fall prey to legalism but live in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. He alone is the end of the law for us for righteousness. Our boasting is in our Lord – not in any act of obedience we perform.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

1) What are some examples of legalistic practices in various church contexts today?

- 2) How are the principles that Jesus advocates here different from antinomianism?
- 3) Do we shrink back from confrontational situations because we fear the opposition and ridicule?
- 4) How can we cultivate a heart of compassion for the brokenness of people around us?

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### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

#### Constable:

SABBATH CONTROVERSIES				
Event	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
The disciples plucked ears of grain in Galilee.	12:1-8	2:23-28	6:1-5	
Jesus healed a paralytic at the Pool of Siloam in Jerusalem.				5:1-18
Jesus healed a man with a withered hand in Capernaum.	12:9-14	3:1-6	6:6-11	
Jesus referred to the Jews circumcising on the Sabbath.				7:22-23
Jesus healed a man born blind in Jerusalem.				9:1-34
Jesus healed a woman bent over in Judea.			13:10-17	
Jesus healed a man with dropsy in Perea.			14:1-6	

**Scott Grant:** For many first-century Jews, the Sabbath was not simply a day of rest; it was intertwined with their national identity and hopes. God gave it to Israel after he liberated it from Egypt. For some, keeping the Sabbath meant that you were saying, “We are God’s people.” “It was a badge of Jewishness for people who’d been persecuted and killed simply for being Jews,” writes scholar N.T. Wright.<sup>3</sup> When Jews kept the Sabbath, they remembered God’s work in creating the world and in creating them as a people, and they anticipated God’s future work in liberating them from their enemies once again.

Whether one kept the Sabbath or not—and how one kept it—was no small matter in Jesus’ day. For many, Sabbath practices determined whose side you were on, whether you accepted Roman occupation or whether you opposed it. For Pharisees, a popular pressure group, keeping the Sabbath according to their rulings was a sign of loyalty—to God, to Israel, and to national hopes for liberation. They were watchful for the emergence of movements that ignored or trivialized the Sabbath and thereby posed a threat to their hopes for the coming kingdom of God, which for them constituted liberation from Rome.

For the Pharisees, picking heads of grain constituted a violation of the Sabbath. They could invoke Exodus 34:21: "You shall work six days, but on the seventh day you shall rest; even during plowing time and harvest you shall rest." They want to know why Jesus, as a preacher of the kingdom of God, is allowing his disciples to violate the Sabbath.

Jesus answers by telling a story about David, Israel's prototypical king, from 1 Samuel 21:1-6.<sup>4</sup> After being privately anointed by the prophet Samuel, David was running from Saul, who was still ruling in Israel. Strictly speaking, David and his men broke the law by eating bread that was set aside for use in the tabernacle and for consumption by the priests. God, however, didn't reprimand David. As the presumptive king, David had the authority to override the law, especially inasmuch as the then-king was seeking to kill him. If, strictly speaking, the Pharisees could claim that Jesus broke the Sabbath law, he claims that he has the authority to override it. Jesus claims the right to pick grain on the Sabbath, the holy day, just as David claimed the right to eat bread from the holy place, the house of God. Jesus sees himself as the presumptive king of Israel, anointed by John the Baptist but not yet enthroned (Mark 1:9-11).

**Stedman:** The Sabbath originally was given to restore man, to give him rest and recreation. Properly observed, it would be a joy. But the Pharisees had so ringed it about with their thousands of interpretations of what it meant to cease work that they had made it a terrible burden to bear. For instance, they held that it was perfectly all right to spit on a rock on the Sabbath -- that presented no problem. But if you spit on the ground, that made mud; was mortar; therefore you were working on the Sabbath. So it was absolutely wrong to spit on the ground! That was the nature of the restrictions they devised. So it is not surprising that they considered it wrong to thresh a head of grain on the Sabbath day, even though you were hungry, because that was working on the Sabbath.

**MacArthur:** In essence, His message was in complete, direct opposition to the apostate Judaism that dominated the nation and was pervaded by the religious leaders, namely the Pharisees and scribes. It was for this they hated Him. They hated His theology. They hated the fact that He attacked them at the point of their **spiritual pride**. It's an age-old story, folks, but the more religious people are and the more proud they are of their religion, the more proud they are of their spiritual achievement, the more proud they are of their accomplishment religiously, the more resistant they are to the gospel of grace. That's why the people that responded to Jesus were the tax collectors, prostitutes, criminals, low-lives who had no spiritual pride, who were not allowed to go to the synagogue, who were not allowed to go to the temple, who were the outcasts, the unsynagogued, they had no pride to hold on to. They came to Jesus. . .

The zenith of this system of manifest spiritual pride was Sabbath. On Sabbath they all came out into public view at the synagogue. On that great day, all the focus of their self-righteous proud system reached its clarity. This was their time to shine. Now remember, God had instituted the Sabbath in Genesis 2 verse 3, He rested after He had created the world in six days. And then He blessed it and sanctified it, set it apart. In Exodus 20 verses 8 to 11, as God lays out the Ten Commandments, He says, "Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy." In Exodus 31 He defines what that means, simply, don't work...don't work, stop your work. Whatever work you do, don't do it. That simple. That was it, folks, that was it. Worship God, take a day of rest, don't work. It was for rest, recreation, restoration, worship.

But in the system of the Pharisees, the self-righteous system, which, by the way, had been long developing for centuries, the Sabbath then gave them an opportunity to parade their self-righteousness. And how would they do that? By developing hundreds of rules for conduct on the Sabbath which they would adhere to and thus would manifest the high degree of spirituality that belonged to them before the populous. They created overlaid laws upon laws, upon laws, upon laws, upon rituals, routines, rules, restrictions, restraints that made the Sabbath Day anything but rest, it was the most difficult, limiting day of the week

TEXT: Mark 3:7-35

TITLE: *PITFALLS OF MINISTRY POPULARITY –  
PICTURES OF THE MASTER ABOUT HIS FATHER’S BUSINESS*

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST BALANCED THE PRESSURE TO REACH THE MASSES WITH THE STRATEGIC VALUE OF INTIMATE DISCIPLESHIP OF KEY LEADERS –  
4 INTERACTIONS WITH DIFFERENT GROUPS IN THE CONTEXT OF GROWING MINISTRY POPULARITY AND INCREASING OPPOSITION**

**INTRODUCTION:**

We live in the age of paparazzi ... where the rich and famous cannot leave the sanctuary of their residence without being bombarded by the intrusive presence of people pressing upon them and taking snapshots of their every movement. We know very little of the pressures and the pitfalls that such attention and popularity create. Nobody was outside my home snapping my picture as I drove over this morning to preach.

When we study the short earthly ministry of Jesus, His rapid rise to popularity and fame is striking. Jesus had a mission that was targeted to reaching the masses; and yet that very mission created unique difficulties and challenges. Because the gospel message of repentance from sin and faith in Jesus Christ is a very personal message; it must be received personally; the new birth experience is not a widespread people movement but a one-on-one relationship with the living God. The pathway to discipleship involves an intimate fellowship and closeness with Jesus – it has nothing in common with a mob of people pressing to get close enough to Jesus for some type of isolated one-time magical touch that would solve their immediate needs.

Our passage today presents a series of 4 interactions that Jesus has with various groups of people – interactions in the context of His growing ministry popularity and the increasing opposition of religious leaders in particular.

**THE MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST BALANCED THE PRESSURE TO REACH THE MASSES WITH THE STRATEGIC VALUE OF INTIMATE DISCIPLESHIP OF KEY LEADERS**

We will see some of the **Pitfalls of Ministry Popularity** as we look at these **4 Pictures of the Master about His Father’s business**

**I. (:7-12) INTERACTION WITH HUGE CROWDS AND UNCLEAN SPIRITS –  
ADMONISHING THEM TO REFRAIN FROM PROCLAIMING HIS IDENTITY –  
MINISTRY POPULARITY CAN ATTRACT PEOPLE FOR THE WRONG REASONS**

**A. (:7-9) We are Amazed at the Popularity of Jesus**

**1. (:7-8) Magnitude of His Popularity**

*“And Jesus withdrew to the sea with His disciples; and a great multitude from Galilee followed; and also from Judea, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and beyond the Jordan, and the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude heard of all that He was doing and came to Him.”*



**Hendriksen:** According to the Father's time-clock Calvary is still some distance away. For the present therefore the seashore is better suited to the Master's purpose than the synagogue.

**Constable:** Mark described many people coming to Jesus from all over Jewish Palestine. "Jerusalem" was in "Judea" to the south. "Idumea," named only here in the New Testament, was the old Edomite territory southeast of Judea. People also came from the east side of "the Jordan" River (Perea and the Decapolis), and from the Mediterranean coast to the northwest ("vicinity of Tyre and Sidon"). It is interesting that these locations form something of an outline of this Gospel. Jesus first ministered in Galilee (chs. 1—6), then in Tyre, Sidon, and the Decapolis (ch. 7), and finally in Jerusalem (chs. 10—16). Notably absent were people from Samaria, the land of Jewish iconoclasts who separated from the other Jews.

**Stedman:** I think we have difficulty grasping the size of this crowd. This was not just a few people, or a few thousand. There were literally tens of thousands of people, undoubtedly, in this crowd. . . You can see how Mark traces the emphasis upon the crowd throughout this division. In Verse 20, he says, "and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat." Then in Verse 32, "a crowd was sitting about him; ..." And in Chapter 4, Verse 1: "Again he began to teach beside the sea. And a very large crowd gathered about him, ..." And then, in Verse 36, Mark says, "And leaving the crowd," they went across to the other side of the lake. In Chapter 5, Verse 21: "And when Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered about him; ..." And in Verse 24: "And a great crowd followed him and thronged about him." So this is the period when Jesus is pressed by the great masses of people, the period of his greatest popularity.

## 2. (:9) The Method to Deal with the Problems Caused by His Popularity

*"And He told His disciples that a boat should stand ready for Him because of the multitude, in order that they might not crowd Him;"*

**MacArthur:** What do you mean a boat? The diminutive is used in the Greek, a little boat, just a little boat.

## **B. (:10) We are Reminded of the Power of Jesus**

*"for He had healed many, with the result that all those who had afflictions pressed about Him in order to touch Him."*

People looking for a **rabbit's foot** – someone who would meet their immediate physical needs

**Stedman:** All they wanted was healing. He wanted to preach. This is one of the things popularity does. It invariably distorts a message and emphasizes something secondary, making it paramount in the eyes of the people, so that they miss the point.

**MacArthur:** Now chapter 3 verse 7 to 12 is a good place to restart our study. It's a good place because it's a summary from chapter 1 verse 1 through chapter 3 verse 6, you kind of have the first act in Mark. And then you have a kind of summary. Summaries are good. Summaries look back and sort of gather up the truth. It is kind of like we've been watching a video, or watching a play unfold and it's just constant action up to now. And all of a sudden, Mark hits the pause button in chapter 3 verses 7 to 12 and says, "Let me give you a still photo, let me give you a snapshot now. Let's stop the action and let's freeze the frame and sum up what we've learned."

**MacArthur:** The results, back to verse 10, was that all those who had afflictions pressed around Him in order to touch Him. Affliction is fascinating. Afflictions is the word *mastigos*(?), it's the Greek word for a scourge, a whip. It's a funny way to refer to your illness, isn't it? You can refer...we use the word affliction, it's kind of a benign word in one sense, but the Greek word *mastigos*, is a whip, a scourge, it is the very word for scourge or whip.

Why would they refer to their illnesses and disabilities as a whip, as if someone is whipping them and scourging them? Because in their system of theology, anybody who had such an infirmity was under the judgment of...whom?...God, in their theology

### **C. (:11-12) We are Surprised at the Paradox of Jesus = Silencing Testimony About His Identity**

#### 1. (:11) Automatic Testimony of Demons

*“And whenever the unclean spirits beheld Him, they would fall down before Him and cry out, saying, ‘You are the Son of God!’”*

**Utley:** There is a series of three imperfect verbs in this verse which shows Jesus' ongoing confrontation with the demonic.

“*unclean*” -- Morally and spiritually filthy

“*fall down*” -- Image of an inferior falling down in a subservient position before a superior

This is a no-contest event – no struggle or conflict involved her

#### 2. (:12) Squelching of that Testimony

*“And He earnestly warned them not to make Him known.”*

**Stedman:** Well, we can be sure of one thing -- these unclean spirits did not desire to advance the cause of Christ by their witness. They told the truth, but they did so because they knew it would hurt the cause of Jesus, not help it. They were out to mislead people about Christ. So something about the way they told this, though it was true, was nevertheless misleading, and that is what our Lord rejected. . .

These are the twelve whom Jesus selected. It is evident in the contrast between this paragraph and the previous one that Mark wants us to understand that the witness Jesus wanted was not pretentious claims and impressive titles from demons, true as they might have been, but rather he wanted the witness of changed lives and empowered words, of men who had been with him and whose lives were different as a result, who were sent out to say what they had heard and learned, and who therefore had power to speak authoritatively -- even over the demons. This was the witness he chose. It is the witness he chooses yet today.

**Application:** Lord Jesus does not want the testimony of Christians who live in unclean fashion just like the world; He wants testimony coming from transformed lives that are on the pathway of holiness

## **II. (:13-19) INTERACTION WITH THE TWELVE APOSTLES – COMMISSIONING THEM FOR CRITICAL MINISTRY FUNCTIONS – MINISTRY POPULARITY MUST NOT CROWD OUT THE PRIORITY OF DEVELOPING ONGOING LEADERSHIP**

### **A. (:13) Setting for the Commissioning**

*“And He went up to the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him.”*

**Jeff Miller:** One might get the impression from what Mark has recorded thus far that Jesus was rather aloof, not allowing folks to talk about Him and not getting too close to anyone. What follows will certainly put an end to such thoughts.

### **B. (:14-15) Scope of Ministry – 3 Key Functions**

*“And He appointed twelve,”*

#### 1. Personal Discipleship Based on Intimate Fellowship with Jesus

*“that they might be with Him,”*

**Utley: Robert Coleman** has authored two helpful books on Jesus' methods: *The Master Plan of Evangelism* and *The Master Plan of Discipleship*, both of which deal with the growth of the early church using the same principles as Jesus.

#### 2. Preaching the Gospel of Repentance and Faith

*“and that He might send them out to preach,”*

“Apostles” = ones who are sent out on a mission

#### 3. Powerful Dominion Over Demons = Validation of Their Message and Ministry

*“and to have authority to cast out the demons.”*

**Constable:** Jesus also gave these disciples the ability ("authority") "to cast out demons," along with preaching. The miracles would convince many of their hearers that God had sent them as His spokesmen. Mark probably mentioned exorcisms because this was the greatest demonstration of the disciples' authority, not the only one.

### **C. (:16-19) Specific Selection**

*“And He appointed the twelve:”*

**MacArthur:** Twelve Apostles...why twelve? Because they constitute the new spiritual leadership of Israel. An unmistakable message is sent them to the leaders of Israel that they are unqualified, that they are exempted. An unmistakable message is sent to the nation that the corrupt leadership to which they have been subjected is rejected by God, judged and condemned. . . Throughout His ministry, Jesus attacks their spiritual bankruptcy, pride, hypocrisy, iniquity, cruelty and deceptiveness. And here He pronounces judgment on them while they're planning His murder. The whole religion of Judaism is set aside for the gospel of grace. And in the future, there will be men who will speak the truth, they will preach the New Covenant gospel. They will preach repentance and forgiveness of sin by faith in Christ alone. They will preach the cross. They will preach the resurrection. But there are none of the leaders of Israel who are qualified for that. . .

You know, I love the simplicity of that organization. I love simplicity. I really do, especially organizational simplicity. I can't think of anything more simple than this...pick twelve guys and pour your power through them. That's what Jesus did. The church hasn't changed, it's the same thing today. Christ is the head of the church, His power flows through the men He picks to be the elders and the pastors and shepherds. That's all the organization needs. . .

Apostle was a title with clout...delegated power. Now I can promise you this, these guys had never had a title with clout. Fishermen isn't that kind of title. Zealot isn't that kind of title. Tax collector isn't that kind of title. Farmer isn't that kind of title. They've now been elevated as the official agents of the divine King to act on His behalf for the benefit and exercise of His authority and Kingdom. This is unbelievable for these men. Wow...how high have they been lifted from such obscurity?

God does not choose on the basis of man's wisdom and power:

**1Cor. 1:25-29** *“Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are, that no man should boast before God.”*

#### 1. Peter

*“Simon (to whom He gave the name Peter),”*

Rock – calling him something he was not as yet – saw the potential in Simon

#### 2. James and John

*“and James, the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James (to them He gave the name Boanerges, which means, ‘Sons of Thunder ‘);”* “

Must be a reference to the tempestuous nature of their temperament – not exactly mild mannered  
**Luke 9:54** *“Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?”* (the Samaritans who were not receiving Jesus)

#### 3. Remaining Eight

*“and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot;”*

#### 4. Traitorous Judas Iscariot

*“and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him.”*

Sovereignty of the Lord's selection process; He chose them before they chose to be His disciples

**MacArthur:** They're not the highest and the noblest and the best. They're not the most educated, the most highly skilled, the most gifted, humanly speaking. The truth is, they basically are distinguished by one thing, that is they are ordinary. They have that in common. And they are...they are a motley, motley group. They are a very, very strange group. You couldn't pull them together any other way than God doing it for His own purposes because of their

divergence. While as many as seven of them might have been fishermen, you might have gotten seven guys together on that common ground. The others are so different in the things that they did and we know for sure only four are fishermen that there would be no reason to collect these men together, no reason for them to come together, live together, work together and minister together apart from the purposes of God. They are perfectly ordinary men in every way. Not one of them is renowned for scholarship. Not one of them is renowned for erudition. None of them had a track record as an orator or some kind of theologian. They were outsiders, total outsiders from the religious establishment of Jesus' day. They didn't have any particular natural talents. They don't appear to have any particular intellectual talents. They weren't highly educated. They were, on the other hand, prone to mistakes and misjudgments and misunderstandings and bad attitudes and lapses of faith and bitter failure and argumentativeness and no more so than their leader, Peter. And Jesus remarked that they were slow learners, they were spiritually dense. They were blockheads. . . They're going to be the foundation of the church, Ephesians 2:20, the Apostles are the foundation of the church and it all depends on twelve men whose most notable characteristic is that they were just plain ordinary men.

### **III. (:20-30) INTERACTION WITH ANTAGONISTS – CONDEMNING THEM FOR BLASPHEMING AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT – MINISTRY POPULARITY LEADS TO ALL SORTS OF UNJUSTIFIED ATTACKS**

#### **A. (:20-22) Two Unjustified Attacks**

##### 1. (:20) Bizarre Situation – Seemingly Unhealthy

*And He came home, and the multitude gathered again, to such an extent that they could not even eat a meal.”*

**Stedman:** Mark's intention is to underscore the weakness of popularity, the empty, hollow worthlessness of being popular, and how much damage and danger popularity produced in our Lord's ministry.

Pressure of the crowds has been huge theme in this section – crowd pictured as pressing upon Him in a dangerous fashion

##### 2. (:21) Unjustified Attack from His Own Family

*“And when His own people heard of this, they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, ‘He has lost His senses.’”*

Have you ever been accused of losing your mind over decisions you made and actions you took to follow Jesus?

They wanted to declare Jesus mentally incompetent and take custody of Him for His physical and mental protection

**William Macdonald** said it well: 'It is always true that a man who is on fire for God seems deranged to his contemporaries. If we set out to make a fortune, men will cheer us; if we are a fanatic for Jesus Christ, they will jeer us'...

**Constable:** Jesus' family members heard about His extreme busyness. The Greek term translated "His own people" (NASB, lit. "those with Him") is an idiom meaning His family members,

not just His friends. They felt concern for His health. Perhaps they worried that He was not eating properly. They may even have concluded that His overworked condition had affected His mental stability. They decided to come to Capernaum from Nazareth and take charge of Him for His own good. The Greek word *kratesai* ("take custody" or "take charge") elsewhere describes arresting someone (cf. 6:17; 12:12; 14:1, 44, 46, 49, 51). Thus it appears that the best of intentions motivated Jesus' family. However, they misread the evidence. He was not too busy nor was He out of His mind (cf. Acts 26:24; 2 Cor. 5:13). He was simply carrying out His Father's will. Sometimes those who have concern for a disciple's welfare apply pressure to depart from God's will. This constitutes opposition, not assistance.

### 3. (:22) Unjustified Attack from the Religious Leaders

*“And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, ‘He is possessed by Beelzebul,’ and ‘He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons.’”*

Beelzebul is a reference to Satan here = the ruler of the demons

**Utley:** The "*beel*" reflects the Semitic word *ba'al*, which means "lord," "owner," "master," or "husband." It was the name for the fertility storm-god of Canaan.

The "*zebul*" can mean (1) heights (i.e., mountain or heaven); (2) prince (i.e., Zabal); or (3) dung. The Jews often changed the letters of foreign gods to form a derogatory pun.

Attributing the power of Jesus to the devil

Recognized that it was more than just magic; more than smoke and mirrors; no natural explanation; there must be a supernatural explanation; balked at acknowledging His claims to deity

## **B. (:23-27) Refutation of Religious Leaders**

### (:23a) Series of 5 Responses

*“And He called them to Himself and began speaking to them in parables,”*

Responds with a series of comparisons – speaking in the form of short proverbs or truisms that could not be denied

#### 1. (:23b) First Response

*“How can Satan cast out Satan?”*

#### 2. (:24) Second Response

*“And if a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.”*

#### 3. (:25) Third Response

*“And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.”*

#### 4. (:26) Fourth Response

*“And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but he is finished!”*

#### 5. (:27) Fifth Response

*“But no one can enter the strong man's house and plunder his property*

*unless he first binds the strong man, and then he will plunder his house.”*

### **C. (:28-30) The Curse of the Unpardonable Sin**

*“Truly I say to you, ‘all sins shall be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they utter; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin’ -- because they were saying, ‘He has an unclean spirit.’”*

Graciousness of God to forgive all of the sins of men – whatever the kind or variety or perverseness

Was this a unique sin that could only be committed by those in the physical presence of Jesus Christ and the validations of His person and ministry?

People who worry about whether they have committed this sin, have nothing to fear

**Stedman:** And it is true, therefore, that if in the ultimate there is a rejection of Christ, then there is no hope, because there is no ground of forgiveness other than faith in the Lord Jesus. Men are forgiven when they believe in his name -- and on no other basis. If that is set aside; ultimately and finally -- this is not a single act of rejection which is in view, it is a process -- if the heart is resistant and rejects the claims of Jesus as set forth by the Holy Spirit, the result is that there can be no forgiveness. This is Scripture's sharp way of underscoring the fact which Jesus himself declared "No man comes unto the Father but by me," {cf, John 14:6}.

**Scott Grant:** Those who persistently dismiss the saving work of the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ as the work of evil run the risk of irrevocably placing themselves outside the kingdom of God.

**Utley:** In light of the above, this sin is committed by those who, in the presence of great light and understanding, still reject Jesus as God's means of revelation and salvation. They turn the light of the gospel into the darkness of Satan (cf. Mark 3:30). They reject the Spirit's drawing and conviction (cf. John 6:44,65). The unpardonable sin is not a rejection by God because of some single act or word, but the continual, ongoing rejection of God in Christ by willful unbelief (i.e., the scribes and Pharisees).

## **IV. (:31-35) INTERACTION WITH FAMILY MEMBERS – RAISING SPIRITUAL RELATIONSHIPS TO A LEVEL WORTHY OF INVESTMENT OF TIME AND MINISTRY – MINISTRY POPULARITY CREATES CONFLICT OVER MAINTAINING SPIRITUAL PRIORITIES**

### **A. (:31-32) Close Ties to Physical Family Members**

*“And His mother and His brothers arrived, and standing outside they sent word to Him, and called Him. And a multitude was sitting around Him, and they said to Him, ‘Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are outside looking for You.’”*

Family had traveled to Capernaum from Nazareth; now they arrive and are standing outside; Another passage that supports the position that Mary, the mother of Jesus, gave birth to other children after Jesus

No mention of Joseph – perhaps he has died by now

What reaction might we have expected from Jesus?

Certainly he held family in high regard and respected his mother – cf. how while on the cross He made sure to provide for her care

Yet when it comes to being about His Father’s business, Jesus did not allow family to trump His ministry priorities – tricky applications for us – not encouraging us to blow off our parents and their concerns . . . as we mature and come to a point of adult independence – we continue to take counsel from our parents .. but must make our own decisions regarding the will of God for our lives and the focus of our ministry

Might end up doing some things where family members would think we have lost our minds .. but easy to abuse this as well

Important passage for children of believing parents – they are not included in the spiritual family just because of their physical connection

### **B. (:33-35) Greater Ties to Spiritual Family Members**

*“And answering them, He said, ‘Who are My mother and My brothers?’ And looking about on those who were sitting around Him, He said, ‘Behold, My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother.’”*

Look at the sense of community that Jesus teaches here

Importance of spiritual family members

Priority of obedience

**Matt. 10:34-38** *‘Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. 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. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. 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. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.’*

**Jeff Miller:** One of the most profound prayers I’ve ever heard simply states:

*“Dear God, Your will, nothing more, nothing less, nothing else. Amen.”*

### **CONCLUSION:**

**Rudyard Kipling** on families:

*“All of us are we—and everyone else is they. A family shares things like dreams, hopes, possessions, memories, smiles, frowns, and gladness... A family is a clan held together with the glue of love and the cement of mutual respect. A family is shelter from the storm, a friendly port when the waves of life become too wild. No person is ever alone who is a member of a family.”*

\* \* \* \* \*



## DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What types of pitfalls have we seen popular ministers of today fall prey to?
- 2) Have we been the subject of any unjustified attacks because of our allegiance to Jesus?
- 3) Can the unpardonable sin be committed today?
- 4) How can we value fellow believers as beloved members of the same spiritual family?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Alan Carr:** God's people need that same heart for heavenly things. The Lord saved us to serve Him, **Eph. 2:10**, and He has every right to expect us to place His will ahead of our will. Yet, most of the time our focus is on earthly matters.

- We are more concerned with making a living than doing the will of God.
- We are more concerned with our own needs than we are with the needs of others.
- We are more concerned about the trivial affairs of life than we are about the souls of men.
- We probably spend more time praying for a few personal needs than we do for the power of God to be on our lives and on our church.
- We need to have the focus of our hearts adjusted, **Col. 3:2**.

**Van Parunak:** Two characteristics that we must keep in mind whenever we consider the Lord's call:

a) It is Sovereign, initiated by him at his will. In Gk, the subject is emphatic: "He himself called whom he wished." He makes the selection; he takes the initiative. We recognize this sovereign call to salvation, cf. Rom. 9, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." Here, we are concerned with a call from among those who were already followers of him, to special service.

1) Sometimes missionary conferences (for example) give the impression that God has called everyone to missionary service and it's up to us to respond. In fact, the call to service is just as focused and just as sovereign as the call to salvation. Cf. Acts 13:2.

2) It's certainly wrong to hold back when the Lord calls you to a service, confirming his call (as in Antioch) through the demonstrated effectiveness of your ministry on a local scale. But it's also disastrous to rush enthusiastically but unproven into a ministry on the strength of a flush of emotional enthusiasm.

3) Every believer has some fundamental responsibilities: live a holy life; be ready always to give a reason for the hope that is in you; work diligently to provide for your household; function in the local church as a member of the body. If God has a more focused role for you, he will reveal it as he prospers your efforts locally.

b) It is Effective; it produces results in our lives. In the case of salvation, "whom he called, them he also justified," Rom. 8:30. In the case of service, the ones who are truly called do in fact go forth and bear fruit; those who make shipwreck show that they were not truly called of God.

TEXT: Mark 4:1-20

TITLE: PARABLE OF THE SOILS – DO YOU HAVE EARS TO HEAR?

**BIG IDEA:**

**RESPONSE TO THE GOSPEL DEPENDS ON YOUR HEART CONDITION --  
UNDERSTANDING EVANGELISM STARTS WITH UNDERSTANDING THE FOUR  
DIFFERENT TYPES OF HEART RESPONSES TO THE SOWING OF THE GOSPEL**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Interesting paradox in the Galilean ministry of Jesus Christ – huge crowds were attracted to Jesus and His amazing healing miracles ... but very few became committed disciples who understood and followed His message. How could this be? What if we commissioned fruit inspectors to look into the hearts of all the professing Christians throughout the many church services in our country this morning? What would they find regarding the genuineness and health of the fruit? Is there really spiritual life present? No root ... No fruit; No fruit ... No life

**MacArthur:** The crowds were, however, superficial and exploitive and they were a hindrance, though at the same time they were an opportunity. True believers were this little group of twelve Apostles and other believers who, when all is said and done, after the resurrection only numbered 500 in Galilee and 120 in Jerusalem. It raises the question, “Why so few?”

Only 2 passages in Mark’s action-oriented account that contain **extended teaching** by Jesus – here in chap. 4 and in chap. 13. So this content must be viewed as **fundamental** and of **primary importance** to Jesus as He is beginning the more intensive phase of the training of the 12 for future ministry. That ministry is summarized in the Great Commission – with evangelism being the key starting point.

This passage is not about the sower – who is not expressly identified here; it is not about what method or style the sower uses or what type of personality or powers of persuasion the sower uses ... It is a given that the sower is sowing the seed

This passage is not even about the seed – which is the Word of God – it is assumed that the seed is genuine and pure and unadulterated and effective. This is not about adapting our message or refining it to be more palatable ...

This passage is all about the difference in soils. We need to first examine how it is that we receive and respond to the Word of God. Then we need to make sure we can pass this Evangelism 101 course in terms of how the gospel message impacts ourselves and then others.

**RESPONSE TO THE GOSPEL DEPENDS ON YOUR HEART CONDITION --  
UNDERSTANDING EVANGELISM STARTS WITH UNDERSTANDING THE FOUR  
DIFFERENT TYPES OF HEART RESPONSES TO THE SOWING OF THE GOSPEL**

**(:1-2) TEACHING LOGISTICS**

**A. (:1) Teaching Setting**

*“And He began to teach again by the sea. And such a very great multitude gathered to Him that He got into a boat in the sea and sat down; and the whole multitude was by the*

*sea on the land.*”

Summary of ministry in Galilee as we have studied previously

- priority of teaching ministry
- necessity of teaching in outlying areas (*by the sea*) rather than in cities and synagogues
- logistical complications due to the surprisingly large crowds – provided for opportunity, but presented difficulties

important to sit down if you are teaching from a small boat; position rabbis usually took when they were teaching

## **B. (:2) Teaching Method = Parables**

*“And He was teaching them many things in parables, and was saying to them in His teaching,”*

Moving into a section that will feature the **parables of Jesus**

Two contrasting goals: revealing truth and concealing truth – enigmatic presentation

Jesus is going to explain more about why he uses this teaching method after he introduces the details of the parable

But what is a parable?

**MacArthur:** Any kind of analogy, any kind of illustration, any kind of comparison fits into the broad category of a parable.

**Constable:** Parables are illustrations that teach truth by comparisons (Gr. *parabole*, lit. "something thrown alongside," similitudes). Some are long stories, but others are short similes, metaphors, analogies, or proverbial sayings (cf. 2:19-20, 21, 22; 3:24-25, 27). The popular definition that a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning, is essentially accurate as far as it goes. The use of parables for teaching was a common rabbinic device that Jesus adopted and used with great skill. . . . Matthew recorded Jesus giving two groups of parables on this occasion: four to the multitudes (Matt. 13:3b-35), and four to the disciples (Matt. 13:36-52). Mark recorded only Jesus' parables to the multitudes.

**Wiersbe:** A parable begins innocently as *a picture* that arrests our attention and arouses our interest. But as we study the picture, it becomes *a mirror* in which we suddenly see ourselves. If we continue to look by faith, the mirror becomes *a window* through which we see God and His truth. How we respond to that truth will determine what further truth God will teach us."

**MacArthur:** Psalm 78 introduces a parable, a dark saying, a hidden saying that is then the basis of a judgment pronounced on Israel.

Now if you follow that idea along in the Old Testament, I'm going to tell you something you need to think about, you can look at it when you read your Old Testament in the future, parables in the Old Testament are connected to **judgment**. Parables in the Old Testament are connected to judgment. Psalm 78 is that illustration. It is a dark saying, it is a hidden saying, it is a parable. It's stated to be a parable in verse 2, the parable is given and the parable then is a picture of Israel's judgment. When you come to 2 Samuel chapter 12, Nathan tells David a parable, a parable about a man. A man had some sheep, a neighbor who stole his sheep, etc., etc., and that

is a parable that ends up in a pronouncement on David. In Judges chapter 9 verses 1 to 21, Gideon's son Jotham tells a parable to the men of Shechem because they had chosen the murderous Abimelech to be their king and killed all his brothers. And the parable is told and then it is explained as divine judgment coming on those sinful people.

In Ezekiel chapter 17, chapter 24, you have Ezekiel giving a parable that is explained as a judgment. In **Isaiah chapter 5 and chapter 6**, you have Isaiah giving the parable, it begins in chapter 5 about the vineyard and the question is even asked, "What is this vineyard and who is he talking about? And what's going on here?" And he pronounces the Babylonian judgment on Israel, their captivity when they were hauled into Babylon is the meaning of the parable. . .

So the basic truth of the parable is this, **the result of all gospel proclamation by anybody and everybody is dependent on the condition of the heart.** Did you get that? It depends on the condition of the heart. Don't pat yourself on the back, it's not you. It's the heart and if you think you can do something about the heart, guess again because you can't. I can throw seed, but only God can plow soil. Only God by the Holy Spirit can plow the heart. Now that's a foundational truth to understand. "No man comes unto Me except the Father draws him."

And by the way, in that John 6 passage, Jesus repeats that same statement in another form in the sixth chapter, and it's worth being reminded. John 6:65, "*For this reason I said to you, 'No one can come to Me unless it's been granted him from the Father.'*" Unless it's been granted him from the Father. So the only way that there's going to be good soil is that it's divinely prepared by God, chosen, prepared, the Spirit of God has come and done conviction. The heart is made ready and there's a response. . .

So, on the one hand, our Lord speaking in parables is a **judgment to the non-believers** who are fixed in their rejection. On the other hand, it is **an invitation to revelation to His friends** to whom the great mysteries of the Kingdom will be disclosed in full so that they can have the privilege of knowing this truth and carry out the responsibility of proclaiming it.

**Deffinbaugh:** Our Lord's words of explanation reveal that some decisive changes have occurred in His ministry:

- **They reveal that there is a change in the message of our Lord.** I believe that in the first Galilean campaign of our Lord, the emphasis was on His identity as Israel's king. Now, the Lord's teaching has shifted to the more intimate (secret) aspects of His kingdom.
- **Our Lord's words reveal a change of method.** Our Lord is now speaking by means of parables—more indirectly than before.
- **Our Lord's words reveal a change of focus and emphasis.** Jesus is beginning to spend more time with His disciples. In our Lord's first Galilean campaign, it would seem that His disciples were not always present. From now on, Jesus pours more effort into the teaching of His disciples (not just the 12, either, but the larger group of His followers).

**Scott Grant:** In part, Jesus teaches in parables to avoid arrest. His preaching has already drawn the attention of powerful enemies. To continue preaching his controversial message in a straightforward manner would draw even more unwanted attention and place his mission

in further danger. Therefore, he teaches cryptically, in parables, intriguing those who are receptive to his message but confounding those who are opposed to it.

## **I. (:3-9) DETAILS OF THE PARABLE – 4 TYPES OF SOIL AND THE RESULTS**

### **(:3) Preamble**

*“Listen to this! Behold, the sower went out to sow;*

Importance of this fundamental parable -- need to understand the main point here  
Function of the sower is to sow – viewed here as sowing directly (rather than through intermediaries)

Indiscriminate sowing – not like a farmer at all – but with the purpose in mind of producing a **fruitful crop**

Broadcast method of sowing -- not planting individual seeds ... but walking down paths in a field and casting seed everywhere

### **A. (:4) Seed on the Road**

*“and it came about that as he was sowing, some seed fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate it up.”*

**Jeff Miller:** A first-century path alongside—or through—a field was composed of dirt that was well-worn and firmly-packed from high volumes of foot traffic, virtually impenetrable to scattered seed.

We can throw some grass seed on our lawn and see some of the same activity – where the seed lies on ground that has not been prepared and dug up ... the birds come along and say “Thank you very much for the easy meal”

### **B. (:5-6) Seed on Rocky Ground**

*“And other seed fell on the rocky ground where it did not have much soil; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of soil. And after the sun had risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.”*

Lots of rocky ground in Palestine

**MacArthur:** What we’re talking about here is limestone bedrock below the level of the plow. The plow goes in but below that there’s limestone bedrock. That stuff exists all through the land of Israel. It is...in fact, the rabbis used to say that when God dumped the rocks on the earth, He made a mistake and dumped all of them on Israel. It is a very, very rocky place and much of that rock lies below the surface, below the plow and what happens is, the seed goes in, it finds the soft soil, it starts to get life, the ground is warm, there’s moisture and water there and it starts to grow, the roots can’t go down because they hit bedrock and so whatever nutrients are there, whatever elements of life are there shoot the plant upward. And that’s why it says it immediately sprang up.

**Illustration:** land that Rick bought – would be nice to have a soccer field – but thin layer of dirt with rocky under footing – would have to bring in good fill dirt to create any type of playable field

Emphasis here = No root

**C. (:7) Seed Among Thorns**

*“And other seed fell among the thorns,  
and the thorns came up and choked it, and it yielded no crop.”*

Emphasis here = No fruit

**D. (:8) Seed on Good Soil**

*“And other seeds fell into the good soil  
and as they grew up and increased,  
they yielded a crop and produced thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.”*

**(:9) Postscript**

*“And He was saying, ‘He who has ears to hear, let him hear.’”*

**Wiersbe:** Each of the three fruitless hearts is influenced by a different enemy: the hard heart—the devil himself snatches the seed; the shallow heart—the flesh counterfeits religious feelings; the crowded heart—the things of the world smother the growth and prevent a harvest. These are the three great enemies of the Christian: **the world, the flesh, and the devil** (Eph. 2:1-3)."

**1 John 2:15-17** *“Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.”*

**(:10-13) ASIDE – PARABLES 101 – INTRODUCTION TO PARABLES**

**A. (:10) Perplexity About Parables: Why Use Parables? / What Do They Mean?**

*“And as soon as He was alone, His followers, along with the twelve, began asking Him about the parables.”*

Sounds like the bulk of the crowd dispersed with no understanding of the meaning of this parable  
Distinction made here between the general followers of Jesus and the specific 12 Apostles

**B. (:11-12) Purpose of Parables**

*“And He was saying to them, ‘To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God; but those who are outside get everything in parables, in order that while seeing, they may see and not perceive; and while hearing, they may hear and not understand lest they return and be forgiven.’”*

Def. of a mystery = something not previously revealed in the OT but now made known by God both revealing and granting understanding of the truth

Jewish understanding and expectation of the kingdom of God was not complete; there was a mystery aspect to it – certainly this whole church age in which the emphasis is on sowing the seed to all men everywhere – to create a church with no distinction between Jew and Gentile – was a mystery to OT Jews

Look at the clear distinction Jesus makes between 2 very different groups of people:

- **The disciples** who have been given a gift of understanding God's truth ... and by implication who receive the gift of forgiveness of sins
- **Those who are outside** – to whom the truth is hidden in judgment; who will not experience forgiveness of sins

That's why it should not be surprising that of the 4 types of soil mentioned ... only 1 concerns those who are saved = the only group that bears fruit

### **C. (:13) Perspicuity of Parables: This Parable Should Be Simple to Understand**

*“And He said to them, ‘Do you not understand this parable?  
And how will you understand all the parables?’”*

“Perspicuity” – plain to the understanding esp. because of clarity and precision of presentation

We are accustomed to emphasizing the main truth of each parable and not pressing each detail as if it has some specific allegorical meaning ... but look at how Jesus interprets this parable

**Stedman:** Please notice that Jesus treats it exactly as the commentator says he must not do! He treats it as an **allegory**. He says every detail means something. And he says, furthermore, that this is the way to handle all the parables. This is the key to understanding parables. Parables are allegories in which every detail applies, has its own import to the whole.

**Evangelism 101** starts with an understanding of the different types of responses we should expect from the proclamation of the gospel message

## **II. (:14-20) INTERPRETATION OF THE PARABLE – 4 TYPES OF SOIL AND THE RESULTS**

### **(:14) Consistent Thread = Sowing the Seed**

*”The sower sows the word.”*

The sower is **actively sowing the word** – that is a given – STOP right here; is this a given for us individually ... for us as a church ... is this what characterizes the bulk of our activities ... is everything else just there to support our main ministry in life = to fulfill the Great Commission??? Huge problem ... but not the thrust of this parable

Not talking about **HOW the sower sows the word** – should we use tracts .. open air preaching ... friendship evangelism ... large stadium type crusades ... etc. – should we use different types of music .. what about drama and plays ...

Everybody hears the Word – not dealing with the issue of what about the heathen in Africa who have never heard the gospel

**Differing responses** to the Word is the issue – based on different dispositions of the heart

**Stedman:** The Word of God is sown by means of preaching or teaching or reading or studying or witnessing, or in some other way. The Word is dropped into hearts like seeds into soil. That Word is the life-giving element which can change the whole situation and bring enrichment and



harvest into a life. Therefore the moment of the sowing of the Word is a magic hour. It is a time when the opportunity to be changed is present.

The inherent power of the Word of God

**James 1:21** *“in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls”*

**1 Pet. 1:23** *“for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God”*

**A. (:15) Seed on the Road – Hardened Hearts vs. Spiritual Life**

*“And these are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them.”*

Satan is alive and active; a genuine threat and enemy of the reception of the word of God  
Scribes and Pharisees fall into this category – the religious self-righteous who are blind leaders of the blind

This category is impossible to penetrate at all with the impact of the gospel message  
They feel they have their act together; they don't sense any need for salvation; don't view themselves as lost and in need of a Savior

**Jeff Miller:** This soil represents a hard heart that doesn't permit the Word of God to penetrate its surface. These individuals are in control of their own lives; they have all of the answers. They are unteachable, and the Word of God falls upon their deaf ears.

**B. (:16-17) Seed on Rocky Ground – Shallow Hearts vs Spiritual Perseverance**

*“And in a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; and they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away.”*

*“and in a similar way”* – these first two groups are related – they are spiritually dead – bear no fruit

Not talking about some category of “carnal Christians” who just don't reach full maturity

Same as **John 15** – professing believers – but the fruitless branches have no life and are gathered and thrown into the fire and burned

Superficial Christianity has no roots and no persevering endurance; they never understood the costs of discipleship

that superficial, only temporarily soft, self-centered, self-indulgent, self-seeking heart.  
Don't use **emotion** to try to manipulate folks into a decision for Christ – you must understand this parable of the soils

Don't just assume that every profession of faith is authentic; don't be surprised when you see

apostasy – people falling away who previously professed faith

Importance of spiritual perseverance

If your concept of the gospel is that Jesus came to take away all of your problems and give you smooth sailing through life ... then you will fall away when trials or hardship or persecution impact you.

Particularly relevant warning to those believers in Jesus' day who were facing persecution for their new faith

**Deffinbaugh:** These folks respond positively to the word because they think that it is a kind of “prosperity gospel,” a gospel which promises only good times, blessing, happiness, and bliss. The quickness of the response is an indication of their lack of depth, or their lack of perception as to what the gospel really means. And, let me quickly add, this is not due to our Lord's misrepresentation of the gospel. It is the result of selective hearing, of hearing only the good and pleasant things, rather than hearing of the costs involved in discipleship, of which our Lord often spoke.

**C. (:18-19) Seed Among Thorns – Distracted (Preoccupied) Hearts vs Spiritual Devotion**

*“And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, and the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.”*

Not willing to pay the price of discipleship

**MacArthur:** This is a double minded person whose repentance is not complete.

This is the person who wants salvation, wants Christ, wants the Kingdom but wants the world and wants riches and wants things. Pretty obvious. This is the double minded. He wants to serve God and money and Jesus said, “You can't serve God and money.” This is the rich young ruler, remember him in Luke...in Matthew 19? Comes to Jesus, “What do I have to do to enter the Kingdom?” And He says, “Give up all your money because that's obviously the idol that rules your heart.” And he was not willing to do that. And he was also not willing to admit his own sinfulness. He wanted to hang on to the illusion of his own pride and his own riches.

Literally when it says at the beginning of verse 19, “worries of the world,” it is literally the distractions of the age...the distractions of the age. Whatever they are, whatever occupies the age...this is the preoccupied heart. This is the heart that unfortunately loves the world and all the things that are in the world, according to 1 John 2, and therefore the love of God is not in him. This is the heart that is the enemy of God, James 4:4, because it loves the world. This is the kind of heart that says, as Jesus points out in Luke chapter 9, “Yeah, I'm going to follow You, Lord, I'm going to follow You but I can't follow You now, you know, I've got to go home and wait till I get my inheritance from my father so I have some money. Well I can't follow You now, I've got to go home and say goodbye to everybody so I can raise some money to take with me.” And Jesus says, “No, no, no, if you look back you're not fit for the Kingdom.”

These are those who are under the terrible temptation of the love of money becoming the root of all kinds of evil, 1 Timothy chapter 6. These are people consumed with the stuff of the world.

#### **D. (:20) Seed on Good Soil – Fruitful Hearts**

*“And those are the ones on whom seed was sown on the good soil; and they hear the word and accept it, and bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.”*

3 Present Participles – ongoing activity characterizing their interaction with the Word:

- Hear
- Accept
- Bear fruit

**Van Parunak:** Location: the good ground, free from the characteristics of the other three.

- 1) Unlike the wayside, it is plowed up.
- 2) Unlike the stony ground, it is deep.
- 3) Unlike the thorny ground, it does not favor weeds.

**Hendriksen:** The importance of spiritual fruitbearing, as the mark of the true believer, is stressed even in the Old Testament (Ps. 1:1-3; 92:14; 104:13). This line of thought is continued in the gospels (Matt. 3:10; 7:17-20; 12:33-35; Luke 3:8; John ch. 15) and in the rest of the New Testament (Acts 2:38; 16:41; Rom. 7:4; Gal. 5:22; Eph. 5:9; Phil. 4:17; Col. 1:6; Heb. 12:11; 13:15; James 3:17,18).

Different amounts of fruit

What is your Goal in life? Should be to be fruitful to the maximum extent possible

Back in those days a healthy crop yield would have been tenfold ... so this amount of fruitfulness is astonishing

**MacArthur:** That’s not natural. Good soil is not natural. Hard soil is natural. Just leave the ground and that’s what it will be. Rocky soil, that’s natural, leaving it the way it is. Weedy soil, that’s natural that’s the way it is. Something has to happen to this soil. To make it good soil, the stone has to be broken up. The hard ground has to be broken up. The weeds have to be taken out. Who can do that? Only God can do that. He alone can do that. Deuteronomy 30 verse 6, “The Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants to love the Lord your God with all your heart that you may live. Proverbs 20 and verse 9 says, “Who can say I have made my heart clean, pure from sin?” Nobody can do that on his own.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

**Jodi Harper Application:** Our county government has an office that tests soil. You can dig up a few handfuls of dirt from your yard and send it to them. They will put it under their microscope and see what it contains. In a few weeks, they will send you a report of how good your soil is for growing things. You will find out if there are good nutrients in your yard, or if you need to add something to make the soil just right.

May we not be found to be hard-hearted and impenetrable; or shallow; or distracted and preoccupied when it comes to obedience to God’s Word.

May the Lord grant that we are **fruitful** in our response to the Word of God.

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## DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What can we do to more actively sow the powerful gospel message?
- 2) How have we responded when threatened by hardship or persecution for the sake of our identification with Jesus Christ?
- 3) What things in our lives or other activities and pursuits are distracting us from our devotion and service to Christ?
- 4) How does this parable help to motivate our evangelistic efforts?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Gundry:** In summary, the good hearers welcome the word immediately, so that Satan cannot snatch it away. They welcome it deeply, so that persecution because of it cannot induce them to apostatize. They welcome it exclusively, so that other concerns do not stifle it. The understanding that results from this kind of reception goes beyond the intellectual to touch conduct, commitment, and devotion. . . . Thus the mystery turns out to be that God's rule is established, not by conquest, but by speaking; and that a person participates in God's rule, not by joining an army, but by hearing the message in right ways

**Deffinbaugh:** **Jesus viewed His teaching by parables (and thus His concealing and revealing) as a fulfillment of prophecy, or at least as consistent with the ministry which God gave to Isaiah.** Our Lord cites from Isaiah chapter 6 to vindicate His actions. God had sent many prophets to the nation Israel, and all of them were rejected, along with their message. John, the last of the Old Testament prophets, was also rejected, at least by the religious leaders of Israel. Isaiah chapter 6 is the account of this prophet's commission. The words which our Lord cited are the word of God to Isaiah, indicating that his ministry was essentially not one of calling men to repentance, but rather of confirming their condemnation. Isaiah's words sealed Israel's doom, and preceded the outpouring of God's judgment on His disobedient people. Jesus viewed His ministry as similar to that of Isaiah, and thus teaching in parables could be vindicated by referring to Isaiah's account of God's words addressed to Him. . .

The nation Israel has not received Jesus as their Messiah. Their leaders have rejected Him and have determined to put Him to death. The people demand miracles and signs. Jesus began to veil His teaching, focusing more on His disciples and revealing more and more to them about His upcoming rejection and sacrificial death. Jesus' concealing of these mysteries of the kingdom allowed the unbelieving nation to intensify its efforts to rid itself of this kind of Messiah. It signaled a change from speaking of a crown to suffering death on a cross. These mysteries would only be proclaimed and understood after our Lord's crucifixion, burial, and resurrection.

**Scott Grant:** The kingdom is not coming as expected, however. It is not coming with guns blazing but with seeds casting. Jesus is more like a farmer than a military leader. Neither is the kingdom being universally embraced in Israel. Those in the know, such as scribes from Jerusalem and even Jesus' own family, are resisting and even opposing the incoming kingdom.

The different kinds of ground in the parable represent different kinds of receptivity Jesus' message about the kingdom finds among those who hear it. The parable of the sower functions to vindicate Jesus' unorthodox vision of the kingdom and explain the unexpectedly mixed response within Israel to the arrival of the kingdom.

TEXT: Mark 4:1-34

TITLE: 4 PARABLES UNLOCKING THE MYSTERIES OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE MAGNIFICENT TRUTHS OF THE MYSTERIES OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD COME TO US PACKAGED IN PARABLES OF DIVINE INSIGHT**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Last week we looked at the first of 4 parables in Mark chapter 4. It was the longest of the four and the most fundamental – our prerequisite course = **Parables 101 – the Parable of the Soils**. If you want to understand any of the parables of Jesus, you must first understand that one. Today we will look at all 4 parables in this chapter and how they relate to one another – with our emphasis being on the interpretation of the final 3 – a much more challenging task since Jesus does not give us His point-by-point interpretation of these.

Remember what is happening at this point in the ministry of Jesus in Galilee. He has demonstrated His authority as the Son of God – to teach with authority; to heal all types of physical diseases; to cast out demons and demonstrate His dominion over the kingdom of Satan; soon we are going to see that even the forces of nature – the wind and the sea obey Him. Yet while He is experiencing rapid growth in popularity among the people and multitudes are attracted to Him (some in faith but most in superficial curiosity), opposition is growing among the religious leaders. The unbelieving Jews could not understand how the OT promises regarding a coming King and Kingdom could be fulfilled by this humble son of a carpenter. His preaching regarding the kingdom did not connect with their expectations of an immediate physical kingdom with all of its pomp and impressive glory.

So we saw in 3:23 that Jesus began to teach them in **parables** – a method that was ideally suited for both revealing divine truth to those with spiritual insight and concealing truth from the blinded multitudes. I view our privilege today as similar to excited children coming downstairs on Christmas morning to open up the surprises contained in the variety of gift packages under the tree. We can pick up the packages and shake them and guess at their contents. But what joy there is as we open them up and have the full revelation of their contents. Sometimes you open a gift and you still can't identify what it is – that can be a bit disconcerting ...

**THE MAGNIFICENT TRUTHS OF THE MYSTERIES OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD COME TO US PACKAGED IN PARABLES OF DIVINE INSIGHT**

Really 2 sets of 2 parables each:

First set – dealing with the **reception of the kingdom of God** – our response to the Gospel message and to God's gracious revelation

Second set – dealing with the **growth of the kingdom of God**

**James Edwards:** In the first parable the emphasis falls on the process of growth, whereas similar imagery in the second accentuates the contrast between small beginnings and great results. Both parables are stories of surprise. One could never imagine the conclusion from the beginning. Such is the kingdom of God.

**I. (:1-20) PARABLE OF THE SOILS – THE RECEPTION OF THE KINGDOM DEPENDS ON YOUR HEART CONDITION – ONLY FERTILE HEARTS SOVEREIGNLY PREPARED BY GOD PRODUCE FRUIT**

- Hardened Hearts vs. Spiritual Life
- Shallow Hearts vs. Spiritual Perseverance
- Distracted (Preoccupied Hearts vs. Spiritual Devotion)

**II. (:21-25) PARABLE OF THE LAMP – THE RECEPTION OF THE KINGDOM DEPENDS ON YOUR ATTENTIVENESS TO DIVINE REVELATION – TO THE EXTENT THAT YOU LISTEN WELL YOU WILL BE BLESSED WITH ADDITIONAL SPIRITUAL INSIGHT**

This parable seems to tie directly to the parable of the soils just above

Deals with our response to God's revelation; looking at **human responsibility** instead of divine sovereignty

One could have gotten the wrong impression from Jesus' teaching regarding His use of parables that God's intent was mainly to hide or conceal truth

**A. (:21-22) God Ultimately Desires Illumination Rather than Concealment**

**1. (:21) Basic Function of a Lamp = Illumination**

*“And He was saying to them, ‘A lamp is not brought to be put under a peck-measure, is it, or under a bed? Is it not brought to be put on the lampstand?’”*

Who would think of buying a light and then hiding it so it cannot perform its intended function?

**Wessel:** The lamp represents Jesus who “comes,” and the definite article “the” serves to identify him. . . . the present hiddenness of Jesus will not always be . . . God intends that one day Jesus will be manifested in all his glory, at the Parousia. But who Jesus really is, is now hidden.

**James Edwards:** In the OT, a lamp is not infrequently a metaphor for God (2 Sam 22:29) or the Davidic Messiah (2 Kgs 8:19; Ps 132:17) or the Torah (Ps 119:105). Not only does Mark distinguish the lamp by making it the acting subject, but he refers to it with the definite article, *the* lamp. Finally, reference to the lamp coming is more suitable of a person than an object, and has indeed been used of Jesus earlier (1:7; 3:20). These particulars signal that this is no ordinary lamp. The image points to Jesus as the implied agent, for whom the lamp is a metaphor. Jesus is the lamp of God who has come to bring light and revelation (John 1:5, 8:12).

Jesus came as the Light of the world –

**Is. 60:1-3**

**John 1:4ff**

**John 8:12** *“I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the light of life.”*

We are called to live as *children of light* – **Ephes. 5:8**

Application: “this little light of mine; I’m going to let it shine”

## 2. (:22) Ultimate Goal of God = Revelation and Illumination

*“For nothing is hidden, except to be revealed;  
nor has anything been secret, but that it should come to light.”*

Revealed in due time

Much was hidden in OT times that Jesus came to reveal = the mysteries of the kingdom of God; much still remains hidden that will be revealed when He comes in His full glory to physically reign over the earth from the throne of David in Jerusalem

God is not ultimately in the business of hiding truth – He is interested in making truth known; in bringing everything to the light

### **B. (:23) Responsibility Falls on the Hearer**

*“If any man has ears to hear, let him hear.”*

This is the key verse and lies at the heart of this parable

It repeats the same phrase from **4:9** – obviously must be very significant in this context

Those appendages on the side of your head – How are you using them??

Jesus is not just talking about understanding the words He says ... but obeying all of His commands

**James 1:22** *Prove to be doers of the word and not hearers only ...*

We need to hear with hearts and minds and wills inclined towards obedience

This is our responsibility – nobody else can do this for us; not putting the blame on God if we don't respond with fertile hearts ... if we have hearts of stone or rocky hearts or thorny hearts ... puts the blame squarely on us – we should be attentive to God's Word

### **C. (:24-25) Degree of Attentiveness Determines Degree of Spiritual Insight**

#### 1. (:24) Opportunity to Be Blessed With Greater Spiritual Insight

*And He was saying to them, ‘Take care what you listen to. By your standard of measure it shall be measured to you; and more shall be given you besides.’”*

**MacArthur:** listen carefully to the Word of God. Get it...that's the idea. Be seeing what you are hearing, that's the literal Greek, *be seeing what you are hearing*, perceive the Word of God thoughtfully, carefully.

#### 2. (:25) Degree of Spiritual Insight Compounds Both in Positive and Negative Sense

*“For whoever has, to him shall more be given;  
and whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.”*

Principle of compounding interest

**Van Parunak:** Like the "measure" saying, this is probably a commonplace saying or proverb, originating in an economic context. Our modern-day equivalent is "The rich get richer, and the poor get poorer," or, "It takes money to make money."



**III. (:26-29) PARABLE OF THE GROWING SEED – THE MYSTERIOUS GROWTH OF THE KINGDOM CAN ONLY BE ATTRIBUTED TO THE SOVEREIGN WORK OF GOD – PRODUCING IMPRESSIVE RESULTS ACCORDING TO HIS TIMETABLE**

**A. (:26) The Introduction of the Kingdom of God (Sowing the Seed) Does Not Look Very Impressive**

*“And He was saying, ‘The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil;’”*

Does not matter so much who is sowing the seed here – whether Jesus or His disciples; this is not the emphasis of the parable – it is not about the sowing process

When you look at what is sown, then you look at the end result ... you cannot by natural means fully understand the process of growth; you certainly cannot control or manipulate that growth by human means

**B. (:27-28) The Growth of the Kingdom of God is Mysterious but Progressive and Impressive = Solely the Work of God**

*“and goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts up and grows-- how, he himself does not know. The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head.”*

Look at how this passage balances the teaching on God’s Sovereignty and Man’s Responsibility – here the emphasis switches back to the sovereign work of God

This is the **life of a farmer** – he does not stay up all night fretting over the growth of the seed; one season is condensed here into a series of repetitive acts of going to bed each night and getting up each day until you see growth

Importance of **Faithfulness** in daily tasks

When you see growth ... it happens gradually and progressively; requires great patience

Cf. Jesus explaining the new birth to Nicodemus in **John 3** – like the wind – you see the effects but you can’t fully understand or explain the process – *how he himself does not know*

Observable growth; you can see the plant maturing – but you can’t speed along the process

**Stedman:** As Jesus draws the picture, this farmer goes out to sow. It is hard work as he sows the field, but this is what he can do. But then he goes home and goes to bed. He does not sit up all night biting his fingernails, wondering if the seed fell in the right places, or whether it will take root. Nor does he rise the next morning and go out and dig it up to see whether or not it has sprouted yet. He rests secure in the fact that God is at work, that he has a part in this process, and he must do it; no one can do it for him. But he will faithfully perform it. So the farmer rests secure, knowing that as the seed grows there are stages which are observable: "... first the blade, then the ear then the full grain in the ear." It is only as the grain is ripe that he is called into action again. When the harvest is ready, then he is to act once more. [**1 Cor. 3:6** “*we are laborers together with God.*”]

**Grassmick:** The soil does this all by itself (*automate*; cf. the English “automatic”) This key Greek word (emphatic by position) could be translated “*without visible cause*” implying “without human agency,” and thus refers to work done by God . . .

Some interpreters view this parable as a picture of evangelism. Some take it as depicting spiritual growth in a believer. Others see it as a picture of the coming of God’s kingdom by the mysterious, sovereign work of God. Its emphasis is on growth under God’s initiative in the interim phase between the proclamation by Jesus (the lowly Sower) and His disciples and the ultimate manifestation of the kingdom by Jesus (the mighty Harvester). The third view is preferred in light of Mark 4:26a and the overall context of the kingdom parables. [my preference]

### **C. (:29) The Culmination of the Kingdom (Reaping the Harvest) Achieves God’s Objectives According to God’s Timetable**

*“But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.”*

**John 4:35-38** – Jesus instructs His disciples *“lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest. Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal; so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. For in this case the saying is true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’ I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored and you have entered into their labor.”*

So there is an immediate harvest that is available to be reaped right now . . . but this picture points toward the eschatological harvest when the kingdom of God will be fully developed – like the picture of the church as a building that takes shaped slowly over time but in God’s timing comes to full completion

**C. E. Graham Swift:** Human instrumentality is limited to two things, first sowing and finally reaping. Between these initial and final activities it is a matter of confidence in the vitality of the seed and in the fruitfulness of the interaction between seed and soil.

## **IV. (:30-32) PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED – THE SURPRISING RAPID GROWTH OF THE KINGDOM WILL BRING BLESSING TO ALL NATIONS – ESPECIALLY WHEN VIEWED FROM SUCH INSIGNIFICANT BEGINNINGS**

### **A. (:30) Continuation of Teaching in Parables About the Kingdom of God**

*“And He said, ‘How shall we picture the kingdom of God, or by what parable shall we present it?’”*

**Van Parunak:** The previous illustration describes the MEANS of the kingdom's spread: by God's power, not man's efforts. This illustration emphasizes the MAGNITUDE of its expansion.

### **B. (:31) Insignificant Beginnings of the Kingdom of God**

*“It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the soil, though it is smaller than all the seeds that are upon the soil,”*

### C. (:32) **Impressive Growth of the Kingdom of God**

#### 1. Impressive in Size

*“yet when it is sown, grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants”*

#### 2. Impressive in the Inclusion of Gentile Nations

*“and forms large branches; so that the birds of the air can nest under its shade.”*

Started out addressing the issue of surprising lack of reception to the gospel message ... now we finish with surprising growth from such small beginnings

#### Do birds represent:

- Just a general reference to the great size of the plant
- Evil forces; false professors of faith and false teachers under the cloak of Christianity
- Gentiles who are included in the kingdom [my preference]

\* \* \* \* \*

**MacArthur:** Now mustard seed was the smallest seed that they used in their farming. It wasn't the actual smallest seed on the planet but it was proverbial for something small to them because it was the one they were familiar with. . .

Notice the reference to the birds nesting in its shade. This is taken out of **Ezekiel chapter 17** and in Ezekiel 17 you have a messianic prophecy that says, “Under the rule of Messiah, nations will come to salvation,” and the nations are pictured as birds coming to lodge in the tree of blessing. So that's borrowed right out of that imagery. And so the birds are representative of the nations. In other words, this is going to expand and not only Israel will be a part of this coming Kingdom, but the nations of the world will be a part of it as well. You have a very similar use of birds in **Daniel 4 verses 10 and 21**, Nebuchadnezzar views his kingdom and the birds that are in his tree, as it were, represent peoples and nations under his rule.

\* \* \* \* \*

The mustard tree is not a tree at all but is classified as an evergreen shrub. The tree grows to about 20 feet high [more normally 12-15 feet] and has an irregular shape. It is nearly as wide as it is tall. The branches start to grow very low to the ground.

[http://www.ehow.com/about\\_6469078\\_mustard-tree.html](http://www.ehow.com/about_6469078_mustard-tree.html)

**The mustard tree grows very quickly, reaching its full size in only a few years.** In the same way, Jesus indicated that the Kingdom of God would grow quickly, and indeed it did. By the time Paul was preaching the gospel in Asia, he said the entire region had heard the gospel.

**The birds of the air settle in its branches.** This is intended to be a warning toward doctrinal purity. The phrase “birds of the air” often is used to symbolize demonic forces in Scripture. In this instance, Jesus is warning His disciples to beware of the enemy's attempts to encroach into the Kingdom of God (see also the wheat and the tares parable later in the chapter) and dilute the church's doctrinal purity.

<http://drcristy.wordpress.com/2012/02/22/the-mustard-tree-and-the-kingdom-of-god/>

**(:33-34) POSTSCRIPT – METHODOLOGY OF TEACHING IN PARABLES**

*“And with many such parables He was speaking the word to them as they were able to hear it; and He did not speak to them without a parable; but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples.”*

**Hiebert:** “*Expounded all things*” – a statement unique to Mark. The verb means to loosen, to untie, to solve, and was used of solving or interpreting knotty problems, riddles, or dreams. The disciples needed such help in order to understand the parabolic message. Theirs was a high privilege, but believers today are equally privileged to receive the teaching ministry of the indwelling Spirit, who takes the things of Christ and reveals them to receptive hearts (cf. Jn 16:14).

**C. E. Graham Swift:** A statement by the evangelist finally summarizes the purpose and principle of parabolic teaching. The kingdom of God was so different from prevalent notions about it, and the parables were well fitted to dislodge these popular ideas where direct statement would not have been received. The nature of the kingdom was declared to the people by comparison rather than by definition. But to His private disciples privately Jesus gave fuller instruction.

**Van Parunak:** Three characteristics of the Lord's teaching:

1. Parabolic: 33 "many parables" reflects v.2 "many things by parables." Cf. John 3:12, earthly things presumed to be easier to understand than heavenly things, and yet the effect of sin is so great that even these are not readily understood without explanation.

2. Proportionate: "as they were able to hear." He does not cast his pearls before swine. cf. v.25.

3. Progressive: "he expounded all things to his disciples." Where there is understanding, he gives more. This and the previous point show that he remains in control of the word as it goes forth.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Hopefully these Christmas packages this morning were amazing nuggets of God's truth that encouraged you with respect to the kingdom of God.

- We should be thankful for God's work of sovereign preparation to till up the ground of our hearts and make our hearts fertile soil for the Word of God
- But we must take our responsibility to use our ears to listen well and thus be blessed with additional spiritual insight
- The kingdom might not look impressive in the sowing stage ... but God is the one who produces the growth in ways that are mysterious to us
- The end result will be quite impressive as the full harvest is brought in according to God's timetable – meanwhile we labor in the harvest fields in patient dependence upon the sovereign work of God

\* \* \* \* \*

### **DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) How can you tell whether you have ears to hear?
- 2) What can we do to be more effective in causing the light of our testimony for Jesus Christ to

shine brighter and clearer?

3) What were some of the erroneous expectations regarding the kingdom of God that Jesus needed to address with His Jewish contemporaries?

4) Where is the imagery of birds used in the Scriptures in a negative connotation and where in a positive connotation?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Hendriksen:** On this aspect of the truth, namely, God's sovereignty, the present parable places the emphasis. It teaches that just as God alone, not the farmer, thoroughly understands and is in fact the Author of physical growth, so also God alone, not man, thoroughly understands and is the Author of spiritual growth, the establishment and progress of the reign of God in hearts, lives, and spheres. It is because of his will that the spiritual seed, the word or message of the gospel, asserts its increasingly powerful influence upon the hearts of men and thus also upon society generally. What a comfort this is, for now with patience we await the harvest that is certain to arrive -- Victory is assured: God's plan must be and is going to be carried out.

Accordingly, the parable sets forth three thoughts. So closely are they linked that the three actually form a unit. They are as follows:

1. To man growth is a mystery (verses 26, 27)
2. The seed reveals its potency (verse 28)
3. The harvest-time spells victory (verse 29)

### **H. M. Luckock: Immediate revelation not always desirable --**

Here our Lord is justifying the parabolic form of teaching, which often serves to veil the truth, on the ground that immediate revelation is not always desirable. Many things are concealed, both in nature and by art, though the concealment is by no means designed to be permanent. What striking illustrations of this principle are furnished in geology! Look at the almost measureless beds of coal, hidden for ages in the bowels of the earth, but designed by Providence to be revealed when necessity should arise. The precise time for the unveiling it is not always easy to decide, because man's knowledge is finite, but we rest assured that it will coincide with the need for its use. It is a principle worth bearing in mind when human efforts fail; for it is encouraging to know that such a result may be due simply to the fact that we have tried unconsciously to anticipate the fore-appointed time.

### **Biblical Illustrator:**

1. Hear with discrimination, shunning false doctrine (John 10:5).
2. Hear with attention; really and earnestly hearing (Matthew 13:23).
3. Hear for yourself, with personal application (1 Samuel 3:9).
4. Hear retentively, endeavouring to remember the truth.
5. Hear desiringly, praying that the Word may be blessed to you.
6. Hear practically, obeying the exhortation which has come to you.



TEXT: Mark 4:35-41

TITLE: *EVEN THE WIND AND SEA OBEY HIM*

**BIG IDEA:**

**JESUS CAN BE TRUSTED IN THE STORMS OF LIFE BECAUSE HE IS LORD OF ALL – CONFIDENCE IN THE SUPREME AUTHORITY AND PROVIDENTIAL CARE OF OUR SOVEREIGN SAVIOR SHOULD EMBOLDEN OUR FAITH**

**INTRODUCTION:**

We see **disobedience to Jesus Christ** all around us every day. It is reflected in the language of most people who take His name in vain all of the time without any fear of accountability. It is reflected in the type of coarse humor and jesting that people engage in constantly. It is reflected in the pursuit of the lusts of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. It is reflected in their sense of independence as if they are in control of their lives and their destiny instead of the Master of the Universe. People need a deep sense of awe and wonder at the majesty of the one who is sovereign over all things. It is the fear of the Lord that is the beginning of wisdom.

What type of fear of the Lord dictates our response of obedience? What do we say or do that we would like to pull back and change if we had a deeper knowledge of our Sovereign Savior? In our familiar story this morning the disciples of Jesus have their lack of faith exposed in the crisis of the storm on the Sea of Galilee. Jesus rebukes them with some stinging words for their cowardice and lack of faith. They have allowed their fears to consume their faith. They have perversely entertained the heresy that it seems as if their God doesn't care about their welfare.

This is not just a simple story about how Jesus can smooth over the rough trials of your life and calm all of the seas that might be troubling you in terms of your external circumstances. Yes He can heal your diseases; Yes He can restore relationships; Yes He can put you on sound financial footing . . . if He desires. He can also choose to allow that disease to consume you physically or allow your job and finances to bottom out. But more importantly, **He wants you to trust Him today for who He truly is** – the one that *even the wind and the sea Obey*. Think how important this message was to the Gentile believers in Rome who were starting to face severe persecution because of their faith. I have gotten into the boat with Jesus and pushed off to head for the other shore – how is this going to end for me? **Heroes of the Faith – Heb. 11:32-40**

**JESUS CAN BE TRUSTED IN THE STORMS OF LIFE BECAUSE HE IS LORD OF ALL – CONFIDENCE IN THE SUPREME AUTHORITY AND PROVIDENTIAL CARE OF OUR SOVEREIGN SAVIOR SHOULD EMBOLDEN OUR FAITH**

**Simple Outline:**

- 3 Clear Pictures – like snapshots or selfies – study these pictures; pull them back up and reflect on them
- 3 Penetrating Questions – drive home the lesson

## **I. (:35-37) PICTURE OF A TERRIFYING STORM -- STORMS WILL ARISE IN LIFE IN THE CONTEXT OF GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL CARE**

### **A. (:35) Jesus Leads Us Into Difficult Trials**

*“And on that day, when evening had come, He said to them,  
‘Let us go over to the other side.’”*

Same day when He had been teaching them precious insights about the mysteries of the kingdom of God. Now Jesus was taking them out of the classroom for some laboratory field work. Some of the best lessons are impressed upon us in the crucible of times of testing.

Crossing over to the east side (Gentile side) of the Sea of Galilee – 13 miles long; 7 ½ miles wide

Trip started at sundown and took place during the evening hours – adding to the terror

**Grassmick:** Mark's selection of parables is followed by a series of miracles, indicating that what Jesus *did* (His works) authenticated what He *said* (His words). Both relate to the presence of God's sovereign rule (kingdom) in Jesus. . . This section contains four miracles that clearly show Jesus' sovereign authority over various hostile powers: a storm at sea (4:35-41); demon possession (5:1-20); incurable physical illness (5:25-34); and death (5:21-24, 35-43).

**Wiersbe:** Did Jesus know that the storm was coming? Of course He did! The storm was a part of that day's curriculum. It would help the disciples understand a lesson that they did not even know they needed to learn: Jesus can be trusted in the storms of life. Many people have the idea that storms come to their lives only when they have disobeyed God, but this is not always the case. Jonah ended up in a storm because of his disobedience, but the disciples got into a storm because of their *obedience* to the Lord.

**Scott Grant:** Hear Jesus' invitation: *“Let us go over to the other side.”* Is our Lord inviting you to venture into some unknown territory for his sake?

### **B. (:36) Never Forget the Presence of Jesus in the Midst of Trials**

*“And leaving the multitude, they took Him along with them, just as He was, in the boat; and other boats were with Him.”*

Vividness of the eyewitness details provided here

*“just as He was”* – He had been teaching the multitudes from a boat a little ways off the shore; now He proceeds across the Sea without first going ashore – you sense maybe some urgency; desire to get away from the crowds

Yet other boats try to accompany Him; we are not told how they fared in the storm – but probably were spared as well

**Stedman:** And now we come to the physical exhaustion produced by the tremendous demands of the crowds upon Jesus. Here he is, at the end of a very heavy day of teaching, of ministering, and of healing. He is worn out. . . Mark also indicates that there were certain witnesses present to testify to the unusual phenomenon which occurred: *“And other boats were with him.”* Mark adds that to reassure us that what happened during that journey was not an hallucination.



**MacArthur:** Luke tells us they were sailing along. And Luke uses a very specific verb, the verb is *pleo* and it means to sail, not *elauno*, which means to row. You row when there's no wind. You sail when there's wind. So it was an ideal situation. The water was calm. They were sailing along. Those boats had the capability of being rowed. They had oars but they also had a mast and a sail. And when the breeze came up, they would sail. They launched from the shore and they were sailing along with a gentle breeze in the calm waters of dusk, pushed toward that eastern shore. Off they go.

### **C. (:37) Terrifying Storms Can Put Us Seemingly on the Brink of Disaster**

*“And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up.”*

Must have been a terrifying storm if the most seasoned professional fishermen thought that they were goners

**Hiebert:** such sudden, furious storms of hurricane proportions were characteristic of the lake, which lies 628 feet below sea level. These storms often swept down on the sea through the deep gaps in the highlands surrounding the lake. The deep ravines served as gigantic funnels to draw the wind down upon the waters.

## **II. (:38) PICTURE OF PERFECT PEACE -- DON'T MISTAKE THE CALM OF THE SAVIOR FOR INDIFFERENCE**

### **A. What Does Perfect Peace Look Like?**

*“And He Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion;”*

We are going to see His humanity in his exhaustion and need for sleep and then His deity in His power and control over the forces of nature

Remember the farmer in the parable above went to sleep in perfect confidence in the sovereign power of the one who would bring about kingdom growth

**Psalms 4:8** *“In peace I will both lie down and sleep, For You alone, O Lord, make me to dwell in safety.”*

### **B. 3 Wrong Assumptions by the Disciples**

*“and they awoke Him and said to Him,  
‘Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?’”*

Comes across in Mark’s gospel as a rebuke of Jesus

#### 3 wrong assumptions:

1. Jesus is not just another Teacher
2. Jesus does care – not indifferent or hard-hearted
3. The disciples are not going to perish

Stand Still and see the salvation of the Lord

### **III. (:39) PICTURE OF SUPREME AUTHORITY -- THE SOVEREIGN SAVIOR CAN CALM THE TERRIFYING STORMS OF LIFE**

*“And being aroused, He rebuked the wind and said to the sea,  
‘Hush, be still.’ And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm.”*

Supreme Authority means Absolute Control  
Should not be surprising that the Creator can control His creation

**Grassmick:** “*Be muzzled and remain so*” – force of the perfect tense . . . somewhat of a technical term for dispossessing a demon of his power (cf. 1:25) and may suggest that Jesus recognized demonic powers behind the ferocious storm.

**Hendriksen:** What is very striking is that not only the winds immediately quiet down, but so do even the waves. Generally, as is well-known, after the winds have perceptibly diminished, the billows will continue to roll for a while, surging and subsiding as if unwilling to follow the example of the now subdued air currents above them. But in this instance winds and waves synchronize in the sublime symphony of a solemn silence. Something comparable to an evening stillness of the starry heavens settles upon the waters. Suddenly the surface of the sea had become smooth as a mirror.

### **IV. (:40-41) THREE QUESTIONS TO DRIVE HOME THE LESSON:**

Remember the Lesson:

**JESUS CAN BE TRUSTED IN THE STORMS OF LIFE BECAUSE HE IS LORD OF ALL –**

In the most threatening of circumstances

**A. (:40) Two Questions Asked by Jesus of the Disciples –**

**Why are you so timid? Why are you cowardly?**

**Why Don’t You Trust Me?**

*“And He said to them, ‘Why are you so timid? How is it that you have no faith?’”*

Greater danger than the storm:

*No faith – 7:18; 8:17-21, 33; 9:19*

Their lack of faith seems more directed towards His lack of attentiveness to their needs rather than to His power to save

**Heb. 3:12** *“Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.”*

**Edwards:** Typically in Mark, whenever the person and work of Jesus are highlighted, so, too, are discipleship. For Mark, the revelation of Jesus as God’s Son is not an isolated datum that transpires in a vacuum. Jesus’ self-disclosure occurs in the presence of insiders so that they may be enabled to hear, comprehend, and increase in faith. Who Jesus is lays a claim on what his disciples may become. These two elements of Christology and discipleship are evident in the present story.

**Hampton Keathley:** Fear is the result of a lack of faith. It is a failure to believe that God is good and God is in control. Although we all believe that Jesus is God, do we live every day like we really believe that He is really in control of every situation? Sometimes we say, "God was so gracious" when something good happens like He's not gracious all the time. Sometimes we say something like, "Where was God when I needed Him?" When if we were taking a theology exam in the classroom, we know that God is omnipresent. That is a human description of our experience, not a statement of good theology.

**B. (:41) Question Asked by the Disciples of One Another – Who Is This Jesus?**

*"And they became very much afraid and said to one another,  
'Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?'"*

Our response to the Sovereign Savior should reflect the extent of His providential power and care

**Grassmick:** In stilling the storm Jesus assumed the authority exercised only by God in the Old Testament (cf. Pss. 89: 8-9; 104:5-9; 106:8-9; 107:23-32).

**Stedman:** The word translated "awe" means "fear," but it is a different kind of fear than that which occurs earlier. Then it was cowardly fear; here it is that sense of deep respect which has awe at its heart. Thus out of the failure of their faith there came this deeper impression, this glimpse into the mystery of his Personhood, which filled them with a deep sense of awe: "Who can this be, that even wind and sea obey him, who controls all the elements of the natural world. Who then is this?" The wonderful thing about this incident is that even though the disciples flunked their examination of faith, the groundwork was laid for a new expression of faith the next time they were under test. Thus their own failure opened the possibility for a new expression of faith to come.

**CONCLUSION:**

**Stedman:** "Remember, the boat will not sink, and the storm will not last forever. That is having faith -- to remember those facts."

**Hymn: Does Jesus Care When My Heart is Pained**

Does Jesus care when my heart is pained  
Too deeply for mirth or song,  
As the burdens press,  
And the cares distress,  
And the way grows weary and long?  
O yes, He cares, I know He cares,  
His heart is touched with my grief;  
When the days are weary,  
The long night dreary,  
I know my Savior cares.  
Does Jesus care when my way is dark  
With a nameless dread and fear?

As the daylight fades  
Into deep night shades,  
Does He care enough to be near?  
Does Jesus care when I've tried and failed  
To resist some temptation strong;  
When for my deep grief  
There is no relief,  
Though my tears flow all the night long?  
Does Jesus care when I've said  
"goodbye"  
To the dearest on earth to me,  
And my sad heart aches  
Till it nearly breaks,  
Is it aught to Him? Does He see?

\* \* \* \* \*

### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) In what ways have we cheapened our sense of who God is to think that somehow He is just like us – thus sacrificing the sense of wonder and awe we should have in His presence?
- 2) When have we reasoned with God that He should exempt us from some trial or cut it short because of our service to Him and faithfulness to Him?
- 3) Is it proper to vent against God with emotional responses – regardless how impertinent or rude – that sincerely express our lack of faith at a point in time?
- 4) What other evidence do we need of the care of Jesus Christ than His sacrifice for us on the cross?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Edwards:** In 1986 the hull of a fishing boat was recovered from the mud on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, about five miles south of Capernaum. The boat – 26 ½ feet long, 7 ½ feet wide, and 4 ½ feet high – corresponds in design to a first-century mosaic of a Galilean boat preserved in Migdal only a mile from the discovery site, and to a sixth-century-mosaic of a similar boat from Madaba. . . . The boat was propelled by four rowers (two per side) and has a total capacity of about fifteen persons.

**Lenski:** The fact that these disciples should turn to Jesus for help is astounding. A number of them were expert sailors who knew all about handling a boat, and who had been in many a violent storm on this lake. They run to Jesus who had never handled boats but had worked as a carpenter with his father in Nazareth. How could a former carpenter help these expert sailors when all their skill was at an end, and death in the roaring waves was their certain fate? IN the providence of God this storm brought to expression such faith as they really had. Completely at

the end of their resources, in which they had always taken great pride, they now throw themselves upon Jesus as their only hope. They forget that he had never sailed a boat; they think not of human but of divine ability in him. They abandon all human help, the best of which they had in their own skill; they throw themselves utterly into the divine hands of Jesus.

That was faith. But their terror, the resorting to Jesus only in their extremity, their fear of death in the waves, are not faith but littleness of faith and are in glaring contrast with the calmness of Jesus.

**MacArthur:** So the Lord is communicating two things here. He's communicating His deity in the expression of power and He's communicating His sympathy, His compassion and His care for his own in protecting them from premature death. Does that mean that Christians don't die? No. But they don't until their time has come. And until that time, the Lord protects and cares for and preserves His own as He did here. This is a story that has no explanation apart from the deity of Jesus Christ. There is no explanation humanly for this. Even if you could suggest that the wind stopped on their own, there's no explanation for the water flattening out. And if they thought it was coincidental, they would never have responded in terror because they knew divine power was present, nor would they have suggested that this was a divine person, not someone from around their neighborhood. And they also said, "The wind and the sea obey Him," which means that the stopping of the wind and the stopping of the water was directly connected to His words.

### **Alistair Begg: Jesus Calms the Storm**

Introduction: **Is. 40:27-31**

This is a familiar story. Impact of the story is more than just: Jesus calmed the storm on the lake and He can calm the storm in your life.

First notice the details.

Using the boat as a floating pulpit. Clearly an eyewitness account – probably Peter who told Mark. There were other boats; squall was a furious squall; boat was in danger of being completely swamped; Jesus sleeping on a cushion in the stern of the boat;

Why were the disciples out on the lake and why did they end up in the storm? Not because they were being disobedient or because they had made foolish choices. This was a result of their obedience to the Word of Jesus; God leads His people into storms; experiences that make us wonder whether we have any faith at all

Similar to clear air turbulence – keep your seatbelt at least loosely fastened around you; When the cool air rushes down from the mountains and meets the hot air coming off the lake you have conditions for such a violent storm;

What started out as a routine journey became a crisis situation; they had very quickly passed the point of their know-how ... the notion that they had any semblance of control had been removed from them; Panic situation; they came to Jesus in demanding fashion; phenomenally overwhelmed

Asked a terrible question: Don't you care if we drown? I wouldn't have called you to Follow Me if I wasn't going to take care of you; I am going to go to the cross and die for you guys – surely I care; *“Why do you complain, O Jacob ...”*

In the midst of the extremities of life, we can identify with this question; the immediacy of their circumstances so filled their minds that it became between them and their assurance of Jesus' care and caused them to lose sight and sound of Jesus' Word; “Let's go over to the other side” –

they doubt the reality of His Word to them

Interesting thought – Jesus speaking to lake and waves and wind – they couldn't hear;  
**Calvin:** Not that the lake had any perception, but to show that the power of His voice reached the elements which were devoid of feeling  
The Lordship of Jesus over Creation established clearly in the minds of the disciples;

They had been given the secret of the kingdom of heaven? How was it working for them?? It was a matter of degree; In the midst of difficult circumstances their lack of trust is revealed; Jesus caused a spiritual storm in hearts and minds of disciples – sheer awe swept over them; they still have to discover just who Jesus is; given a glimpse of His majesty;

In every storm and trial of our lives there is an opportunity for us to wonder together with the disciples concerning the wonder and identity and authority of Jesus

Picture of boat in the sea = picture of church in the world; cf. early church buffeted by persecution from Rome that threatened to swamp them; they didn't need a Sunday School lesson that Jesus could fix their problems – but He is majestic, King, Ruler of all nations

Whether our cancer is healed or whether it takes us home prematurely from our perspective, the very storm itself drives home the lesson that Jesus is the Majestic King, Ruler of All

Rough seas out there; we don't want to try it on our own; in Jesus we have a faithful Pilot who can take us safely to the other shore

### **Brian Borgman: Do You Not Yet Have Faith?**

Everything Jesus does, He does for a distinct purpose – usually tied into OT history of redemptive purposes; the reason the text is before us is far more than to claim that Jesus can calm the storms of our lives; Two main purposes:

- To demonstrate that Jesus Christ is God
- To show us that we must put our faith in Him

#### **1. Our Faith will inevitably face difficult threats**

This is a mega storm; a whirlwind or even a hurricane; you don't want water in your boat; this is a serious problem; it is filling up quickly;

They were in the process of obeying and serving Christ –

This storm was not an accident --

Didn't make them exempt from storms; the threat to our faith will continue to be real throughout our life until we die

How foolish we are to think that just because we do the right things, we will be spared hard times;

Disciples not exactly calm, cool and collected;

We are not exempt from our faith being threatened

#### **2. Our Faith may degenerate into rude and impertinent reactions under stress**

Lord totally exhausted; insight into His humanity; had to be awakened by the disciples; the storm did not awaken him; contrast Jonah story

Very abrupt question; level of rudeness in this; 5:31; 6:37; rudeness is part of our fallen nature;

Son of God subjected to the rudeness of men;

They were afraid and impatient so they snapped at the Lord Jesus;

Jesus did not respond in anger or impatience or rudeness;

We must guard against a carnal and impertinent response to God; not good and healthy to vent against God – it is sin; never the prerogative of the creature to say to the Creator: “Why have you done this to me ... you must stop”

### **3. Christ’s Sovereignty rules over all the threats to our faith**

Psalm 65:5-7; 89:8-9; 107:23-32

Grand demonstration that Jesus is God in human flesh as He caused the wind to stop and the sea become calm – not just providing safety for His disciples from the storm;

Our faith must be anchored in the one who is in sovereign control;

### **4. Jesus asks them 2 penetrating questions that expose their lack of faith – stinging words of rebuke**

- Why are you cowardly? – this word has emotional connotations; when fear is cowardly it becomes unbelief
- Do you not yet have faith? These men have devoted themselves to Jesus but now they are berated; not words of reassurance; counseling often demands a rebuke of impertinent unbelief instead of coddling words of reassurance; a hardness and sharpness to God’s words here; not always Jesus meek and mild

When you are on the verge of going under you see what your faith is made out of; is your faith well-placed? Is my fear consuming my faith or is my faith consuming my fear?

Nothing wrong with having a sense of fear – but how we respond is critical

### **5. Their response was one of nothing but awe**

They feared a great fear; same response as sailors in book of Jonah once they threw him overboard and the storm stopped; difference from their earlier cowardly fear; this fear was properly placed; the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and of biblical piety; now fearing the one who controls the sea; fear of one who is sovereign and in control of all things and we stand before Him as sinners; we do not fear God as we ought to; the depth of their wonder; sense of awe and wonder has been cheapened in our day; “You thought that I was altogether just like you;”

TEXT: Mark 5:1-20

TITLE: *DOMINION OVER DEMONS*

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE COMPASSIONATE SAVIOR DEMONSTRATES HIS DOMINION OVER THE DESTRUCTIVE POWER OF DEPRAVED DEMONS**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Massive outbreaks of visible demonic activity are very scarce throughout human history. You have the rebellion of 1/3 of the angels at the beginning of time – but no humans were around to witness God consigning them to the pit of imprisonment and torture. You have the possible demonic liaison with humankind that led to the wickedness of men at the time of Noah’s Flood (Gen. 6). Now as the seed of the serpent arrives on the scene to do battle with the serpent and his demonic forces of the kingdom of darkness, you have an outburst of violent, demonic activity.

In our times, despite all of the hype about demons and exorcisms, you really only see probably isolated psychopaths that would be such madmen that we would attribute their perversions to demonic control. You have the famous ones like Charles Manson and Jeffrey Dahmer ... the larger scale champions of evil like Hitler ... but for the most part Satan today likes to disguise his emissaries and make them appear as close to children of the light as possible. In the Day of the Lord, the activity of demonic forces will once again be more widespread and evident.

**Hendriksen:** After taming a wild sea, Jesus now tames a wild man

Both seem untamable

**Alan Carr:** As we move through this chapter, we are going to discover that Jesus is not just the **Master of the Deep**. He is also the **Master of the Demonic**; the **Master of Disease** and the **Master of Death**. He will demonstrate His power over all situations, problems, difficulties and dangers.

**THE COMPASSIONATE SAVIOR DEMONSTRATES HIS DOMINION OVER THE DESTRUCTIVE POWER OF DEPRAVED DEMONS --**

**3 FOCAL POINTS OF THE STORY:**

- **EVIL** – the destructive power and depravity of wicked, demonic forces
- **EXORCISM** – the superior power and dominion of the Compassionate Savior
- **EVANGELISM** – the effective power and privilege of obedient proclamation vs. blind rejection

**I. (:1-5) EVIL – THE DESTRUCTIVE POWER AND DEPRAVITY OF WICKED, DEMONIC FORCES –**

**SERIOUS DEMONIC THREAT OF DESTRUCTIVE EVIL**

**A. (:1) Arrival at the Appointed Destination = Country of the Gerasenes**

*“And they came to the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gerasenes.”*

Concept of Divine Appointments



Good that we know the details of the journey; otherwise it looks like just an uneventful crossing of the sea; very dramatic miracle performed by Jesus that demonstrated His authority over the forces of nature; they were exhausted when they got into the boat and started the journey; think how exhausted they must have been after the dramatic events of the terrifying storm; good that Jesus had gotten some sleep in the boat

**Deffinbaugh:** If, indeed, it was late at night, the scene must have been an eerie one, with the nerves of the disciples already worn thin by the terrifying experience of the storm.

Destination all along was the “*country of the Gerasenes*”

**Constable:** Mark and Luke called this area "the country of the Gerasenes," but Matthew called it the country of the Gadarenes. Gergesa (also referred to as Gersa and Kersa) was a small village about midway on the eastern shore of the lake. Gadara was a larger town six miles southeast of the lake's southern end. This incident apparently happened somewhere near both towns on the southeast coast of the lake.

#### **B. (:2-3a) Accosted by Unclean Man With Unclean Spirit**

*“And when He had come out of the boat, immediately a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met Him, and he had his dwelling among the tombs.”*

No break for Jesus; no time to rest up and relax; constantly under ministry pressure

New situations; new challenges

Why would Jesus care about the welfare of this madman? Everybody else stayed as far away from him as they could – Jesus just took a dangerous journey across the Sea of Galilee to meet with him – the Compassion of the Savior – *came to seek and to save the lost*

**James Edwards:** Jesus meets a man with an **unclean** spirit living among unclean tombs surrounded by people employed in unclean occupations, all in unclean Gentile territory.

**Constable:** Matthew wrote that there were **two men**, but Mark and Luke mentioned only the more prominent of the two. Mark stressed this man's great physical strength that had progressively increased, evidently due to the demons' increasing hold on him. Now nothing could restrain him. The poor man was miserable in his condition.

**Scott Grant:** Mark depicts the man in a way that is reminiscent of the storm. Both the storm and the man, by all appearances, cannot be controlled.

**MacArthur:** He would be classified as a man who lived in the tombs as a madman. He is a maniac. He is deranged, he is irrational, he's dangerous. He is a sub-human, anti-social, sociopathic and intensely evil. He's a monster. He's a monster. . . In fact, he's such a threat that Matthew 8:28 says, "*No one would pass that way because he was so...and the word is...violent..violent.*"

#### **C. (:3b-4) Evidence of Demonic Power = Could Not Be Restrained by Human Forces**

*“And no one was able to bind him anymore, even with a chain; because he had often been bound with shackles and chains, and the chains had been torn apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces, and no one was strong enough to subdue him.”*

Didn't have mental hospitals; had to deal with the threat the best they could; no thought given to restoration to health of the poor demon-possessed man; just an emphasis on how society could isolate itself and protect itself from such a threat

Contrast Samson – strongest man – bound by his enemies; took divine power to cast off the shackles

Remember parable about Jesus coming to first bind the strong man (Satan) and then have dominion over him – kingdom of God vs. kingdom of Satan

#### **D. (:5) Evidence of Demonic Activity = Bizarre and Destructive Behavior**

*“And constantly night and day, among the tombs and in the mountains, he was crying out and gashing himself with stones.”*

**Hendriksen:** Habitually, at intervals during the night and day, this man's ear-splitting screams are echoing eerily from cavern to cavern near the rocky shore, striking terror into the hearts of any traveler who might dare to come within hearing distance.

## **II. (:6-13) EXORCISM – THE SUPERIOR POWER AND DOMINION OF THE COMPASSIONATE SAVIOR – SUCCESSFUL DEMONIC EXORCISM ON A HUGE SCALE**

### **A. (:6-9) Identification and Quantification of the Demonic Threat – Orthodox Theology**

*“And seeing Jesus from a distance, he ran up and bowed down before Him; and crying out with a loud voice, he said, ‘What do I have to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God, do not torment me!’ For He had been saying to him, ‘Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!’ And He was asking him, ‘What is your name?’ And he said to Him, ‘My name is Legion; for we are many.’”*

**MacArthur:** So I say, they're orthodox even in their eschatology. They knew that it wasn't the time. This was the time of Messiah's death and Messiah's resurrection. This is not the time of His reign and His Kingdom and their judgment. What's going on?

**James Edwards:** “*Most High God*” is an epithet emphasizing the transcendence and exaltation of Israel's God over pagan gods and goddesses and rival powers.

**Van Parunak:** He does not do this [ask demon to identify himself] in order to use the name in exorcism: neither in 1:24 nor (in the event) here does he use the name. Rather, he is forcing the demon to acknowledge that "it" is really "they." . . . The term "legion" describes a division of the Roman army, with 6000 men, but may be used just in the sense of a large number. There appear to be at least 2000, since they are able to possess that many swine. . . . 2000 is a HUGE herd; usually a herd of swine had fewer than 200! Emphasizes just how large is the host of demons that the Lord overcame.

**Constable:** The way the man related to Jesus shows that the demons within him recognized Jesus as someone superior to them. The demons controlled the man's physical movements and his words. They addressed Jesus as "*Son of the Most High God*"—recognizing His deity (Gen. 14:18-24; Num. 24:16; Isa. 14:14; Dan. 3:26; 4:2; cf. Mark 1:23-24). "*Most High God*" is a title used in the Old Testament, mainly by non-Israelites, to denote the God of Israel. The fact that the man knelt before Jesus likewise shows that the demons regarded Jesus as their superior. The demons feared that Jesus would send them to their eternal judgment immediately, something only God could do (Rev. 20:1-3; cf. Matt. 8:29; Luke 8:31). The tormentor appealed ("I implore You") for deliverance from "*torment*." Ironically, he appealed to Jesus for mercy *in God's name* ("*by God*"). He probably did this because he knew that Jesus was subject to His Father.

**Hendriksen:** The meaning here [of 6000] is undoubtedly figurative: a very large number. It is also possible that the term "*Legion*" conjured up the vision of an army of occupation, cruelty, and destruction.

#### **B. (:10-13) Exorcism and Diversion of the Demonic Threat**

*"And he began to entreat Him earnestly not to send them out of the country. Now there a big herd of swine feeding there on the mountain. And the demons entreated Him, saying, 'Send us into the swine so that we may enter them.' And He gave them permission. And coming out, the unclean spirits entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, about two thousand of them; and they were drowned in the sea."*

**Hendriksen:** If we are accustomed to associate the good angels with places in which order, beauty, and fullness of life prevail, does it not seem natural, in harmony with Scripture (Matt. 12:43) to link evil angels with regions where disorder, desolation, desertion, and death dominate?

Better that they afflict animals than humans – this is a distinction that is being obliterated today

This passage condemns our modern materialism and exposes the wrong priorities of organizations like PETA that have lost the crucial distinction between the elevated value of humans over animals – cf. commercials that beseech you to give your \$\$ to Compassion for the saving of a child vs. images of an emaciated dog that somehow deserves your same donation; a matter of priority; Jesus did not come to earth to save the mistreated animals

**James Edwards:** In the eyes of Jesus, the rescue and restoration of one person is more important than vast capital assets. Compared to the redemption of a human being, the loss of the swineherds, considerable though it is, does not rate mentioning.

### **III. (:14-20) EVANGELISM – THE EFFECTIVE POWER AND PRIVILEGE OF OBEDIENT PROCLAMATION VS BLIND REJECTION – TWO CONTRASTING RESPONSES TO THIS MIRACULOUS EXORCISM**

#### **A. (:14-17) Response of the Hard-Hearted Gerasenes – Chased Jesus Away**

##### 1. (:14a) Report of the Herdsmen

*"And their herdsmen ran away and reported it in the city and out in the country."*

##### 2. (:14b-16) Research (Investigation) Into the Miraculous Healing

a. (:14b) Curious Inquiry

*“And the people came to see what it was that had happened.”*

b. (:15a) Careful Verification of the Healing Miracle

*“And they came to Jesus and observed the man who had been demon-possessed”*

- *“sitting down,”*                      **Jesus Changed Him**  
Condition of peace and rest

- *“clothed”*                              **Jesus Clothed Him**  
Condition of modesty and righteousness

- *“and in his right mind,”*      **Jesus Calmed Him**  
Controlled now by his dependence upon the Savior

*“For we have not receive a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind”*

Note the parallel to the calming of the storm in the previous passage

*“the very man who had had the "legion";”*

There could be no mistake – this was the same individual – but now he was radically transformed

c. (:15b) Cowardly Fear

*“and they became frightened.”*

d. (:16) Collaborative Reiteration by Eye Witness Accounts

*“And those who had seen it described to them how it had happened to the demon-possessed man, and all about the swine.”*

3. (:17) Rejection of the Divine Miracle Worker

*“And they began to entreat Him to depart from their region.”*

Saw the facts of the situation ... but did not digest them correctly; wrong moral and spiritual and theological grid – they saw their precious herd of swine disappearing over the cliff and with them their hopes of financial prosperity – obviously had no concern for the welfare of the one who had been demon possessed

**Van Parunak:** Fear of the Lord must always lead in one of two directions: surrendering ourselves to his lordship, or (as here) wanting to dissociate ourselves from him as completely as possible.

**Constable:** Perhaps the people "implored" Jesus "to leave their" area, because they reasoned that if He dealt so severely with evil—He would eventually destroy them, too. Rather than turning *to* Him in worship, they turned *from* Him to the darkness they preferred (cf. John 1:11; 3:19).

Mark's account implies that what happened to the pigs disturbed the local population, suggesting that **economic loss** played a part in their request.

**Deffinbaugh:** As these people began to piece together the previous events, not only of the destruction of the pigs, but also the deliverance of Legion, they began to sense that there was One far more awesome, much more to be feared, than Legion. They had dealt with Legion (I suspect) by forcing him from their presence. Now they would deal with this One greater than he by doing likewise. **It is ironic that while the demons didn't want to leave the country, the dwellers of that land didn't want the Messiah to stay.** Here is one of the few times that a miracle drove people away, rather than to draw them to Jesus. It would seem that these people had no Messianic expectations, and therefore wanted nothing to do with One Who had such awesome power, a power over which they had no control.

## **B. (:18-20) Response of the Healed Gerasene Man – Evangelizing the Region – From Madman to Missionary**

### 1. (:18) Desire to Accompany Jesus

*“And as He was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed was entreating Him that he might accompany Him.”*

Didn't stay very long in this region – back into the boat  
The loneliness of Rejection

### 2. (:19) Directed to Go Home and Give Testimony

*“And He did not let him, but He said to him, ‘Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you.’”*

This was no small deed – *what great things*  
Attributes His motivation to his compassion and mercy – His lovingkindness

### 3. (:20) Dedicated to Proclaiming the Gospel

*“And he went away and began to proclaim in Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him;”*

How long did it take to prepare this man for missionary responsibilities?  
Just go and tell your story

**Constable:** The "Decapolis" was a league of 10 Greek cities, all but one of which stood on the east side of the lake. One of these towns was Gergesa. The others were Damascus, Kanatha, Scythopolis, Hippos, Raphana, Pella, Dion, Philadelphia, and Gadara.

**Scott Grant:** Jesus' dangerous mission to the other side of the sea turns out to be for the sake of only one person. But that person evangelizes the region. When Jesus returned to the region, the residents received him enthusiastically (Mark 6:53-56). Apparently, the man preached effectively. The parables of Mark 4 are played out in the life of this man in Mark 5. He's like the good soil in the parable of the sower and the parable of the seed, bearing fruit thirty, sixty,

and a hundredfold, canceling out the hard-heartedness of his fellow residents. Instead of putting the lamp under a basket or a bed, he puts it on the lamp stand. He listens carefully to Jesus, in line with the parable of the measure. He's the first "bird of the air"—the first Gentile—to nest under the shade of Jesus' mustard plant.

**MacArthur:** Did his ministry have an effect? Look at chapter 7 for a minute. "A little while later, Jesus goes back into Gentile region of Tyre through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee in the region of Decapolis." Jesus makes a visit to the Decapolis region. "And they brought to Him one who is deaf and..." Wait a minute, why would they bring somebody to Him who was deaf? He didn't minister in that area. He had only been there one time, the encounter with this maniac.

4. (:20b) Developing Interest in Jesus  
*"and everyone marveled.*

Not necessarily saving faith – but it did get their attention  
Who is this Jesus that even the demons obey him??

**CONCLUSION:**

Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin?  
The blood of Jesus whispers peace within.

Who is this man that even the wind and the seas obey Him?  
Who is this man that even the demons obey Him?

**Deffinbaugh:** there is in demon possession a counterpart to the filling (or control) of the Holy Spirit. Just as demons desire to possess persons through whom they can exhibit their personalities, so the Spirit of God indwells man, imparting new life, and progressively gaining control so that the character of God is exhibited, but not in such a way as to hinder our individuality and identity. May the Spirit of God be so evident in us that men may see God in our lives.

\* \* \* \* \*

**DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) What type of demonic activity do we see in our day?
- 2) What are the great things that Jesus has done personally for us that should be at the core of our witnessing?
- 3) How should we respond to animal rights groups in order to maintain the biblical priority of the distinction between humans and animals as opposed to the evolutionist mindset that just sees a difference in degree and not in kind?
- 4) Why did some respond in fear to this marvelous healing?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Deffinbaugh:** Although the manifestations of demonization vary widely, this man showed several of the classic symptoms.

**(1) Severe personality change.** The ‘before’ and ‘after’ descriptions of the demoniac reveal that he was a totally different person under demonic influence. It is something like the behavior and personality change in a man who is totally intoxicated. More than this, however, is the fact that the man’s own identity and individuality were swallowed up by the demons with him. When Jesus asked his name the man answered, “Legion, for we are many” (Mark 5:9). Those who have witnessed demon possession tell us that each demon has its own distinct personality and that the individual possessed begins to manifest the distinct personality of the demon by which he is possessed. If it is a feminine spirit, the voice will be a feminine one, if masculine then very manly.

**(2) Anti-social behavior.** The conduct of this pathetic individual was obviously anti-social. That is why he was living in the solitude of the tombs, away from civilization.

**(3) Spiritual insight.** The demoniac further evidenced demon activity by the depth of his spiritual insight. Instantly he recognized the Lord Jesus to be the Son of God (verse 7). There was a source of spiritual insight beyond human capabilities here. In addition, Matthew includes the comment, “Have You come here to torment us before the time?” (Matthew 8:29). This reveals to us that demons have an intuitive knowledge of their impending doom.

**(4) Super-human strength.** Also, frequently associated with demon possession was a super-human strength (cf. Acts 19:16). The demoniac was uncontrollable by any of the normal means of human confinement. No matter what men attempted to bind him with, he broke loose. No one was strong enough to subdue him (verses 3, 4).

**(5) Torment.** The price tag of possession was high, for those who fell victim to the demons agonized in constant torment. Such was the case with this man (cf. verse 5). His animal-like shrieks must have sent chills up the spines of any who were nearby.

**(6) Tendency towards self-destruction.** Another indication of demonic control is the fact that this man was continually doing harm to himself by gashing himself with stones (verse 5). Other demoniacs described in Scripture were bent on self-destruction as well (cf. Mark 9:17-29). The destructive desires of the demons were dramatically carried out in the drowning of the swine.

### **Alan Carr: The Maniac Who Became a Messenger**

Jacob Koshy grew up in Singapore with one driving ambition: to be a success in life, to gain all the money and possessions he could. That led him into the world of drugs and gambling, and eventually he became the lord of an international smuggling network. In 1980, he was arrested and placed in a government drug rehabilitation prison in Singapore.

He was frustrated beyond endurance. All his goals, purposes, dreams, and ambitions were locked up with him in a tiny cell, and his heart was full of a cold emptiness.

He was a smoker, and cigarettes weren't allowed in the center. Instead, he smuggled in tobacco

and rolled it in the pages of a Gideon Bible. One day he fell asleep while smoking. He awoke to find that the cigarette had burned out, and all that remained was a scrap of charred paper. He unrolled it and read what was written: "Saul, Saul, Why do you persecute me?"

Jacob asked for another Bible and read the entire story of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. He suddenly realized that if God could help someone like Saul, God could help him, too. There in his cell he knelt and prayed, asking Christ to come into his life and change him. He began crying and couldn't stop. The tears of a wasted life washed away his pain, and God redeemed him. He started sharing his story with the other prisoners, and as soon as he was released he became involved in a church. He met a Christian woman, married, and is now a missionary in the Far East where he tells people far and wide, "Who would have believed that I could find the truth by smoking the Word of God?"

#### Outline of Passage:

- I. (:1-7) **The Man's Condition**
  - A. (:3) His Home
  - B. (:3-5) His Helplessness
  - C. (:5) His Hopelessness
  - D. (:6-7) His Helper
- II. (:8-17) **The Man's Conversion**
  - A. (:8-10) It Was Divine
  - B. (:11-14) It Was Dramatic
  - C. (:15-17) It Was Definite
- III. (:18-20) **The Man's Commission**
  - A. (:18) The Man's Wish
  - B. (:19) The Master's Will
  - C. (:20) The Man's Work

#### Alternative Outline:

- I. (:1-6) **The Man's Slavery**
  - A. (:2) His Master
  - B. (:3-5) His Misery
  - C. (:2, 6) His Mentality
- II. (:6-13) **The Man's Savior**
  - A. (:1) The Savior's Purpose
  - B. (:6-12) The Savior's Perception
  - C. (:13) The Savior's Power
- III. (:14-20) **The Man's Salvation**
  - A. (:15) Salvation Changed Him
  - B. (:15) Salvation Clothed Him
  - C. (:15) Salvation Calmed Him
  - D. (:18-20) Salvation Compelled Him

**Scott Grant:** Many of us who follow Jesus feel that we're not doing enough to share the gospel. On the one hand, we don't know how to "evangelize." On the other hand, we're afraid to evangelize. Even our meager efforts to "witness for Christ" seemingly fall on deaf ears. We fight off feelings of guilt because of our fears and ineffectiveness by concluding, "I'm not a gifted evangelist."



Maybe we're making things too complicated. Jesus told his first disciples, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men." He commissioned all his disciples to preach the gospel (Mark 1:17, 3:14). Jesus takes it upon himself to make us what he wants us to be. In Mark 5:1-20, he meets a tortured individual and makes an evangelist of him—all in a day. What will Jesus make of us? Will we follow him? Will he make us become fishers of men?

**MacArthur:** This kind of power over the kingdom of darkness is only possible when God is wielding it...whether it's in the casting out of heaven, or the casting in to the Lake of Fire, or here casting thousands of demons out of one man, this is the power of God on display. This is the most extreme encounter with the powers of supernatural wickedness anywhere in Scripture. There are no such accounts in the Old Testament. And in the New Testament, this is far and away the most extreme and the most extensive. Our Lord throughout His ministry vanquished demons, He did it regularly, He did it repeatedly, He did it often. But there was no such display as this one. This, to indicate that He is, in fact, the Messiah, that He is the Savior, that He is the Son of God, that He is God in human flesh who wields absolute limitless power over the forces of hell...Satan and all his realm. . .

Remind yourself of 1 John 3:8...1 John 3:8 says, "*The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.*" That's the New Testament fulfillment statement of Genesis 3:15. That would be the seed of the woman who will come and crush the serpent's head, says the Old Testament, Genesis 3:15. The New Testament says, "*The Son of Man has come for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.*" *Destroy, luo*, to undo, to remove, to annihilate, to obliterate the works, *erga*, action, effect, impact. That's why in John 12:31 he said, "*The ruler of this world is cast out.*" John 16:11, "*The ruler of this world is judged.*" Romans 16:20, "*Satan is under your feet. He is a subjected power.*" So our Lord is displaying His ability to fulfill His purpose of bringing to naught, obliterating the works of the devil. He has total power over them and He will be able to do what He says He will do in the end when it tells us in Matthew 25:41 that He prepared the Lake of Fire for the devil and his angels. He has the power to place them there. Scripture makes it clear and, believe me, the demons know it...the demons know it. . .

He's raging, violent, deadly, supernaturally strong, deviant, perverted. There's nobody like this guy in Scripture, nobody. Cause Satan doesn't usually operate this way. He disguises himself as...what?...angel of light. He likes to go to church in a gray suit, likes to sit in a pew, likes to stand behind a pulpit, likes to teach in a seminary. That's what he likes to do. He disguises himself as an angel of light. The closer he can get to Christianity, the closer he can get to the truth and deviate people from it and lead people astray, the happier he is. He runs a clandestine operation. Only occasionally do you see this kind of thing. And we see it from time to time in our world, don't we? These deviated, perverted people that we call monsters that do things that are beyond comprehension for normal people. Satan usually doesn't operate that way. He wants to hide in the pews among the respectably religious people. . .

#### Outline:

The first power is the **devastating power of demons**. Second is the **delivering power of deity**...the delivering power of deity. . . Now that brings us to the final power that's manifest here . . . the **damning power of depravity** . . .

TEXT: Mark 5:21-43

TITLE: FAITH THAT DEFIES DEFEAT – DOMINION OVER DISEASE AND DEATH

**BIG IDEA:**

**IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO TRUST IN JESUS FOR DELIVERANCE --  
NEVER MISINTERPRET GOD'S DELAYS TO BE GOD'S DENIALS**

**INTRODUCTION:**

One of the many perversions of our sin nature is our **perverted sense of time**. We have our own timetable that dictates our expectations of when God should act and accomplish X or Y. Our faith can limp along for a time . . . but it tends to give out once that internal alarm clock goes off telling us that the time is up; the opportunity for God to act is over; the **delay** on God's part as far as we can tell has now transitioned to outright **denial** of our quest for deliverance.

**Illustration:** time clock in chess

A young woman longs to see God provide her with a suitable marriage partner. She prays diligently and seeks to order her priorities in accordance with God's kingdom goals; yet nothing happens. It seems as if her time has passed her by.

A young couple desires to be blessed with the joy of parenthood. Month after month they get their hopes up only to be disappointed time and again. Finally they face the reality that stared Abraham and Sarah in the face back in Genesis 12 – How shall I give birth when I am so old?

A person who has been a Christian for many years understands God's requirements regarding some life dominating sin issue . . . but they have been this way for so long . . . they just excuse their behavior and shrug their shoulders and say "That's just the way that I am" and give up the spiritual fight for victory and deliverance. They sit in the pew every Sunday and listen to the truth of the Word of God . . . but have very little commitment to seeing God change their lives.

2 miracles – both hopeless situations from the human perspective

**IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO TRUST IN JESUS FOR DELIVERANCE --  
NEVER MISINTERPRET GOD'S DELAYS TO BE GOD'S DENIALS**

**3 STAGES OF FAITH**

**I. (:21-24) HOPE – LEADS TO THE INITIATION OF FAITH –  
GET STARTED**

**A. (:21) Accessibility to Jesus is a Privilege We Take for Granted**

*“And when Jesus had crossed over again in the boat to the other side,  
a great multitude gathered about Him; and He stayed by the seashore.”*

Disciples might have had to think twice about recrossing the Sea of Galilee after their recent harrowing experience

Look at the lengths these crowds went to in order to be in the presence of Jesus. They knew He had traveled over to the country of the Gerasenes . . . but here they were waiting for Him when

He returned (near Capernaum) and they pressed up against Him. Word traveled fast that Jesus was back in Galilee – on the west side of the Sea of Galilee.

What type of access do you believe that you have to Jesus?

- denied? Do you believe that Jesus is not interested in you or available to you?
- restricted? Do you believe that you must jump through certain hoops of works and worth in order to get His attention? Barriers that seem insurmountable and unobtainable?
- unlimited? What does the Bible say?

**B. (:22-23) Faith Seeks to Engage the Power of Jesus While There is Still Hope**

*“And one of the synagogue officials named Jairus came up, and upon seeing Him, fell at His feet, and entreated Him earnestly, saying, ‘My little daughter is at the point of death; please come and lay Your hands on her, that she may get well and live.’”*

“*Jairus*” = Gk form of Hebrew name Jair = he will give light

Concerned for Daddy’s little girl; she was only 12; an only child (Luke)

**Borgman:** “*implore*” – earlier usages: 5:10 demon possessed man; 5:12; 5:17 the townspeople; 5:18 – earnest begging and beseeching from a variety of sources – moved Jesus

**Constable:** “*Synagogue rulers*” were not priests, but lay leaders, who were responsible for the worship services and the synagogue's physical facilities. This honorary title also described distinguished members of the synagogue. As such, “*Jairus*” (the Greek form of the Hebrew “*Jair*”: “he will give light or awaken”; cf. Num. 32:41; Judg. 10:3) undoubtedly enjoyed much respect in his community.

**MacArthur:** Matthew compresses the later information that came as they were moving toward the house that the daughter had died into a statement that the man, no doubt, said later, “My daughter has just died, but come and lay Your hand on her and she will live.” No, he believed Jesus could heal her. He believed that Jesus could raise her from the dead.

**C. (:24) The Journey of Faith Can Have Many Twists and Turns and Unexpected Delays**

*“And He went off with him; and a great multitude was following Him and pressing in on Him.”*

The pathway of faith takes you through a minefield of dangers and conflicts

What type of hope do you have in the power of Jesus to work on your behalf?

Is your hope engaging the power of Jesus by faith?

Have you started on that journey of faith?

Application: **Get started** – you can’t sit on the sidelines

Now the story ramps up in terms of drama and intensity – not just dealing with the challenge of faith for Jairus regarding his sick daughter ... but now we add into the equation the complexity of the faith of another woman who comes to Jesus seeking deliverance from a 12 year bleeding plague ... park Jairus over on the sideline for a moment and focus in on this new woman

## II. (:25-34) CONVICTION – LEADS TO THE ACTIVITY OF FAITH – TAKE ACTION – TRAGIC INTERRUPTION?? OR DIVINE APPOINTMENT??

### A. (:25-28) Conviction Regarding the Power of Jesus Energizes Faith

#### 1. (:25) Persistent Problem

*“And a woman who had had a hemorrhage for twelve years,”*

The Greek word that is translated "*hemorrhage*" or "flow of blood" here is the same Greek word used in the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Old Testament) in **Leviticus 15:25-27**, where laws about menstruation are set forth.

#### 2. (:26) Discouraging Distress

##### a. Medical Failures

*“and had endured much at the hands of many physicians,”*

##### b. Financial Drain

*“and had spent all that she had and was not helped at all,”*

Healthcare costs were an issue back then as well

##### c. Deteriorating Condition

*“but rather had grown worse,”*

\*\*\*\*\*

**Alan Carr: Her Agonies** - A constant flow of blood, such as this, would have caused this woman untold suffering. Let's take a moment to examine some of the areas in which she suffered.

1. **She Suffered Physically** - From the constant blood loss, this poor woman would have been weak and anemic. She would have been pale. She would have had no energy at all. The least of efforts would have worn her out. The word "*plague*" is the same word that is translated "*whip*" elsewhere. Her disease was like a scourge, constantly beating her down, day by day!
2. **She Suffered Medically** - We are also told that she had tried all the remedies of all the physicians of her day. We are told that she "*suffered*" under their care.

An example of their "*medical*" techniques can be found in the Talmud. There are eleven remedies prescribed in the Talmud. Some are potions, most are simply superstitious nonsense.

Everything from carrying various concoctions of herbs; to frightening the sufferer; to having her stand over a ditch while someone says "*Arise from thy flux*" was suggested as a possible cure.

One remedy even called for the woman to carry an ear of corn taken from the dung of a white donkey. It is hard for us to imagine the kinds of indignities those doctors put her through.

3. **She Had Suffered Socially** - She almost certainly was not married, because through physical contact, she would defile her husband. If she had ever been married, her

husband would have been probably divorced her. She could not work around others because of the danger of defilement. This reduced her to a life of begging scraps of food from a distance. Her condition left her on the fringes of society.

4. **She Had Suffered Emotionally** - Since the Bible says that she had been this way for 12 years, and considering the average life span in those days, it is safe to assume that she has probably been this way since just after puberty. She has lived her life moving from one rejection to another. She is lonely, isolated and desperate!
5. **She Had Suffered Religiously** - Under the Law, **Lev. 15:19; 25-27**, this woman was to be considered unclean. Anything or anyone that she touched was also considered unclean. As a result, she could not mingle with people in public, lest she cause them to be defiled. She could not go to the Women's Court of the Temple, because she was unclean.
6. **She Had Suffered Financially** - The Bible tells us that she had "*spent all she had*". The doctors and their useless remedies had not helped her. All they had done was drain her bank account dry. She has been left penniless and destitute.

\* \* \* \* \*

### 3. (:27) Aggressive (but Guarded) Approach

*"after hearing about Jesus, came up in the crowd behind Him, and touched His cloak."*

How could the unclean one presume to touch the most holy one?

**Hendriksen:** She is not going to come into physical contact with Jesus himself. She will merely touch his garment, and even then only one of the four wool tassels which every Israelite was ordered to wear on the corners of his square, outer robe (Num. 15:38; cf. Deut. 22:12) to remind him of the law of God.

### 4. (:28) Faith-based Mindset

*"For she thought, 'If I just touch His garments, I shall get well.'"*

**Constable:** Mark described the woman's plight with a series of seven participles. She was, before she met Jesus, incurable. She had faith in Jesus' ability to heal her and a belief that she could obtain healing by touching His clothing (cf. 3:10; 6:56). She tried to remain unobtrusive, since her condition rendered her and all who contacted her ritually unclean (Lev. 15:25-27). Perhaps she had come from some distance, since apparently no one in the crowd recognized her, or objected to her being there.

**Zeisler:** there are all kinds of things that can put us in the category that this woman is in. A disease inside, an affliction, a problem that I long to be free of and yet I cannot turn myself loose from and it has done nothing but make life hard to live. There are folks who sense these things about themselves, who just like this woman have gone to physician after physician, participated in every medical fad, been in various therapy groups, had consciousness raised, read all the self-help books, listened to all the media preachers—people who, just like this woman, have spent hundreds and thousands of dollars getting the best training, Lifespring training, buying wheat

germ and jogging suits and everything else, desperately hoping that, "If I just get this thin—if I just take this, join this group, buy this—it can free me" and ultimately they never work. The condition persists. It has not gone away, and the next opportunity is ruined as well.

## **B. (:29-34) Conviction Regarding the Power of Jesus Leads to Complete Healing**

### 1. (:29) Physical Healing –

What did the Woman Feel?

*“And immediately the flow of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction.”*

**Borgman:** “affliction” – not in the sense of trial; scourge; whip; some sort of chastisement – text give us no background about divine chastisement ... but you could assume so

### 2. (:30-33) Healing Attributed to the Power of Jesus and Humble Confession –

What did Jesus Feel? How did the Woman Respond?

*“And immediately Jesus, perceiving in Himself that the power proceeding from Him had gone forth, turned around in the crowd and said, ‘Who touched My garments?’ And His disciples said to Him, ‘You see the multitude pressing in on You, and You say, ‘Who touched Me?’ And He looked around to see the woman who had done this. But the woman fearing and trembling, aware of what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him, and told Him the whole truth.”*

Did the whole truth include some confession regarding sexual impurity or sin that was directly connected with her affliction???

**Hiebert:** She feared His displeasure because the healing had been secured without His permission. She may also have dreaded His anger because her touch had made Him ceremonially unclean until the evening (Lev 15:19).

### 3. (:34) Spiritual Healing Attributed to Faith

*“And He said to her, ‘Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your affliction.’”*

Includes the forgiveness of sins and restoration of relationship of peace with God

**Constable:** Jesus did not rebuke her, even though her faith in Him seems to have been mixed with superstition. Yet He wanted to speak to her, lest she conclude that *touching* Him was what cured her. His words were full of spiritual sensitivity and compassion. She had nothing to fear from Him. Perhaps the woman was afraid because she had obtained Jesus' power surreptitiously (stealthily). Still, we have seen that a typical response to the revelation of Jesus' power was fear (cf. 4:41; 5:15).

**Zeisler:** At this point, Jesus had been on an errand that had life-or-death consequences. A little girl was dying. In fact, she died before he could get to her. An important man, a synagogue official, was involved, somebody who carried weight in the community; and a crowd of people were accompanying him, so many that Jesus was jostled on every side. His own disciples treated him as if he were a fool for stopping and could not understand why he seemed not to heed the

urgency of proceeding quickly. Yet Jesus loved that woman enough to stop the procession, enough to set everything else aside.

Application: It's not just enough to Get started in your faith; **you must aggressively take action**

Now we resume the story from the vantage point of the longsuffering father Jairus

### **III. (:35-43) ASSURANCE – LEADS TO PERSEVERANCE IN FAITH – DON'T GIVE UP**

#### **A. (:35-36) God's Delays Present a Threat to Persevering Faith**

##### 1. (:35) Word of Discouragement from the World

*"While He was still speaking, they came from the house of the synagogue official, saying, 'Your daughter has died; why trouble the Teacher anymore?'"*

##### 2. (:36) Word of Encouragement from the Savior

*"But Jesus, overhearing what was being spoken, said to the synagogue official, 'Do not be afraid any longer, only believe.'"*

**Edwards:** The present tense of the Greek imperative means to *keep* believing, to hold onto faith rather than give in to despair.

Cycle: Birth of a Dream

Death of a Dream

Fulfillment of a Dream

**MacArthur:** The delay has proven deadly. Did they know that Jairus was going to find Jesus? Certainly they did. Certainly he would have told his wife, family, friends, but now Jesus has delayed and she is dead. This is reminiscent, isn't it, of Martha's attitude in **John 11:21** when they sent word that Lazarus was sick. Jesus was up on the Jordan and they sent word to Him that Lazarus, His friend, was sick and Jesus delayed. And when He finally arrived, Martha says to Him, *"It's too late...it's too late. You could have done something if You had gotten here before He died."*

**Deffinbaugh:** "Where there's death, there's hope."

#### **B. (:37-39) God's Perspective Provides Assurance to Persevering Faith**

##### 1. (:37) Training Opportunity for Devoted Disciples

*"And He allowed no one to follow with Him, except Peter and James and John the brother of James."*

They will have the opportunity to grow in their faith

Preparation for their leadership roles in their Great Commission ministry

##### 2. (:38) Perspective of the World – Weeping and Wailing

*"And they came to the house of the synagogue official; and He beheld a commotion, and people loudly weeping and wailing."*

Typical expressions of grief at funerals in that day  
They hired professional mourners – as well as family and friends  
Quite a commotion

**Hiebert:** The Mishnah stipulated that even the poorest husband “in Israel should hire not less than two flutes and one wailing woman” when his wife died (Ketuboth 4.4). The custom of hiring such mourners went back to ancient times (Jer. 9:17; Amos 5:16).

3. (:39) Perspective of the Savior – No Problem – Peace and Tranquility

*“And entering in, He said to them, ‘Why make a commotion and weep? The child has not died, but is asleep.’”*

**C. (:40-43) God’s Resurrection Power Demonstrates His Dominion Over Disease and Death**

1. (:40a) The Mocking of Faith

*“And they began laughing at Him.”*

2. (:40b) The Focus of Faith

*“But putting them all out, He took along the child's father and mother and His own companions, and entered the room where the child was.”*

3. (:41-42) The Exercise of Resurrection Power

*“And taking the child by the hand, He said to her, ‘Talitha kum!’ (which translated means, ‘Little girl, I say to you, arise!’). And immediately the girl rose and began to walk; for she was twelve years old. And immediately they were completely astounded.”*

*“they were amazed with a great amazement”* – same thought in noun and verb

4. (:43) The Practical Instructions

a. Caution Regarding Stirring Up Opposition

*“And He gave them strict orders that no one should know about this;”*

Strange request – you just raised someone from the dead; how is it even possible that no one should know about this?

b. Care for the Physical Needs of the Young Girl

*“and He said that something should be given her to eat.”*

**Constable:** When Jesus restored life, recovery was instantaneous (Gr. *euthys*, twice in this verse), not gradual, as was also true with former prophets (cf. 1 Kings 17:19-20; 2 Kings 4:33). Perhaps Mark mentioned the girl's age because she was 12, and the woman whom Jesus had just healed had suffered with her affliction for 12 years (v. 25). The woman had begun living when she



should have died from her incurable condition. The girl had died just when she should have begun living as a young woman. Jesus could—and did— deliver both from death. Everyone present expressed extreme amazement at Jesus' power (cf. 4:41). The Greek word, from *existemi*, literally means they were "out of their minds with great amazement."

**James Richards:** What does Mark accomplish by sandwiching the woman's story into the story of Jairus? Jairus and the woman have only one thing in common: both are victims of desperate circumstances who have no hope apart from Jesus. Otherwise their stories diverge sharply. Jairus has a name and a position. As ruler of the synagogue, he has enough clout to summon Jesus to his house. The woman has none of these. Her name is not given (or remembered), and she has no position. Her only identification is her shame, a menstrual hemorrhage. She must approach Jesus from behind, whereas Jairus approaches Jesus face to face. Jairus, in other words, is a person of status and privilege. But in typical Markan irony, he does not hold an advantage regarding the one thing that matters. It is the woman who exemplifies faith, and in this respect their roles are reversed. Despite her embarrassing circumstances, she pushes through both crowd and disciples to reach Jesus. Her gender, namelessness, uncleanness, and shame – none of these will stop her from reaching Jesus. To this undaunted woman comes the healing and liberating word, "*Daughter, your faith has healed you; go in peace.*" When Jesus says, "*Don't be afraid; just believe,*" how should Jairus understand the command to believe? What kind of faith should he have? The answer is that he must have the kind of faith the woman has (vs. 34)! The woman exemplifies and defines faith for Jairus, which means to trust Jesus despite everything to the contrary. That faith knows no limits – not even the raising of a dead child.

## CONCLUSION:

- Get Started -- **HOPE**
- Take Action -- **CONVICTION**
- Don't Give up -- **ASSURANCE**

**Heb. 11:1-2** "*Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old gained approval.*"

**Heb. 12:1-2** "*Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*"

\* \* \* \* \*

## DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Where else in the gospels do we see the power of the Savior combined with His compassion and pity?
- 2) What types of obstacles or delays make it difficult for us to persevere in faith?
- 3) In what ways is it helpful to characterize death as sleeping?

4) How does our faith counteract fear?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

#### **Van Parunak: 3 Healing Miracles in Mark 5**

Application: Though all deal with various physical ailments, all have spiritual overtones as well, and we can see these as examples of how we need to be healed spiritually.

1) The Demoniac (1-20): oppressed by the Prince of Darkness. So we "*walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience*" (Eph. 2:2).

2) The Woman with an Issue of Blood (24-34): she was thus ritually unclean (Lev 15:25-27,31) and would have been excluded from temple worship or from contact with observant Jews. So we were once alienated from the people of God (Eph. 2:11-12).

3) Jairus' Daughter was sick unto death (21-23, 35-43), and in fact dead when the Lord reached her. So we "were dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1).

**MacArthur:** Who is able to such a massive mighty work? Who can destroy demons? Who can destroy disease? Who can destroy death? Who can create? Only one, only one. One who has power over demons, power over disease, power over death and even power over the creation itself. One who can control wind. One who can control water. One who can create organs, limbs, food. One who can destroy, as it were, Satan and all his legions, gives evidence of His power to do that by dismissing with a command an entire legion of demons who had taken up residence in a maniac in Gadara. This is the one. Power over disease, that is repletely evident in the New Testament record of the gospels, one healing after another to the degree that He banishes illness from Israel for the time of His ministry. Power over demons again and again, week after week, day after day displayed. Power over death as well. And here in the text before us, Mark's first recording of a resurrection. The one who gives life to demonstrate that He is the life.

The miracles then were Jesus' self-revelation, the disclosure, the manifestation, the verification of His person by His power. To go along with that unparalleled power was unparalleled pity...unparalleled pity. There could have been so many ways in which Jesus could have demonstrated His deity in displays of power. He could have done powerful things of all kinds, but He chose expressions of power that were connected to delivering people from the sufferings of life, whether it was hunger, whether it was the fear of drowning, whether it was demon-possession, or whether it was disabling and even deadly disease. That power was accompanied always by pity for the expressions of His power were filled with mercy toward human pain and suffering. Again summed up in the wonderful, familiar words of John, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son."

So here again, another time in Mark's account, chapter 5 verses 21 and following, we see both the power and the pity of our Lord made manifest. . .

They're an interesting duo. They have no relationship to each other. There's no reason they

would even know each other. But they're brought together in the text of Matthew, Mark and Luke. They're two, a man and a woman, one rich, one poor; one respected, one rejected; one honored, one ashamed; one leading the synagogue, the other excommunicated from the synagogue; one with a twelve-year-old daughter dying, and one with a twelve-year-old disease suffering. They remind us of what Mary had said in her Magnificat in Luke 1:52 when she said, "God was a Savior who brought down rulers and exalted those who were humble." Here is a perfect illustration of that. . .

What an example of ministry He is. Accessible, available, interruptible, indomitable, imperturbable, charitable and the ultimate act of His charity, the ultimate act of His love is the sacrifice of Himself. Hold the message until the story is complete. And we, on this side of the cross, have the full message. Aren't we thankful for that?

**Deffinbaugh:** Not only does Mark demonstrate the power of our Lord Jesus, but he also reveals His person. What we see in these passages is not just that God is a God of infinite power, but that He is a God of infinite compassion and tenderness. He is deeply touched by human needs. He is sensitive to our sufferings and trials in life. He cares not only for the raising up and putting down of kingdoms, but also for the missed meal at a time of illness.

Those of us who are so-called 'Calvinists' are known for our emphasis on the severity of God. We must proclaim to men the bad news of sin, of the righteous indignation of God, and of the eternal punishment men face apart from faith in Christ. But as Paul reminds us, "Behold then the kindness and severity of God" (Romans 11:22a). In emphasizing the severity of God, let us not represent God as austere and aloof, for He is a God of infinite kindness. Nowhere is that more clear than in these miracles recorded by Mark in the fourth and fifth chapters.

### **Brian Borgman: Christ's Sovereignty Over Disease and Death**

He is the Creator of all that is good and one day will restore His creation which means the abolition of sickness and death; sovereignty over 2 of our greatest enemies

Moving passage; grips our affections – especially those of us who are parents

#### **1) (:21-24) A Desperate Father's Request**

Crowd just before had told Jesus to go home; to leave; now He receives the opposition reaction; hearts are totally different just a few miles away; crowd compressed in on Him; decided it was best for Him to stay there at the seashore;

Jairus – probably a wealthy man; even wealthy people endure hardship and are not exempt from sickness and death; his wealth could not buy health; zeal and determination; sense of urgency and utmost respect – falls down before Jesus; sickness and death is great leveler in society; Recognized his 12 year old daughter was about to die; knew there was somebody He had heard about who could help

Not as much faith as the Roman centurion; a very imperfect faith

Mob of people moving rapidly with Jesus and Jairus as they head for his house – curious to see Jesus at work; Jesus could not move fast enough for Jairus

#### **2) (:25-34) A Desperate Woman's Attempt at Securing Healing – Lord Jesus condescends to imperfect faith marbled with superstition**

This interruption has a name, an affliction, a need

**Matthew Henry:** "here is another one who comes clandestinely to steal a cure"

Tremendous amount of determination; would have been weak from her bleeding; ceremonially

unclean; hopeless people go to the Great Physician; still have a glimmer of hope  
Jesus maybe can help me =thought implanted from on high  
Her faith was very imperfect – her inability to come forward publicly and request healing;  
wanted to remain incognito, secret; grain of superstition in her faith – was there anything magical  
about Jesus’ garments? Not a walking power plant  
Impertinence of the disciples –  
She falls down and spills her guts;  
Jesus commends her faith and seals her salvation with simple words

### **3) (:35-43) Fear Vanquished and Death Conquered**

Delay seemed costly –  
She was an interruption; a delay; Jairus standing by – can we please get on with it!  
Tenderness with which people break the news to Jairus; his heart must have sank; must have felt  
surge of bitterness towards this woman who had taken up precious time; he got there first;  
appears that Jesus is not fair and takes care of others better than others;  
Jesus makes it sound so easy – “*just believe*”  
Jesus clears the crowd out; not there to put on a faith healing show; concern and compassion for  
Jairus and his family;  
Adopted practices of pagan nations = paying for professional mourners at funeral; whole  
household of these mourners – just a job for these people; superficiality of this scene;  
Jewish traditionalism was cold and heartless but Jesus full of love and compassion;  
These two words *Talitha kum* stuck in the mind of Peter;  
Their hope was realized and their joy was restored = the business of Jesus;  
Not yet time for Jesus to go to the cross; a number of miracles kept in relative secrecy; No one  
ever cared for me like Jesus – tenderness and compassion – she is hungry – give her something  
to eat

TEXT: Mark 6:1-6

TITLE: FAMILIARITY BREEDS CONTEMPT – LESSON ON REJECTION

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE SHOCKING REALITY FOR GOD’S MESSENGERS:  
THOSE WHO KNOW YOU THE BEST BELIEVE YOU THE LEAST**

**INTRODUCTION:** (Parallel -- **Matt. 13:54-58**)

We come this morning to a very short story – but one of the saddest stories in the gospel accounts. In Chap. 5 we saw numerous incidents where Faith (despite its limitations) triumphed. As we open up Chap. 6 we see the tragedy of lack of faith. We are going to see Jesus rejected in His home town Nazareth. Then next week we will see the disciples commissioned for their short term missionary project with the dominant story being the beheading of John the Baptist by the unbelieving Roman ruler Herod Antipas.

General maxim – there certainly are exceptions to the rule

**Mark Copeland:** You have likely heard the saying “familiarity breeds contempt”, which means...  
a. The better we know people, the more likely we are to find fault with them. - **The New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy**

b. If you know someone very well or experience something a lot, you stop respecting them. – **The Free Dictionary**

c. The more you know something or someone, the more you start to find faults and dislike things about it or them. - **UsingEnglish.com**

**Van Parunak:** A specific episode to show them how rejection can come not only from the religious leaders (which we have seen several times already) but also from the masses (new here), and how to deal with it.

**THE SHOCKING REALITY FOR GOD’S MESSENGERS:  
THOSE WHO KNOW YOU THE BEST BELIEVE YOU THE LEAST**

**4 SOBERING INSIGHTS REGARDING REJECTION**

**I. (:1-2A) FAMILIAR HOMECOMING SETTING: REJECTION HURTS MOST WHEN THERE IS AN EXPECTATION OF POSITIVE ACCEPTANCE**

**A. (:1a) Stealth Departure from Capernaum -- Resurrection Miracle Did Not Secure Acceptance**

*“And He went out from there,”*

After raising Jairus’ daughter from the dead He had commanded that no one spread the word about that dramatic miracle; He did not want to make a big deal and stir up further opposition; it was time to get out of Dodge

Journey of about 25 miles southwest to Nazareth

**MacArthur:** Jesus went out from there, meaning Capernaum where He had based His Galilean ministry up to this point. This marks a crisis, by the way, in the history of Capernaum. At this point when He leaves, He never comes back to reestablish Himself there. It's no more His home. No longer is the center of His Galilean ministry, only occasionally does He visit there and only in passing. Capernaum has heard enough and seen enough, plenty to be responsible for believing.

Furthermore, they don't need more information. They don't need more revelation. And additionally the growing power and hostility of the Pharisees and the scribes makes it dangerous for Him to go there. And then there's the nearness of Herod's residence in Tiberias not far away which made it nearly impossible for Him to be in Capernaum. And furthermore, Capernaum was doomed. Listen to **Matthew 11**. "He began to denounce the cities...verse 20...in which most of His miracles were done because they didn't repent. Woe to you, Chorazin, woe to you Bethsaida, for if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sack cloth and ashes. Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you," that is to say, it will be more tolerable in hell for idolatrous Gentiles than it will be for religious Jews who rejected Christ. "And you, Capernaum...verse 23...will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend to Hades for if the miracles that occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day. Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you. In hell it would have been better for you to be a homosexual pervert living in Sodom than to be a synagogue-attending, self-righteous Jew living in Capernaum." That town is cursed.

## **B. (:1b) Uneventful Home Town Reception in Nazareth**

*"and He came into His home town;"*

A small village of no consequence – about 500 inhabitants; surely everybody knew everybody else; how could anyone significant come out of Nazareth?

Where was the Palm Sunday Hallelujah Chorus with the big band and the adulation?

Imagine the type of home town reception for a returning war hero or a big-time celebrity – parades down main street; political figures out to greet you and give you a key to the city; Did you ever see the home town visits by the American Idol finalists – huge crowds cheering and worshiping their entertainment idols; longing for just a glimpse of their face or maybe an autograph

Jesus has been off on a widespread ministry tour – teaching with authority; performing impressive miracles; what type of reception did he find back at Nazareth? No crowds thronging around Him; no accolades

Remember what had transpired when He was driven out of the synagogue on His last visit

**Wiersbe:** Jesus returned to Nazareth, where a year before He had been rejected by the people and evicted from the synagogue (**Luke 4:16-30**). It was certainly an act of grace on His part to give the people another opportunity to hear His Word, believe, and be saved, and yet their hearts were still hard. This time, they did not evict Him: they simply did not take Him seriously.

**MacArthur:** It is in its ancient configuration about sixty acres on a rocky hillside on the road to nowhere. The best guess is the town had about 500 residents, not exactly a booming metropolis, about 500 residents. It is so obscure that it is never mentioned in the Old Testament, never mentioned in the Jewish Mishnah, never mentioned in the Jewish Talmud, never mentioned by Josephus. And no church ever appeared there until the fourth century A.D. Our Lord returns to this little small town for one final visit to the people who were most familiar with Him. If you grow up for 30 years in a town of 500, you know everybody and everybody knows you. About a year earlier, He had made that other visit when they tried to kill Him.

**Wessel:** That Jesus was considered by the Galileans as a Nazarene is implied by Mark 1:9, 24; John 1:46. Even though he was born in Bethlehem, since his family lived in Nazareth and he had been brought up there, it was natural to regard it as his hometown.

**Illustration:** Driving Teen Haven van – blew out a tire on Surekill Expressway outside of Phila; went to service station of proprietor I had known as a youth. Expected special treatment.

**Hiebert:** The inhabitants of Nazareth did not flock to Him as soon as He arrived. They did not give their returning townsman an excited welcome.

### **C. (:1c) Loyal Following by His Disciples – Preparation for Ministry**

*“and His disciples followed Him.”*

**Wessel:** The incident Mark records here should not be thought of as a personal visit by Jesus to his family. Rather, he comes as a rabbi accompanied by his disciples

Should be instructive to them regarding what type of reception they could expect after sacrificial ministry

### **D. (:2a) Consistent Approach to Ministry**

*“And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue;”*

You cannot get a better home field advantage than this  
Here you have the Lord of the Sabbath ... the Messiah, King of the Jews, teaching in his home town synagogue on the Sabbath

Jesus was not driven by peer pressure or what type of popular response He was receiving; He went about His Father's business of preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God consistently – message of repentance and faith

Grace of God providing yet another opportunity for these hard-hearted and blinded folks to hear the word of truth

## **II. (:2b-3) INCREDULOUS RHETORICAL QUESTIONS: REJECTION TAKES OFFENSE BECAUSE OF MORAL AND SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS DESPITE OVERWHELMING EVIDENCE**

### **A. (:2b) Rejection of the Evidence of His Teaching and Miracles –**

Jesus Had Demonstrated Amazing Wisdom and Performed Mighty Miracles

*“and the many listeners were astonished, saying,  
‘Where did this man get these things,  
and what is this wisdom given to Him,  
and such miracles as these performed by His hands?’”*

“*this man*” should not be teaching such words of wisdom and performing such works of power

**Constable:** They wondered "where" Jesus got the teaching and the authority that He demonstrated. They asked each other *who* had given Him the "wisdom" He manifested, and they questioned *how* Jesus had obtained His ability to do "miracles."

## **B. (:3a) Rejection of the Evidence of His Person and Character**

### 1. Familiarity with His Skill Set

*“Is not this the carpenter,”*

Probably demeaning -- just one of the commoners among the disrespected working class who had a trade with their hands – working with stone or metal as well as wood – he was a builder of things with his hands – *tehton* – architect, technician

### 2. Familiarity with His Mother

*“the son of Mary,”*

**Wessel:** Behind this question may be the rumor, circulated during Jesus’ lifetime, that he was illegitimate (cf. John 4:41; 8:41; 9:29)

**Hiebert:** It was the common practice among the Jews to use the father’s name, whether he were alive or dead. A man was called the son of his mother only when his father was unknown.

### 3. Familiarity with His Brothers

*“and brother of James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon?”*

### 4. Familiarity with His Sisters

*“Are not His sisters here with us?”*

**Richards:** By the second century A.D. a reverence for the holy family, and especially for the sanctity of Mary, resulted in the brothers and sisters of Jesus being regarded as children of Joseph by a former marriage. Both the Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions, in dependence on creeds from the fourth century and later, call Mary “ever virgin” and follow the view that Jesus’ siblings were half-brothers and half-sisters. Arguments that Jesus was an only child are based on later dogma, however. The plain sense of v. 3, and of the NT in general, is that Jesus was the oldest of five brothers and at least two sisters, all of whom were the natural children of Joseph and Mary.

## **C. (:3b) Rejection Expressed in Amazing Unbelief**

*“And they took offense at Him.”*

Who do you think you are? You can’t fool us. We have known you since you were young.



**Wessel:** The word translated “*they took offense*” is from *skandalizomai*, from which the English word “scandal” is derived. . . The idea conveyed by the Greek verb is that of being offended and repelled to the point of abandoning (whether temporarily or permanently, the word does not specify) belief in the Word (cf. Lk. 8:13) or one’s relation with Jesus (14:27, 29).

### **III. (:4) CORE TEACHING PRINCIPLE: FAMILIARITY BREEDS CONTEMPT – THOSE WHO KNOW YOU THE BEST BELIEVE YOU THE LEAST**

*“And Jesus said to them, ‘A prophet is not without honor except in his home town and among his own relatives and in his own household.’”*

**Deut. 18:15** – pointing to Himself as a prophet

**Van Parunak:** he is a “*dishonored*” prophet. “*Without honor*” is *atimos*, used (adj and verb) 2x in the LXX in **Isa. 53:3** “*despised*.”

3 Concentric circles -- narrowing down to your closest family relatives

**Wiersbe:** “Familiarity breeds contempt” is a well-known maxim that goes all the way back to Publius the Syrian, who lived in 2 BC. Aesop wrote a fable to illustrate it. In Aesop’s fable, a fox had never before seen a lion, and when he first met the king of the beasts, the fox was nearly frightened to death. At their second meeting, the fox was not frightened quite as much; and the third time he met the lion, the fox went up and chatted with him! And so it is,” Aesop concluded, “that familiarity makes even the most frightening things seem quite harmless.”

Look at how the name of Jesus Christ is so familiar to people – yet they use it every day as a curse word

Familiarity should not breed contempt among those who are **mature in the faith** – that is why one of the main requirements for spiritual office is that others be familiar with the testimony of your life; we are not looking for hired guns from far off places where we don’t know anything about their lifestyle

### **IV. (:5-6) NEGATIVE MINISTRY IMPACT: UNBELIEF AND REJECTION DENY PEOPLE THE BENEFITS OF POTENTIAL MINISTRY**

#### **A. (:5) Limited Healing Ministry**

*“And He could do no miracle there except that He laid His hands upon a few sick people and healed them.”*

**Cranfield:** “The point of *ouk edunato* [“no miracle”] is not that Jesus was powerless apart from men’s faith, but that in the absence of faith he could not work mighty works *in accordance with the purpose of his ministry*; for to have worked miracles where faith was absent would, in most cases anyway, have been merely to have aggravated men’s guilt and hardened them against God.”

#### **B. (:6) Diverted Teaching Ministry**

##### 1. Shocking Unbelief at Home

*“And He wondered at their unbelief.”*

Astonishing unbelief

**Van Parunak:** *"He marveled."* The word occurs six times in Mark; 5x of men's attitude toward Jesus, only here of him. What is marvelous is not just that they do not believe, but that they disbelieve in the face of the evidence! They acknowledge his wisdom, and the power of his acts, and yet still reject him! NB: **Don't swallow the line that people disbelieve for lack of evidence.** The hardness of the human heart is such that they disbelieve even in the presence of evidence.

Warning – **Heb. 3:12** *“Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.”*

**Wiersbe:** Jesus was certainly a *“stone of stumbling”* to them because of their unbelief (Isa. 8:14; Rom. 9:32-33; 1 Peter 2:8).

## 2. Selective Itinerant Teaching Ministry to Surrounding Villages

*“And He was going around the villages teaching.”*

**Hiebert:** a transitional statement, well set off as a separate paragraph. It marked the outcome of the visit to Nazareth but also set the background for the mission of the twelve.

Will be sending the disciples out on their first trial missionary journey – hopefully they have been observing and taking notes and learning this very important lesson

### **CONCLUSION:**

So far as we know, Jesus never returned again to His home town, Nazareth.

Let's not despise those who refuse to believe the gospel. We can be amazed at their failure to respond to the evidence before them ... but understand that but for the grace of God, there we go as well.

It is only God's sovereign gracious power that draws any of us into fellowship with Himself.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) Where have we become so familiar with our relationship with Jesus, with our access to the Word of God, and with ministry opportunities that we have allowed familiarity to dull our sense of appreciation?
- 2) If more evidence is not the answer to human unbelief and rejection . . . what strategy should we employ?
- 3) In what ways have you experienced rejection from close friends and relatives because of your faith in Jesus?

4) How shocked are you at the unbelief of those closest to you?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Van Parunak:** This is the third Synagogue story in Mark (cf. 1:21-28, 3:1-6). The previous two were in Capernaum. Note sequences:

a) Reduction in the magnitude of his miracles, from casting out a Demon, to healing a withered hand, to an unspecified "*few sick folk*."

b) Increase in the opposition: from a Demon (who should be expected to oppose him), to the Pharisees (who will emerge as the villains), to ordinary but overly familiar people.

c) His assessment of the audience

- 1) ch.1, nothing explicit
- 2) ch.3, angry over their hard hearts
- 3) ch.6, marveling about their unbelief.

**MacArthur:** The Bible doesn't say that Jesus wondered, or was astonished, or was amazed except for two times...here and on an occasion when He was amazed at the faith of a centurion, as recorded both by Matthew and Luke. The Bible tells us the people were constantly amazed at Him. They were astonished at Him. But only those two times was He amazed at them. Once with the centurion He was amazed at his faith. Here He is amazed at the unbelief in His own hometown. . .

unbelief is a mighty force. It has brought a curse on the whole human race. It drowned all of humanity. It activates the judgment of God. And it brings about the forfeiture of eternal life, it brings about eternal judgment. That passage that we just read, I think perhaps more than any in the gospels, puts on display the power of unbelief...the power of unbelief. . .

A little bit of background is probably pretty necessary. He had no acceptance at all in His hometown, none, not even from His intimate family. His family's attitude is conveyed to us back in Mark 3:21, they thought He had lost His mind. They thought He was a maniac. For all that they knew, He grew up there for 30 years as a quiet carpenter and now, all of a sudden, He's catapulted Himself on to the public scene. He hadn't done miracles as such in Nazareth, but the word about the miracles was running rampant all over everywhere. They were trying to process all of this with a great measure of skepticism and thought that He had lost His mind and actually they found Him in verse 31, "His mother and brothers arrived and standing outside sent word to Him and called Him," the objective was to get Him out of the public situation He was in and save both the public from His madness and Himself as well. We read in John chapter 7 that His family did not believe in Him, His brothers did not believe in Him. . .

I want to show you four things about unbelief. . .

First, unbelief obscures the obvious . . .

Secondly, unbelief not only obscures the obvious, it elevates the irrelevant . . .

Then there's a third characteristic of unbelief, it assaults the messenger . . .  
One final characteristic of unbelief. Unbelief spurns the supernatural . . .

How foolish is unbelief? Unbelief chooses hell. Unbelief chooses Satan. Unbelief chooses sin. Unbelief chooses to go it alone my way in the kingdom of darkness with no divine intervention. Is that really what you want? So you don't want to be blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies, right? You don't want love, joy, peace, gentleness, faith, meekness, self-control. You don't want prayers answered. You don't want divine intervention in your life, supernatural wisdom, supernatural direction, hope, the promise of heaven, peace that passes understanding. You don't want those things, right? Well unbelief..unbelief spurns the supernatural. It shuts out God. Nazareth can be added to Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum. It's over. With a few exceptions, there must have been a few believers. And maybe He did a few miracles just to let His disciples know that He still had the power, it wasn't a power issue. It was a purpose issue.

**Richards:** The people of Nazareth see *only* a carpenter, *only* a son of Mary, *only* another one of the village children who has grown up and returned for a visit. If only God were less ordinary and more unique, then they would believe. The servant image of the Son is too prosaic to garner credulity. God has identified too closely with the world for the world to behold him, too closely with the town of Nazareth for it to recognize in Jesus the Son of God. Humanity wants something other than what God gives. The greatest obstacle to faith is not the failure of God to act but the unwillingness of the human heart to accept the God who condescends to us in only a carpenter, the son of Mary.

#### **Warren Berkley: The Marvel of Unbelief**

The people of Nazareth enjoyed so many advantages. Jesus lived among them. He preached to them with power. They knew of His miracles. But they were blind to his identity, deaf to his message and hardened their hearts against Him, to their own peril and loss.

Jesus is not physically here on earth today. But His people are here and His message is sounded forth. Human responses often duplicate that of the people of Nazareth. The stubborn unbelief of sinners who are offered gracious forgiveness and life in Christ, is astonishing.

Quoting **Matthew Henry**: "If we cannot do good where we would, we must do it where we can, and be glad if we may have any opportunity, though but in the villages, of serving Christ and souls. Sometimes the gospel of Christ finds better entertainment in the country villages, where there is less wealth, and pomp, and mirth, and subtlety, than in the populous cities."

#### **Chris Mueller: The Tragedy of Unbelief**

Unbelief, the very thing that made Eve eat the forbidden fruit, kept Israel out of the Promised Land, caused the Jews to ignore their prophets, and ultimately led them to crucify their Messiah. Unbelief is what blinds us to our selfishness and pride, allowing us to think somehow we will escape eternal judgment. Unbelief causes us to not see Christ as God incarnate who came to provide the only way to be forgiven, make us right with God and get to heaven. And unbelief is what causes an entire town of people to reject their Messiah and treat Him harshly. . .

All Christ-followers will be rejected. Students, don't be shocked if you're verbally mocked by friends. Employees, don't gasp when you're gossiped about for your faith. All true Christians will be persecuted—you will be rejected. Second Timothy 3:12, "*Indeed, all who desire to live*

*godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*” You’ll be hit, hurt, slandered, passed by, ignored, and mocked. . .

Sadly, this jaw-drop response was not excitement and belief, but an astonishment which quickly soured into cynicism and unbelief. As they reflected on what they heard and saw from Jesus, they couldn’t get over that He’d grown up in their midst. They could not get beyond His history with them. They could not look past His humanity. They displayed a mounting agitation as they reflected upon the identity of this profoundly wise teacher and miracle worker. Since Jesus was a hometown boy, they knew He’d not studied under any rabbi of influence. He lacked the proper credentials—He didn’t have a seminary decree, or a university doctorate. Therefore He wasn’t qualified for this ministry. . .

Those who heard Jesus didn’t reject Him for lack of evidence, but in spite of overwhelming evidence. They did not reject Him because they lacked the truth, but because they rejected the truth. They refused forgiveness because they wanted to keep their sins. They denied the light because they preferred the darkness. The reason for rejecting the Lord has always been that people prefer their own way to God’s way, period. The person who’s heard the Gospel many times but continually asks for more evidence of its truth is merely revealing the obstinacy of his unbelief. The person who does not accept the light God has already given will not believe, no matter how much more light he’s given.

<https://media.faith-bible.net/scripture/mark/the-tragedy-of-unbelief>

### **Robert Rayburn: The Power of Unbelief**

The Lord’s own astonishment at this unbelief is the index of how inexplicable, how shocking their unbelief really was. In defiance of overwhelming evidence they shut their eyes and their hearts to the Son of God. Even Jesus was taken aback by the refusal of so many people – people who should have known better – to recognize the Son of God. Giving commands to demons and having them obey him without question or quibble; healing every manner of sickness immediately and perfectly by the mere utterance of a word; raising the dead to life again; tell me if you think you would brush all of that off and hate such a man who had come among you with such power to do you good. Well, yes, you would have done just as they did. Because what they did is what everyone does. What they were in Nazareth was nothing other than human beings acting as human beings. That is what makes this text so revealing and so important and no doubt that is why Mark has placed it in his story. The man of Nazareth is every man; the woman of Nazareth is every woman.

It is the intractability of human unbelief, the natural offense the human heart takes at evidences of the presence of God, the deep-seated opposition to the truth of God, even more a natural hatred for or animosity toward God that is here on display in Nazareth and so often in the Gospels. *There is something mysterious here; something profoundly irrational.* It is a violation of reason, of clear-thinking, and of good sense. What can explain the reception that Jesus received except that there is some bent in man that makes him an enemy of the truth and an enemy of God? That is what the Bible in fact says about human beings. Why didn’t the whole world rush to Jesus Christ when once the word got out that a wonderworker, a genuine wonderworker, had arrived and a man of sterling and perfect goodness and love too boot? This is what the Bible says about human beings. They are by nature enemies of God; rebels who will not give in to him even to save their own souls. What the Bible teaches in many places is precisely what we have illustrated in this text.

Whence this intractable unbelief in Nazareth? Why be so offended? Why not just ignore? No, they have to reject, and despise, and then, as we read elsewhere, try to kill Jesus. Nothing explains this but the Bible's teaching that man's love of himself and love of sin, and his corresponding hatred of God, is so powerful, so invincible, so much a part of his nature, his character that even the most amazing demonstrations of God's power and love cannot induce him to forsake his idols and submit to God. He is a rebel by nature. An anti-God principle lies deep in his makeup. He would never admit this, of course, but it is the fact that alone explains man's behavior in the world as the Bible everywhere takes pains to say. There is something deeply wrong with the human soul. It is bent away from God and that means it is bent away from everything true and everything good. That and that alone explains why when the Son of God came into the world he was regarded so widely as an enemy rather than a friend. Jesus simply brought to the surface and made visible what always lies festering in the human heart.

<http://www.faithtacoma.org/content/2007-09-02-am.aspx>

TEXT: Mark 6:7-30

TITLE: *DELEGATED RIGHTEOUS POWER VS DEPRAVED PAGAN POWER*

**BIG IDEA:**

**AMBASSADORS FOR JESUS CHRIST ADVANCE GOD'S KINGDOM BY MEANS OF DELEGATED RIGHTEOUS POWER THAT ALWAYS TRUMPS DEPRAVED PAGAN POWER**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Beheadings are in the news today – so as barbaric as this biblical account sounds to our civilized ears ... depraved pagan power still operates from the same motivation and looks pretty much the same in the execution of its wicked agenda. Yesterday's King Herod who served up the head of John the Baptist on a platter is not that much different from today's Islamic supremacists who use terror and intimidation as tactics to advance their terrorist agenda.

Our passage today is one of those **sandwich passages** in the Gospel of Mark – two bookends of material that obviously fit together with an inner filling that begs the question: Why have I been inserted here? [Remember previous story of raising of Jairus' daughter from the dead with insertion of interruption of the healing of the woman with the 12 year blood flow issue] Here you have the 12 apostles sent out on their initial trial mission (6:7) and then they return to report back to Jesus (vs. 30). In the middle you have this flashback account of the beheading of John the Baptist by Herod Antipas. What is the connection?

The authority and power of Jesus Christ have been clearly established in the first 6 chapters of Mark's gospel. Yet His identity as the Messiah remains an issue of confusion. We have reached an important transition point where Jesus has called His disciples and equipped and empowered them so that now He can send them out as His **Ambassadors** to advance God's kingdom on a wider scale. **Matt. 10:6** (one of the parallel passages along with Luke 9) makes it plain that they are still restricted to Jewish towns and villages rather than Gentile or even Samaritan cities. Jesus is preparing them for the days of the Great Commission when following His ascension they will be sent out as the pioneering missionaries to advance God's kingdom in Jerusalem, and then in Judea and Samaria, and ultimately even to the remotest part of the earth (**Acts 1:8**).

But the demonstration of the righteous power of Jesus Christ through His appointed delegates always stands in contrast to the depraved pagan power of authority figures like Herod Antipas. In this passage we see the pathetic nature of Herod's phony power.

**AMBASSADORS FOR JESUS CHRIST ADVANCE GOD'S KINGDOM BY MEANS OF DELEGATED RIGHTEOUS POWER THAT ALWAYS TRUMPS DEPRAVED PAGAN POWER**

By way of **application** we want to minister today in the confidence and faith and clear conscience of those who are relying on the delegated righteous power that comes to us from our Lord Jesus Christ. The disciples of Jesus (His ambassadors for the sake of the gospel) are not the ones who should be cringing in cowardly fear and conscience-ridden guilt like pathetic King Herod. Let's bite into this tasty sandwich.

## (:7A) APOSTLES SENT OUT ON INITIAL MISSIONARY JOURNEY

*“And He summoned the twelve and began to send them out in pairs;”*

From what we have studied of the apostles to this point in Mark’s gospel, we might conclude that Jesus is **premature** in sending them out at this point. They have not been very impressive so far.

- Came from humble beginnings with very little academic preparation or ministry training; most of them were fishermen; used to working with their hands; not fancy orators or charismatic speakers
- But they had obeyed the call of the Master to follow Him and Jesus had promised to make them *fishers of men*
- They were a little slow to pick up even the most basic teaching of the foundational parable of the different soils – Jesus expressed almost exasperation – *“Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables?” (4:13)*
- They accused Jesus of not caring that they were perishing in the storm on the Sea of Galilee so that Jesus had to wonder at their cowardice and lack of faith
- They lacked discernment on many levels – taking everything that He said so literally that when Jesus asked *“Who touched my garments?”* in the incident where He healed the woman with the long term bleeding issue ... they made fun of His inquiry

It would seem like the twelve were more in line for some remedial training than for being sent out on such a responsible mission with no backup. These were the tiny group of core leaders that Jesus was putting at risk by putting them out on the front lines of the spiritual battlefield.

**Application:** Ministry success has everything to do with the delegated power of Jesus Christ and His resources ... not the limitations of our human weakness and inadequate personalities and immature spiritual development

How do we respond to the Savior’s call to ministry? Do we offer up excuses and try to plead that we need more preparation?

Here the Master is the one authoritatively summoning the 12 and commanding them to go out

### **Importance of ministering in the context of plurality of spiritual leadership –**

Note in these pairs there is not some type of predetermined hierarchy of leadership – Now you are the Lead Apostle and you will function as the subordinate or helping Apostle – they are sent out to minister together – not that their gifts are identical ... but there is no hierarchy in their relationship

They can support one another, encourage one another, bear testimony that is united and more credible; serve as checks and balances for the blind spots in one another; hold one another accountable from the perspective of personal holiness

**Parunak:** *“two by two.”* Even with this sacred anointing, they are not to go alone. Cf. Paul's example, teamed first with Barnabas, then with Silas. **Eccl. 4:9-12.**

**Synergy:** “The working together of two things (muscles or drugs for example) to produce an effect greater than the sum of their individual effects”

**MacArthur:** Furthermore, there are **Twelve** of them. And that is not by chance, that is not merely happenstance. There are Twelve because there are Twelve tribes in Israel and they are the symbols of the New Israel, the true Israel, the Israel of God, the new people that the Lord is



forming. In fact, they will rule over in the Millennial Kingdom, each of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, each of them will have a tribe to rule and their names are already emblazoned upon the holy city, the New Jerusalem in the heaven of heavens. So they are permanently put in this position of spiritual responsibility and leadership.

According to **Ephesians 2:20** they become the foundation stones of the church. Here is a massive indictment on Judaism at the time of Jesus. Mark it in your minds, folks, Jesus rejected totally the Judaism of His day. It was not sufficient to bring salvation to anyone and neither is the Judaism of this day, or any other day that rejects the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no way to heaven except through Him. And so He chooses the Twelve and renders a judgment on the nation Israel.

## **I. (:7B-13) DELEGATED RIGHTEOUS POWER -- POWERFUL DELEGATED MINISTRY REFLECTS THE RIGHTEOUS AUTHORITY OF JESUS CHRIST**

### **A. (:7B) Delegated Authority With Ultimate Dominion -- Over Demons**

*“and He was giving them authority over the unclean spirits;”*

This was not some limited type of power and authority

The apostles were not going to be disappointed halfway into their mission to discover that Jesus had only given them limited power and authority; they were not going to encounter any forces that were superior to Jesus Christ

The power of Jesus trumps all other supposed power and authority

What a privilege to be Ambassadors for such a kingdom! – not some puny, insignificant entity that other nations could walk all over – but going out into a hostile world with the conviction that you had the backing of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords

Even the demonic spirits would be subject to your power and would lend credibility to your credentials and authenticity

This was not some phony or counterfeit power; this was legitimate, authentic, ultimate power – the real deal

Why as Christians do we allow ourselves to live in such defeated states? Let’s be the Ambassadors that we were called to be – ones with ultimate delegated authority

### **B. (:8-11) Detailed Instructions -- Regarding Bold Ministry Practices**

#### 1. (:8-9) Confidence in the Lord’s Material Provision

*“and He instructed them that they should take nothing for their journey, except a mere staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belt; but to wear sandals; and He added, ‘Do not put on two tunics.’”*

**Guelich** quoted by **Constable**: They were not even to take the usual extra tunic—that Palestinians often used as a blanket at night. The Twelve were to rely on God to provide their needs, including the need for hospitable hosts. The urgency of their mission required light travel, and it

prohibited elaborate preparations. They could take a walking stick ("staff"), and they would need "sandals," but they were not to take spares. Apparently Jesus stressed what *not* to take more than what *to* take, in order to deprive the disciples of any sense of self-sufficiency.

**Staff** and **sandals** and **minimum clothes** are the necessary equipment for itinerant preachers at that time who are moving from town to town

**Illustration:** Karen's preparations for our trips: Rather have it and not need it than need it and not have it – different approach here

**Brad Hertzog:** **Ex. 12:11** – celebration of the Passover before they are called out of Egypt; “*you shall eat the feast in haste;*” Needed to be ready for the Lord's call to move out; just the bare necessities; not hindered by any extras; sense of urgency to this mission

## 2. (:10) Contentment with Available Hospitality

*“And He said to them, ‘Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave town.’”*

**Parunak:** When you are received by one household in a community, be content there; don't try to "swap up" to a more prosperous one where the food is better or the bed more comfortable.

## 3. (:11) Consecration from the Defilement of Rejecters Who Will Be Judged For Their Unbelief

*“And any place that does not receive you or listen to you, as you go out from there, shake off the dust from the soles of your feet for a testimony against them.”*

**Constable:** Shaking dust off their feet symbolized the defiling effect of contact with pagans. When the Twelve did this, it implied that those who had refused their message were unbelieving, defiled, and subject to divine judgment (cf. Acts 13:51; 18:6).

**Copeland:** This illustrates the principle of selection

a. We're told not to “*cast your pearls before swine*” - cf. **Mt 7:6**

b. People judge themselves unworthy of the gospel by their lack of interest

1) Paul was willing to preach again if people were interested- **Ac 13:42-44**

2) But when people rejected the gospel, he turned elsewhere - **Ac 13:45-46**

-- **People judge themselves unworthy of eternal life by their disinterest**

## **C. (:12-13) Documented Success -- Threefold Ministry Accomplished with Power and Effectiveness**

### 1. (:12) Preaching Ministry = Gospel of Repentance from Sin Leading to Power Over Death

*“And they went out and preached that men should repent.”*

### 2. (:13a) Exorcism Ministry = Power Over Demons

*“And they were casting out many demons”*

### 3. (:13b) Healing Ministry = Power Over Disease

*“and were anointing with oil many sick people and healing them.”*

**Don DeWalt:** To suppose that the oil was used medicinally, is contrary to the whole tenor of the narratives. It was “the vehicle of healing power committed to them” an external sign such as our Lord sometimes used to connect himself and the person cured. It was probably also a symbol of anointing by the Holy Spirit. -**Schaff**. The Jews were in the habit of anointing their faces and hair with oil every day when they went among their fellows. This was omitted when sick or fasting. The apostles anointed a sick man when about to heal him with a word and send him forth. It meant that the patient was able to go out among his fellow-men.

## **II. (:14-29) DEPRAVED PAGAN POWER -- POWERFUL DELEGATED MINISTRY STIRS STRONG EMOTIONS OF FEAR AND GUILT IN DEPRAVED PAGAN RULERS**

**[There can be a heavy price for powerful ministry – just ask John the Baptist –  
When you accept the mantle of ministry you must be prepared for the price of Martyrdom]**

### **A. (:14-16) Powerful Ministry of the Apostles Stirs Strong Emotions of Fear on the Part of King Herod – Powerful Presence of John the Baptist and OT Prophets Remembered**

#### 1. Spreading Reputation of Jesus Christ

*“And King Herod heard of it, for His name had become well known;”*

This section inserted more for what it says about King Herod than what it says about John the Baptist; contrasting responses of Herod and Herodias

**Constable:** "Herod" Antipas was not really a king, "king" being a popular designation rather than an official title in his case. He was the tetrarch (ruler of one of four [political] divisions) who was born in 20 B.C., and ruled over Galilee and Perea from 4 B.C. to A.D. 39, when he was banished to Gaul. Perea lay east of the Jordan River and south of the Decapolis. Its northern border was about halfway between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea, and its southern border was about halfway between the northern and southern ends of the Dead Sea. The territory of Ammon lay east of Perea. Mark probably called Antipas a king because that is how the people in his territory spoke of him popularly. It was natural for Mark, who was writing for Romans, to use this title since the Roman government used it to describe all eastern rulers

**Alan Carr:** His father was Herod the Great. Herod the Great was the king who had been ruling when Jesus was born. It was Herod the Great who had ordered the deaths of all the infants in Bethlehem, in an effort to destroy the Lord Jesus. When Herod died, the Roman emperor divided his kingdom into four parts. One part was given to the man in our text, Herod Antipas. He wasn't really a king; he was actually a “tetrarch”, which means “the ruler of a fourth part.” He did demand, however, that his subjects call him “king”. Herod Antipas ruled from 4 A.D. to 39 A.D. He was banished to what is now France by the Roman emperor for demanding to be made a king in 39 A.D. Jesus summed up the character of Herod Antipas once by calling him a “fox”, **Luke 13:32.**

**Matt. 14:1** Herod had heard "*the report (news) concerning Jesus*"

Great contrast in this section between Gentile figure head political ruler = **Herod** (not even a true

king) and

King of the Universe and King of the Jews in particular = **Jesus Christ**

As well great parallel between **Herod** who unjustly put John the Baptist to death and **Pilate** who condemned Jesus to death

## 2. Variety of Explanations for Powerful Ministry of the Apostles in the Name of Jesus

### a. John the Baptist

*“and people were saying, ‘John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and that is why these miraculous powers are at work in Him.’”*

### b. Elijah

*“But others were saying, ‘He is Elijah.’”*

### c. OT Prophet

*“And others were saying, ‘He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old.’”*

## 3. Fear of King Herod

*“But when Herod heard of it, he kept saying, ‘John, whom I beheaded, has risen!’”*

Herod confused

You can't keep a good man down!

## **B. (:17-29) Powerful Ministry of the Apostles Stirs Strong Emotions of Guilt on the Part of King Herod -- Execution of John the Baptist Regretted**

### 1. (:17-20) Reprisal Against the Rebuke Delivered by John the Baptist

*“For Herod himself had sent and had John arrested and bound in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, because he had married her. For John had been saying to Herod, ‘It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.’ And Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death and could not do so; for Herod was afraid of John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and kept him safe. And when he heard him, he was very perplexed; but he used to enjoy listening to him.”*

Characteristics of depraved pagan power: [in the case of Herod Antipas – not in all cases]

- Responds to political pressures and manipulative forces rather than acting out of conviction on righteous grounds
- Involved with debauchery and all kinds of shameful sinful behavior
- Insecure and fearful when confronted with righteousness and holiness
- Perplexed and confused regarding the message of truth – courage of John the Baptist in rebuking the king by applying the truth in pressure situation

**Parunak:** John no doubt protested the union on two grounds:

a> **Adultery.** Herod divorced his own wife, and took Herodias while Philip was still living; thus the union was adulterous on the part of both parties. **Deut. 22:22.**

b> **Incest.** Marriage to a brother's wife was forbidden (**Lev. 18:16; 20:21**; excepting the case of levirate marriage, **Deut 25:5-10**) . . .

"Herod feared John," because John was just and holy. The world recognizes spiritual power, and fears it. We, on the other hand, have nothing to fear from "*them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul*," **Matt. 10:28**. So we should be encouraged, not cowed, in our spiritual combat. Yet Herod falls tragically short—if only he had feared God rather than John!

#### Copeland:

1. First married to Phasaelis, daughter of King Aretas IV of Nabatea
2. Divorced her to marry Herodias - Mk 6:17
  - a. Who was his half-niece, married to his half-brother Philip
  - b. They had fallen in love while in Rome together
  - c. They agreed to divorce their spouses and marry one another

**Scott Grant:** One of the roles of a prophet in Israel was to confront kings with the word of God when they strayed from it. John's rebuke implied that someone who fancies himself king of the Jews had no business behaving in such a manner. John, with his lonely yet lovely voice from the wilderness, stood up to the powers of the world. By rebuking Herod, John marked himself out as a threat to the ruler's aspirations. Herodias wanted John killed, but Herod, who enjoyed listening to John, resisted, fearing divine retribution for putting a righteous man to death.

#### 2. (:21-25) Request for the Head of John the Baptist

*"And a strategic day came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his lords and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee; and when the daughter of Herodias herself came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests; and the king said to the girl, 'Ask me for whatever you want and I will give it to you.' And he swore to her, 'Whatever you ask of me, I will give it to you; up to half of my kingdom.' And she went out and said to her mother, 'What shall I ask for?' And she said, 'The head of John the Baptist.' And immediately she came in haste before the king and asked, saying, 'I want you to give me right away the head of John the Baptist on a platter.'"*

#### Characteristics of depraved pagan power:

- Networks with those who are in positions of worldly power and wealth and influence
- Times of celebration characterized by sinful indulgence and the lusts of the flesh
- Encourages sin on the part of others rather than promoting godliness
- Makes foolish and rash promises – executing injustice rather than justice
- Wrongly imagines that one has control of their own fortune and destiny
- Manipulated by others in soap opera family contexts of scheming and schism
- Pursues barbaric and wicked agendas rather than promoting the kingdom of God

Stag party – only intoxicated males present

**Don DeWalt:** Nicephorus states that Salome met with a terrible death as a punishment for her share in the sacrilegious crime. When crossing the ice it broke under her, and the fragments drifting together severed her head from her body.

### 3. (:26-28) Regret for the Beheading of John the Baptist

*“And although the king was very sorry, yet because of his oaths and because of his dinner guests, he was unwilling to refuse her. And immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded him to bring back his head. And he went and had him beheaded in the prison, and brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother.”*

#### Characteristics of depraved pagan power:

- Restricted by pride from doing what is right
- Commands actions that are reprehensible and will give an account in eternity to higher authority
- Puts pleasing family members and prominent associates ahead of fearing God

### 4. (:29) Respect for the Body of John the Baptist

*“And when his disciples heard about this, they came and took away his body and laid it in a tomb.”*

Just as John the Baptist had been the **forerunner** for Jesus in His message of preaching the arrival of the kingdom of God .... So John was the forerunner for Jesus in His death and burial – could not be the forerunner for His resurrection because Jesus must be the first fruits

### **(:30) APOSTLES REPORT BACK ON THEIR POWERFUL MINISTRY EXPERIENCE**

*“And the apostles gathered together with Jesus; and they reported to Him all that they had done and taught.”*

This verse stands in contrast to the pathetic type of governing power just displayed by King Herod

Time of rejoicing in spiritual ministry success as the righteous delegated power of Jesus Christ has been on display in their preaching, their casting out of demons and their healing of the sick throughout the Jewish towns and villages

No reveling in debauchery – but rejoicing in transformed lives that have been delivered from the bondage of sin and the fear of death

Operated on the basis of faith and complete dependence on the Lord for their daily needs;  
Operated on the basis of love (even for their enemies) and a good conscience – building others up instead of ruling by intimidation and brutality

Ministry success beyond their wildest dreams – that Jesus could use them in such a powerful fashion – what a privilege!

\* \* \* \* \*

## DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What are some of the advantages of ministering in pairs instead of on your own?
- 2) How can we cultivate a sense of being sent out to minister in power?
- 3) Are we truly ministering on the basis of faith and good conscience with the goal of our obedience to the Lord's commands being love?
- 4) How do you explain the contrasting instructions given in **Mark 6:8** and **Luke 22:36**?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Guelich** quoted by **Constable**: Re After the *'beginning of the gospel'* in 1:1-15, the first half of Mark's Gospel falls rather neatly into three major sections (1:16—3:12; 3:13— 6:6; 6:7—8:26). Each section opens with a story about the disciples (1:16- 20; 3:1-19; and 6:7-13). Each section winds down with a story about the negative response generated by Jesus' ministry (3:1-6; 6:1-6a; 8:14-21). And each section concludes with a summary statement that recalls for the reader the nature of Jesus' ministry (3:7-12; 6:6b; 8:22-26).

### A. THE MISSION OF THE TWELVE 6:6B-30

This is another of Mark's "sandwich" or chiasmic sections. The main event is Jesus' sending the Twelve on a preaching and healing mission that extended His own ministry. Within this story, between their departing and their returning, the writer inserted the story of John the Baptist's death. The main feature of that story that interested Mark was Herod Antipas' perception of who Jesus was. The **identity of Jesus**, which is the heart of this section, becomes the main subject of the sections that follow (6:31—8:30).

**Cranfield**: the passion of the Forerunner being a pointer to the subsequent passion of the Messiah (cf. ii. 19f.). The parallels between vi. 17-29 and xv. 1-47 are interesting: e.g. Herod's fear of John as *aner dikaios kai hagios* ["a righteous and holy man"] (v. 20) and Pilate's attitude to Jesus (xv. 5, 14); Herodias' implacable hatred of John and the Jewish leaders' implacable hatred of Jesus; Herod's and Pilate's yielding to pressure; the details of the burials of John and Jesus."

**Copeland**: What a sad picture of "**Weakness In The Seat Of Power**"...

- a. A man in the position of power
- b. A man whose personal failings left him weak and easily manipulated

### **Alan Carr: Death of a Conscience**

Many people believe that the conscience was given to us to help us make decisions between right and wrong. That is a false assumption! The conscience will only resist any deviation from the truth, or the right and the wrong, it knows. . .

The most dangerous thing any person can do is to sin against the truth. Paul tells us that sinning against a "*good conscience*" leads to spiritual "*shipwreck*", **1 Tim. 1:19**. A "*good conscience*" is one that knows the truth and desires to be obedient to it. When people know the truth and reject it in favor of their own standards of right and wrong, they sin against a "*good conscience*". . .

As we watch Herod in these verses, we are witnessing the death of his conscience. He refused to accept the Word of God and change his ways. Then, he listened to John preach repeatedly and said “no” to the Word. Now, he has crossed the line and done the unthinkable. He has put this man he both feared and admired to death, all because of the anger of his wife. This is a tragic scene.

**Jeff Miller:** In the Gospel of Mark, only five verses are given to the ministry of John the Baptist, while fourteen are dedicated to his death. Does that seem backward to you? Not if you understand the message of the Gospel of Mark. In this Gospel, finishing well is just as important as starting well (see **Mark 9:9-13**). John the Baptist is held up in the Gospel of Mark as an example of one who finished well. In fact, in Mark only two people die for the Gospel—Jesus and John the Baptist. He is heralded as a hero to Mark’s persecuted Roman audience. He harbored no fear of the establishment, and no fear of death. He did not waiver in unbelief when imprisoned, nor did he waffle when the executioner arrived for his head. He remained faithful—and full of faith—until the very end.

**Scott Grant:** For some of those in power, who have become accustomed to getting what they want, sex is one of the perks. With such a mindset, they make themselves vulnerable to being manipulated by those, like Herodias, who use sex to get what they want. In some cases, even young girls, like the daughter of Herodias, become pawns in the game of power and grow up to believe that they’re valued only for their sexuality. In the end, when power, sex, and alcohol mix, impulsiveness overpowers reflection, rulers lose their appetite for justice, and they serve up injustice on a platter. Even outrageous miscarriages of justice, such as the execution of a prophet, become cause for celebration if they serve the interest of power.

**MacArthur:** Mark loves I guess what we’ve been calling sandwiches, a story with two sides and something else in the middle. We have seen that already just in the past chapter in the case of starting out with the story of Jairus, ending up with the resurrection of Jairus’ daughter from the dead, but in the middle the wonderful account of Jesus healing the woman with the issue of blood.

Well here is another one of those kind of Marken sandwiches in which he begins with the Apostles and ends with the Apostles and drops in the middle the account of the horrible execution of the last of the Old Testament prophets, John the Baptist. . .

This is where we have the foundational beginning implications for the nature of ministry that is so important to all who teach the gospel. Here we see Jesus the perfect leader delegating His message and His power to the first generation of gospel preachers, His first representatives, namely the Twelve. Here is the start of what we know as church leadership and gospel ministry. The Lord delegates to chosen representatives, twelve of them, the responsibility of representing Him, of taking His preaching and His power to the villages and towns and to the people of Galilee. . .

For well over half of the three years of His earthly ministry, He did it all. He has passed the half-way point now in His ministry. He is headed to the cross. There are only a few months left in the Galilee ministry. There were three tours of Galilee. He is about to launch the third and final one in the winter of the next to the last year of His life on earth. . . Galilee, as I said, only has a little time. In chapter 10 of Mark and verse 1 Jesus goes to Judea where He spent the last year of His



ministry, Judea being the southern portion of the land of Israel. Not much time left, only time for one brief Galilean tour. . .

They went out and preached that men should repent. That too was a part of the message of Jesus, as well as John the Baptist. Repent. That was the message that Israel couldn't swallow because that affirms that they are poor prisoners, blind and oppressed as Jesus designated them in Luke chapter 4, borrowing from Isaiah 61 that the gospel was going to be preached to the poor prisoners, blind and oppressed. It's not talking about physical conditions, it's talking about heart conditions, to those who realized they're spiritually bankrupt, who realized they're in prison to sin and death and judgment, who are blind to spiritual truth and who under the oppressive threat of punishment. The gospel comes to those who recognize their horrendous spiritual condition, the deadly wrath of God about to fall on their heads. And the gospel says, "Repent, recognize your religious sins, your hypocrisy." That's what Jesus preached. That's what John preached. That's what they preached. That's what we preach. We preach that sinners must repent, put their faith in Jesus Christ who enter in to the Kingdom of God wherein lies eternal salvation and eternal blessing under the sovereign rule of God. . .

Supernatural power then was to authenticate the message, but I think beyond that, it is to demonstrate the compassion of God as over against false teachers. Listen do you think the people of Israel felt that their religious establishment was compassionate? I don't think so. Jesus indicted them and said, "You bind on these people burdens they can't even carry and you don't even lift a finger to lighten the load. They had turned the Sabbath day, a day that was supposed to be a day of rest, into the most hated day of the week because there were so many prescriptions; people could barely do anything. They had added so many laws and rituals and routines and demands and commands that all of life was externally cumbersome. . .

Turn to Luke 22..Luke 22:35. "He said to them," this is the look back, "When I sent you out, you remember that, guys?" He's talking to the Twelve. "Remember when I sent you out without money belt, and bag, and sandals? You didn't lack anything, did you?" What did they say? No, nothing. Did they learn the lesson? Did they learn the lesson of providence? Did they learn that you can live dependently? Is that forever? Is that supposed to be the way you live your entire life?

No. But isn't it good to know that God will provide? Cause there's going to be times and there have been times in all our lives when we were in one degree of desperation or another wondering where in the world we were going to be able to get what we needed to make it? "But now," He says in verse 36, "But now," now is different than then, okay? "But now, whoever has a money belt, take it along. Likewise a bag," which assumes you can fill it up and pack it up. "And whoever has no sword, sell one of your coats and get a sword. It's not going to be easy out there. You may have to kill your food. You may have to defend yourself against an enemy. You're going to need supplies."

This is the normal thing. Plan, prepare, accept what God has provided. Pack it up, do what you're going to do. But for those Twelve then, the lesson was on dependence. Go like the rabbis said that people were to go to the temple with no staff, no shoes and no money. Go sort of symbolically bare before God. This is Boot Camp on Trust. . .

The culmination of the killing of the prophets of the Old Testament era is given to us in this text as it records for us the execution of John the Baptist. The Jews rejected Jesus, we know that, and

eventually, of course, they cried for His blood and said, “Crucify Him, crucify Him, we’d rather have Barabbas released to us,” a common criminal. They rejected Jesus.

But they also rejected John the Baptist. In fact, that’s a package deal. If you reject Jesus, then it’s clear that you have rejected John because John the Baptist was the prophet who pointed to Jesus and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” It was John the Baptist who said, “I must decrease and He must increase.” It was John the Baptist who said, “He is far greater than I, I’m not even worthy to loose the strings on His sandals.”

#### 7 Characteristics of their ministry:

- They preached the message of salvation
- They demonstrated compassion
- They lived dependently
- They demonstrate contentment
- They exercised discernment
- They obey orders
- They embrace accountability

#### **Brad Hertzog: (:7-13) Mission and Martyrdom**

God is a sending God; He has a mission that He is accomplishing; Mark is the missionary gospel; 3:13 and 6:7-13 are the bookends of Jesus calling and sending His disciples;

#### **I. (:7) A Surprising Sending**

Evaluate where we are in the progress of this mission; Mark presenting snapshots of the disciples; what type of progress are they making; misunderstood His mission; some of the disciples called Him insane at one point; rebuked Jesus for not caring they were about to die; irritated with Jesus for asking “*Who touched me in the crowd*”; they don’t seem to be getting it; not the resume you are looking for; sending may seem premature to us – seems like they need extended remedial training

#### Application:

a) word of great encouragement to us; fulfillment of God’s mission primarily dependent on Jesus’s calling and equipping to carry out the task

Trial mission; in the future they will be sent out permanently; they come back fairly quickly; What made them fit for this mission? Jesus called them and equipped them and gave them authority; not dependent on our merits; we are His instruments

b) word of instruction to us – Christian life is a series of callings and opportunities we might not fully understand; can’t wait until you think you are fully prepared; opportunities come when we least expect it

c) If mission is successful we will understand that it is due to Jesus Christ and His blessing

#### **II. (:8-11) Some Curious Instructions**

1. Packing List

2. Housing Instructions

Doesn’t seem very spiritual; seems like some trivial comments – more appropriate for 12 year old going off to camp for several weeks; there must be something more significant

#### A. (:8-9) What to Take or Not Take

1. Staff
2. Belt
3. Sandals

B. (:10-11) How to Act – urgency of this mission; look at parallel accounts; find someone who will receive them and provide their necessities; stay with them the whole time; against cultural

norm to stay longer than 2-3 days in someone's home; short stay to proclaim the kingdom and exercise the authority Jesus had given them; then move on;  
Need for **dependence** – not able to plan for every contingency; remember the whittling down of Gideon's army

**Matt. 10:5** – being sent only to the Jewish towns; this declaration of shaking off the dust treats them as no better than the heathen, Gentile villages – strong declaration of judgment  
Exodus was a time of transition in how God dealt with His people; delivering them out of bondage and slavery; this is the beginning of transition time for disciples as well; mission will soon be completely transferred to Lord's disciples  
“*anointed with oil*” – only other reference in NT is in James – OT kings were anointed; picture of in-breaking of God's kingdom into this time period; Is. 61:3 “*the oil of gladness*” – symbol of New Covenant times and last days;

### **III. A Heightened Context**

Flashback to beheading of John the Baptist; sandwich portion; What does John's death have to do with Jesus's mission for His disciples? John's martyrdom is directly connected to their mission; 1:14 – why did the going forth of Jesus have connection to imprisonment of John? Mission and Martyrdom go hand and hand; Discipleship and Death are intimately connected; servant is not above His master; world hated Jesus and persecuted Him and will hate and persecute His disciples; “*all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted*”; Expect the world to hate you and expect persecution; Martyrdom used to be highest calling in the church; might now be near the top of the list of things we want to avoid

#### **Brad Hertzog: Forerunner to Jesus . . . Again**

One of only 2 sections in Mark that is about John the Baptist instead of Jesus Christ; examine the circumstances of John's death at hands of Herod Antipas

#### **I. (:14-20) Paranoia and Preaching in the Palace**

Heard of Jesus' name and fame and what was taking place; name *Herod* should be read as synonymous with opposition to Jesus and the proclamation of the gospel; generic family name; different Herods referred to in NT; Herod the Great was ruling when Christ was born; made decree that newborns should be killed; he was the most powerful Herod; died in 4 B.C.; this is one of his sons; he had 4 sons – each given a portion of his land; this one given Galilee; ruled during earthly life of Jesus; same one at trial of Jesus;

Vs. 17 begins a flashback – pretty sordid mess in king's palace; took a fancy to brother Phillip's wife Herodias and decided to marry her; John is man of courage and conviction; applies Word of God to anyone at any time in any place; Herod not off limits for John; not driven by polls or special interests; everybody was gossiping privately about situation;

#### 2 contrasting responses:

1) Herodias is furious at John – wanted to have him killed;

Herod put him in prison to appease his wife; this Herod could be maneuvered into making decisions

2) Herod's response (v. 19) – he feared John and kept him safe; perplexed about the message but continued to hear him

Lot of confusion swirling about who Jesus is; normal choices; Herod makes a definitive judgment – seeing Herod's conscience speaking to him; John had credibility with him; His worst fears have come true – the man and his message have come back

#### **II. (:21-29) a Party, a Plot, a Pawn in the King's Palace**

Herodian soap opera; birthday of king is time for revelry and indulgence and pleasure; throws a party – the wealthy, the powerful, the prestigious;

This wasn't a tap dance; custom to give her a great gift in response; understand the depth of the debauchery that is taking place here; Herodias is also his half niece; so this is an incestuous marriage; one sin does not stand on its own; connected to other sins

Herod's pride now at stake; John is the forerunner first to ministry of Jesus and then to His death; cf. how Jesus was handled at His trial; Pilate wanted to have Jesus released; but wishing to satisfy the crowd he delivered Jesus to be crucified; Herod and Pilate became friends that day – 2 prideful men who would not humble themselves to do what they knew to be right;

*"He must increase but I must decrease"* = his motto

The one greatest born of women becomes a party favor for Herod

**Alan Carr:** Herod did not like the fact that John exposed his sin, he still wanted John around.

- Herod had a reverential fear of the Baptist because he knew that John was a genuine man of God. He knew he was a holy and a righteous man.
- Herod "*observed*" John, that is, he kept John the Baptist safe and under constant guard. He didn't want John to expose his sins, but he didn't want anything bad to happen to John either.
- When Herod heard John preach, "*he did many things*" – This can be interpreted two ways and I think both are true. First, when Herod heard John, he was perplexed. That is, what he heard caused him great conflict of soul. He heard the truth and recognized it as truth. Second, Herod did some of the things John told him to do. He may have reformed his life to a certain point, but not the point of giving up Herodias. The truth touched Herod's heart and he tried to dull the pain of conviction by doing some good things.
- The most amazing part of this verse tells us that Herod "*heard him gladly*". The idea is that Herod "*enjoyed*" hearing John preach the Word of God. He didn't intend to change his whole life and surrender all to the Lord, but he liked the preacher and he loved to hear him preach.
- King Herod is one confused man!

The guilt over what he did is eating him alive. He knows he killed an innocent, decent and good man. His conscience is bothering him and he is sure that John the Baptist has come back to haunt him

TEXT: Mark 6:31-44

TITLE: THE BREAD OF LIFE -- THE FEEDING OF THE 5,000

**BIG IDEA:**

**4 IMPORTANT LESSONS TO QUALIFY AS A GOOD SHEPHERD**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Here is a very familiar story to all of us – the feeding of the 5,000. But sometimes as we learned in the beginning verses of chapter 6, familiarity can breed contempt.

**Parunak:** Out of 35 miracles performed by the Lord in the gospels, this is the only one that is mentioned in all four. So it merits special attention. (Mt. 14:13-21; Lk. 9:11-17; Jn 6:1-14)

We think we understand the meaning of this simple miracle ... but do we really?

How we usually picture this simple story is the disciples being dispatched by Jesus to search through the crowd and come up with the resources at hand = a meager 5 loaves and 2 fishes held by one young lad (**John 6:9**). Jesus then demonstrates His power to provide physical bread (that which nourishes physical life) for the entire crowd – that physical bread being symbolic of the spiritual life He can both provide and sustain. Thus we have Jesus revealed as **the Bread of Heaven** -- broken for us in His redemptive sacrifice on the cross-- who has come down to give life to those who will receive Him. That lesson is definitely being taught. We need to partake of Jesus Christ by faith. We will reflect on insights focused on that central application at the end of our message as we look at the teaching of Jesus in John 6 about this miracle. That will serve as our transition into our time of communion this morning.

But first walk with me through the passage from the standpoint of the Master Shepherd training His intern shepherds and I think you will see a far expanded emphasis.

[**Outline** – have been working our way through the gospel of Mark – come to a series of **sets of 4** – let me quickly review for you – 4 Challenges / 4 Parables / 4 Realms of Dominion of the Lord / 4 Sobering Insights regarding inevitability of rejection / 4 lessons of faith]

**(:31-34) THE SETTING FOR THE MIRACLE – MINISTRY TO OTHERS OFTEN TRUMPS OUR NEED FOR REST AND REFRESHMENT**

This passage is going to say a lot about putting the needs of others ahead of our own needs

**A. (:31) Rest and Refreshment are Essential When Ministry Has Been Exhausting**

*“And He said to them, ‘Come away by yourselves to a lonely place and rest a while.’  
(For there were many people coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.)”*

**Mat. 14:13** *“Now when Jesus heard about John, He withdrew from there in a boat to a secluded place by Himself”*

**Hiebert:** He could have easily stimulated a popular movement against Antipas because of John’s martyrdom. Aware of the tense situation, Jesus deliberately withdrew from the territory of Antipas.

**Lk. 9:10** “to a city called Bethsaida”

**Hiebert:** that is, Bethsaida-Julius, which was located on the eastern bank of the Jordan, just above its entry into the Sea of Galilee. But they apparently did not touch the city at all

Jesus recognized the need to recharge one’s batteries – you cannot minister non-stop; you must allow for times of rest and solitude and refreshment

In this case, the disciples had been skipping meals and eating was now a very high priority

We read all of the time about the dangers of burnout in spiritual ministry – our bodies and emotions are not designed to run all of the time at the highest level of intensity – yet Jesus seems to have a special ability to draw strength from His heavenly Father to meet the demands of ministry

**Hendriksen:** took place when Passover, probably April of the year AD. 29, was already approaching, as is clear from John 6:4. The Great Galilean Ministry, probably extending from about December of A.D. 27 to about April of A.D. 29, was drawing to its close.

**B. (:32-33) Peace and Quiet Can Be Elusive Due to the Burden of Ministry**

*“And they went away in the boat to a lonely place by themselves. And the people saw them going, and many recognized them, and they ran there together on foot from all the cities, and got there ahead of them.”*

Sign miracles have snowball effect – create increased curiosity

The time on the sea in the boat proved to be the only respite they would have – ironic since their earlier time on the water had been so stressful when the storm arose

**Parunak:** “Desert” here does not mean sand and cactus (though that can be extremely beautiful), but simply a country area, which at this time of year would have been flush with grass from the winter rains.

**Hiebert:** a lonely place, uninhabited and unsuitable for cultivation. The rocky shores around the Sea of Galilee, especially the eastern side, offered many such places”

**C. (:34) The Primary Mission of a Shepherd is to Feed the Sheep**

1. The Eyes of a Shepherd -- Vision for the Needs of People

*“And when He went ashore, He saw a great multitude,”*

Was probably discouraging to the disciples who had been anticipating time along with the Lord Jesus; but not discouraging to Jesus – He saw the opportunity to meet the needs of people

Healings only touched isolated individuals; feeding miracle touched all

2. The Heart of a Shepherd -- Compassion for the Needs of People

*“and He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a*

*shepherd;*”

Driven by compassion for others

**Hendriksen:** With him sympathy is not just a feeling. It is a tender feeling transformed into helpful action. It is, as far as possible, an identification. It is not just an emotion but a deed; better still; a whole series of deeds. He teaches them, heals them, feeds them.

**Parunak:** “*sheep without a shepherd*” –  
a> The expression comes from the OT.

1> **Num 27:17.** When the Lord tells Moses to prepare to depart this life, Moses asks that the Lord provide the children of Israel with a leader, “*that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd.*” In response, the Lord appoints Joshua.

2> **1 Kings 22:17,** Michaia ben Imlah [Micaiah son of Imlah] sees in a vision the death in battle of Ahab king of Israel, under the figure, “*I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd.*”

b> People are by nature a flocking creature, and need the oversight and direction of those so gifted by God. This need finds its NT reflection in the role of the “*pastor,*” which simply means “*shepherd.*”

c> This multitude had no shepherd. The Jewish priesthood and the rabbis should have been their shepherds, but we have seen already their hardness to the things of God, a problem that had been evident to Ezekiel (**ch 34**) 600 years earlier.

**Hiebert:** portrays them as helpless, lacking nourishment, guidance, and protection, exposed to the perils of dispersion and destruction. He saw that the religious leaders did not meet the spiritual needs of the people.

Remember the charge that Jesus gave to Peter at the end of the Gospel of John: Shepherd my sheep; Feed my sheep – that is how you will demonstrate that you truly love me  
What type of meal are God’s children getting today throughout this country?? How many sheep without adequate shepherds are there?

### 3. The Priority of a Shepherd – Spiritual Indoctrination Trumps Physical Feeding “*and He began to teach them many things.*”

**Lk. 9:11** “*He began speaking to them about the kingdom of God and curing those who had need of healing*”

**Hiebert:** From John’s gospel, we learn that upon landing, Jesus and His disciples ascended the hillside and sat there, apparently waiting until the whole multitude had assembled. Prepared to teach . . .

These opening verses just serve to define the **setting** for the miracle which now will be the focus  
Remember that Jesus is in the process of Training the 12 to go out as His ambassadors and serve as good shepherds of the flock of sheep entrusted to them

## 4 IMPORTANT LESSONS TO QUALIFY AS A GOOD SHEPHERD

You want to be a pastor who shepherds the flock of God? Here are 4 important lessons to master if you want to truly be a Good Shepherd

### I. (:35-36) THE GOOD SHEPHERD DOES NOT EXPECT THE SHEEP TO PROVIDE FOR THEMSELVES

#### A. Don't Surrender to Outward Circumstances -- Expect God to Do the Impossible

*“And when it was already quite late, His disciples came up to Him and began saying, ‘The place is desolate and it is already quite late;’”*

We are often tempted to give up and allow the circumstances to defeat us;  
It seems reasonable to confess our inadequacy;  
We lack the vision for how the Lord can work in amazing ways – can't think outside the box

Look at how the deck is stacked against the disciples here

- running out of time – soon it will be dark
- nowhere near visible resources – out in a remote area

We give up too easily

#### B. Don't Teach People to Trust in Themselves – Expect God to Provide

*“send them away so that they may go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.”*

**Lk. 9:12** *“and find lodging”*

Now that does not mean that we teach people to quit their jobs and look for hand-outs from God; We must be discerning as to the means that God wants to use in different circumstances to provide our daily bread; but make sure that our trust is in God – *“Give us this day our daily bread”*

So the disciples have failed the first test – they have a lot to learn before they can qualify as good shepherds

That's why the command Jesus left with His disciples at the end of the Gospel of John was *“Feed My Sheep”*

Not saying that we don't all have the responsibility to read the Word ourselves and allow the Holy Spirit to teach us ... but we still need gifted leaders in the church to provide teaching and direction; we should expect that the Lord wants to provide such shepherding to His sheep

### II. (:37-38) THE GOOD SHEPHERD SACRIFICES ALL OF HIS RESOURCES TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE SHEEP

#### A. (:37a) Sacrifice All You Have to Meet the Needs of Others

*“But He answered and said to them, ‘You give them something to eat!’”*

Emphatic: *“You”*



Jesus commands His disciples to take the responsibility on themselves to provide for the flock  
Jesus ultimately is going to make the supreme sacrifice and lay down His life for the sheep  
Came not to be ministered to but to minister and give His life for the sheep

**Hendriksen:** Jesus means that these men must not be so quick to shake off responsibility. . .  
“Don’t bother the Master and don’t bother us,” was too often their slogan.

This is the key to understanding the passage that I had missed for many years –

**Van Parunak** opened up this passage to me:

**The Source of the food.** He corrects them by calling attention to the food they already have: five loaves and two fishes. This is almost certainly intended for their picnic supper.

1> One of the motives for their trip was to get some solitude so that they could eat. They certainly would have brought food along.

2> Objection: John 6:9 reports that this food was in the possession of "a lad."

a: The conventional view is that some kindly little boy in the crowd shared his lunch. But that would presume that the disciples either have none, which is unlikely, or hoard it, also unlikely.

b: Alternative: Zebedee can't run a fishing business alone. With his sons following the Lord around, he must find other help. The lad is one of his helpers, whom the 12 have brought along to "carry their bags," and who happens to be the custodian of their lunch.

[Or: perhaps this lad had prepared to bring enough to feed Jesus and His disciples alone]

Not only was everyone fed, but there were twelve baskets of crumbs left, one for each apostle, to show that they really hadn't lost anything in sharing their lunch!

The Disciples must share their picnic lunch, but it is returned to them many-fold in the twelve baskets. Clinging selfishly to our blessings will result in our inability to enjoy them, while sharing them with others will bring God's blessing. Cf. **Prov. 11:24-26**,

*"There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and [there is] that withholdeth more than is meet, but [it tendeth] to poverty.*

*The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.*

*He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him: but blessing [shall be] upon the head of him that selleth [it]."*

**Edwards:** To their minds that is an unreasonable, if not impossible, command.

**B. (:37b) Don’t Make Excuses Because of Your Short-Sightedness**

*“And they said to Him, ‘Shall we go and spend two hundred denarii on bread and give them something to eat?’”*

Math doesn’t add up

**John 6:5** has Jesus asking Philip “*Where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat?*” saying this to test him – Trick Question – putting Philip on the spot – like being called on in class to answer the teacher’s question – part of the teaching strategy of Jesus

Not a very respectful response to the Lord’s command  
Ask the Lord to open your eyes to the possibilities around you

**Hiebert:** The denarius was the ordinary pay for a day’s work in the vineyard (**Mt. 20:2**). Thus the amount suggested would be about eight months’ wages for a common workingman.

**C. (:38) Don’t Under Value the Gifts God Has Given You**

*“And He said to them, ‘How many loaves do **you have?** Go look!’ And when they found out, they said, ‘Five and two fish.’”*

These were resources that **belonged to them**; that were in their control; they were stewards of what they had – they needed to do a proper accounting of what God had already given them

**Hiebert:** In form these loaves were flat cakes or biscuits, not like our modern loaves of bread. The two fishes were either dried or salted fish, and were commonly eaten with the bread as a relish.

**III. (:39-42) THE GOOD SHEPHERD TRUSTS THE LORD TO MULTIPLY THE AVAILABLE GIFTS TO MEET THE PRESSING NEED**

**A. (:39-40) Faith Works in Concert with Good Organization and Administration**

*“And He commanded them all to recline by groups on the green grass.  
And they reclined in companies of hundreds and of fifties.”*

Even when your faith is struggling ... still **obey** what the Lord tells you  
You don’t yet see the outcome – how the problem is going to be resolved ... but trust the Lord through the process

If you don’t have much light, follow the light you have

Very organized approach – not some mob scene – Christ still has situation under control

**B. (:41) Faith Looks to God for Blessing and Results**

*“And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, He blessed the food and broke the loaves and He kept giving them to the disciples to set before them; and He divided up the two fish among them all.”*

What a tremendous miracle! Jesus kept breaking the food and distributing to the disciples to take around to the crowd and He never ran out ...

**C. (:42) Faith Is Never Disappointed**

*“And they all ate and were satisfied.”*

Simple resources can multiply into abundant blessing

**John Piper:** [desiring.org](http://desiring.org) the Lord is most delighted in His children when they are most satisfied with Him

What is our view of the sufficiency of our Savior

#### **IV. (:43-44) THE GOOD SHEPHERD ENDS UP HAVING HIS OWN NEEDS ABUNDANTLY MET ALONG WITH THE SHEEP**

##### **A. (:43) The Provision of the Lord SuperAbounds -- You Can Never Outgive the Lord**

*“And they picked up twelve full baskets of the broken pieces, and also of the fish.”*

They ended up with more than they started with; each of the disciples could now sit down to eat with their own basket of abundant provisions

##### **B. (:44) The Provision of the Lord Satisfies the Pressing Need**

*“And there were five thousand men who ate the loaves.”*

Add to that the multitude of women and children (**Matt. 14:21**) – truly an astounding miracle

**John 6:14** *“Therefore when the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, ‘This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.’”*

#### **CONCLUSION:**

Transition to **communion** as we study through **John 6:22ff**

**Edwards:** Not surprisingly, the early church saw a parallel between the feeding of the five thousand and the **Last Supper**, both accounts of which contain the sequence of *“taking bread . . . blessing . . . breaking . . . giving to the disciples”* (cf. **14:22**)

\* \* \* \* \*

#### **DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) Are we partaking of Jesus Christ in an intimate way on a daily basis?
- 2) Do we have a conviction that the Lord can take our limited giftedness and multiply blessing to many people by His grace?
- 3) Are we laboring for the bread which sustains for eternity or spending all of our passion and energy on laboring for the temporary bread of this earth?
- 4) Are we truly satisfied with the sufficiency of Jesus who alone can meet our deepest needs?

\* \* \* \* \*

#### **QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:**

**MacArthur:** Virtually everyone has seen these power displays. This final one in terms of quantity is way beyond any public miracle Jesus did...the feeding of this massive crowd. Matthew tells us there were five thousand men. Luke tells us there were five thousand men. Mark tells us there were five thousand men. But Matthew also tells us, "Besides women and children." And the most obvious thing to say is that there were five thousand men, there were at least five thousand women, for sure, they were the wives and they were the mothers and they were the sisters, etc. And how many children? We don't know, there could have been ten thousand children, there could have been fifteen thousand children, there could have been more. This is a crowd that stretches between 20 to 25 thousand, and maybe beyond that. It is a huge crowd. And to create food at that quantity is a massive, creative miracle that is the capstone on the display of miracles there in Galilee and is something that could obviously only be done by the Creator Himself ... creating this food. . .

How important is this miracle? Well it is the biggest miracle He has done yet and it is the final miracle, in a sense, in a very large and public sense, in Galilee. From now on the focus in Judea is on smaller crowds. They don't get the same crowds in Judea that came to see Him in Galilee. And primarily from now on, once He leaves Galilee, He focuses more on training the twelve than on the public ministry. So it is a turning point, it's a monumental moment. . .

the most full sweeping record of this event is contained in the sixth chapter of John. And we'll make a reference to that. The miracle is so monumental that in John 6:14 and 15 we are told that the people tried to make Jesus the King. They tried to make Jesus the King. They would have liked nothing better than to have the ultimate welfare state where somebody creates your food for you. Talk about entitlement...that's it...that's it. Where you have a king who can heal all your diseases, free you from demons, raise your dead loved ones and provide free food, that is ultimately it. So there's little wonder that after He did this, they tried to make Him a King. . .

here is the picture of God the provider, *Jehovah-Jireh* is the Old Testament name for the Lord who provides. You see the deity of Christ in this desire to provide what men need, not only the desire to provide but the ability to provide. He is, in fact, the incarnation of *Jehovah-Jireh*, the Lord who provides.

The first thing we see Him providing is rest...rest. . .

They didn't actually go to that village, but they went near that village. The crowd couldn't have fit in that village. They would find a rather isolated place somewhere near the village of Bethsaida.

Now Bethsaida is an important village in the New Testament because it is the village where Peter and Andrew and Philip and Nathaniel, four of the Apostles, the first four called to the Lord, John 1:43 and 44, grew up. It was their town. It was where they learned their fishing trade. Everybody in town knew them and everybody in that little village who knew them perhaps had just recently experienced their return. It's very likely that when the disciples were sent out, some of them went back to their hometowns and eleven out of twelve were from Galilee, all but Judas Iscariot and perhaps it was one of those four with another member of the Twelve, they went out two-by-two, they went back to Bethsaida, did some miracles there, healed some people, cast out some demons, maybe even raised a dead person...we don't have the record of that. But they had experienced gospel ministry. There's little doubt that Jesus Himself had been there. He had

literally traversed Galilee twice over the more than a year that He had already ministered there in Galilee. So that little village had high exposure to the Lord Jesus, but nothing like they were going to have on this day...on this day...because it was near that little village that our Lord arrives on this day, heals many people, we'll see that in a moment...and then does this massive miracle. One would expect that whatever the population of that little village, a few hundred, most of that village was there that day and was fed along with the rest of the crowd, as it tells us, who had come from cities and areas all over that part of Galilee. So they had a very intimate experience with the power of Christ.

Now why is that important? Because of the words of our Lord in Luke 10 and also in Matthew 11:21, the same thing. But I'll have you look at Luke 10. Luke 10:13, our Lord pronounces a judgment on Bethsaida. "Woe to you, Bethsaida." Damnation, cursing, condemnation, judgment pronounced on you... "Woe" is actually an onomatopoeic word, an onomatopoeia is a word that sounds like its meaning, "Oiye!" that's a woe to you, Bethsaida, for if the miracles had been performed in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sack cloth and ashes. It will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment than for you. . .

**Edwards:** It is nevertheless clear from the account that Jesus will not march to a populist and militarist drumbeat. He will not be a militant-messianic shepherd of the sheep (so Isa 40:11; Mic 5:4; Psalms of Solomon 17). His model as host of the wilderness banquet is not that of Barabbas, a Zealot chieftain, but that of Moses. The repeated references to the wilderness (6:31, 32, 35) recall Israel's sojourn in the wilderness following the Exodus from Egypt; the multiplication of loaves (v. 41) recalls the gift of manna (Exod 16:14-15); and Jesus' leading the people as a shepherd (v. 34) recalls Moses; leading a fledgling nation. Like Moses (Exod 18:21, 25), Jesus divides the crowd into groups (vv. 39-40). The shepherd that this wayward flock needs is not a guerrilla Messiah but a Moses to teach them (Num 27:17) and a David to lead them (Ezek 34:1-31). It is their work that Jesus has come to fulfill.

TEXT: Mark 6:45-56

TITLE: REMEDIAL CHRISTIANITY – FOR THOSE WHO JUST DON'T GET IT

**BIG IDEA:**

**HARDENED HEARTS AND MISPLACED PRIORITIES OBSCURE THE IMPACT OF GOD'S SAVING PRESENCE**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Nothing is more frustrating to a teacher than to continue to present lessons that the students just don't get. Karen, as you know, teaches some of the lower level math classes over at the community college.

There can be many reasons why students don't get it

- Some associated with the teacher
  - o Doesn't have a good grasp on the material himself
  - o Problems in communication – language barriers
  - o Problems with methodology – just doesn't know how to teach
- Some associated with the student
  - o Doesn't show up for class – just not present
  - o Poor listening skills
  - o Just slow – they will never get it – don't have the mental capability
  - o No application – doesn't do the homework

Why do Christians sit every week under sound biblical instruction ... and yet you see no positive change in their lives?

REMEDIAL CHRISTIANITY – FOR THOSE WHO JUST DON'T GET IT

**HARDENED HEARTS AND MISPLACED PRIORITIES OBSCURE THE IMPACT OF GOD'S SAVING PRESENCE**

We will spend the bulk of our time on the first section dealing with Jesus walking on the water  
Important lessons of faith in this section

**I. (:45-52) THE DISCIPLES DON'T GET IT – PROBLEM = HARDENED HEARTS – LESSON OF FAITH: SINCE JESUS CARES FOR US WE SHOULD TAKE COURAGE RATHER THAN BE AFRAID**

How can we tell that Jesus cares for us?? Mt. 14:22-33; John 6:15-21

**A. (:45-46) Committing Himself to Prayer**

1. (:45) Dismissing the Class from the Feeding of the 5000

a. Dismissing the Disciples

*“And immediately He made His disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side to Bethsaida,”*

Καὶ εὐθὺς ἠνάγκασεν τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ ἐμβῆναι εἰς τὸ πλοῖον καὶ προάγειν εἰς τὸ πέραν πρὸς Βηθσαιδάν

Jesus had to send the apostles away because of the growing plot to make him a political king

Compelled them to depart  
This boat is seeing a lot of action

**Hendriksen:** John mentions the reason – or one of the reasons – why Jesus withdrew into the hill. That reason was the attempt by the people to take him by force and make him king (**6:15**).

**Parunak:** Even now, his ministry toward us is one of prayer: Rom. 8:27; Heb. 7:25; 1 John 2:1. No need to ask Mary or one of the saints to pray for us; the Son of God himself is our intercessor. . . Cf. **Gen. 16:7-14**, Hagar's experience of the God who sees us. Beerlahairoi, "the well of the Living One who sees me."

**Hiebert:** The existence of two Bethsaidas seems best to harmonize all the data.

**MacArthur:** disagrees

**Grassmick:** The simplest solution seems to be that Bethsaida Julias (east of the Jordan) spread across to the western side of the Jordan and was called "Bethsaida in Galilee" a fishing suburb of Capernaum. The disciples sailed for this town from the northeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee but were blown off course southward, eventually landing at Gennesaret on the western shore.

#### b. Dismissing the Crowd

*"while He Himself was sending the multitude away."*

ἕως αὐτὸς ἀπολύει τὸν ὄχλον.

No easy matter to dismiss a crowd of over 5,000 plus women and children – easier when they saw that the disciples had left – nothing more going to happen here

#### 2. (:46) Devoting Himself to Prayer

*"And after bidding them farewell, He departed to the mountain to pray."*

καὶ ἀποταξάμενος αὐτοῖς ἀπῆλθεν εἰς τὸ ὄρος προσεύξασθαι

bidding the crowd farewell

**Constable:** This is the second of the three crises, all at night, that moved Jesus to pray, that Mark recorded (cf. 1:35; 14:32-36). Evidently the desire of the multitudes—to take Jesus by force to make Him king—drove Him to pray (Gr. proseuchomai, cf. John 6:15). This was another temptation to secure Israel's leadership without the Cross. References to Jesus praying always show His humanity and His dependence on His Father. The mountain contrasts with the shore where Jesus left the disciples.

Priority of prayer for Jesus – even though he was weary with burdens of ministry

#### **B. (:47-48) Coming to the Rescue**

##### 1. (:47) Jesus Can Seem Distant

*"And when it was evening, the boat was in the midst of the sea, and He was alone on the land."*

καὶ ὀψίας γενομένης ἦν τὸ πλοῖον ἐν μέσῳ τῆς θαλάσσης, καὶ αὐτὸς μόνος ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς

Interesting emphasis – Jesus was the only one remaining by himself on the land – not stressing loneliness of disciples – they were all together in the boat

## 2. (:48) Jesus Can Manifest His Presence

*“And seeing them straining at the oars, for the wind was against them, at about the fourth watch of the night, He came to them, walking on the sea; and He intended to pass by them.”*

καὶ ἰδὼν αὐτοὺς βασανιζομένους ἐν τῷ ἐλαύνειν, ἦν γὰρ ὁ ἄνεμος ἐναντίος αὐτοῖς, περὶ τετάρτην φυλακὴν τῆς νυκτὸς ἔρχεται πρὸς αὐτοὺς περιπατῶν ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης καὶ ἤθελεν παρελθεῖν αὐτούς.

How could Jesus see them? It was dark; God sees all – or did He come to them and see them as He approached them??

Lord did not help them immediately – it was the fourth watch

**Hiebert:** “*Distressed*”, more literally, “*tortured*,” suggests the grievous physical pains and mental distress to which the twelve were subjected in their efforts to reach the western shore as directed. Efforts almost beyond their strength were demanded to keep the boat facing the wind and waves. . . It was hard work and they were making little headway.

**Hiebert:** As Jesus approached the boat, He deliberately changed His course so that He would come alongside the boat, following a parallel course with it. Obviously, His intention was that the disciples should recognize Him and ask Him to come into the boat with them. He seemed intent on testing their faith. Knowing His miraculous powers, would they have enough faith to recognize Him in this unique manner of coming to them?

**Constable:** The “*fourth watch of the night*”—by Roman reckoning, which Mark followed—would have been between 3:00 and 6:00 a.m. (The Jews divided the night into three watches.)

**Parunak:** if they set sail around 6 the previous evening, they have been rowing against the wind for nine hours, and going nowhere!

**James Edwards:** The latter part of v. 48 is not immediately clear, however. “*He was about to pass by them*” is baffling, suggesting that Jesus intended to walk past the disciples. In the OT, however this nondescript phrase is charged with special force, signaling a rare self-revelation of God. At Mt. Sinai the transcendent Lord “passed by” Moses (**Exod 33:22**; also **33:19** and **34:6**) in order to reveal his name and compassion. Again, at Mt. Horeb the Lord revealed his presence to Elijah in “passing by” (**1 Kgs 19:11**). The most important antecedent of the idea, however, comes in **Job 9:8, 11:**

*[God] alone stretches out the heavens  
And treads on the waves of the sea.  
When he passes me, I cannot see him;  
When he goes by, I cannot perceive him.*

This quotation bears linguistic as well as thematic similarities with v. 48, for “*treads the waves of the sea*” contains the same wording as Mark . . .

The Job quotation summarizes a passage that begins in 9:1ff. by recounting the awesome separation between God and humanity. God can do what humanity cannot do and can never conceive of doing. His wisdom is beyond compare, he moves mountains, shakes the earth, obscures the sun, arrays the heavens in splendor, and “*treads on the waves of the sea.*” This God cannot be conceived of in human categories, and any “natural” explanation of his acts is foolish



and pointless. The God described by Job is wholly God, wholly Other, and can never be confused with human beings.

**Borgman:** OT language of theophany – **Ex. 33** – an appearance of God; a demonstration of God; **1 Kings 19:11-12**; God is going to appear to the disciples in the flesh;

### **C. (:49-52) Calming the Tempest – both Within and Without**

#### 1. (:49-50a) Crisis Panic

*“But when they saw Him walking on the sea,  
they supposed that it was a ghost, and cried out;  
for they all saw Him and were frightened.”*

οἱ δὲ ἰδόντες αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης περιπατοῦντα ἔδοξαν ὅτι φάντασμα ἐστίν, καὶ ἀνέκραξαν· πάντες γὰρ αὐτὸν εἶδον καὶ ἐταράχθησαν.

#### 2. (:50b) Calming the Tempest Within

*“But immediately He spoke with them and said to them,  
‘Take courage; it is I, do not be afraid.’”*

ὁ δὲ εὐθὺς ἐλάλησεν μετ’ αὐτῶν, καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· θαρσεῖτε, ἐγώ εἰμι· μὴ φοβεῖσθε.

Did not leave them in their panic for any length of time but immediately tried to alleviate their fears – the Word of God is what should calm our panic and serve as an anchor in times of distress

How do we react when someone counsels us “Just take courage ... don’t be afraid”  
Very difficult to apply – like the “Stop it” approach to counseling

At the heart of the 2 exhortations to take courage = the majestic statement of Deity – we have the privilege of the presence of the great I AM

Background of “I AM” declaration of Deity – **Ex. 3:14** “Now they may say to me, ‘What is His name?’ What shall I say to them? God said to Moses, ‘I AM who I AM’; and He said, ‘Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

**MacArthur:** This name for God points to His self-existence and eternity; It denotes “I am the One who is/will be,” which is decidedly the best and most contextually suitable option from a number of theories about its meaning and etymological source. . . He’s the same God throughout the ages!

### **Bob Ramey: Analysis of ego eimi claims of Christ in Gospel of John:**

#### 1) “I am the bread of life” (**John 6:35**) – **Lord’s Word of Regeneration**

I am able to give you life initially and every day; Lord’s Supper given one year later for commemorative purposes only (don’t get confused here like Catholics do)

#### 2) “I am the light of the world” (**John 9:5**) – **Word of Revelation**

He brings moral light into realm of moral darkness; healing of the blind provides a nice picture since Jesus connects the light-giving quality of His presence with morality; His opponents get the point: “Are you trying to say that we are blind also?”

#### 3) “I am the door of the sheep” (**John 10:7, 9**) – **Word of Refreshment and Access**

Combine #3 and #4 – you go in for safety and sleep and go out for pasture and exercise

- 4) *"I am the Good Shepherd"* (**John 10:11-24**) – **Word of Responsibility**  
He stays with His sheep despite the danger; takes 100% responsibility for them
- 5) *"I am the resurrection and the life"* (**John 11:25**) – **Word of Resurrection**  
- the resurrection is for the body  
- the life is for the spirit
- 6) *"I am the Way, the Truth and the Life"* (**John 14:6**) – **Word of Requirement and Exclusivity**  
Exclusivity of Jesus being the way, etc.; You need Me; a word of encouragement to the disciples  
- I am the Truth Way – I am faithful to My Word; you won't fail half way there  
- I am the Life Way – provides abundant life and takes us to the right destination by His power
- 7) *"I am the True Vine"* (**John 15:1**) – **Word of Reality and Accomplishment**  
Other vines have been a disappointment
- 8) Used in absolute sense in **18:5** on the occasion of His arrest --  
Reaction: they fell down before Him

### 3. (:51a) Calming the Tempest Without

*"And He got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped;"*

καὶ ἀνέβη πρὸς αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ πλοῖον καὶ ἐκόπασεν ὁ ἄνεμος,

Matthew = only gospel that included account of Peter walking on the water and the subsequent testimony of the disciples: *"Truly you are the Son of God"*

Another miracle recorded in **John 15:21** – immediately they were at land

**Borgman: Job 9:8** *"God alone tramples down the waves of the sea"*; **Ps. 107:23ff** – quiets the storm of the sea; controls both the winds and the waves;

### 4. (:51b-52) Calloused Hearts

*"and they were greatly astonished, for they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened."*

καὶ λίαν [ἐκ περισσοῦ] ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἐξίσταντο· οὐ γὰρ συνῆκαν ἐπὶ τοῖς ἄρτοις, ἀλλ' ἦν αὐτῶν ἡ καρδία πεπωρωμένη.

make dull or obtuse or blind, lit. *'harden'* **Mk 8:17**; petrify as a rock; become calloused

**Hiebert:** They were in a state of being spiritually imperceptive. Their reaction was unworthy of those to whom it had been given to know *"the mystery of the kingdom of God"* (**Mk 4:11**).

**Parunak:** They did not consider the loaves. Had they done so, they would have realized he was amply able to care for them; even after they had eaten their part, the twelve baskets may have been with them even at that moment in the boat. How often in Scripture, the Lord's past blessings to us are the motivation for us to trust him in the future.

**Hendriksen:** In Scripture the heart is the fulcrum of feeling and faith as well as the mainspring of words and actions (Matt. 12:34; 15:19, 22:37; John 14:1; Rom. 10:10; Eph. 1:18). It is the root of man's intellectual, emotional, and volitional life, the core and center of man's being, his inmost self. *"Out of it are the issues of life"* (Prov. 4:23). *"Man looks on the outward*

*appearance, but Jehovah looks on the heart*" (1 Sam. 16:7). When Mark says that the hearts of these disciples were "*hardened*," this probably means that the obtuseness of the Twelve, their inability to draw the necessary conclusion from the miracles of Jesus, was the result of sinful neglect to ponder and meditate on these marvelous works and on the nature of the One who performed them. Amazement, so that in their exhilaration these disciples would even ascribe deity to their Master, as happened even at the present occasion (Matt. 14:33), did not prevent them from falling into a kind of spiritual torpor or sluggishness; that is, they failed to ask themselves what could be expected of such a divine Being. Again and again they needed to be aroused out of their spiritual drowsiness. On the other hand, this hardness of heart must not be confused with the callousness and imperviousness of the scribes and Pharisees. That attitude was the result of unbelief and hatred. The disciples, on the contrary (Judas excepted), were men of faith . . . *little faith*.

The fact that faith should be sufficiently wide awake to derive legitimate conclusions from firmly established premises is the lesson which Scripture teaches (Matt. 6:26-30 Luke 11:13; Rom. 8:31, 32), but which is not always taken to heart.

**Parunak:** Not the usual OT expression, as applied to Pharaoh in Exodus, or to the Pharisees in Mark 10:5. This one means "*calloused*."

### **How can we guard against Hardened Hearts?**

- Allow God's Word to speak to us each day as fresh and new revelation
- Respond to God's Word by being doers and not just hearers only
- Keep reviewing and feeding on examples of God's faithfulness from our past experiences

## **II. (:53-56) THE PEOPLE DON'T GET IT – PROBLEM = MISPLACED PRIORITIES – LESSON OF FAITH: SPIRITUAL HEALING IS INFINITELY MORE IMPORTANT THAN PHYSICAL HEALING**

### **A. (:53-55) Recognizing Jesus Only as a Miracle Worker**

#### 1. (:53) Change in Location

*"And when they had crossed over they came to land at Gennesaret, and moored to the shore."*

Καὶ διαπεράσαντες ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν ἦλθον εἰς Γεννησαρὲτ καὶ προσωρμίσθησαν.

This is just the next morning after the feeding of the 5000

**Grassmick:** This summary statement marks the climax of Jesus' Galilean ministry just before His departure for the coastal region around Tyre and Sidon.

#### 2. (:54) Consistency of Reputation as a Miracle Worker

*"And when they had come out of the boat, immediately the people recognized Him,"*

καὶ ἐξελθόντων αὐτῶν ἐκ τοῦ πλοίου εὐθὺς ἐπιγινόντες αὐτὸν

#### 3. (:55) Crowd Gathering Around the Miracle Worker

*"and ran about that whole country and began to carry about on their pallets those who were sick, to the place they heard He was."*

περιέδραμον ὅλην τὴν χώραν ἐκείνην καὶ ἤρξαντο ἐπὶ τοῖς κραβάττοις τοὺς κακῶς

ἔχοντας περιφέρειν ὅπου ἤκουον ὅτι ἐστίν.

## **B. (:56) Requesting from Jesus Only Physical Healing**

### 1. Rabbit's Tail Mentality

*“And wherever He entered villages, or cities, or countryside, they were laying the sick in the market places, and entreating Him that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak;”*

καὶ ὅπου ἂν εἰσεπορεύετο εἰς κώμας ἢ εἰς πόλεις ἢ εἰς ἀγρούς, ἐν ταῖς ἀγοραῖς ἐτίθεσαν τοὺς ἀσθενοῦντας καὶ παρεκάλουν αὐτὸν ἵνα κἄν τοῦ κρασπέδου τοῦ ἱματίου αὐτοῦ ἄψωνται·

Reminds us of the woman with the 12 year old blood issue problem who snuck up from behind just to touch the garment of Jesus

### 2. Remarkable Cures

*“and as many as touched it were being cured.”*

καὶ ὅσοι ἂν ἤψαντο αὐτοῦ ἐσώζοντο.

So different from healers today – who put the emphasis and the priority on the physical healing and are not effective

## **Matt. 14:34-36**

**Constable:** "Gennesaret" was the name of both a town and the plain on which the town stood. The region was the northwest coast of the lake. It was so prominent because of its agricultural richness that another name for the Sea of Galilee was the Sea of Gennesaret (Luke 5:1).<sup>322</sup> It was an area of dense population.

## **CONCLUSION:**

What does it mean to you that God wants to reveal Himself to you today?

What does it mean to you that Jesus Christ is present with you as the great I AM?

What is causing you to fear or be anxious?

What type of situations cause you to panic and take your eyes off the Savior and sink in the surrounding storms of life?

\* \* \* \* \*

## **DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

1) Why does Jesus seemingly wait so long before helping us in our trials?

2) How can the Word of God be sufficient to alleviate our fears and anxieties?

- 3) What can we do to maintain hearts that are soft and pliable instead of hard and impenetrable?
- 4) How do the prosperity gospel proponents of today treat Jesus as a rabbit's foot?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**MacArthur:** For this morning, we come to the final section in the sixth chapter of Mark's gospel, the last section beginning in verse 45 and running to the end of the chapter. As you know, we're endeavoring to move through Mark at a little more rapid rate than we have some of the other gospels through the years. That is consistent, I think, with Mark's intent. His favorite word is the word "immediately," so in due respect to the Holy Spirit who inspired Mark to use "immediately" repeatedly, we are trying to be rather immediate in the way we move through Mark. We want to do that but not by sacrificing any of the truth, not by sacrificing the message or anything the Holy Spirit has intended for us. It's a delight and a joy for us to go through this wonderful history of the Son of God. Mark launches his gospel by saying, "This is the beginning of the gospel of God's Son," and that's what it's about. Everything in it is designed to give us all the evidence we could possibly need to prove that Jesus is God in human flesh, God the Son, so that every paragraph directs its attention at the person of Jesus Christ. That is consistent with all of the gospels and that certainly is Mark's great intention that we would see Christ in all His majesty and glory. . .

The people, however, wanted only physical things. They wanted only those things which were momentary and temporal. They were eager to receive His power over demons, disease, and death. His power to create food was even more attractive to them. But He saw the crowd for what the crowd was. He saw in the relentless and eager crowds no true worship, no heart repentance, no willingness to abandon an apostate religion, their sense of self-righteousness. They wanted their religion. They loved their self-righteousness. They just wanted the things that Jesus could provide them. They were a...they were a ready group for the prosperity gospel, wanted nothing more even as people are today. They were the thrill seekers. They wanted to use Him in a bloody revolution, if they could. But He would have none of it. . .

Now some have suggested that there was another Bethsaida and what He is saying is you need to go to the Bethsaida that's on the other side of the lake. We don't have any evidence that there's another Bethsaida at all. It does mean "fish house" and there might have been a lot of fish houses around the lake cause fishing was the primary industry. But no one has ever been able to find another Bethsaida, so it's better to stick with the one we know is there, the one where the Apostles were born, the one that was cursed because of its exposure to the miracles, especially the one of the feeding of the thousands. So we're talking about the Bethsaida that is north and east. So they're sent on their way in the direction of Bethsaida and then past Bethsaida to Capernaum.

**Brian Borgman: (:45-52)** New Israel just like old Israel -- slow, imperceptive, spiritually dull, far down on the learning curve; passage connected to feeding of 5,000, true Joshua leading God's people, true David shepherding God's people, true Manna come down from heaven to provide for them in the wilderness;  
Did you find rest in Jesus this past week? Were you content with His gracious provision? Or were you characterized by anxiety and grumbling?

Jesus is patient with thick-headed disciples and will teach us again;  
We need to hear the same truths over and over and over again;

### 1) (vv.45-47) – Jesus Arranging a New Need for His Disciples

Jesus acting in compassion towards His disciples; compelled them firmly – left them no choice

- He wanted to get off by Himself to pray
- He wanted disciples to continue their rest
- (John) – Crowd wanted to take Jesus by force and make Him King; squelching Messianic madness that had gripped the crowd
- He wants to teach them lesson of faith once again

Jesus sovereignly leads them into a trial; sea = place of chaos and upheaval – restlessness of the wicked; disciples obey; trials not always associated with discipline for sin;

### 2) (:48-50) – The Desperate Need Itself

Strong headwind; unable to make any progress; totally futile effort; wearying themselves out by their backbreaking striving against relentless wind; “straining” – being tested or examined by torture; tormented or distressed in an extreme way; tapped out; hopeless and helpless; the darkest hour = between 3 and 6 am; had been on the sea for more than 6 hours by this time; maybe up to 9; they wet their tunics when they see Jesus; disciples panic; this appearance only adds to their stress instead of relieving it; folklore: when sailors were at sea and about to drown they would see ghost of those who had gone before; slow, dull disciples – figure that they are just sunk; so absorbed in our own problems we don’t see the hand of God at work;

### 3) (:50-52) -- Jesus Addressing the Need

“*but immediately*” – Jesus did not leave them to their screaming; spoke to them; compassion of the Savior; gives out His voice as an anchor to these storm-tossed souls; What do you say to people who are terrified? Just telling me to have courage is not going to solve my problem; **Ex. 14:13** reference – Egyptian army closing in on them at the Red Sea – very same words; “*I am*” reference – *ego eimi* – **Ex. 3:14** – a lot deeper than just “Be brave, it is me”; 8 times in John’s gospel Jesus identifies Himself in this way; **Is. 41:10** “*Do not fear*”; don’t miss the significance of these statements;

Does something about their need – gets in the boat with them; waves and wind stop; understand how the Lord responds to His people in the midst of their terror and distress and fear; He speaks His words to them!

Problem: Christians don’t know who their God is! And what He will do for His people  
What are you looking for in your times of trouble and distress? Look to the Word of God!  
Petrified, calloused hearts – smallness of faith that is unresponsive; confounded; don’t know what to make of the situation; failure to remember God’s workings in the past and apply that knowledge of His presence and provision to our current situation; you have been good to me in the past; your promises have never failed; this present difficulty I know I will endure; Why did the Israelites pile up rocks everywhere? So that they and their children would remember that in this place at this time, God was our help! Look back to where I raised that Ebenezer; as children of Abraham by faith we have over 4,000 years of monuments to God’s faithfulness – especially His love demonstrated on Cavalary; Why be afraid? I AM is with us; the headwinds are simply a part of life; Take courage; no more whining and complaining;

**David Silversides: The Only Wise God our Savior**

Why did He send them all away?

- Wrong ideas of His Messiahship
- Wanted to separate disciples from the people who had wrong views and would do them harm
- Training opportunity for disciples who would be without the physical presence of Christ
- Lord wanted time alone to pray

Sovereign providence of the Lord in orchestrating this circumstance according to His wisdom for the good of His people and the glory of His Father

### **1. Christ the perfect man of prayer**

Ps. 89; divine person and yet a man of prayer; how could He not pray since He was perfect man; a man who doesn't pray is a wicked man; prayed though exceedingly busy and weary; don't sacrifice times of prayer; difficult to pray when a lot is going on; commotion and excitement  
Ps. 94 – seek grace to pray; Ps. 104 at the end

### **2. The Wisdom of Christ (:47)**

- He saw them toiling (:48) – had deliberately sent them on the ship without His physical presence; straining; tormenting; strong word; wind was against them; experienced fishermen; minds were in a state of alarm; had struggled through the dark night in fear of their lives; He did nothing to help them until the fourth watch; He teaches us in affliction; Lord knew what He would do and when He would do it  
- He would have passed by them – never at a loss to help us since He is a Savior who can walk on the raging sea; never powerless; they screamed;

### **3. Not tempted above we are able (:50)**

They were troubled; at their wit's end; loved them all along; they had to learn to depend upon Him; our trust in the Lord is so much changed by our outward circumstances; shows us afflictions of various kinds; able to give the comfort and assurance of His presence to distracted disciples

### **4. Our inability to appreciate Christ (:51)**

Astonished more than they ought to have been;

TEXT: Mark 7:1-13

TITLE: EXPOSING SELF RIGHTEOUS RELIGIOUS TRADITION

**BIG IDEA:**

**RELIGIOUS TRADITION CREATES HYPOCRITES IN THE SIGHT OF GOD BY UNDERMINING THE AUTHORITY OF GOD'S WORD**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Some passages the Lord makes so simple that you can't possibly miss the main point. Here Jesus just repeats His Big Idea statement several times in the space of a couple of paragraphs.

**RELIGIOUS TRADITION CREATES HYPOCRITES IN THE SIGHT OF GOD BY UNDERMINING THE AUTHORITY OF GOD'S WORD**

This has always been the case. The most severe opposition that Jesus faced during His earthly ministry didn't come from Gentile pagans. It was the Jewish religious leaders of the establishment, based out of their headquarters in Jerusalem, that felt threatened by the presentation of the truth and violently attacked Jesus and His ministry. These were the so-called experts in the OT, in the law given to Moses. When religious tradition collides with God's authoritative revealed truth in His inspired Word, the confrontation is always intense.

Remember the Protestant Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century – the establishment church reacted violently to its authority being questioned by the **Sola Scriptura** approach of the Reformers. Should faith and practice be based on the simple interpretation of the Word of God or should the authority of centuries of church tradition be elevated over the Scriptures? When I think of the Pharisees of Jesus' day, the best modern day parallel I can find would be the self righteous and hypocritical leadership of Roman Catholic priests. They continue to undermine the authority of God's Word by the legalistic rules and regulations imposed by the extra-biblical authority of the popes and the church fathers – it is their interpretation and application of the scriptures that take precedence in the Roman Catholic Church. Yet you find the ecumenical movement of today trying to minimize the differences between Protestants and Catholics. What has fundamentally changed since the days of the Reformation? Don't be fooled into thinking the differences are minor.

Certainly both Jesus and the Jewish religious leaders understood that they were on opposing sides on the fundamental issue of who has the authority to determine matters of faith and practice.

**RELIGIOUS TRADITION CREATES HYPOCRITES IN THE SIGHT OF GOD BY UNDERMINING THE AUTHORITY OF GOD'S WORD**

But we can't let **ourselves** off the hook so easily. Even within our own church circles where we understand the salvation truths of **justification by faith** alone apart from works ... we still fall prey to the snare of religious tradition. Our battleground is not as crucial as the essence of the gospel message, but there are certainly volatile confrontations when church leaders blindly hold to the traditions of established practices and refuse to re-examine their position in the objective light of the authority of God's Word.



## **I. (:1-8) HYPOCRITES TRY TO HIDE BEHIND RELIGIOUS TRADITION TO APPEAR SUPER SPIRITUAL**

### **A. (:1-5) Judgmental Spirit of Self Righteous Hypocrites**

#### 1. (:1-2) Self Righteous Hypocrites Look to Condemn Those Who Neglect Their Precious Traditions

*“And the Pharisees and some of the scribes gathered together around Him when they had come from Jerusalem, and had seen that some of His disciples were eating their bread with impure hands, that is, unwashed.”*

Καὶ συνάγονται πρὸς αὐτὸν οἱ Φαρισαῖοι καὶ τινες τῶν γραμματέων ἐλθόντες ἀπὸ Ἱεροσολύμων. <sup>2</sup> καὶ ἰδόντες τινὰς τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ ὅτι κοιναῖς χερσίν, τοῦτ' ἔστιν ἀνίπτοις, ἐσθίουσιν τοὺς ἄρτους

**Hiebert:** The Pharisees have not been mentioned in Mark since **3:6** where they were last seen plotting the death of Jesus. . . The passive voice indicates that they were motivated by their own inner concern to counter the popularity of Jesus.

By now we should have a pretty good understanding of who these Pharisees and scribes were. **The scribes** were the religious professionals who were essentially the religious lawyers of the establishment. They were charged with being experts in the OT law. They copied the manuscripts, provided interpretation and teaching. They codified the tradition of the elders – that evolving documentation of rules and regulations that rabbis had added to the scriptures as a fence to protect the enforcement and application of the Word of God. But those traditions had come to supplant the simple meaning of God’s truth.

The **Pharisees** were the Jewish party of Separatists (the root meaning of their name); the religious conservatives who were the leaders in the practical implementation of living out the commandments of the law and the corresponding layers of oral tradition with its minute regulations. They were more concerned with the ethical practices than with the core theology. Jesus attacked them as essentially self righteous and hypocritical – laying impossible standards of behavior on the people that they failed to live up to themselves. They were extremely legalistic and concerned with outward appearances rather than the inward righteousness of the true law of God. Many scribes were also Pharisees – much overlap between the two groups.

Both groups had made the journey **from Jerusalem** to address this pressing issue with Jesus – Jerusalem was the hub for the religious leaders of the establishment – the ones most threatened by the growing ministry of Jesus; that is where the temple was; that is where the upper echelon of the religious hierarchy enjoyed their reputation as the top dogs and defended their authority; they had been closely monitoring the teaching and practice of Jesus and His disciples

Now they gather around Jesus – not with open minds and hearts to hear God’s Word, but with a critical, judgmental, attacking spirit – wanting to find fault and put down this movement that was gaining such popularity

**Hendriksen:** Most Pharisees and scribes hated Jesus, because:

- a. he claimed divine prerogatives; taught with unique and powerful authority
- b. he did not honor their traditions with respect to the Sabbath, fasts, ablutions, etc.  
we will talk more about the tradition of the elders
- c. he associated with publicans and sinners – had meals with them; friendships with them –

would have made them unclean in the eyes of the Pharisees  
d. he exerted what they considered a baneful influence upon the people – they could not control Him; He did not recognize and bow to their authority  
e. he was their opposite – all about internal righteousness; where they sought to elevate sacrifice and religious ritual, He as all about mercy and compassion and inward righteousness; genuine and authentic – not legalistic and hypocritical  
Jesus made them feel very insecure – they reacted with great intensity in their opposition

**MacArthur:** This is a head-on collision between true and heart religion and false and external religion

What was the specific issue the Jewish leaders gathered around Jesus to address?  
Matter not of hygiene or cleanliness – matter of ritual and ceremonial cleansing – not something governed by the scriptures but regulated by their body of oral traditions – the traditions of the elders – documented in the Talmud and in a later century codified in the Mishnah – in fact an entire section would be devoted to this topic

What is the big deal of not following the ritual cleansing?

**Ron Daniel:** You see, the Jews believed that a demon sat upon unwashed hands. If you ate before ceremonially cleansing them, they thought, the demon would enter your body through your mouth. So, they believed that the ceremonial cleaning was very necessary.

**Grassmick:** In reply Jesus made no reference to His disciples' conduct. Rather He addressed two issues underlying the inquiry:

- (a) the true source of religious authority – tradition or Scripture (:6-13) and [today's sermon]
- (b) the true nature of defilement – ceremonial and moral (:14-23) [next week's sermon]

## 2. (:3-4) Self Righteous Hypocrites Have an Elaborate Code of Precious Traditions

*“(For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands, thus observing the traditions of the elders; and when they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves; and there are many other things which they have received in order to observe, such as the washing of cups and pitchers and copper pots.)”*

οἱ γὰρ Φαρισαῖοι καὶ πάντες οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι ἐὰν μὴ πυγμῆ νίψωνται τὰς χεῖρας οὐκ ἐσθίουσιν, κρατοῦντες τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν πρεσβυτέρων, <sup>4</sup> καὶ ἀπ' ἀγορᾶς ἐὰν μὴ βαπτίσωνται οὐκ ἐσθίουσιν, καὶ ἄλλα πολλὰ ἐστὶν ἃ παρέλαβον κρατεῖν, βαπτισμοὺς ποτηρίων καὶ ξεστῶν καὶ χαλκίων [καὶ κλινῶν]-

Our English translation puts these 2 verses in parenthesis as almost an aside – remember Mark was writing to largely a Gentile audience; these were ones that were not as familiar with the traditions of the elders; they needed some explanation as to why this issue was such a big deal; Matthew (15:1-10) writing more to a Jewish audience does not feel the need to include this explanation

**Hendriksen:** The marketplace, a gathering center for many people, was naturally looked upon as being especially defiling. A Jew might brush against a Gentile! Therefore, coming from such a place, these Jews did not dare to eat unless they had first of all complied with whatever it was that tradition demanded regarding hand rinsing.

We don't necessarily understand all of the details regarding this particular washing ritual – but that is not necessary for grasping the import of the passage; these practices were of supreme importance to the scribes and Pharisees; they would watch others to see that they acted correctly – this is how one would appear spiritual before others – did you conform to these types of external practices

Can't emphasize enough how **elaborate** these rules and regulations were:

- Sabbath keeping rules –
  - o You can't look into a mirror
  - o You must be careful where you spit – on a rock vs on mud
  - o Wooden leg in case of fire – can you carry it out or must you take time to put it on
- Here we are talking about ceremonial cleansing

Not easy to be an expert in such an elaborate system – required extensive study; always policing the people to try to get conformity to these practices

Sprinkling would not have been sufficient – needed a baptizing of the hands; the mode was significant; [some commentators believe that the Pharisees held to bathing their entire body, not just the hands]

Christians can be judgmental and legalistic towards one another about many types of external practices as well; maybe they have certain traditions about how to raise your kids or what types of educational practices are acceptable or what types of dress are acceptable ... or practices of a specific church or denomination that have no scriptural demand but have been a **preference** that has been enforced over time to such an extent that it seems obligatory

- Not using musical instruments in the worship service
- OK, you can use pianos and organs, but not drums
- You must conclude the sermon with a gospel invitation – an altar call for people to come forward
- Only the Senior Pastor can be the visionary for the church – God wants to speak primarily through his leadership – supported by some helping elders [we are talking tradition here and violent opposition]
- You must genuflect in a certain way when you enter the sanctuary or face the altar
- You can never drink any wine or alcoholic beverage
- You can't play cards or dance [well some of us obviously can't dance]

The list goes on ...

### 3. (:5) Self Righteous Hypocrites are Always Pointing the Legalistic Finger of Condemnation at Others

*“And the Pharisees and the scribes asked Him, ‘Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with impure hands?’”*

καὶ ἐπερωτῶσιν αὐτὸν οἱ Φαρισαῖοι καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς· διὰ τί οὐ περιπατοῦσιν οἱ μαθηταὶ σου κατὰ τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν πρεσβυτέρων, ἀλλὰ κοιναῖς χερσὶν ἐσθίουσιν τὸν ἄρτον;

Tradition of the elders – like erecting fences around the law to protect it

**Legge:** people often willingly accept rigidity and ritual as a substitute for reality.

**Grassmick:** Later, in the third century A.D., the oral tradition was collected and codified in the Mishnah which, in turn, provided the foundation for and structure of the Talmud.

**Parunak:** See **Edersheim**, II.11 ff, for the details on this complicated procedure, which regulated the history of the water to be used, the amount, the position in which the hands were held, how many rinsings were needed, etc. Not just an ordinary hygienic measure, but part of the Jewish genius for turning every aspect of daily life into a part of the religion. Great for preserving the identity of the nation, but superfluous from the perspective of obedience to God.

## **B. (:6-8) Judge of All the Earth Exposes the Fundamental Sins of Hypocrites**

### 1. They Neglect the Word of God – which labels them as Hypocrites

*And He said to them, ‘Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites,’”*

Ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· καλῶς ἐπροφήτευσεν Ἡσαίας περὶ ὑμῶν τῶν ὑποκριτῶν,

Is. 29:13 and Ex. 20:12

Ironic – these men should have been the experts in the OT scriptures – but they had missed the divine intent of so many passages; what Isaiah said so many centuries ago has direct application to their hearts today – that is why we preach the entirety of the scriptures

**Hendriksen:** The hypocrite is the man who hides or tries to hide his real intentions under (*hypo*) a mask of simulated virtue.

**James Edwards:** It would be a mistake to assume that in calling the Pharisees “hypocrites” Jesus accuses them of lack of dedication. . . . On the contrary, it was their commitment to the oral tradition – and Jesus’ equal commitment to recovering the intent of the written law – that made their differences so earnest.

Would you go to a Roman Catholic church to hear good exposition of the Word of God??  
Look at how much attention they give to all of their rites and ceremonies . . . to the pronouncements from the church fathers and from the popes – all of the papers that come out of the Vatican from different councils on different topics  
They Neglect the Word of God

### 2. They Pretend to Worship on the Outside but Their Hearts are Rebellious

*as it is written, ‘This people honors Me with their lips,  
But their heart is far away from Me.’”*

ὡς γέγραπται [ὅτι] οὗτος ὁ λαὸς τοῖς χεῖλεσίν με τιμᾷ,  
ἡ δὲ καρδία αὐτῶν πόρρω ἀπέχει ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ·

### 3. Their Self Righteous Attempts at Worship are Futile

*“But in vain do they worship Me,”*

μάτην δὲ σέβονται με διδάσκοντες

**Parunak:** Elaborate buildings, vestures, and liturgies do not guarantee orthodoxy, and may even

detract from it, just as the temple in Jerusalem lured the people of Jeremiah's day into a false sense of security.

**MacArthur:** *Vain worship*...vain meaning empty, useless, pointless, lifeless, hypocritical worship. This characterized the people of Israel at the time of our Lord. And it wasn't anything new, it was deeply imbedded into their religion. It was in the water. It was in the ground. It was in the air. It was in the fabric of how they thought and how they acted. They were literally the products of centuries of hypocritical, superficial, empty, useless worship. It was directed at the right God but in the wrong way. God does not accept worship, even worship in His name directed at Him done wrongly. It's a problem, a serious problem to worship the wrong God, and it's equally a problem, a serious problem, to worship the right God in the wrong way. And the Jews had turned this into a highly sophisticated art form. . .

[Examples: Isaiah 1; book of Malachi]

The prophet Malachi, that wonderful little prophecy that ends the Old Testament, again reminds us of an apostate Israel. That whole prophecy of four brief chapters, is an indictment on Israel for false worship, empty worship, for offering the lame and the halt sacrifice instead of the best lamb, for despising worship, for going through the mechanics of worship while at the same time cultivating iniquity in the heart.

#### 4. They Elevate Human Traditions to be Divine Commandments

*"Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men."*

διδασκαλίας ἐντάλματα ἀνθρώπων.

**MacArthur:** ...they were not nearly so concerned about Scripture as they were their tradition. They had made their tradition equal to the tradition. In fact, they had made it superior to the Scripture, like the Roman Catholic Church, and like those false religions that have a tradition equal to the Scripture and a tradition that is the only legitimate interpreter of the Scripture.

#### 5. They Choose to Follow Human Traditions Over Divine Commandments

*"Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men."*

ἀφέντες τὴν ἐντολὴν τοῦ θεοῦ κρατεῖτε τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων

**Parunak:** The Claim: you "lay aside" God's commands and "hold" fast to human tradition. Somehow traditions that originate in human teaching and are expressed physically seem more appealing, more "religious," than those that God enjoins, particularly when they are more inward. The point of the claim here is that the Pharisees give more priority to the outward and human traditions than to the inward and divine ones, which thus suffer neglect.

Cf. **Sermon on the Mount** – Christ exposing the hypocrisy of the Jewish religious leaders who claimed to be the experts in the OT law – but were neglecting it at every turn

### **HYPOCRITES TRY TO HIDE BEHIND RELIGIOUS TRADITION TO APPEAR SUPER SPIRITUAL**

**You cannot hide from God** – He strips off the mask of the hypocrites and exposes them as self righteous frauds

## II. (:9-13) HYPOCRITES DISREGARD THE CLEAR COMMANDS OF GOD BY ELEVATING RELIGIOUS TRADITION OVER GOD'S WORD

### A. (:9) Principle Stated – You Have Elevated Religious Tradition Over Obedience to God

*“He was also saying to them, ‘You nicely set aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition.’”*

καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς· καλῶς ἀθετεῖτε τὴν ἐντολὴν τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα τὴν παράδοσιν ὑμῶν στήσητε.

### B. (:10-12) Principle Illustrated by Specific OT Example

#### 1. (:10) Clear OT Command – 2 Instances

*“For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘He who speaks evil of father or mother, let him be put to death!’”*

Μωϋσῆς γὰρ εἶπεν· τίμα τὸν πατέρα σου καὶ τὴν μητέρα σου,  
καί· ὁ κακολογῶν πατέρα ἢ μητέρα θανάτῳ τελευτάτω.

Authority of Moses = the Giver of the Law – standing behind the validity of the commandment

Corroboration in 2 different passages so there can be no doubt regarding the intent of the command

**Hendriksen:** *To honor* father and mother means more than *to obey* them, especially if this obedience is interpreted in a merely outward sense. It is the inner attitude of the child toward his parents that comes to the fore in the requirement that he honor them. All selfish obedience or reluctant obedience or obedience under terror is immediately ruled out. To honor implies to love, to regard highly, to show the spirit of respect and consideration. This honor is to be shown to both parents, for as far as the child is concerned they are equal in authority.

Grassmick: Such responsibility included adequate financial support and practical care for their needs in their old age (cf. **1 Tim. 5:4**).

#### 2. (:11) Cunning Hypocrisy

*“but you say, ‘If a man says to his father or his mother, anything of mine you might have been helped by is Corban (that is to say, given to God),’”*

ὁμοῖς δὲ λέγετε· ἐὰν εἴπη ἄνθρωπος τῷ πατρὶ ἢ τῇ μητρὶ· κορβᾶν, ὃ ἐστὶν δῶρον,  
ὃ ἐὰν ἐξ ἐμοῦ ὠφελήθῃς,

**James Edwards:** In the case of Corban, a person could dedicate goods to God and withdraw them from ordinary use, although retaining control over them himself. In the example of v. 11, a son declares his property Corban, which at his death would pass into the possession of the temple. In the meantime, however, the son retains control over the property – and his control deprives his parents of the support that otherwise would have been derived from the property in their old age.

**Parunak:** Modern example: **annulments** in the RC organization. On paper, RCs have a strong stand against divorce. However, they have constructed an elaborate definition of what

constitutes a "valid" marriage under canon law, making it possible for those who want "out" of a marriage to find a **loophole** to argue that they were never really married in the first place. Rome goes along with this game, rather than condemning it at the outset.

**Current News:** A Vatican document called for leaders of the Roman Catholic Church to do more to reach out to gay and divorced Catholics, striking a far more **welcoming tone** toward people living in conflict with Vatican teachings. . . . Monday's document raised the possibility of permitting, on a case-by-case basis, remarried Catholics to take communion after a period of penitence. It said that many bishops favored an acceleration of the long and complicated process of **annulment**.

### 3. (:12) Contradiction of God's Commands

*"you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or his mother;"*

οὐκέτι ἀφίετε αὐτὸν οὐδὲν ποιῆσαι τῷ πατρὶ ἢ τῇ μητρὶ,

### **C. (:13a) Principle Restated for Emphasis – You Have Elevated Religious Tradition Over Obedience to God**

*"thus invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down;"*

ἀκυροῦντες τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ τῇ παραδόσει ὑμῶν ἢ παρεδώκατε·

Where is the regard for the Word of God? You are invalidating it

**Hiebert:** *Making void* is stronger than *reject* in verse 9 and means to deprive of authority, to cancel.

**Grassmick:** Nullify – used in the papyri for annulling contracts.

You are perpetuating this false dependence on man's traditions because you continue to hand it down and validate it for the next generation

### **D. (:13b) Pointing to Additional Examples**

*"and you do many things such as that."*

καὶ παρόμοια τοιαῦτα πολλὰ ποιεῖτε.

Could have isolated a lot of other examples; this was just one case study to illustrate the point

### **CONCLUSION:**

When religious tradition is threatened by the Truth of God's Word – the collision is inevitable; Jesus did not shrink back from that battle or mince words when it came to exposing the error of the self righteous and hypocritical scribes and Pharisees

### **Matt. 23:1-36**

\* \* \* \* \*

## DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why is it dangerous to get too devoted to one preacher's interpretation of Scripture?
- 2) Can you identify any traditions in your church or denomination that are more preferences than they are obligatory in terms of biblical mandate?
- 3) What other examples could Jesus have referenced regarding how the religious leaders were nullifying the Word of God by their man made traditions?
- 4) How can we guard our hearts against worshiping God in a vain, futile manner?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**MacArthur:** In **Mark 12:15** it says of Christ, "*But He knowing their hypocrisy...*" Wow. They don't ever escape, no hypocrite ever does. He knows, He knows yours, He knows your heart. He knows if you love Him, if the trajectory of your life is to love Him with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, if He is your all in all, if He is your everything, if you adore Him, if you love Him and worship Him from the heart, He knows that and He knows if you're a hypocrite. And you're in some pretty bad company if it's all external. We manage...we manage to strip out all the ceremony, don't we? Purposely, to strip out all the ritual, get rid of all the routine, all the costumes, all the falderal, all the superficiality. But we still have the possibility of hypocrisy, people trying to live a good life on the outside earn their way to God while their hearts are far from Him.

**David Legge:** Your conformity without is not changing you within'. So what the Lord was really saying is that there is a deceitfulness with religion, and indeed any other institution of humankind that tries to effect a change on the inside by changing the outside. You are deceiving others, you're making out by your outward conformity that you're something you're not on the inside - but not only are you deceiving those around you, you're deceiving yourself, thinking that you're better than others because of your conformity without.

### **Brian Borgman: Hypocrisy Exposed (:6-7)**

Pharisees were masters of legalism; we are all prone to the errors of the Pharisees; missing the point of the law; added to the law man made traditions that focused just on the externals; ended up setting aside the law of God and thus God Himself; thinking you are right with God because of something you do; goes hand in hand with self righteousness; thinking you have won the favor of God by jumping through your own man made hoops; pretending to be something you are not; all the while failing to be what you really are; Root = Hypocrisy

Gravitates towards man made rules because he can accomplish those; Jesus uses the penetrating application of the Word of God to expose hypocrisy; Isaiah written 700 years before days of Christ; Chap. 29 is a statement of condemnation of their conduct at that point of time – yet still relevant and applicable to the Pharisees of Jesus' day; this is what preaching is all about; hearing the voice of God to us today; Word of God comes fresh to each generation; labels them as hypocrites – wouldn't sit well with His audience; we despise being called this; play actor;



pretender; Matt. 6 – don't give or pray or fast like the hypocrites; the hypocrite never thinks he is a hypocrite; at least a prostitute knows she is a prostitute

Hypocrites honor God with their lips; pay lip service; has a date for his conversion; talks about his love for God and his walk with God; professes to know God; Titus 1:16 – deny Him by their deeds; avoids certain socially unacceptable sins; have a form of godliness but deny the power; knows the lingo; talks the talk; in the public eye they seem to be quite godly; usually prays very well; not the same person in private; no private communion with God; totally self reliant; never senses need for God's grace; no affection or warmth or love for God – just profession of love; bolstering their own self righteousness and beating others down; what are you in private??  
Wife should know whether you are authentic or hypocrite

Essence of authentic corporate worship – magnifying God; heartfelt satisfaction in the glory of God and a trembling when we do not have it; easy to engage in vain worship where there is no heart for God or no longing for God; hypocrite knows nothing of authentic worship; issue is not one of form but of engaging the heart; did you sing the words of the hymn with just a fine voice or from a full heart?

### **Dr. Steven J. Lawson: Truth vs Tradition (two parts)**

Violent collision between truth and tradition in a religious culture; divine revelation vs human rules; true spirituality vs superficiality; authority of God vs man's tradition; Protestant Reformation in 16<sup>th</sup> century was all about this violent collision; Is the Bible the only infallible rule for faith and practice? The teaching of the living church must be subordinated to the Word of God; it is never a small conflict; it had been a gathering storm; countless rules and endless regulations added to the OT by the scribes and rabbis = the tradition of the elders; ended up being elevated above Scripture; primacy and sole authority of Word of God wiped out; authoritative teaching of Jesus created the perfect storm

The more religious the culture the harder it is for the truth to thrive; the religious culture always seeks to smother out the divine truth; the more established the tradition, the harder people will cling to it; truth requires you to let go of empty tradition

### **I. (:1-2) The Investigation – the Pharisees and the Scribes**

Pharisees: conservative sect; fastidious observance of law of God in its greatest detail; they added to truth their tradition; given enough time tradition always crowds out the truth; observing external religion; never calls for cleansing of the soul or repentance; allows for mere sentimentality and superficiality; separated one; against all defilement of the world; the holy huddle

Scribes: the lawyers of the day; studied the OT, copied it; taught it; interpreted it;

Both wanted a strict enforcement of the law of Moses so they added to it the tradition of the elders; Jerusalem was the center of the religious establishment; seat of their legalism; hub of their hypocritical religion; came as theological hit men to put an end to the ministry of Jesus Christ because the truth was making inroads; panicking as truth took root; growing hatred of Christ; attempting to discredit Jesus

Those who hold to man-made traditions over the Word of God will fight at all costs to protect those traditions; tradition dies hard if it ever dies at all; inserting the truth creates a panic;

## **II. (:3-4) The Explanation --**

Matthew writes for a Jewish audience where no explanation is needed – they grew up with the system; Mark writing for Gentile audience – outside the system and wondering: Why in the world would that be such a big deal?

Introduced by “for”; “*all the Jews*” = a great number; not talking about dealing with sanitary conditions but ritual and ceremonial

“*traditions of the elders*” – dealt with salvation and sanctification; recorded in Talmud; Mishnah; the fence around the law to protect the law of Moses;

Martin Luther took opposite approach: How do you defend the Word of God? It is like a lion – just get out of the way; it will defend itself;

Examples: layers of Sabbath keeping regulations; could not look into a mirror; you might find a grey hair and you would be tempted to pull it out = working on the Sabbath; if man had wooden leg and house caught on fire ... could he carry it out or did he have to first put it back on ... insanity and stupidity of trying to follow these regulations; contrast simplicity of Ten Commandments

Transmission of spiritual germs needed to be avoided at all costs; very prejudiced; led to all sorts of rules about cooking and eating utensils; **Matt. 23:25** – wrath of God upon you in condemnation for you clean the outside of the dish ...

They neglected inward cleansing

## **III. (:5) The Confrontation –**

Not asking with humble, teachable spirit

Ask in order to bring a charge against Jesus

You can hear the hatred in their voices; contempt in their voices; enforcing their hallowed ritualism; Jesus has posed a threat to their entire legalistic system

Legalism is more narrow than the truth; Liberalism is more broad

Only liberty in the truth; does not need any alteration

Legalism chokes out the truth

This confrontation is inevitable and unavoidable

People will rise up in anger against the truth

Response of the Lord:

## **IV. (:6-8) The Condemnation**

## **V. (:9-13) The Illustration**

TEXT: Mark 7:14-23

TITLE: *EXPOSING THE SOURCE OF TRUE DEFILEMENT = THE DEPRAVED HEART OF EVERY MAN*

**BIG IDEA:**

**YOU MUST LOOK WITHIN YOUR OWN HEART TO FIND THE SOURCE OF TRUE DEFILEMENT -- DON'T MAKE EXCUSES OR TRY TO COVER UP YOUR SIN WITH LEGALISM**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Many people today are not at all concerned with the issue of moral and spiritual defilement. They have chosen to bury their head in the sand of existential pleasures for the moment – ignoring the inner voice of conscience which speaks to their guilt and futility. But people who are religious – like the scribes and Pharisees of Christ's day – have taken great pains to try to cover over their sins with some form of external self righteousness or system of works to appease God. They have a desire to appear clean before God and before others. They are experts in jumping through the hoops of their legalistic system that deceives them into thinking they are more righteous than the people around them.

Psychologists today who like to study human behavior would have us to believe that man is **basically good**. They make excuses for our sins and point to all sorts of external influences that could have made Johnny do the bad things that he did.

Jesus strips aside all excuses and exposes the hypocrisy of legalism – as we saw last week. Now He gets to the **heart of the problem** – and it is not a pretty picture. Many people like “feel-good” messages. I have to warn you up front -- this is not a “feel-good” message.

Jesus teaches the general crowd and then His own disciples:

**YOU MUST LOOK WITHIN YOUR OWN HEART TO FIND THE SOURCE OF TRUE DEFILEMENT -- DON'T MAKE EXCUSES OR TRY TO COVER UP YOUR SIN WITH LEGALISM**

This message was radically different from the common doctrine of the Pharisees – so different that even the disciples had difficulty comprehending the very simple spiritual principle that Jesus was pressing home.

**I. (:14-15) KEY LESSON TAUGHT BRIEFLY TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC -- DEFILEMENT COMES FROM WITHIN NOT FROM WITHOUT**

**A. (:14) Requirement for Understanding Introduced: Pay Attention**

*“And after He called the multitude to Him again, He began saying to them, ‘Listen to Me, all of you, and understand.’”*

Καὶ προσκαλεσάμενος πάλιν τὸν ὄχλον ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς· ἀκούσατέ μου πάντες καὶ σύνετε.

The crowd had apparently drifted into the background to allow the Pharisees and scribes to have their stage to make accusation against Jesus. But now Jesus makes sure to gather them all around within hearing range for His important lesson.

Lesson is made available to all

What Jesus is about to say is very important

If you miss the point of this key lesson, it will have eternal consequences for your soul.

You can be mistaken about a lot of things ... but don't get this wrong.

## **B. (:15) Statement of the Key Lesson = Source of True Defilement**

### 1. Negatively: Defilement Does Not Come From What You Eat or Drink

*“there is nothing outside the man which going into him can defile him;”*

οὐδέν ἐστιν ἔξωθεν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου εἰσπορευόμενον εἰς αὐτὸν ὃ δύναται κοινῶσαι αὐτόν,

Scribes and Pharisees had come to challenge Jesus and His disciples on the issue of defilement – claiming that physical contact with something external somehow ended up leading to internal, moral corruption – Jesus took the complete opposite stance

**Constable:** Obviously Jesus was speaking morally and spiritually, not medically and physiologically. Jesus clarified the intent of the Mosaic laws regarding clean and unclean food (**Lev. 11; Deut. 14**). The Jew who ate unclean food became unclean because he or she disobeyed God's Word, not because the food made him or her unclean.

What was the purpose of the Jewish dietary laws regarding ceremonial cleanliness?

**MacArthur:** And at this point, you know, you're saying to yourself, if God didn't want them to get preoccupied with this, why did He institute these in the first place? Because they needed symbols, they needed pictures, they needed types, they needed representations of a spiritual reality. Ceremonies, various kinds of rituals, various kinds of prescriptions with touching and eating and drinking simply were external representations of the fact that **God wanted heart cleansing**. He wanted the heart to be pure from pollution, corruption and defilement. So the writer of Hebrews says in **Hebrews 8:5**, *“These things are an example and shadow of heavenly things.”* “They are figures for the time then present.” In **chapter 9 verse 10**, the writer of Hebrews says, *“Foods and drinks and various washings and fleshly ordinances were imposed until the time of reformation.”* That would be the time of Christ. They had a temporary role to play. They were like the ABC's, like the primer, like the basics that you teach a child by using illustrations. In **Hebrews 10:22** it says, *“Let us draw near with a true heart, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.”*

Wasn't this the point of the **symbolism in circumcision**? God demanded heart cleansing; Apart from such cleansing, you would remain no different than an uncircumcised Gentile.

### 2. Positively: Defilement Only Comes From the Rotten Fruit of the Depraved Heart

*“but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man.”*

ἀλλὰ τὰ ἐκ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐκπορευόμενά ἐστιν τὰ κοινοῦντα τὸν ἄνθρωπον.

### Understanding of doctrine of Natural Depravity:

The doctrine of total depravity teaches that people are not by very nature inclined to love God with their whole heart, or mind, as He requires, but rather all are inclined to serve their own interests, desires, wants, and needs, and to reject the rule of God. . .

- (1) man is a sinner; but
- (2) he is not nearly as sinful in actual practice as he could be; however
- (3) he really is a totally depraved sinner in the sight of God.

Total depravity does not mean, however, that people are as bad as they possibly can be. It does mean that “sin affects every aspect of our person, that our good acts are not done entirely out of love for God, and that we are completely unable to extricate ourselves from this sinful condition. Even the “good” things man does are tainted by sin because they are not done for the glory of God and out of faith in Him. The world focuses on the external acts claiming that they are good, while God focuses on both the external and internal acts. His purpose is to determine the motivation that perpetuated the act. If the act goes against God then it demonstrates a rebellious heart, meaning that they are going against Him. They bring no glory to Him. **Isaiah 64:6** says “*All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.*” What this demonstrates is the selfishness of man’s intended good deed actually corrupts the act itself.

<http://soldrock.wordpress.com/2013/02/22/total-depravity/>

**Wayne Grudem:** In our natures we totally lack spiritual good before God: It is not just that some parts of us are sinful and others are pure. Rather, every part of our being is affected by sin – our intellects, our emotions and desires, our hearts (the center of our desires and decision-making processes), our goals and motives, and even our physical bodies. Paul says, “*I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh*” (**Rom. 7:18**), and, “*to the corrupt and unbelieving nothing is pure; their very minds and consciences are corrupted*” (**Titus 1:15**). Moreover, Jeremiah tells us that “*the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt; who can understand it?*” (**Jer. 17:9**). In these passages Scripture is not denying that unbelievers can do good in human society **in some senses**. But it is denying that they can do any **spiritual good** or be good in terms of a **relationship with God**. Apart from the work of Christ in our lives, we are like all other unbelievers who are “*darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart*” (**Eph. 4:18**).

### **C. (:16) Requirement for Understanding Summarized: Spiritual Discernment**

*“If any man has ears to hear, let him hear.”*

This limits greatly the scope of who gets it

Authenticity of verse is seriously questioned – not in the best manuscripts

**Constable:** Later copyists may have added it as a result of reading 4:9 and or 4:23. It may be genuine since many early manuscripts contain it. Most modern translators have judged it a later addition to the text.

## **II. (:17-23) KEY LESSON REINFORCED AND EXPANDED TO HIS DISCIPLES – DEFILEMENT COMES FROM WITHIN NOT FROM WITHOUT**

### **A. (:17-18a) Lack of Understanding Lamented**

#### 1. (:17) Disciples Don’t Get It -- Need Help to Understand the Lesson

*“And when leaving the multitude, He had entered the house, His disciples questioned Him about the parable.”*

Καὶ ὅτε εἰσῆλθεν εἰς οἶκον ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄχλου,  
ἐπηρώτων αὐτὸν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ τὴν παραβολήν.

2. (:18a) Disciples Should Get It – Should Not Need Help to Understand the Lesson  
“*And He said to them, ‘Are you so lacking in understanding also?’*”

καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀσύνετοί ἐστε;

**Constable:** Their "*hardness of heart*" is a prominent theme in 6:31— 8:26 (cf. 6:52; 8:14-21).

**Hendriksen:** That others – for example, the Pharisees and scribes, the people in general – do not grasp my teaching is not strange, but that you, who have associated with me for so long a period and so closely, are also so dense, that is inexcusable. (cf. John 14:9)

They were so immersed in the doctrine of the Pharisees that they could not grasp this radical concept that Jesus was presenting; thought He was teaching them in the obscure form of a parable when He was simply stating a spiritual principle

The monks never got this concept – thought they could isolate themselves from the world and find a place of peace and communion with God; but they brought their corrupt hearts right into the monastery with them; those who were sincere (like Martin Luther) wrestled with the depths of depravity in their own heart

Christian schools can miss this concept – they have not created a place of spiritual idealism – they have actually intensified the hypocrisy on the part of some of the students – you find that pretty much the same type of behavior exists; not to say that there is not value in Christian education; there is a bad influence of having a peer group that is blatantly and outwardly defiant of God and His standards – but you also need to admit the reality of the more pressing pollution within

**B. (:18b-23) Explanation of the Key Lesson = Source of True Defilement**

1. (:18b-19) Explained Negatively

a. Principle Stated

“*Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him;*”

οὐ νοεῖτε ὅτι πᾶν τὸ ἔξωθεν εἰσπορευόμενον εἰς τὸν ἄνθρωπον οὐ δύναται αὐτὸν κοινῶσαι

b. Principle Illustrated

“*because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?*”

ὅτι οὐκ εἰσπορεύεται αὐτοῦ εἰς τὴν καρδίαν ἀλλ’ εἰς τὴν κοιλίαν, καὶ εἰς τὸν ἀφεδρῶνα ἐκπορεύεται,

**Parunak:** Gives two reasons that food (or contamination on food) cannot defile a person morally:  
a) The organ it affects: it enters the belly, not the heart, and the heart is the seat of purity. This is not a new teaching; the OT knew it well (Prov. 4:23).  
b) Its transience. It doesn't remain in the person, but passes out into the sewer.

c. (:19) Principle Extended

“(Thus He declared all foods clean.)”

καθαρίζων πάντα τὰ βρώματα;

Editorial statement inserted by Mark

**Constable:** Mark interpreted the significance of Jesus' teaching for his Gentile readers. Mark meant that Christians need not observe the dietary restrictions of the Mosaic Law (cf. Rom. 14:14; Gal. 2:11-17; Col. 2:20-22). This was a freedom that Jewish Christians struggled with for many years during the infancy of the church (cf. Acts 10; 11; 15). Later revelation clarified that Jesus terminated the entire Mosaic Law as a code (Rom. 10:4; et al.).

**Parunak:** The effect of his statement was to render all foods clean, thus overruling the Levitical dietary laws. Thus his statement to the crowds not only invalidates the (human) rabbinical teachings about hand-washing, but has the further implication that a portion of the OT law would no longer be applicable.

**Hendriksen:** Interpreters may differ on the question exactly when, according to God's will, the abolition of the ceremonial laws regarding clean and unclean went into effect. Did it take place right now, at the very moment when Jesus spoke these words? Did it occur when Jesus was crucified? See **Col. 2:14**. On the day of Pentecost? Whatever be the answer, it remains true that *in principle* all foods were pronounced clean here and now.

Dramatic change from OT Israelite Mosaic law --

Peter had a difficult time grasping this -- **Acts 10:9ff**

Roman Catholics still do not get it

**Hiebert:** These ceremonial regulations in the law had a function as symbolically teaching the reality and importance of *moral* purity. They demanded an external separation which pointed to the need for an inner heart condition of separation unto God. But these external regulations in themselves did not convey the purity of heart to which they pointed. They were the shadow and not the substance (Heb. 10:1). When they found their fulfillment in Christ, these ceremonial foreshadowings became obsolete."

2. (:20-23) Explained Positively

a. (:20) Principle Stated

“And He was saying, ‘That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man.’”

ἔλεγεν δὲ ὅτι τὸ ἐκ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐκπορευόμενον, ἐκεῖνο κοινοῖ τὸν ἄνθρωπον.

b. (:21-22) Principle Illustrated

“For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed” Laundry list:

ἔσωθεν γὰρ ἐκ τῆς καρδίας τῶν ἀνθρώπων . . . ἐκπορεύονται,

Summary: “*the evil thoughts,*” οἱ διαλογισμοὶ οἱ κακοὶ

Talking with yourself – internal dialog; cf. Ps. 14:1; Obad. 3

6 plural nouns: sinful actions:

1) “*fornications,*” πορνεΐαι,

Sexual sins; immoral acts – John 8:41; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 5:3; Col. 3:5; 1 Thess 4:3;  
Pornography – any kind of sexual aberration

2) “*thefts,*” κλοπαί,

How about loafing on the job? Not fully paying our taxes? Taking office supplies from work . . .  
The seed of being a thief is in your own heart

3) “*murders,*” φόνοι,

**Hendriksen:** It should be made clear, however, that Jesus sharpened the edge of every commandment. He taught that hatred is murder (Matt. 5:21, 22), and that a married man’s lustful look at another woman is adultery (Matt. 5:28).

Have you had anger in your heart?

We are a murderous people – killing unborn babies because they are inconvenient

4) “*adulteries,*” μοιχεΐαι,

The breaking of the marriage covenant; union between husband and wife meant to reflect eternal union between Christ and His church; our day has increasing rate of divorce – almost same rate in the church as without; if you think it you have done it

5) “*deeds of coveting*” πλεονεξΐαι,

You see something and you want it

6) “*and [deeds of] wickedness,*” πονηρίαί,

Malice; look at how children treat one another

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6 singular nouns: sinful attitudes:

7) “*as well as deceit,*” δόλος,

Matthew mentions false testimony; trying to cover up our sins; treachery

8) “*sensuality*” ἀσέλγεια,

I Pet. 4:3 – excessive attention to lustful thoughts and sexual impulses; our heart is attracted to the filth the world presents

9) “*envy,*” ὀφθαλμὸς πονηρός,

Evil eye; vs unselfishly sharing



10) “slander,” βλασφημία,  
Cursing; taking God’s name in vain; breaking third commandment; speaking ill of God

11) “pride” ὑπερηφανία  
Arrogance; haughtiness

12) “and foolishness” ἀφροσύνη·  
Anything opposite of wisdom – study through Proverbs

**Constable:** The list of sins proceeds from six actions to six attitudes (cf. Rom 1:29-31; Gal. 5:19-23). Matthew's record included only six sins.

**MacArthur:** the first six are plural, therefore they have to refer to acts. The second six are singular, therefore they refer to attitudes behind the acts.

c. (:23) Principle Restated

*“All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.”*

πάντα ταῦτα τὰ πονηρὰ ἔσωθεν ἐκπορεύεται καὶ κοινοῖ τὸν ἄνθρωπον.

Our problem is not primarily our environment; not primarily a devil problem; we have a heart problem which we cannot escape on our own; we don’t have the ability or even the desire to change our hearts – we love the darkness

**CONCLUSION:**

Understanding the key lesson should drive us to the Savior for cleansing and forgiveness of sins.

Must confess the sinfulness of our own hearts

Legalism doesn’t get us anywhere with God – just confirms our hypocrisy

We need new hearts

**Ps. 51**

**A BROKEN SPIRIT PLEADS FOR FORGIVENESS AND CLEANSING**

**I. (:1-4) A BROKEN SPIRIT CONFESSES SIN**

**A. A Broken Spirit Appeals to the Grace of God (:1)**

God's Grace is Rooted In:

1. His lovingkindness (:1)

2. His compassion (:2)

**B. A Broken Spirit Understands the Nature of Sin (:1d-2)**

1. transgressions = a breaking of the law

2. iniquity = deviation from what is right

3. sin = missing the mark

**C. A Broken Spirit Does not Make Excuses (or deny the reality) (:3)**

**D. A Broken Spirit Submits to the Righteousness of the Judge (:4)**

**II. (:5-9) A BROKEN SPIRIT FINDS HOPE IN CLEANSING AND FORGIVENESS**

**A. (:5) Our Sinful Nature Presents a Problem**

**B. (:6) God's Design is Inner Righteousness**

from a spring of:  
truth  
wisdom

**C. (:7) Cleansing Is the Answer**

**D. (:8) A Broken Spirit Can be Restored to Wholeness and Joy**

**E. (:9) Forgiveness is the Answer**

### **III. (:10-13) PLEA FOR RESTORED FELLOWSHIP AS BASIS FOR MINISTRY**

**A. Cleansing is Necessary**

**B. Enjoyment of the Presence of God**

\* \* \* \* \*

#### **DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) Why did the disciples have such a difficult time understanding this message?
- 2) What types of legalistic practices do various religions enforce today that would fall into the category of trying to avoid contamination from the outside?
- 3) As you work your way through the catalog of sins detailed here by Jesus, where does your conscience speak to you most directly?
- 4) How can you leverage this spiritual principle to increase your humility and your appreciation for the grace of God?

\* \* \* \* \*

#### **QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:**

**Mark Copeland:** Source of Defilement

#### **I. NOT THE FOOD**

##### **A. DIETARY RESTRICTIONS IN THE PAST...**

1. From the Creation, man (and animals) may have been vegetarian - **Gen 1:29-30**
  2. After the Flood, God gave animals as food, but not their blood - **Gen 9:3-4**
  3. With the Law of Moses, Israelites were restricted in their diet - **Lev 11:1-47**
- In Old Testament times, God did have some stringent dietary guidelines**

##### **B. DIETARY FREEDOMS IN THE PRESENT...**

1. Jesus has declared all foods clean - **Mk 7:14-19**
  - a. To the multitude, Jesus hints at the source of true defilement - **Mk 7:14-16**
  - b. To His disciples, He explains His parable - **Mk 7:17-19**
  - c. "...purifying all foods" is likely a parenthetical statement - **Mk 7:19**
  - d. For while the Law of Moses was in force, Jesus observed it in full - cf. **Mt 5:17-18**
  - e. Thus Mark's parenthetical statement was intended for disciples living after the cross
2. Paul later taught that all food is acceptable
  - a. Teaching to abstain from foods would be a sign of apostasy - **1Ti 4:1-3**
  - b. Nothing is to be refused when received with thanksgiving and prayer - **1Ti 4:4-5**
3. There are a few exceptions...

- a. Things offered to idols, blood, and things strangled - **Ac 15:28-29; 21:25**
- b. Especially when connected to idolatry - **1Co 10:19-23; Re 2:14, 20**
- c. When certain foods becomes a stumbling block to the weak - **Ro 14:14-21; 1Co 8:8-13**

-- From the New Testament, we learn of the dietary freedom we have in Christ

## II. BUT THE HEART

### A. MAN HAS A HEART PROBLEM...

- 1. The heart (mind) is a fountain out of which much that impacts life flows - **Pr 4:23**
- 2. Affected by sin, it becomes deceitful and wicked - **Ec 9:3; Jer 17:9**

### B. EVIL THOUGHTS LEAD TO TRUE DEFILEMENT...

- 1. Evil thoughts
    - a. The general term translated 'evil thoughts' precedes the verb in the Greek text and is viewed as the root of various evils which follow - **Bible Knowledge Commentary**
    - b. Evil thoughts generated in a heart unite with one's will to produce evil words and actions
  - **ibid.**
  - 2. Adulteries
    - a. Illicit sexual relations by a married person
    - b. Which Jesus said could occur in the heart - **Mt 5:27-28**
  - 3. Fornications
    - a. Illicit sexual activities of various kinds, prompted by lust - cf. **1Th 4:3-5**
    - b. Including pre-marital sex, homosexuality, etc.
  - 4. Murders
    - a. Taking life intentionally
    - b. Which is connected to hate in the heart - **1Jn 3:15**
  - 5. Thefts
    - a. Stealing
    - b. Including shoplifting, pilfering, etc.
  - 6. Covetousness
    - a. Greediness
    - b. Which makes one an idolater - **Ep 5:5; Col 3:5**
  - 7. Wickedness
    - a. Evil acts
    - b. Done with malice
  - 8. Deceit - acting with guile and intent to defraud
  - 9. Lewdness
    - a. Unrestrained and unconcealed immoral behavior
    - b. Closely related to lust - cf. **Ro 13:13**
  - 10. An evil eye - a Hebrew idiom for stinginess - cf. **Pr 28:22**
  - 11. Blasphemy - slander, verbal abuse against God or man
  - 12. Pride - arrogance, boastful opinion of one's self, often with disdain toward others
  - 13. Foolishness - lack of common sense, with moral and spiritual insensitivity
- **Such sins prompted by evil thoughts are what truly defile us!**

### Parunak:

#### a) Structural notes:

- 1) A list of "evil things" within an inclusio repeating the theme of the parable.
- 2) The Greek order suggests that "the evil thoughts" (the only definite term in the list) is

the summary of all the things that come forth, later explicated in terms of its different components. "*From the heart the evil thoughts issue, specifically, adulteries, ...*" Thus the Lord traces wickedness back to the initial thought or plan, just as in the Sermon on the Mount he condemns the adulterous thought as much as the act, the hateful word as much as murder.

3) The remaining twelve items are in two groups of six, the first plural, the second singular. Within each group the first three are specific, the second three the corresponding general items.

b) The plural actions (numbered according to the Ten Commandments in Exod 20)

- 1) adulteries, 7: sexual impurity in which one partner is married to someone else.
- 2) fornications, 7: the more general term, sexual impurity of any form.
- 3) murders, 6: premeditated malicious slaying of another human being. The verb in "*Thou shalt not kill*" refers specifically to murder, not to capital punishment or holy war.
- 4) Thefts, 8: taking property that belongs to another.
- 5) covetousness, 10: harboring a desire to possess what belongs to another.
- 6) wickedness, either a general summary to the plurals list, or an abstract "malicious actions" underlying "murder."

c) The singular actions

- 1) deceit, 9: saying what is not true
- 2) lasciviousness, 7: even more general than fornication; the inner orientation
- 3) an evil eye, 5 (cf. Matt 20:15, stinginess, which in the context most immediately refers to the use of Qorban for depriving parents of their due) or 4 (seeking to enrich oneself through violation of the Sabbath)
- 4) blasphemy, 6 (under the terms of Matt. 5:22) or 9 (specifically, bearing false witness); or is this 3 (taking name of the Lord in vain?)
- 5) pride, 1&2; the inward elevation of heart (Lk 1:51) against which God sets himself in battle array (Jas 4:6; 1 Pet 5:5; Prov 3:34).
- 6) foolishness, 1: "*The fool hath said in his heart, 'There is no God.'*"

**MacArthur:** Well I don't really think that psychologists any longer are interested in trying to defend the fact that extraordinary evil is only done by some sort of extraordinary human beings who are outside the pale or normalcy. I think that's gone by the wayside. I think we're pretty well acquainted with the fact that seemingly normal people can do things that are horrendously evil. Seemingly normal people are engaged, if not in the purveying of evil in being entertained by things that are vile and wretched. I think we now know that evil is pervasive throughout our society and that even ordinary people can do things that are extraordinarily corrupt.

All of that came clear to a psychologist by the name of James Waller in the year 2002. He published a psychological book, the title of it, *Becoming Evil...Becoming Evil*. The subtitle, *How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing*. The thesis of the book is that extraordinary evil can be done by what are apparently ordinary people, that extraordinary evil does not arise out of some human abnormality but rather extreme evil can be done by very common, normal people. That's the unsettling results of the study that is behind the book, extraordinary evil arises from ordinary people. There's no way to escape that anymore and that is correct.

Following up on that book was a book written in the year 2007 by a social psychologist by the

name of Philip Zimbardo. In that work titled *The Lucifer Effect*, subtitle “Understanding how good people turn evil,” he concludes that this pervasive far-reaching in our society is environmental. That is, what corrupts us is outside of us. We are all exposed to hostile and I guess you could call the Ascetic situations we find ourselves in and our proclivity for evil are ranging far from human goodness into extreme evil is the result of over exposure to things that are outside of us.

Now this is in direct conflict with the Bible. The Bible says our problem is not outside of us, our problem is inside of us. Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.” That’s the collective heart. Men are wicked. “There’s none righteous, no not one.” We are capable without any outside influences, according to James 1:14, of conceiving lust in our hearts, turning it into sinful attitudes that become sinful acts...deadly sinful acts. Sin works its way from the inside out. . .

[the Pharisees} all thought that they were basically good on the inside, they were righteous on the inside, they went to the synagogue, they observed the traditions of the elders, they followed the ceremonies and the ritual washings that they were told to do and so they therefore were good and righteous. And the only thing they had to be afraid of was something on the outside because the inside was fine. That was the illusion. . .

Leviticus is full of lists, lists about things that defile. You’re not to touch them. You’re not to drink this. You’re not to eat that. They are there in the book of Leviticus. They were not to touch a dead body or they would be defiled, ceremonially, ritually. Come in contact with any bodily fluids, people who had...women who had a baby would be considered to be defiled until they went through a purification ceremony after childbirth. People with leprosy were considered to be defiled. People who contacted reptiles would be defiled and anybody who touched a person who had touched a reptile would be passing on the defilement. Anybody who touched a Gentile would be defiled. Anybody who had touched a person who had touched a Gentile would receive the defilement.

### **C. J. Mahaney: True Defilement; True Forgiveness**

Excerpts from recent graduation speeches from prominent people – trying to inspire college graduates; importance of opening statement of Jesus

#### **I. Jesus’ concise response to Pharisees (:14-15)**

The length of this conflict speech between Jesus and the Pharisees is a clue to its importance; accusation of eating with defiled hands; underlying issue is of critical importance; first calls out the Pharisees for their hypocrisy (:6-13); now addresses the root issue; crowd had respectfully separated themselves when the religious leaders had gathered around Jesus; He calls them to Himself again: “Hear me, all of you and understand;” Why this urgency? Eternity is hanging in the balance for this crowd and for His disciples; the true nature and source of moral defilement; not just addressing how one eats, but what one eats – Jesus expands the treatment; stunning clarification;

[vs. 16 – most scholars do not believe this was in the original text; missing from the best and oldest manuscripts]

#### **II. Jesus’ complete treatment of the subject to His disciples (:17-23)**

Food passes through the digestive system; not the heart; one of Israel’s distinctives = dietary laws for purpose of purity and separation; here Jesus abolishes it all; a cataclysmic change taking place here; much more serious form of defilement already exists within everyone and should be

our concern; all foods declared clean; all hearts declared unclean; no heart is exempt from this defilement; sin has taken root in every heart;

Evil thoughts; 6 evil actions; 6 evil attitudes

Our impulse is to ignore this list or use it to compare ourselves favorably with others; we must not dismiss this list; we are included in this picture; the wickedness of men often attributed to other factors: bad company, influence of devil, poor environment, etc.

Every man has within him the root of every sin; this is what cuts one off from God; makes one unfit for fellowship with God; understand this in order to understand your need for cleansing from God; how do you obtain a righteousness that is sufficient for right standing before God? Pharisees were wrong on this crucial issue; flawed view of sin and of their own heart and of how they could be forgiven and cleansed; they thought they were righteous because they washed their hands a certain way; but their hearts were evil;

A right understanding of defilement drives one to seek cleansing that can only come from God; **Spurgeon**: Life and death and hell and worlds unknown all hang in the balance on this issue

Human incapability of altering this condition of our hearts; no religious formality can address and resolve this

Where does Mark direct us for help? 1:1 – “*the gospel of Jesus Christ, the son of God*” = most important sentence in book of Mark

Editorial comment of **vs. 19** is huge; Mark seldom steps on stage as an actor in the drama; the teaching of Jesus is supremely authoritative – taking precedence over the Mosaic Law; Jesus assumes the role of God; dietary laws pointed to need for inward cleansing – pointed ultimately to the Messiah who would come; they were the shadow; He was the substance – able to remove the pollution in the human heart; His perfect life of obedience and substitutionary sacrifice on the cross and subsequent regeneration of our heart required;

#### Application:

1) Understanding this should **Humble us** – seeing our need for the grace of God; meant to drive the non Christian to Christ for cleansing – what is wrong lies deep within us where we can't get at it; we are all trying to cleanse ourselves or ignore our uncleanness for all manner of sinful pleasure; you can't shake the guilt; you won't be able to avoid the consequences of sin

2) It should **Amaze us** – leads us to truly understand and appreciate the grace of God; must understand the gravity and effects of sin;

3) It should **Protect us** – faulty understanding of sin left Pharisees vulnerable to hypocrisy and external system of works and self righteousness; prior to conversion we have nothing in ourselves to admire;

**Warfield**: there is nothing in us or done by us at any stage of our earthly development because of which we are acceptable to God; we must always be accepted for Christ's sake

Let no one leave here admiring himself, but admiring Christ alone and resting on His work on the cross alone

#### **Brian Borgman: Bad Hearts Exposed**

Illustration from Tom Sawyer – Aunt Polly: “I know that deep inside of you there is a good boy just waiting to come out;”

Colonial Quakers' view of man – **basically good** – isolate him from the corruption of external influences and he will change his behavior – built penitentiaries = place of penance; where you

can come to find the good boy inside

This view of man has been perpetuated by psychologists and educators

Teaching of Jesus brings out the true nature of us all;

Defilement: “*common*” – opposite of sacred or sanctified;

### **I. (:14-15) Lord Jesus Corrects the View of the Pharisees regarding Defilement Before the Crowd**

Demands that the crowd listen and pay close attention; what He is about to say is going to go against everything they have been taught by the Pharisees;

Explains true defilement very briefly to the crowd;

So succinct that it seems to be obscure to the disciples – they think He is telling another parable;

### **II. (:17-23) More Detailed Explanation to His Disciples**

Begins with a rebuke – Jesus expected them to know and understand the meaning of what He had said; where is your sense? Your basic ability to understand what I just said to you;

Goes into the toilet; the latrine; there is nothing in that process that can morally pollute you; won't increase your internal moral pollution; this idea was revolutionary to them;

So radical that Mark adds parenthetical note on ramifications of what Jesus had just done;

**Acts 10:9** – Peter did not remember the teaching here of Jesus and the general application;

The Jews missed this concept; the monks missed this concept – trying to get out of contact with this wicked world;

**Jer.** The heart is desperately wicked and deceitful above everything else; who can know it?

**Bishop Ryle:** every man carries within him a fountain of wickedness

Our problem is a heart problem

Jesus goes further and catalogs our problem; we go through such a list and start to check off the ones we feel we are not guilty of;

Every seed of sin dwells right in our own heart

TEXT: Mark 7:24-37

TITLE: *OUTSIDERS CAN BECOME INSIDERS*

**BIG IDEA:**

**JESUS GRACIOUSLY EXTENDS HIS HEALING POWER TO DESPERATE GENTILES – IN RECOGNITION OF REMARKABLE FAITH AND EVOKING REMARKABLE TESTIMONY**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Have you ever experienced being an **outsider** – not being part of the accepted group with all of its privileges and standing? Maybe at school, you were an outsider of the various cliques of popularity. Maybe racially, you have experienced something of prejudice and isolation; maybe now at work you are regarded as something of an outsider because of your stand for Jesus Christ. In God’s OT kingdom program, the Jews were definitely the insiders and the uncircumcised Gentiles were definitely the outsiders. As we have been studying the ministry of Jesus, it has been concentrated in the Jewish regions around Nazareth and Capernaum and the Sea of Galilee and various cities throughout Judea. Today we see Jesus venturing out to Gentile areas – to the regions of Tyre and Sidon and Decapolis.

**Eph. 2:11-22**

It should not be surprising to see the gracious delivering power of Jesus extended to the Gentiles. Many OT prophecies spoke to this promised worldwide blessing:

- **Gen. 12:3** Call of Abraham -- *“And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”*
- **Gen. 26:4** *“by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed”*
- **Is. 9:1-2** Messiah will be a light to the Gentiles -- *“Galilee of the Gentiles. The people who walk in darkness will see a great light”*
- **Is. 42:6** *“I will appoint you [Israel] as a light to the nations, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the dungeon and those who dwell in darkness from the prison”*

If the Pharisees and scribes were put off by Jesus eliminating the distinction between clean and unclean foods with all of their detailed ceremonial rites and regulations, imagine their disdain at seeing Jesus reach out to the unclean Gentiles and include them in the sphere of Messianic blessing.

*OUTSIDERS CAN BECOME INSIDERS*

**TWO GENTILE HEALINGS -- JESUS GRACIOUSLY EXTENDS HIS HEALING POWER TO THE GENTILES -- IN RECOGNITION OF REMARKABLE FAITH AND EVOKING REMARKABLE TESTIMONY**

**Continuation of the Training of the Twelve** – text does not say explicitly that Jesus took His 12 apostles along with Him into this Gentile journey – some commentators think **He went alone**: **Parunak**: The Twelve may not yet be ready to visit a non-Jewish area, and in particular to receive the Syrophenician woman. Cf. Peter's strictness in this regard (Acts 9:14, 28; Gal. 2:11ff). How



about Matt 15:23, where "*his disciples*" ask him to send the woman away? Probably the reference is to Sidonian disciples. Cf. Matt. 8:21 for this broader sense of "disciple," and Matt's use of "his twelve disciples" when he wishes to be specific (10:1; 11:1; 20:17).

But most commentators see this period as an **intensification of the training mission of Jesus** -- **MacArthur**: This was to be their walking seminar, lasted several months. The whole idea was to spend isolated, non-stop time with the Twelve. They had affirmed already, you remember, from that night when they were on the sea and Jesus came walking in the water, they had affirmed, "You are God's Son."

**Hendriksen**: expounding to The Twelve the lessons of the cross ... a considerable amount of time is spent in predominantly Gentile territory

## **I. (:24-30) REGION OF TYRE – HEALING OF THE DEMON POSSESSED DAUGHTER – RESPONSE TO THE REMARKABLE FAITH OF THE DESPERATE SYROPHOENICIAN WOMAN**

### **A. (:24a) Identification of the Gentile Geographic Region**

*"And from there He arose and went away to the region of Tyre."*

Ἐκεῖθεν δὲ ἀναστὰς ἀπῆλθεν εἰς τὰ ὄρια Τύρου.

**Hiebert**: Mark commonly employed *and* (*kai*) to begin a new paragraph, but here he used *de*, perhaps best rendered *now*. Only six of the 88 sections in Mark, according to the Westcott and Hort text, begin with the particle *de*, while 80 begin with *kai*. Not only did Jesus take a firm stand against the Jewish leaders regarding their traditions, but He also left for non-Jewish territory.

**MacArthur**: Phoenicia has two famous cities, **Tyre** and **Sidon**. This account of Mark is paralleled in Matthew 15 verses 21 to 28 and Matthew says, "Tyre and Sidon," they're two coastal cities, twenty miles apart, famous, famous cities...famous in history, famous in the Old Testament, as I told you, quoted in **Psalm 87:4**, famous because of the conquering of Alexander the Great. They are the main cities in Gentile country, Phoenicia, north and west of Galilee, pressing against the Mediterranean coast. Jesus went there. He didn't go there for a day. He didn't go there for a few days. He went to Tyre and He was there a while, we don't know how long. And then He went 20 miles and Tyre was 50 miles away from Capernaum, Galilee...Sea of Galilee area. Then He went 20 miles north and He went through Sidon, the sister city. We don't know how long He was there. And then He followed the highway east back across the mountains of Lebanon, a very circuitous route, even going further north than Sidon, and going through the mountains and down to the south, east of the Sea of Galilee and then back toward the Sea of Galilee in the middle of Decapolis which didn't begin until the southern part of the Sea of Galilee, was a Gentile area called Decapolis, a Greek word for "ten cities." . . . Hellenized, Greek-influenced cities, pagan cities, heathen cities, non-Jewish cities, but is from the lower part of the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee and south from there.

### **B. (:24b-26) Initiative for the Miracle**

#### 1. Miracle Seeker

*“And when He had entered a house, He wanted no one to know of it; yet He could not escape notice. But after hearing of Him, a woman . . . immediately came and fell at His feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, of the Syrophenician race.”*

Καὶ εἰσελθὼν εἰς οἰκίαν οὐδένα ἤθελεν γινῶναι, καὶ οὐκ ἠδυνήθη λαθεῖν· ἀλλ’ εὐθὺς ἀκούσασα γυνὴ περὶ αὐτοῦ, . . . ἐλθοῦσα προσέπεσεν πρὸς τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ· ἡ δὲ γυνὴ ἦν Ἑλληνίς, Συροφαινίκισσα τῷ γένει·

Matthew identifies her as a Canaanite woman

## 2. Malady Specified

*“whose little daughter had an unclean spirit,”*

ἧς εἶχεν τὸ θυγάτριον αὐτῆς πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον,

**Hiebert:** The diminutive, *little daughter*, is a term of endearment and does not establish the age of the daughter.

## 3. Messiah Supplicated

*“And she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter.”*

καὶ ἠρώτα αὐτὸν ἵνα τὸ δαιμόνιον ἐκβάλῃ ἐκ τῆς θυγατρὸς αὐτῆς.

- Persisted in the entreaty
- Suggested a method that they had seen Jesus use on other occasions
- Wanted an immediate and permanent solution

*“Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed.”* – **Matt. 15:22**

**MacArthur:** If you need **mercy**, then you’re not asking for justice, right? She’s not saying, “I’m worthy of this. I deserve this. I should receive this.” She’s saying, “I’m not worthy.” This is sheer mercy. “I need mercy, Lord, on behalf of my horrendously, tragic life with a demon-possessed little girl. Be merciful to me.” This is like the Publican in the temple beating his chest in Luke 18 saying, “Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner.” Mercy assumes unworthiness. This woman’s theology is pretty sound, at that point. She comes to the right object and she comes with the right attitude, okay? She comes to the right object for her faith, who is the Lord. She comes with a right attitude, an attitude of humility, brokenness and penitence. And she says, “Lord,” she acknowledges Him as Lord, identifying who He is. He is, in fact, Lord. “If we confess Him as Lord and believe in our heart that God raised Him from the dead, we’re saved.”

## **C. (:27-30) Interaction of Jesus With the Gentile Woman and the Performance of the Healing Miracle – REMARKABLE FAITH**

Initial response of Jesus is not recorded in Mark – just in Matthew: *“But He did not answer her a word.”* – Disciples were put off by her persistence and wanted Jesus to send her away

### 1. (:27) Principle of Jewish Priority

*“And He was saying to her, ‘Let the children be satisfied first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.’”*

καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτῇ· ἄφες πρῶτον χορτασθῆναι τὰ τέκνα, οὐ γάρ ἐστιν καλὸν λαβεῖν τὸν ἄρτον τῶν τέκνων καὶ τοῖς κυναρίοις βαλεῖν.

Dogs was a harsh negative term used by the Jews to refer to the unclean Gentiles – speaking of the wild scavenging mangy dogs who roamed the cities ... Jesus softened the term by use of the diminutive – little doggies; household pets

**Rom. 1:16** *“salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”*

Not the time for blessing to be extended to the Gentiles on a widespread basis ...

### 2. (:28) Perspective of Extension of Blessing to Gentiles

*“But she answered and said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord, but even the dogs under the table feed on the children's crumbs.’”*

ἡ δὲ ἀπεκρίθη καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ· κύριε· καὶ τὰ κυνάρια ὑποκάτω τῆς τραπέζης ἐσθίουσιν ἀπὸ τῶν ψιγίων τῶν παιδίων.

The Jews would still have full sufficiency – that would not be impacted by what she was requesting

**MacArthur:** But this kind of a test of her humility and she's amazing, she's witty, she's insightful. Her response is not to say, “Oh, that's very offensive.” Her response, she answered in verse 28 and said to Him, “Yes, Lord, yes, Lord,” He's still Lord, “Yes, Lord.” Here's her wit, “But even the dogs under the table feed on the children's crumbs.” I mean, that's a great response, isn't it? “You're not going to get rid of me with that analogy. Okay, okay, I'm a dog, I buy...I'm a dog, I'll buy that, I'm a dog. I don't have a right to the covenant promises of Israel, I'm a Gentile, I come from an idol-worshiping people. All right, I'm a Canaanite. Okay, we should have been exterminated, but I'm here and this is the situation. And whatever falls off the table, can't I have that?” You know, she's got such sound theology, she's a...she understands the difference between Israel and the church...not fully but she knows that God has a plan for Israel and she's not a part of that plan. She knows she's not at that table. I love this about her. She's not offended at all.

**James Edwards:** The woman maintains the same distinction between “*children*” and “*dogs*” in her reply to Jesus, though with one slight change. Whereas Jesus refers to Israel as *teknon* (“biological children”), the woman refers to Israel as *paidion*, which is more inclusive, implying both children and servants in a household. The change in terminology suggests that the woman understands the mercies of God to extend beyond ethnic Israel.

### 3. (:29) Performance of the Miracle in Response to Great Faith

*“And He said to her, ‘Because of this answer go your way; the demon has gone out of your daughter.’”*

καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῇ· διὰ τοῦτον τὸν λόγον ὑπάγε, ἐξελήλυθεν ἐκ τῆς θυγατρὸς σου τὸ δαιμόνιον.

**Matt. 15:28** “‘O woman, *your faith is great; it shall be done for you as you wish.*’ And her daughter was healed at once.”

**Application:** Is your faith **REMARKABLE** in the same way?

- Faith that persists in laying hold of the blessing dispensed by the Messiah
- Faith that is bold and respectful and reverent and humble
- Faith that expects great things from God

#### 4. (:30) Permanent Deliverance

*“And going back to her home, she found the child lying on the bed, the demon having departed.”*

καὶ ἀπελθοῦσα εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτῆς εὗρεν τὸ παιδίον βεβλημένον ἐπὶ τὴν κλίνην καὶ τὸ δαιμόνιον ἐξεληλυθός.

What about **your requests for miracles**, for the power of Jesus to heal of terminal illness and serious handicaps?? Not often granted – Not a problem of lack of faith; consider the far greater spiritual deliverance we have experienced as Gentiles grafted in to the children of faith, the children of promise, the children of Abraham

## **II. (:31-37) REGION OF DECAPOLIS – HEALING OF THE DEAF AND DUMB MAN – EVOKING THE REMARKABLE TESTIMONY OF THE AWESOMENESS OF JESUS’ SAVING POWER**

### **A. (:31) Identification of the Gentile Geographic Region**

*“And again He went out from the region of Tyre, and came through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, within the region of Decapolis.”*

Καὶ πάλιν ἐξελθὼν ἐκ τῶν ὀρίων Τύρου ἦλθεν διὰ Σιδῶνος εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν τῆς Γαλιλαίας ἀνὰ μέσον τῶν ὀρίων Δεκαπόλεως.

This was not the first time this Gentile area had experienced the healing power of Jesus.

**MacArthur:** close to the area of Gerasa, or Gadara where Jesus had healed the man with the legion of demons in him, thousands of demons that our Lord sent into the pigs that went off the hill into the lake. People from that area knew about Jesus from the Decapolis. In Matthew 4 and verse 25 it says, “*Many people came into Galilee to see Jesus from Decapolis.*” So His reputation had extended. We also know that when He healed that demoniac, He told him to tell the people in his region what He had done for that man. And that man responded, **chapter 5 verse 20** of Mark, by going out and proclaiming what Christ had done for him through the region of Decapolis.

### **B. (:32) Initiative for the Miracle**

#### 1. Miracle Seekers

*“And they brought to Him”*

Καὶ φέρουσιν αὐτῷ

## 2. Malady Specified

*“one who was deaf and spoke with difficulty,”*

κωφὸν καὶ μογιλάλον

## 3. Messiah Supplicated

*“and they entreated Him to lay His hand upon him.”*

καὶ παρακαλοῦσιν αὐτὸν ἵνα ἐπιθῇ αὐτῷ τὴν χεῖρα.

- Persisted in the entreaty
- Suggested a method that they had seen Jesus use on other occasions
- Wanted an immediate and permanent solution

**MacArthur:** This is what He did. He put His hands on people when He healed them. You see that in chapter 1 verse 31, 41, chapter 5 verse 41, chapter 6 verse 5, chapter 8, we'll see it again verses 22 and 25, places in Matthew, places in Luke, He touched people. There's a tenderness in that, but also there's a recognition of the fact that He did not care for the assumed defilement idea. He was eager to touch these people which the Pharisees and scribes would view as a defiling act on His part. Touching a person like him was a way to express compassion and love.

### **C. (:33-37) Interaction of Jesus With the Gentile Multitude and the Performance of the Healing Miracle – REMARKABLE TESTIMONY**

#### 1. (:33a) Private Attention

*“And He took him aside from the multitude by himself,”*

καὶ ἀπολαβόμενος αὐτὸν ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄχλου κατ' ἰδίαν

not seeking public acclaim

wanting to get the full attention of this man apart from all the distractions of the surrounding crowd

#### 2. (:33b-34) Personal Symbolic Actions – type of Sign language that this handicapped man could understand

##### **a. Ears**

*“and put His fingers into his ears,”*

ἔβαλεν τοὺς δακτύλους αὐτοῦ εἰς τὰ ὦτα αὐτοῦ

**b. Tongue**

*“and after spitting, He touched his tongue with the saliva;”*

καὶ πτύσας ἤψατο τῆς γλώσσης αὐτοῦ,

**c. Deep Sigh**

*“and looking up to heaven with a deep sigh, He said to him, ‘Ephphatha!’ that is, ‘Be opened!’”*

καὶ ἀναβλέψας εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἐστέναξεν καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ· Εφφαθα, ὃ ἐστὶν διανοίχθητι.

**Hendriksen:** He looked up to heaven, indicating that his help came from above; in other words, that in prayer he was “taking hold of” his heavenly Father. Cf. **Isa. 64:7**.

**MacArthur:** What is the *deep sigh*? An expression of sympathy, an expression of pain over the man’s suffering and an expression of compassion, of tenderness, strong emotion showing that God is going to come down in power and give him his hearing and give him his speech because God is compassionate. And so with sign language, Jesus gives him his first lesson about God. God is powerful and God is compassionate. He cares.

3. (:35) Perfect Accomplishment of the Miracle

*“And his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was removed, and he began speaking plainly.”*

καὶ [εὐθέως] ἠνοίγησαν αὐτοῦ αἱ ἀκοαί, καὶ ἐλύθη ὁ δεσμὸς τῆς γλώσσης αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐλάλει ὀρθῶς.

No speech therapy needed; no learning curve; immediate and full health and recovery to full functioning

4. (:36-37) Pervasive Acclaim – the Testimony of the Gentile Crowd

a. (:36) Scope of the Testimony

*“And He gave them orders not to tell anyone; but the more He ordered them, the more widely they continued to proclaim it.”*

καὶ διεστείλατο αὐτοῖς ἵνα μηδενὶ λέγωσιν· ὅσον δὲ αὐτοῖς διεστέλλετο, αὐτοὶ μᾶλλον περισσώτερον ἐκήρυσσον.

b. (:37) Summary of the Testimony

*“And they were utterly astonished, saying, ‘He has done all things well; He makes even the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.’”*

καὶ ὑπερπερισσῶς ἐξεπλήσσοντο λέγοντες· καλῶς πάντα πεποίηκεν, καὶ τοὺς κωφοὺς ποιεῖ ἀκούειν καὶ [τοὺς] ἀλάλους λαλεῖν.

**MacArthur:** The word for “utterly astonished,” one word in Greek, *hyperperissos* ..., it’s used only here in the New Testament. It is a compound word, very, very strong. It means “above all measure, over the top, superabundantly amazed and astonished.” They had their minds blown in the vernacular. They’re just completely amazed. They can’t contain it. They cannot keep this in. So they spread it everywhere. . .

The first thing they said was He has done all things well. He has done, perfect tense meaning continuously. Everything that He’s ever done He’s done well. Everything He’s ever done He’s done perfectly, literally. A rich adverb, *kalos* meaning rightly, correctly, appropriately. Everything He has done He has done perfectly. They’re commenting on the perfection of His miracles. Look at the blind, they see. Look at the lame, they walk. Look at the deaf, they hear. Look at the mute, they talk. And it’s perfect. They walk perfectly. They see perfectly. They hear perfectly. They speak perfectly. And the people who were sick, they’re perfectly healthy. They’re commenting on the perfection of His miracles.

**Application:** Is your testimony **REMARKABLE** in this same way?

- Testimony to the power of the Messiah
- Testimony to the goodness of the Messiah – His grace and mercy

### **CONCLUSION:**

Remember Paul’s message in **Romans 9-11** regarding the progress of God’s kingdom purposes down through the ages – the initial priority of Jesus was to bring the message of the kingdom to the Jews first ... but as they rejected it, and their hearts were hardened, God turned His attention to the Gentiles who were grafted in to the tree of faith – but the Jews will eventually repent and turn to their Messiah in the last days and all Israel will be saved ...

These 2 Gentile healing stories play a pivotal role in that transition as a foretaste of the coming time of the Gentiles in which we live today

Let’s take full advantage of our opportunity to evidence:

- **Remarkable Faith** – the Lord has sufficient blessings to satisfy all of our needs
- **Remarkable Testimony** – our Lord and Savior, the promised Messiah, does all things well

\* \* \* \* \*

### **DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) Do you have a sense of entitlement from the Lord or a sense of enjoying His grace and mercy with humility?”
- 2) How much is enough for you in terms of the Lord’s blessings? Do you find them sufficient?
- 3) Are there any people that we look down on or judge to be unclean as if they are unworthy of the gospel invitation?
- 4) Is it our testimony that Jesus has done all things well when it comes to our experience?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Hendriksen:** Those who saw what was happening “*glorified the God of Israel,*” a statement which is most naturally interpreted to mean that they ascribed honor to the God who originally was not their God. Accordingly, if we combine Matthew’s account with that of Mark we reach the conclusion that the two events – the one near Sidon and the other in Decapolis – herald the wide-opening of the kingdom’s door to the Gentiles. Thus the Lord who according to Mark 7:1-23 (see especially verse 19) was erasing the line of demarcation between clean and unclean *foods*, soon afterward started to remove the barricade between unclean and (supposedly) clean *people*. That these two are closely related was made very clear to Peter. See **Acts 10:1-11:18**.

**Parunak:** Tyre and Sidon. Relation of Tyre & Sidon with Israel:

1. They were a threat to Israel:

a) A Spiritual Threat

1) 2 Sam. 5:11, trade with David (and later Solomon, 2 Kings 5:1)--commercial interaction

2) Source of pollution during the kings: Solomon's wife (1 Kings 11:1,5); Jezebel wife of Ahab (1 Kings 16:31).

b) A Military Threat: Psa 83:7, part of a large confederacy gathered against Israel. Exact time not known; perhaps Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron 20; or maybe a synthesis of all of Israel's enemies.

2. Israel's response to them: three references, successively less harsh.

a) Ezek 26, God proclaims judgment by hand of Nebuchadnezzar; cf. Isa 23; Jer 25:15-22 (vision of the cup of the Lord's wrath); Ezek 28:1-9 (the "front" for Satan, the King of Tyre)

b) Isa 60, Bringing tribute as subject (not named explicitly, but the prophet seems to be emphasizing the universality of the submission to the new king.) Better than judgment, but still a subordinate position.

c) Joined to Zion by birth! Ps 87:4. An amazing Psalm, depicting gentiles as having citizenship in Zion on equal standing with Israelites!

**Constable:** "*Looking up to heaven*" and sighing were also acts intended to communicate with the man. By looking up, Jesus associated the coming healing with God. By sighing or groaning, He conveyed His compassion for the man and the fact that the healing involved spiritual warfare.<sup>345</sup> This was an unusually difficult miracle, and even Jesus had to take special measures to perform it. Jesus spoke in Aramaic since this was the language that was common in Palestine (cf. 5:41). Probably the man could read Jesus' lips. Jesus' healing was again instantaneous. Not only could the man now speak, but he spoke without any defect. Jesus' elaborate use of means to heal this man would have minimized the possibility of magic and focused attention on Him as the healer. .

Mark expressed the crowd's amazement with a strong word that appears only here in the New Testament: *hyperperissos*. It means "extremely overwhelmed" (cf. 1:22; 6:2; 10:26; 11:18). Their statement that Jesus did everything "*well*" recalls Genesis 1:31, where Moses wrote that God saw that everything that He had created was good. The restoration of hearing to the deaf and speaking



to the dumb was the work of God (cf. Isa. 35:3-6). Matthew recorded that Jesus healed many other people with various afflictions at this time (Matt. 15:29-31).

**Brian Borgman: Bold Hope for Uncovenanted Mercy**

This passage is gripping emotionally; captures our hearts;

Contrast between unbelieving Jews and faith of supposedly unclean Gentile; you are not pure and holy because you have Abraham's blood in your veins;

Tyre goes back to 2200 B.C. – pride rooted in their wealth and trade; Canaanites were ultimate enemy of God to ancient Israelites; no accident when Lord put His feet on Canaanite soil; cf. Elijah who raised up son of Canaanite woman; **Ps. 87:4** – one day people of Tyre would be part of people of God; **Is. 23** – God transforms these people and turns their hearts to Him;

Big news – Jesus is in our town!

Audacious approach of a Gentile woman coming to the Lord Jesus; she is motivated by situation in her life; surpassing the bounds of conduct that would be acceptable; Gentiles did not associate with Jews; significant racial implications; inappropriate for a woman to approach a man in that culture; transgresses ethnic and gender boundaries;

Little girl is cruelly demon possessed (Matt); nothing that touches your heart as suffering of your own children; ugly and frightful thing to be possessed; physically in torment; mother is desperate; a humble boldness; falling down = sign of reverence and respect – in posture of begging God to do something impossible for her; she didn't care what the people around her thought; asking Him repeatedly; crying out; He kept silent; in spite of all her disadvantages she sees Christ as her Messiah and only hope in contrast to Pharisees; Jesus seems rude and insensitive and uncaring; when He finally does open His mouth, it is not in consoling terms; I was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; dog here is a pejorative term; wasn't yet the time of the Gentiles; bread = the blessings of the kingdom; Jesus intending to draw out of this woman a tenacious faith; she doesn't claim some type of exception because we are talking about the predicament of a child; doesn't complain against doctrine of election; doesn't pretend to lay claim to Israel's privileges;

Agrees with the Lord; I am a dog and don't deserve to be fed with the children's bread; you don't owe me anything; But I'm a little (diminutive form) helpless dog and could sure use some little crumbs (diminutive of scraps); What faith!

Even the little tiny scraps would be enough for her; looking for uncovenanted mercy – mercy that had never been promised to her;

She takes the Son of David at His Word and just goes home;

Is. 9:2 Messiah would be a light to the Gentiles;

Faith alone and not blood lines that lay hold of the sovereign mercy of God;

Significant event for us Gentiles;

Precursor to what Jesus would do for the Gentiles on a larger scale;

We are the true circumcision who worship God in the Spirit;

Have you ever felt a deep desperation over your own sin and guilt? The desperation of being lost? Of Bunyan's Christian who has that burden strapped on his back?

Son of God delights to show mercy to desperate Sinners

Desperation is a pathway to mercy;

Bold hope and tenacious faith – this should be result of doctrine of God's sovereignty;

This is not contrary to the sovereignty of God; it is what believing in the sovereignty of God should look like

**MacArthur:** Salvation has always intended to be to the world. If you ask the question, "Then why in John 4 did Jesus say, 'Salvation is of the Jews?'" Why...in Matthew 10 verses 5 and 6...did

Jesus say, ‘I have not come but for the lost sheep of the house of Israel?’” The answer is that Israel was never intended to be the end of God’s saving purpose but the means to the end. The reason our Lord came to Israel was to bring salvation to Israel so that Israel could be the means to Gentile salvation. And while the nation rejected, there were enough who believed the Twelve, the 120, the 500 in Galilee who then took the gospel on the heels of the Great Commission to the ends of the earth. We’re a part of the fruit of that, aren’t we? We’re the Gentiles who make up the church, along with those Jews who have come to embrace their Messiah. We’re the fruit of that early generation of believers who were the means and the first evangelists were Jewish. The early church was Jewish, three thousand converted on the Day of Pentecost, thousands more as the weeks rolled on, who began to extend the gospel and fulfill the Great Commission.

**MacArthur:** The second thing they said, “*He makes even the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.*” It’s interesting that Mark records that because there was a lot of healing going on that day...blind people, lame people, as well as deaf people and mute people. But the crowd used this word, “He makes even the deaf to hear and the mute, *alaleos, alaleos*. Laleo means to speak, a is the alpha privative, not to speak, speechless. He makes the speechless speak. That was the normal word. If you’re going to refer to somebody who is mute, you would say *alaleos*. But Mark...that’s what the people used, but Mark, back in verse 32, when he describes the man who spoke with difficulty, he uses a different word...it’s a different word. It is the word *mogilalon, mogilalon*, very rare word. The only time it ever appears in the New Testament is right there. It’s like Mark pulled it out of the air. There are many references in the New Testament to being speechless or being mute. But one place you have this *mogilalon* word, it’s a rare, rare word.

And Mark because he writes to Gentiles, only rarely refers to the Old Testament because they have no background in the Old Testament. But here he borrows this word. It is here in the New Testament and nowhere else, but it does occur once in the Old Testament. You say, “I thought the Old Testament was Hebrew.” It is, but there’s a Greek version of it called the Septuagint with which the writers of the New Testament were familiar and since they were also Greek speakers, they perhaps had read that. It’s likely Mark had. Mark borrows the word *mogilalon* which appears only one time in the Old Testament and I want to show you where it is, Isaiah 35...Isaiah 35. Isaiah’s prophecy is broken into two parts. The first part of his prophecy is about judgment. The second part of his prophecy is about salvation. The transition comes in chapter 35, the first part about judgment, judgment on Edom and Egypt and Tyre and Israel and Jerusalem. And the second part about salvation for Israel and even for the world through the coming of Messiah.

So in this chapter, chapter 35, you have a transition from judgment to salvation, from doom to hope, from sorrow to joy as salvation comes. And when salvation comes, when God brings the great salvation of Messiah to the world, and we’re talking here about the great Millennial Kingdom of Christ when He comes to reign on earth, things are going to change. The wilderness and the desert will be glad. The arabah which is the desert, will rejoice and blossom like the crocus and blossom profusely. Rejoice with rejoicing and shouts of joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it...oh that’s Gentile territory, that territory of Syrophenicia under Syrian rule that swept all around the lake of Galilee around the land of Israel, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon, they will see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God. Those parts of the land will be included in the Kingdom and they’ll be transformed in glorious ways.

Encourage the exhausted, strengthen the feeble, say to those with anxious hearts, take courage, fear not, your God will come with vengeance, the recompense of God will come but He will save you. God is coming in judgment but He’s also coming with salvation. Look to the future, verse 5,

and this is what will happen when the Messiah comes and establishes His glorious Kingdom on the earth. Not only will the desert blossom like a rose, like a crocus, not only will the land surrounding the nation of Israel flourish with beauty and majesty and see the glory of the Lord, but what also will happen, individuals will be touched. The eyes of the blind, verse 5, will be opened. The ears of the deaf will be unstopped. There will be massive healing in the Kingdom of Christ. The lame will leap like a deer and hear, the tongue of the mogilalon will shout for joy.

Why did Mark use that word? Such an obscure and rare word? Why did he use that word? Why did he tell this story?

I think to touch the hem of the eschatological robe of Jesus and give us a preview of the Kingdom glory when men from every tongue and tribe and nation will gather into His Kingdom and Jew and Gentile will be healed of all their diseases. Gentiles included in the glorious Kingdom. What a picture.

**James Edwards:** This Gentile woman is not offered a separate revelation of God or a righteousness apart from Israel. She fully accepts the authenticity and uniqueness of God's revelation to Israel. So fully does she appreciate that revelation that she trusts its superabundance to spill over and include her people and others like her. This reminded Mark's readers, as it does us today, that salvation is offered to the world, both to Jews and to estranged Gentiles like this woman, through Jesus who fulfills God's revelation to Israel. . .

Only the touch of Jesus can enable true hearing, seeing, understanding, and witness.

TEXT: Mark 8:1-26

TITLE: EXAMINING OUR SPIRITUAL VISION

**BIG IDEA:**

**OUR EYES OF FAITH NEED CLEAR VISION OF THE POWER AND SUFFICIENCY OF OUR SAVIOR**

**INTRODUCTION:**

We have observed many key threads as we have studied through the first half of the gospel of Mark -- 4 most prominent threads:

- The most important = the identity of Jesus as the true Messiah, the son of God
  - o **Mark 1:1** “*The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God*”
  - o **Mark 8:29** confession of Peter: “*You are the Christ*”  
What do people say about Who Jesus is?
- Two halves to the book – First half is all about the:  
**THE AUTHORITY AND MIGHTY WORKS OF THE SON OF GOD VS. THE REDEMPTIVE MISSION OF THE SUFFERING SERVANT**
  - o Authority in His Teaching
  - o Authority in His miracles of healing
  - o Authority in His power over demons and even over death itself
- Increasing opposition from the Jewish religious leaders who remain spiritually blinded and hard-hearted
- Training of the Twelve for their leadership as Jesus hands off the baton to them for the fulfillment of the Great Commission – involved in that is the transition of taking the gospel now to the Gentiles – especially important is the development of their faith – they fail many tests but the Master Teacher patiently continues to build them up and prepare them

Today we are tackling a **big chunk** of Chap. 8 – **26 verses** – looking more at the big picture than all of the details; Why this approach? Because it hangs together thematically as a unit of thought – preparing us for the great watershed that divides this gospel in half – the confession of Peter at the end of the chapter

We like to pat ourselves on the back for our **spiritual discernment**. We can easily be puffed up with pride because of an imbalance between knowledge about Jesus Christ and vibrant faith in Jesus. How can we tell we have maturity issues? Trials and difficulties reveal to us how far short we fall of mature faith. We easily sink into worry and fear and doubts and insecurities. Our physical vision is easy to measure. We take a simple eye chart test and we know where we stand. I see a lot differently with my glasses on as opposed to off. It is more subtle with our eyes of faith.

**OUR EYES OF FAITH NEED CLEAR VISION OF THE POWER AND SUFFICIENCY OF OUR SAVIOR**

Today I want you to go to the eye doctor with me and humbly ask the Great Physician to give you insight into the condition of your spiritual vision. How strong is your faith? How quickly are you grasping the spiritual lessons of the Master Teacher?

## **I. (:1-9) FOCUS OF SPIRITUAL VISION -- THE BREAD OF LIFE CONTINUES TO PROVE SUFFICIENT FOR THE NEEDS OF ALL**

### **A. (:1-4) Answers a Number of Complaints of Men**

1. (:1) Lack of Knowledge – Jesus does not know what I am going through; my difficulties and needs

*“In those days again, when there was a great multitude and they had nothing to eat, He called His disciples and said to them,”*

Ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις πάλιν πολλοῦ ὄχλου ὄντος καὶ μὴ ἐχόντων τί φάγωσιν, προσκαλεσάμενος τοὺς μαθητὰς λέγει αὐτοῖς·

Gospel accounts only provide us a **partial account** of what Jesus said and did; here we have no details about what particular teaching ministry Jesus had with the multitude on this occasion or what incidents of healing occurred; certainly a crowd did not just sit around for 3 days waiting to be dismissed by Jesus without some very significant happenings

**MacArthur:** There a massive crowd comes to Jesus by the Lake of Galilee and He heals them all...absolutely all of them, according to **Matthew 15:29 to 31**, He healed everybody who came and they were bringing all kinds of injuries, illnesses, diseases, etc. And this is all to demonstrate the healing purposes of God, the compassion of God and the salvation of God is intended for the world and **for Gentiles**.

**Different incident** than the feeding of the 5000 recorded earlier in Mark – Jesus refers to these two incidents as separate and distinct – (Mt. 16:9-10) – ends any debate with liberals on this

Probably still in predominantly **Gentile territory** – another contrast in the two feeding miracles

2. (:2-3) Lack of Compassion – Jesus does not care about my personal situation

*“I feel compassion for the multitude because they have remained with Me now three days, and have nothing to eat; and if I send them away hungry to their home, they will faint on the way; and some of them have come from a distance.”*

σπλαγγνίζομαι ἐπὶ τὸν ὄχλον, ὅτι ἤδη ἡμέραι τρεῖς προσμένουσίν μοι καὶ οὐκ ἔχουσιν τί φάγωσιν·<sup>3</sup> καὶ ἐὰν ἀπολύσω αὐτοὺς νήστευς εἰς οἶκον αὐτῶν, ἐκλυθήσονται ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ· καὶ τινες αὐτῶν ἀπὸ μακρόθεν ἦκασιν.

**Parunak:** The English word literally means, "to suffer [passion] with [com]." Greek *splagxizomai* "to be moved regarding the *splagxna*," the inward parts, where we feel emotion. Describes a concern that arises out of feeling the other's need, rather than a purely rational motivation.

Different kind of bible conference than we attend today – 3 days with no food!

**Hiebert:** because of their deep interest in Jesus, the people had stayed longer than anticipated, and their provisions were not completely exhausted. Their very eagerness to remain with Him had brought about the condition of need, and it deeply touched His heart. . . Jesus knew that some in the crowd had come from a great distance. In the Decapolis, the distances between the cities were greater than in thickly populated Galilee.

**James Edwards:** In describing the crowd Mark uses a rare and intensified form of the word for “remain,” *prosmenein*, connoting a special adherence and commitment to Jesus. The crowd has not been coincidentally present but intentionally with him. This is an unusually positive description of a crowd in Mark. Jesus again finds a reception among Gentiles that he has not found among Jews.

**MacArthur:** “*faint on the way*” -- That’s a vivid word, it means to collapse, to come unstrung like a bow, to be made limp. They’ll drop like a bow string when you pull it off one end.

3. (:4) Lack of Power and Sufficiency – Jesus cannot deliver and sustain me  
“*And His disciples answered Him, ‘Where will anyone be able to find enough to satisfy these men with bread here in a desolate place?’*”

καὶ ἀπεκρίθησαν αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ὅτι πόθεν τούτους δυνήσεται τις ὧδε χορτάσαι ἄρτων ἐπ’ ἐρημίας;

**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.

Do you have any complaints against Jesus this morning??

## **B. (:5-9) Demonstrates the Power and Sufficiency of God**

1. (:5) Dedicating All You Have to God

“*And He was asking them, ‘How many loaves do you have?’  
And they said, ‘Seven.’*”

καὶ ἡρώτα αὐτούς· πόσους ἔχετε ἄρτους; οἱ δὲ εἶπαν· ἑπτὰ.

Remember we discussed at the earlier incident, where did the disciples get the available bread and fish? From canvassing the multitude or being willing to sacrifice their own stash??

Can’t hold anything back from God

Must use all available resources and giftedness

2. (:6a) Creating Expectations on the Part of the Crowd

“*And He directed the multitude to sit down on the ground;*”

καὶ παραγγέλλει τῷ ὄχλῳ ἀναπεσεῖν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς·

**Hiebert:** No mention is now made of “*the green grass*” (6:39); months had passed since the feeding of the five thousand, and the dry, hot season had left the hills bare.

3. (:6b-7) Multiplying the Loaves and Fishes

- a. (:6b) The Loaves

“*and taking the seven loaves, He gave thanks and broke them, and started giving them to His disciples to serve to them, and they served them to the multitude.*”

καὶ λαβὼν τοὺς ἑπτὰ ἄρτους εὐχαριστήσας ἔκλασεν καὶ ἐδίδου τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ ἵνα παρατιθῶσιν, καὶ παρέθηκαν τῷ ὄχλῳ.

## Thanksgiving

### b. (:7) The Fish

*“They also had a few small fish; and after He had blessed them, He ordered these to be served as well.”*

καὶ εἶχον ἰχθύδια ὀλίγα· καὶ εὐλογήσας αὐτὰ εἶπεν καὶ ταῦτα παρατιθέναί.

## Blessing

### 4. (:8-9) Satisfying Both the Crowd and the Disciples

#### a. (:8) Abundant Meal

*“And they ate and were satisfied; and they picked up seven large baskets full of what was left over of the broken pieces.”*

καὶ ἔφαγον καὶ ἐχορτάσθησαν, καὶ ἦσαν περισσεύματα κλασμάτων ἑπτὰ σπυρίδας.

**Hiebert:** The baskets here evidently were larger than those used at the feeding of the five thousand, which were travelers' baskets used to carry a day's food supply. . . larger hampers . . . This would suggest that the food now left over was actually more than that at the feeding of the five thousand.

**Acts 9:25** – hamper size basket was used to lower Paul down from the wall

### b. (:9) Successful Solution

*“And about four thousand were there; and He sent them away.”*

ἦσαν δὲ ὡς τετρακισχίλιοι. καὶ ἀπέλυσεν αὐτούς.

But **because of spiritual blindness** everybody doesn't get the message – in fact apart from the gracious touch of the Messiah upon our eyes of faith . . . no one gets it

## C. Creates a Major Complaint on the Part of Jesus: Why Don't You Get It???

- Understand Who Jesus is
- Trust fully in Jesus
- Have spiritual discernment of the lessons Jesus is trying to teach them

Does Jesus have a complaint with you this morning?

## **II. (:10-12) FAÇADE OF SPIRITUAL VISION -- THE BLINDED AND HARD-HEARTED PHARISEES CONTINUE TO PUT JESUS TO THE TEST -- DEMANDING AUTHENTICATION**

## (:10) Transition

*“And immediately He entered the boat with His disciples, and came to the district of Dalmanutha.”*

Καὶ εὐθὺς ἐμβὰς εἰς τὸ πλοῖον μετὰ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ ἦλθεν εἰς τὰ μέρη Δαλμανουθά.

**Hiebert:** The location apparently was on the northwestern shore, perhaps at the southern end of the plain of Gennesaret.

## A. (:11) Critical Spirit of the Pharisees (Matt. 16:1-4)

### 1. Argumentative

*“And the Pharisees came out and began to argue with Him,”*

Καὶ ἐξῆλθον οἱ Φαρισαῖοι καὶ ἤρξαντο συζητεῖν αὐτῷ,

**MacArthur:** three features that mark the spiritually blind and they come out very readily.

- Number one, They're...people who are spiritually blind are comfortable only with others who are also blind, even if they're enemies. . .
- the second is, that the darkness deepens. The more evidence you give them, the deeper they go. . .
- And thirdly, they're condemned to terminal blindness.

### 2. Seeking special authenticating sign

*“seeking from Him a sign from heaven,”*

ζητοῦντες παρ' αὐτοῦ σημεῖον ἀπὸ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ,

**Hiebert:** when the seeking is conducted in a challenging and demanding manner, it denotes a dispute. . . Their demand was a demonstration of their spiritual blindness. They failed to recognize the Messianic signs already being given, while demanding a sign of their own choosing.

**Edwards:** a confirmation of Jesus' ministry from God himself, an “outward compelling proof of divine authority” (**Cranfield**)

### 3. Motivation = to trap and expose Jesus

*“to test Him.”*

πειράζοντες αὐτόν.

**Edwards:** the word for “*test*” does not mean an objective test to discover the merit of something, but an obstacle or stumbling block to discredit. It occurs only four times in Mark, once of Satan's temptation of Jesus in the wilderness (1:13) and three times of the opposition of the Pharisees (8:11; 10:2; 12:15). It is thus apparent in v. 11 that the Pharisees represent a challenge and confrontation of Jesus.

## B. (:12) Troubled Spirit of Jesus

### 1. Lamenting Their Unbelief

*“And sighing deeply in His spirit,”*



καὶ ἀναστενάξας τῷ πνεύματι αὐτοῦ

## 2. Questioning Their Motivation

“*He said, ‘Why does this generation seek for a sign?’*”

λέγει· τί ἡ γενεὰ αὕτη ζητεῖ σημεῖον;

Two views for “*this generation*”:

**Grassmick:** The words this generation denoted the nation of Israel represented by those religious leaders (cf. 8:38; 9:19; 13:30). They continually rejected God’s gracious dealings with them (cf. Deut. 32:5-20; Ps. 95:10).

**Parunak:** The “*generation*”: Three other times in Mark

1) Its character: adulterous, sinful (8:38), faithless (9:19)

2) Its timing (13:30): until the Lord's return.

3) Not a conventional generation of 20 or 40 years, but those who inhabit this present age (*aiwn*, cf. 10:30; Luke 16:8 explicitly relates *aiwn* and *genea*. Gal. 1:4 denotes this present *aiwn* as evil.)

4) In Mark and Luke this word functions much as *kosmos* does in John, for an evil system opposed to God. 1 Cor 1:20 links *aiwn* with *kosmos*.

5) In 13:30, watch out for date setting based on how long a generation is! Hal Lindsey's error in LGPE

## 3. Refusing to Take the Bait

“*Truly I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation.*”

ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, εἰ δοθήσεται τῇ γενεᾷ ταύτῃ σημεῖον.

Death, Burial and Resurrection of Jesus would be the ultimate confirmation of His identity and authority as Messiah = “*sign of Jonah*”

**Parunak:** The Lord will not cast his pearls before swine, Matt 7:6. Cf. Acts 13:46. Not every question deserves an answer. The Lord does not respond when people are trying to trap him; instead, he calls attention to their hypocrisy. "The real intent of your question is not to get an answer, but to attack me; therefore it is appropriate for me to unveil your hypocrisy in pretending to seek instruction."

**John 1** – Jesus came as a light to the world – to the Jews and to the Gentiles

## **III. (:13-21) FRUSTRATION OF SPIRITUAL VISION -- SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING CONTINUES TO BE A CHALLENGE FOR TRUE DISCIPLES**

### **A. (:13-16) Disciples Tend to Lose Focus**

#### 1. (:13-14) Weakness – Creates Vulnerability

##### a. (:13) Transition

“*And leaving them, He again embarked and went away to the other side.*”

καὶ ἀφείς αὐτοὺς πάλιν ἐμβὰς ἀπῆλθεν εἰς τὸ πέραν.

**Hiebert:** Mark's and indicates continuation and implies that this paragraph stands in close connection with the scene just described (vv. 11-13).

“Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus”

b. (:14) Human Weakness

*“And they had forgotten to take bread;  
and did not have more than one loaf in the boat with them.”*

Καὶ ἐπελάθοντο λαβεῖν ἄρτους  
καὶ εἰ μὴ ἓνα ἄρτον οὐκ εἶχον μεθ' ἑαυτῶν ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ.

2. (:15) Warning – Contrasts the Leaven of the Bad Influences with the Bread of Heaven

*“And He was giving orders to them, saying, ‘Watch out!  
Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.’”*

καὶ διεστέλλετο αὐτοῖς λέγων· ὁρᾶτε,  
βλέπετε ἀπὸ τῆς ζύμης τῶν Φαρισαίων καὶ τῆς ζύμης Ἡρώδου.

2 present imperatives – keep up this state of vigilance

Leaven a picture of ongoing fermentation of evil and corruption in the scriptures – like a cancer that spreads its destructiveness

Quite a contrast between the **leaven of the Pharisees** and the **Bread of Heaven** who came down to give light to the world (John 1)

**Hiebert:** leaven refers to the **teaching** of those warned against. Clearly Christ was thinking of the penetrating and corrupting influence of the teachings of His opponents. . . Their perverted views concerning moral goodness and moral evil (cf. 7:1-23) left them morally blind and unable to discern the mission and character of the Messiah.

**Hendriksen:** Yeast and teaching resemble each other in several respects:

- a. both operate invisibly,
- b. are very potent, and
- c. have a tendency gradually to augment their sphere of influence

3. (:16) Worry – Characterizes the Humanistic, Pessimistic Outlook of the Disciples

*“And they began to discuss with one another the fact that they had no bread.”*

καὶ διελογίζοντο πρὸς ἀλλήλους ὅτι ἄρτους οὐκ ἔχουσιν.

**B. (:17-21) Disciples Tend to Regress Back to Dullness -- What is Your Problem?**

1. (:17) Introductory Rebuke

*“And Jesus, aware of this, said to them,  
‘Why do you discuss the fact that you have no bread?  
Do you not yet see or understand?  
Do you have a hardened heart?’”*

καὶ γνοὺς λέγει αὐτοῖς· τί διαλογίζεσθε ὅτι ἄρτους οὐκ ἔχετε; οὐπω νοεῖτε οὐδὲ συνίετε; πεπωρωμένην ἔχετε τὴν καρδίαν ὑμῶν;

## 2. (:18-20) Detailed Rebuke

### a. Problem with Your Vision

*“Having eyes, do you not see?”*

ὀφθαλμοὺς ἔχοντες οὐ βλέπετε

### b. Problem with Your Hearing

*“And having ears, do you not hear?”*

καὶ ὅτα ἔχοντες οὐκ ἀκούετε;

**Parunak:** This is a quote from Jer. 5:21, which sets two conditions in parallel: rebellion (5:23, like the Pharisees), and lack of appreciation for the Lord's sovereign provision (5:24, like the disciples). – cf. Ezek. 12:2

### c. Problem with Your Memory

*“And do you not remember,”*

καὶ οὐ μνημονεύετε,

#### 1) (:19) Review of Feeding Miracle #1

*“When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces you picked up?”  
They said to Him, ‘Twelve.’”*

ὅτε τοὺς πέντε ἄρτους ἔκλασα εἰς τοὺς πεντακισχιλίους, πόσους κοφίνους κλασμάτων πλήρεις ἤρατε; λέγουσιν αὐτῷ· δώδεκα.

#### 2) (:20) Review of Feeding Miracle #2

*“And when I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of broken pieces did you pick up?”  
And they said to Him, ‘Seven.’”*

ὅτε τοὺς ἑπτὰ εἰς τοὺς τετρακισχιλίους, πόσων σφυρίδων πληρώματα κλασμάτων ἤρατε; καὶ λέγουσιν [αὐτῷ]· ἑπτὰ.

**Hiebert:** His own act had twice created material abundance in a time of crisis. Would they then need to worry about their material needs when they had one loaf with them? The memory of the disciples was clear and accurate concerning the historical facts, but they had failed to deduce the appropriate spiritual truth from those facts. They yet failed to grasp the true significance of His Person.

## 3. (:21) Summary Rebuke

*“And He was saying to them, ‘Do you not yet understand?’”*

καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς· οὐπω συνίετε;

#### **IV. (:22-26) FIX OF SPIRITUAL VISION -- CLEAR SPIRITUAL VISION RESULTS FROM THE MESSIAH CONTINUING TO GRACIOUSLY TOUCH THE EYES OF OUR FAITH**

##### **A. (:22) Plight of the Blind Man**

*“And they came to Bethsaida. And they brought a blind man to Him, and entreated Him to touch him.”*

Καὶ ἔρχονται εἰς Βηθσαϊδάν. Καὶ φέρουσιν αὐτῷ τυφλὸν καὶ παρακαλοῦσιν αὐτὸν ἵνα αὐτοῦ ἅψηται.

**Edwards:** The juxtaposition of the two stories is a clue that the lingering blindness of the disciples may also be relieved, as is the blindness of the man at Bethsaida, by the continued touch of Jesus.

##### **B. (:23-25) Two Stage Process of Healing the Vision of the Blind Man**

Only recorded miracle of Jesus performed in stages rather than instantaneously – except the feeding miracles could be viewed as ongoing in the process of breaking and distributing ...

###### 1. (:23-24) First Stage

*And taking the blind man by the hand, He brought him out of the village; and after spitting on his eyes, and laying His hands upon him, He asked him, ‘Do you see anything?’ And he looked up and said, ‘I see men, for I am seeing them like trees, walking about.’”*

καὶ ἐπιλαβόμενος τῆς χειρὸς τοῦ τυφλοῦ ἐξήνεγκεν αὐτὸν ἔξω τῆς κώμης καὶ πτύσας εἰς τὰ ὄμματα αὐτοῦ, ἐπιθείς τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῷ ἐπήρώτα αὐτόν· εἶ τι βλέπεις; καὶ ἀναβλέψας ἔλεγεν· βλέπω τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ὅτι ὡς δένδρα ὁρῶ περιπατοῦντας.

Sees the apostles as large and indistinct objects – sort of how I see people without my glasses on!  
No clear focus; no distinct images

**Grassmick:** The touch of saliva and Jesus’ hands conveyed His intentions and stimulated the blind man’s faith.

**Hiebert:** Why 2 stages? . . . Others have suggested that it was intended as a parabolic lesson to the twelve to teach them that they too needed a further touch to clarify their understanding of the Person of Christ. The fact that this miracle occurs following clear instances of their spiritual dullness of the disciples (vv. 4, 18) is suggestive of an intended lesson for them.

Cf. Jesus cleansing the feet of the disciples – teaching them that although they are cleansed at point of salvation, they need to experience ongoing cleansing

**John 13:10** *“He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean”*

**Grassmick:** This miracle depicts the correct but incomplete understanding of the disciples.

###### 2. (:25) Second Stage

*“Then again He laid His hands upon his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and began to see everything clearly.”*

εἶτα πάλιν ἐπέθηκεν τὰς χεῖρας ἐπὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ, καὶ διέβλεψεν καὶ ἀπεκατέστη καὶ ἐνέβλεπεν τηλαυγῶς ἅπαντα.

### C. (:26) Dismissal of the Blind Man

*“And He sent him to his home, saying, ‘Do not even enter the village.’”*

καὶ ἀπέστειλεν αὐτὸν εἰς οἶκον αὐτοῦ λέγων· μηδὲ εἰς τὴν κώμην εἰσέλθης.

**MacArthur:** you have a confirmation of judgment...you have a confirmation of judgment. Bethsaida is not just any town. They have had high exposure to Jesus. And if you will remember this, in the eleventh chapter of Matthew Jesus in verse 20 began to denounce the cities in which most of His miracles were done. The cities in which most of His miracles were done because they didn't repent, so He denounces them. Here they are.

“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida!” Bethsaida was a town in which most of His miracles were done. Then He says this, what is the curse? “If the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, Bethsaida, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you.” And then He pronounces the same judgment on Capernaum, His headquarters for His Galilean ministry. And that is repeated in Luke 10:13, the same thing. Bethsaida, home of three Apostles. Scene of many, many, many miracles, including the feeding of the vast multitude, high exposure to the Lord and His power is cursed. And what is that curse? That at the Great White Throne Judgment in the future when all the ungodly come to the final tribunal and they will, all who have ever lived, all the ungodly will come to the final tribunal of the Great White Throne Judgment and God will judge them and send them to everlasting hell forever, that judgment will be rendered individually to people and to places. Tyre and Sidon, idolatrous, pagan, Gentile, notoriously wicked, a seaport known for crime, vice, prostitution violence, profanity, greed, injustice, doomed by the prophet Jeremiah in chapter 25 and 47 of his prophecy, guilty of selling Jewish slaves, according to Amos chapter 1 verse 9, this was a vile, vile, vile area. Tyre and Sidon were two wicked cities.

On the other hand, there's Bethsaida...Jewish, proud of its religious heritage, proud of its religious loyalty, a synagogue town, the people who migrated to the temple to worship and sacrifice, and Jesus says, “Hell will be hotter for the inhabitants of Bethsaida than it will be for the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon,” far worse, far worse judgment falls on them.

Our Lord's leaving Bethsaida, our Lord's denying the man the right to go back and tell the town what had happened to him is to assure the disciples of the seriousness of this curse. Yes they need to understand grace, they need to understand compassion and the tenderness of Jesus and the touch of Jesus, but His disciples need to understand judgment also. And because Bethsaida did not repent when they had such exposure to Christ, they'll have a far greater judgment.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Relationship between failure of faith and sin of lack of spiritual perception and failure to remember the great deeds of God on our behalf; How has your eye exam turned out?

\* \* \* \* \*

## DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Do we have any complaints against God's power or sufficiency on our behalf?
- 2) Are we in the category of those that come demanding of Jesus to produce a sign?
- 3) How has the truth impacted your life in the past 5 years? Can you discern a pattern of spiritual growth that demonstrates that you have true spiritual insight and perception (an ability to put into practice the truth of God)?
- 4) Make a list of all the special ways in which you can remember the Lord manifesting His mighty works on your behalf (spiritual monuments to help your memory). Has God ever let you down and failed you and let you starve to death?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Hendriksen:** Passage (and its parallel in Matthew) warns against four errors: the *traditionalism* of the Pharisees, the *secularism* of the Herodians, the *skepticism* of the Sadducees, and the *pessimism* of the disciples.

**Parunak:** Encourages us as Objects of the Lord's work. Shows how resistant we are to full spiritual understanding, and how patiently the Lord persists until he finishes the job. This man seems to be a metaphor for the disciples, who have just been rebuked (8:18) for their similarity in spirit to the spiritual ailments of the two miracles that surround them. In the next section we shall see several examples of how slow they are to get the point. He has touched them and so they see more than others, but they do not yet see clearly, yet he does not give up on them, but patiently persists. So we should not be discouraged at our own slow progress. **Phil. 1:6**, "*Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform [it] until the day of Jesus Christ.*"

**MacArthur:** And [spiritual blindness] is a condition here described of Israel who were believed to be by themselves, at least, the most enlightened people on the planet. They had the Old Testament Scripture, they had the Law of the prophets. They had the ordinances. They had the Covenants. They had it all. They had the complete revelation of God throughout the whole Old Testament as it had been revealed. God spoke in many ways through many means, in many portions and gave them the Scripture and it gave them the light and they didn't understand it and they had an apostate religion framed out of that true revelation. They deviated from it and perverted it to the degree that they had an apostate form of Judaism in Jesus' time. When He came, the light was looking them in the face and they couldn't understand it. That's how deep human blindness is. . .

The psalmist said in **Psalms 82:5**, "*People walk in darkness.*" The prophet said, "*People have eyes but can't see.*" Isaiah said that and Jeremiah said it. The Proverbs say, "*The way of the wicked is darkness.*" Blindness and darkness characterize human nature. That's just part of being human. The light is there but the capacity to follow that light to a fuller light is not there. And

this blindness, as I said, is not a superficial blindness, it is a profound blindness, a profound blindness.

### **Brian Borgman: Hardened Hearts and Poor Memories**

A disciple is a follower and learner of Jesus Christ; we often need remedial discipleship courses; these 3 units all tied together; Jesus brings them out to the divine woodshed for a spanking

#### **1) (:1-10) The Gentiles get more than crumbs after all**

Lesson to Syrophenician woman: “*it is not proper to give the children’s bread to dogs;*”

But in this section we see the Gentiles get a full meal

(:1-3) Messiah demonstrates compassion on the Gentiles – 3 days of listening to the gospel teaching; we see a gentleness in Messiah – doesn’t break a bruised reed; giving the Gentiles His truth; transition from feeding them spiritual truth to physical bread; Jesus testing His disciples; seems that prior miracle of chap. 6 should have made a big impact on them;

(:4) disciples are almost rude to the Lord Jesus in their response; where is their memory and their faith?

(:5) Jesus repeatedly asking them;

(:6-9) Lord Jesus taking initiative to provide bread in the wilderness for the Gentiles

(:10) quiet boat ride back – embarrassed disciples – but still grumbling and complaining and unbelieving – don’t fully get it

#### **2) (:11-13) The Pharisees get nothing at all**

The enemies of Jesus; ask for a public, definite kind of proof that Jesus is who He says He is; what more proof could they want? epitome of defiant unbelief; wanted another miracle to show that all the miracles really pointed to His true identity; a pretense for their unbelief; eyes of faith do not require confirming signs and miracles; “*this generation*” – **Deut. 32; Ps. 95** = wicked generation that dropped dead in the wilderness – forgot their rock and abandoned the Lord their God; sitting in judgment over God and His ways instead of humbling themselves

#### **3) (:14-21) The Disciples don’t get it**

They had forgotten to take bread – this is funny;

Attitude that divine revelation could be controlled and judged by their own human traditions and mind; attitude of unbelief motivated by carnal pride; God in His sovereignty determines when

and where He will do a miracle; your puny little brain can’t determine the truthfulness of the revelation of the Almighty God; Pharisees and Herod: you show me a sign and then we will talk;

Jesus says watch out for that spirit; disciples imperceptive to the teaching and power of Jesus; thought Jesus was just talking about bread; but even so, He could make as much as they needed;

arguing about whose fault it was that they only brought 1 loaf; Jesus didn’t think it was funny;

(:17) You are missing the point; Jesus begins to rebuke the disciples; these men are thick-headed beyond understanding; they had no spiritual understanding or perception; **Mark 6:51-52**; their heart was hardened – should have been full of faith; faith is the prerequisite to understanding;

you believe so that you will know; they failed in understanding because they failed in faith; “*forget*” or “*forgotten*” – study throughout OT and see failures of Israel in this area; **Ps. 78:10,**

**42** – we need to remember God’s mighty deeds; **Ps. 106:7, 13, 21**;

(:21) Repeated general rebuke – lack of faith leads to lack of spiritual insight and comprehension and failure to remember mighty deeds of God – are you guilty of these sins? What about the Providence of God in your life performing one mighty deed after another – God will never fail me in the future because He has never failed me in the past; does the truth impact the way that you live? Where’s your growth? Are you living the same way you lived 5 years ago?

TEXT: Mark 8:27-30

TITLE: WHO IS THIS JESUS?

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE TRUE IDENTITY OF JESUS CONSTITUTES THE ULTIMATE LITMUS TEST**

**INTRODUCTION:**

We all know what a **litmus test** is. That is where one particular criteria serves as a watershed to place people into two opposing camps. The expression is a metaphor based on the litmus test in chemistry -- Blue litmus paper turns red under acidic conditions and red litmus paper turns blue under basic (i.e. alkaline) conditions. When someone is trying to be appointed to serve as a Supreme Court Justice, they argue against the tendency to elevate one particular issue to such a litmus test status – preferring that their entire body of work be evaluated. But when it comes to our relationship to God and our eternal destiny, it all comes down to **one central issue**:

**THE TRUE IDENTITY OF JESUS CONSTITUTES THE ULTIMATE LITMUS TEST**

**1 John 5:1** “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God” – case closed

**Rom. 10:9** “if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved”

**C. S. Lewis** – famous quote: **Liar, Lunatic or Lord?**

"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to. ... Now it seems to me obvious that He was neither a lunatic nor a fiend: and consequently, however strange or terrifying or unlikely it may seem, I have to accept the view that He was and is God."

Scots preacher -- **John Duncan** (1796–1870), around 1859–60:

"Christ either deceived mankind by conscious fraud, or He was Himself deluded and self-deceived, or He was Divine. There is no getting out of this trilemma. It is inexorable."

Or Jesus should be viewed as a **Legend** – not one who even made these claims for Himself (power to forgive sins; existed from all time; would rise from the dead and return to judge the world; etc.); but others manufactured these claims.

What did people living at the time Jesus was on earth say about His identity?

What do people today say about His identity?

Don't forget important connection to previous miracle account of Jesus opening the eyes of blind man



Most important: what do YOU say regarding this key litmus test question

## **I. (:27-28) CONJECTURE REGARDING THE IDENTITY OF JESUS – POPULAR OPINION**

### **Transition (:27a)**

*“And Jesus went out, along with His disciples, to the villages of Caesarea Philippi;”*

Καὶ ἐξῆλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ εἰς τὰς κώμας Καισαρείας τῆς Φιλίππου·

**Dr. Steven Lawson:** Has been in Bethsaida; headed due north following Jordan River up to its source to the villages [plural] of Caesarea Philippi 25 miles away; already north of Sea of Galilee; he would never go further north than this; near the foot of the tallest mountain in this region – Mt. Hermon; first a Canaanite sanctuary for worship of Baal; much pagan worship here;

Coming closer to the political capital for King Herod; setting up the ultimate contrast between:

- Those who confessed Caesar, the Roman emperor, as almost God
- Those who would confess Jesus as the Messiah

**Alan Carr:** Caesarea Philippi also contained a gleaming marble temple, built by Herod Philip, to honor Caesar, the Roman Emperor, who was considered to be a god. The citizens of this city were required to enter this temple, at least once per year, place a pinch of incense on a burning altar and proclaim, **“Caesar is Lord!”**

**James Edwards:** It is here in the outer regions of paganism and even hostility to Judaism that Jesus is first proclaimed Messiah!

School is now in session; it is Final Exam time – only 2 very simple and direct questions:

### **A. (:27b) Question Regarding Popular Opinion**

*“and on the way He questioned His disciples, saying to them, ‘Who do people say that I am?’”*

καὶ ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ ἐπηρώτα τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ λέγων αὐτοῖς·  
τίνα με λέγουσιν οἱ ἄνθρωποι εἶναι;

Studying anthropology here

Youtube videos – asking random people on the street who they think Jesus is – you get some typical responses and some really strange responses

### **B. (:28) Variety of Responses**

#### 1. Political Leader – Launching a New Kingdom

*“And they told Him, saying, ‘John the Baptist;’”*

οἱ δὲ εἶπαν αὐτῷ λέγοντες [ὅτι] Ἰωάννην τὸν βαπτιστήν,

King Herod thought this when he heard about Jesus - **Mk 6:14**; had beheaded John the Baptist but saw him as a powerful and authoritative figure

#### 2. Religious Leader -- Miracle Worker

“and others say Elijah;”

καὶ ἄλλοι Ἠλίαν,

Known more for his mighty deeds than for what doctrines he proclaimed  
Went about doing good – even raising someone from the dead

Likely based on their misunderstanding of Malachi’s prophecy - **Mal 4:5**

### 3. Spokesman for God

“but others, one of the prophets.”

ἄλλοι δὲ ὅτι εἷς τῶν προφητῶν.

### **Deut. 18:15-19**

**Alan Carr:** This was a long list that included such luminaries as Moses, Daniel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, and others. Like Moses, Jesus declared the Law of God. Like Isaiah, Jesus preached about sacrifice and holiness. Like Daniel, the message of Jesus was a prophetic message of a coming King and His kingdom. Like Jeremiah, Jesus carried out a ministry marked by compassion and brokenness. He was, after all, “*a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief*”, Isa. 53:3. Like Hosea, Jesus loved the unlovable and was willing to redeem lost, wretched sinners. . .

### Other Voices chiming in:

- The Pharisees and other religious elitists of the day said, “**...He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?**” **John 10:20.**
- The Scribes, the men viewed as great teachers of the Law, said, “**He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils,**” **Mark 3:22.**
- The Sanhedrin, the ruling body of the Jewish religion, said, “**...He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death. Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands, Saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?**” **Matthew 26:65-68.**
- His Own family and friends said, “**He is beside himself,**” **Mark 3:21.**
- Even as Jesus hung on the cross, giving His life a ransom for sin, the religious elite continued to express their evil opinion of Him. “**Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save. Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him,**” **Mark 15:31-32.**

That’s what some of the people in that day were saying about Jesus. What are they saying about Him in our day? Just as it was in the days when Jesus walked this earth, there are a multitude of opinions about Who He was and is.

- The Muslim says that Jesus was a prophet, but He was not crucified on a cross. He will return, but He is not God.
- The Hindu believes that Jesus is just one of millions of gods.
- The Jew believes that Jesus was a great prophet and teacher, but He is not God.
- The Mormon believes that Jesus was the first baby born to God in Heaven, when God, in a physical body, had sexual intercourse with Mary, His Own daughter. He is the spirit brother of Lucifer.
- The Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Jesus was once the Archangel Michael before He came to the earth. In their view Jesus is not God in the flesh.
- The atheist denies that Jesus ever existed at all.
- The agnostic just doesn't know what to believe about Jesus.
- Society believes that Jesus was a great teacher; that He had some good ideas about loving your fellow man and being good to others, but they do not believe that He is the Savior, or that He is God in the flesh. Most people acknowledge His existence, but they refuse to bow to His authority or give Him the worship He deserves.

**Summary: Very famous and significant; but a man and not God**

**MacArthur:** Why could He not be the Messiah? Because they had a very highly developed Messianic concept, political ruler, military power, overthrows Rome, destroys all Israel's enemies, brings blessedness to Israel, prosperity to Israel, permanent peace to Israel, elevates Israel to be the greatest nation on the face of the earth, all other nations are under the shadow of Israel. The Messiah reigns in Israel and dominates the world, righteousness flows. They took all the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament, the desert blossoms like a rose, Isaiah's prophecies about the character of the Kingdom, all of that, the promises to David all fulfilled, the promises to Abraham all fulfilled, the promise of the New Covenant to Jeremiah, the salvation of Israel fulfilled and the salvation of Gentiles as the gospel extends to the earth.

Where was all this? Their messianic concept was highly developed and so they couldn't get to the point where they saw Jesus as the Messiah, cause He didn't fit that. He wasn't a military leader. He wasn't the conqueror. He wasn't a destroyer of armies. He didn't look like a king, act like a king. So they come up short. John 3:1 to 2, "We know You are a teacher come from God because nobody can do what You do except God be with him." So we get that...we get it, You are a prophet from God. And that's what they're all saying, that's the popular view...John the Baptist, Jeremiah, Elijah and I'm sure they threw in some others. That's question number one on the test.

**Opinions of men are Vain Speculation** – doesn't matter what men say

## II. (:29-30) CONFESSION REGARDING THE IDENTITY OF JESUS – PERSONAL CONVICTION

### A. (:29a) Question Regarding Personal Opinion

“And He continued by questioning them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’”

καὶ αὐτὸς ἐπηρώτα αὐτούς· ὑμεῖς δὲ τίνα με λέγετε εἶναι;

Emphasis on “*You*” in contrast to the general public

**MacArthur:** Now look, they’ve had two and a half years of school, it’s time for the exam. “Two and a half years they have been 24/7 with our Lord, two and a half years of divine revelation, two and a half years of thousands of miracles, two and a half years of the most profound teaching imaginable, and unimaginable, two and a half years for them to see everything they needed to see to learn everything they needed to learn.

**Hiebert:** “*But who say ye that I am?*” but is adversative and passes to the point of supreme concern for Jesus. *Ye* stresses the contrast between the disciples and the people. They are personally asked to crystallize their own faith in an open declaration. *Say* is present tense and implies that He is asking for what they are already saying among themselves or in conversation with others. *Who . . . I am* asks them to identify His Person, not what He did but who He was. Jesus had not previously demanded that they give a direct answer to this question concerning His identity. His method had been to impress upon them the truth concerning Himself through what they heard and saw. He had left them to arrive at the truth concerning Him through personal reflection. But now the time had come to lead them to a positive declaration of faith.

### B. (:29b) Only One Adequate Answer

“Peter answered and said to Him, ‘Thou art the Christ.’”

ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Πέτρος λέγει αὐτῷ· σὺ εἶ ὁ χριστός.

Truncated version of Peter’s confession; Matthew adds: “*the Son of the living God*”  
For Mark, the concept of Messiah included His deity

#### 1. Anointed Supreme King – Ultimate Political Leader -- AUTHORITY

#### 2. Anointed Supreme Priest – Ultimate Religious Leader -- SAVIOR

The One Mediator between God and Man

Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek – righteous king-priest; stress on His eternity; superiority of His priesthood over the Levitical priests; Ps. 110:4; Gen. 14; Heb. 5-7

Our Advocate before the Father – deals with our sin problem

#### 3. Anointed Supreme Prophet – Ultimate Spokesman for God -- LOGOS

John 1

Brings our attention back to the famous “*I AM*” claims of Christ  
Peter confesses “*YOU ARE*”

**Summary: More than all of that = the very Son of God**

**Epilogue (:30)**

*“And He warned them to tell no one about Him.”*

καὶ ἐπετίμησεν αὐτοῖς ἵνα μηδενὶ λέγωσιν περὶ αὐτοῦ.

**Constable:** Probably Jesus instructed ("warned") the disciples "to tell no one about Him" for at least three reasons. First, such an announcement would have hindered His mission. Second, the disciples would not have been able to cope with the questions and opposition such an announcement would generate. They still held many popular misconceptions about Israel's Messiah that Jesus needed to correct. Jesus proceeded to continue preparing them so they could represent Him effectively. Third, Jesus wanted privacy for predicting His passion and resurrection.

**Hiebert:** the disciples themselves were not yet qualified to proclaim the whole truth concerning Him as Messiah. His Messianic mission could not be rightly understood apart from the work of the cross. Only when they understood the relationship between His suffering and His glory would they be qualified to proclaim Him adequately as the Messiah.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Dream I had this week: taking a test – could not figure out the first question; under time pressure; woke myself up: I am not going to take this test. Don't have that option with the litmus test that Jesus sets in front of everyone. Who do YOU say that I am?

Very simple message – yet so few people get it

**1 Cor. 1:18-25** *“but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”*

Now Christ will begin to openly teach His followers about the cross and the suffering that lay ahead as He set His face to go to Jerusalem

\* \* \* \* \*

### **DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) What do some prominent people in our culture think of Jesus Christ?
- 2) What is the significance to you of Jesus being your King?
- 3) What is the significance to you of Jesus being your Great High Priest?

4) What is the significance to you of Jesus being the Logos?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

#### Alistair Begg: Who is Jesus?

Who was Jesus Christ and why did He come? Identity of Jesus is the subject matter; Some quickly answer that he was just a man; but bible claims he is God; idea that he could be both God and man at the same time just confounds them as totally illogical;

“The Myth of God Incarnate” – book by contemporary theologian; followed reasoning of philosopher Spinoza had used a picture of a square circle to dispel the notion of Jesus as God-Man; square and circle are both the same things so it is absurd to say they could co-exist = logical contradiction; but man is the creature (human) and God is the creator (divine); being divine does not exclude being human; a citizen of both heaven and earth

The way to speak to the world is not just to speak louder and slower – assuming people will just accept our ideas; we must engage people in meaningful dialog;

#### I. What did Jesus say? Did Jesus ever claim to be God? Examine the evidence in the Bible 4 Indirect Claims:

1) Jesus made staggering claims about His ability to meet the spiritual needs of others – “*I AM*” statements in John; for forgiveness, peace, security, direction; He alone could bring people into a living, eternal relationship with God; why did He make such claims? Was he a liar or crazy? “I think He was just a good man” – did not leave us that option

2) Jesus made astonishing claims about His teaching --

**Matt. 5:18** – affirming the authenticity of OT Scriptures – **Matt. 24:35** Jesus says the same thing about His words; Jesus takes false interpretations of the OT and corrects them; putting his teaching on a par with the rest of biblical instruction

3) Jesus made claims that He would be directly involved in all the last day events of history --

**John 14:3**; I will be involved in wrapping the world up; I will go away and then I will come back; **John 5:28** Jesus will be involved in final judgment; **Matt. 25:31** – I will sit on my throne and put sheep on one side and goats on the other

4) Jesus made it clear that the reaction of men to him was an indication of their reaction to God --

**John 14:8**; If you have seen Jesus you have seen God; **John 12:44**; **Mark 9:36**; religious establishment cannot stomach that Jesus is God incarnate; **John 5:23**; you cannot claim to honor Jehovah, the father, without equally honoring the Son; orthodox Mormonism falls down here; issue today is tolerance instead of truth; How could such a nice person possibly be motivated by Satan? **John 15:23**; **John 10:30** “*I and the Father are One*” – don’t say you can love the Father and not the Son

#### 6 Direct Claims:

1) John 5 – healing of lame man on Sabbath; God is at work (not bound by your understanding of the Sabbath law) and I am working as well; **John 5:18** “*making Himself equal with God*” – Jesus did not correct their understanding; look at how Peter and John refused to accept such

worship;

2) **John 8:56** – claimed to have existed before Abraham was born; “*Are you greater than our father Abraham?*” Not just older; “*I AM*”; people in post modern world balk at the resurrection and the incarnation

3) **John 10:29-30** – “*I and the Father are One*” – word used is in the Neuter; one in substance and essence with the Father; met with a violent reaction from the Jews; “*you a mere man claim to be God*” – certainly the Jews understood that Jesus claimed to be God

4) **John 4** – “*Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father*” – Jesus revealing all of the personality and attributes of God that it is possible for humans to see; since OT taught that no one could see God face to face;

5) **John 17:5** – “*glorify Me with the glory I had with you before the world began*” – speaking of a glory that was part of His eternal possession before the world began; addressing God on equal terms

6) **John 18** - record of arrest of Jesus; crack soldiers come to make an arrest; Jesus not hiding from them; “*I AM*” – they fall to the ground – Why? Response to divine glory and majesty and sense of who Jesus was

**II. What Does It Mean that Jesus Made These Claims to Deity?** How do we process and assimilate this

- Speaking of the fact of His eternity – *logos* – essential creating principle; not just another religious figure
- Reveals to us His personality – “*the Word was with God*” – intimate fellowship; distinct within the Triune God
- His Deity – “*the Word was God*” – not a separate being – the divinity that belongs to the rest of God belongs to Jesus; we can discover what God is like by looking at Jesus

There was a time when Jesus was God and not man; but never a time when He was man and not God

**Col. 2:9** – God becoming man was not subtraction; nor do we have division – not split up – did not become a combo all mixed up (neither one thing or the other); you have addition; His deity was not humanized nor His humanity deified; two natures and one personality;

**III. What Does It Matter?**

Thomas Carlisle: “If Arianism had won, Christianity would have dwindled to a legend.”

How important is the incarnation?

<http://www.truthforlife.org/resources/series/who-is-jesus/?gclid=CJrD9-zziMICFcxQ7AodwjcAWw>

**Lane:** The recognition that Jesus is the Messiah is thus the point of intersection toward which all the theological currents of the first half of the Gospel converge and from which the dynamic of the second half of the Gospel derives. In no other way could Mark more sharply indicate the historical and theological significance of the conversation in the neighborhood of Caesarea Philippi.

**Constable:** "*Christ*" is the English transliteration of the Greek *christos* that translates the Hebrew *masiah* meaning "anointed one." Originally this Hebrew term had a broad meaning and included anyone anointed by God, including priests, kings, and prophets. Later in the Old Testament it came to have the technical meaning of the divine Davidic king who would appear to deliver Israel and establish a worldwide kingdom (Ps. 110:1; Dan. 9:25-26). In Mark, Jesus rarely used this term Himself (cf. 9:41; 12:35; 13:21), and He never used it of Himself. Probably He avoided it because of its political connotations and the popular misunderstanding of it, but Jesus accepted the title when others applied it to Him (cf. 14:6-62; John 4:25-26).

**Mark Copeland: Names and Titles of Christ**

Advocate (1Jn 2:1)	Last Adam (1Co 15:45)
Almighty (Re 1:8; Mt 28:18)	Life (Jn 14:6; Col 3:4)
Alpha and Omega (Re 1:8; 22:13)	Light of the World (Jn 8:12)
Amen (Re 3:14)	Lion of the Tribe of Judah (Re 5:5)
Apostle of our Profession (He 3:1)	Living One (Re 1:18)
Atoning Sacrifice for our Sins (1Jn 2:2)	Living Stone (1Pe 2:4)
Author of Life (Ac 3:15)	Lord (2Pet 2:20)
Author & Perfecter of our Faith (He 12:2)	Lord of All (Ac 10:36)
Author of Salvation (He 2:10)	Lord of Glory (1Co 2:8)
Beginning and End (Re 22:13)	Lord of lords (Re 19:16)
Blessed and only Ruler (1Ti 6:15)	Man from Heaven (1Co 15:48)
Bread of God (Jn 6:33)	Master (Lk 5:5; 8:24; 9:33)
Bread of Life (Jn 6:35; 6:48)	Mediator of the New Covenant (He 9:15)
Bridegroom (Mt 9:15)	Mighty God (Isa 9:6)
Capstone (Ac 4:11; 1Pe 2:7)	Morning Star (Re 22:16)
Chief Cornerstone (Ep 2:20)	Offspring of David (Re 22:16)
Chief Shepherd (1Pe 5:4)	Only Begotten Son of God (Jn 1:18; 1Jn 4:9)
Christ (1Jn 2:22)	Our Great God and Savior (Tit 2:13)
Creator (Jn 1:3)	Our Holiness (1Co 1:30)
Deliverer (Ro 11:26)	Our Husband (2Co 11:2)
Eternal Life (1Jn 1:2; 5:20)	Our Protection (2Th. 3:3)
Faithful and True (Re 19:11)	Our Redemption (1Co 1:30)



Faithful Witness (Re 1:5)	Our Righteousness (1 Co 1:30)
Faithful and True Witness (Re 3:14)	Our Sacrificed Passover Lamb (1Co 5:7)
First and Last (Re 1:17; 2:8; 22:13)	Power of God (1Co 1:24)
Firstborn From the Dead (Re 1:5)	Precious Cornerstone (1Pe 2:6)
Firstborn over all creation (Col 1:15)	Prophet (Ac 3:22)
Gate (Jn 10:9)	Rabbi (Mt 26:25)
God (Jn 1:1; 20:28; He 1:8; Ro 9:5)	Resurrection and Life (Jn 11:25)
Good Shepherd (Jn 10:11,14)	Righteous Branch (Jer 23:5)
Great Shepherd (He 13:20)	Righteous One (Ac 7:52; 1Jn 2:1)
Great High Priest (He 4:14)	Rock (1Co 10:4)
Head of the Church (Ep 1:22; 4:15; 5:23)	Root of David (Re 5:5; 22:16)
Heir of all things (He 1:2)	Ruler of God's Creation (Re 3:14)
High Priest (He 2:17)	Ruler of the Kings of the Earth (Re 1:5)
Holy and True (Re 3:7)	Savior (Ep 5:23; Tit 1:4; 3:6; 2Pe 2:20)
Holy One (Ac 3:14)	Son of David (Lk 18:39)
Hope (1Ti 1:1)	Son of God (Jn 1:49; He 4:14)
Hope of Glory (Col 1:27)	Son of Man (Mt 8:20)
Horn of Salvation (Lk 1:69)	Son of the Most High God (Lk 1:32)
I Am (Jn 8:58)	Source of Eternal Salvation (He 5:9)
Image of God (2Co 4:4)	The One Mediator (1Ti 2:5)
Immanuel (Mt 1:23)	The Stone the builders rejected (Ac 4:11)
Judge of the living and dead (Ac 10:42)	True Bread (Jn 6:32)
King Eternal (1Ti 1:17)	True Light (Jn 1:9)
King of Israel (Jn 1:49)	True Vine (Jn 15:1)
King of the Jews (Mt 27:11)	Truth (Jn 1:14; 14:6)
King of kings (1Ti 6:15; Re 19:16)	Way (Jn 14:6)
King of the Ages (Re 15:3)	Wisdom of God (1Co 1:24)
Lamb (Re 13:8)	Word (Jn 1:1)
Lamb of God (Jn 1:29)	Word of God (Re 19:13)
Lamb Without Blemish (1Pe 1:19)	

Alan Carr: Not every voice in that day was lifted against Jesus. Some people knew Who He was and proclaimed Him openly.

- John the Baptist got it right – **John 1:29-34.**
- The Angels got it right – **Luke 2:9-14.**
- Simeon got it right – **Luke 2:25-35.**
- Anna got it right – **Luke 2:36-38.**
- The dying thief got it right – **Luke 23:42.**
- The Roman Centurion got it right – **Mark 15:39.**
- The blind man got it right – **John 9:38.**
- Bartimaeus got it right – **Mark 10:47.**
- The crowds outside Jerusalem got it right – **John 12:13.**

➤ Even the demons got it right – **Mark 5:7**.

**Who is Jesus** according to other religions?

All the world's major religions feel compelled to account for Jesus in one way or another:

*Jews believe Jesus was Mary's son, was a teacher (Rabbi), had many disciples, was respected, performed miracles, claimed to be the Messiah and was crucified on the cross. They also acknowledge His followers reported Jesus was raised from the dead.*

*Muslims believe Jesus was born of a virgin, is to be revered and respected, was a prophet, a wise teacher who worked miracles, ascended to heaven, and will come again.*

*Bahá'í believe Jesus came from God, was a wise teacher who had a divine and human nature, worked miracles, and was crucified and resurrected as an atonement for humanity.*

*Hindus believe Jesus was a holy man, a wise teacher, and is a 'god'.*

*Buddhists believe Jesus was an enlightened man and a wise teacher.*

*New Age believers maintain Jesus was a wise moral teacher.*

<http://coldcasechristianity.com/2014/who-is-jesus-according-to-other-religions/>

**Brian Borgman: I Once Was Blind But Now I See**

Peter's confession is directly related to Jesus' opening of the eyes of the blind man; Simple question – Have you taken a look at the polls yet? Inquiring in order to demonstrate the blindness of the crowd; Man always has a religious opinion based on his vain speculation; these opinions don't amount to anything;

“Who do you say that I am?” -- Direct, penetrating, discriminating question – most preaching never gets to this level; no surprise that Peter answers for the apostles;

Simon Peter is the source for Mark's gospel; natural humility; Matthew's account has fuller version; sovereign grace had opened his eyes; Peter didn't figure this out by intellectual inspection; **2 Cor. 4:1-6**

**Dr. Steven Lawson: Peter's Great Confession**

So much power and authority in these verses; Christianity is Christ; the ultimate diagnostic question; the issue is always Christ; not saved by the plan of salvation but by the man of salvation; You cannot be wrong about Christ and be right with God;

**1. The Great Question (:27)**

teaching opportunity; school is now in session; an exam made up of 2 questions; the ultimate question for every human being on the earth; inescapable question; did not ask the question to gain information but to probe into the minds and hearts of the disciples; this will be the pivotal issue of their future gospel ministry

**2. The Great Misconception (:28)**

No lack of opinion regarding Who Jesus Christ is; all these answers extol the greatness and goodness of Christ; but not sufficient for who Jesus really is; not enough to have lofty thoughts about Jesus;

- there is so much power in your ministry that you must be the second coming of John the Baptist; fiery prophet; voice crying in wilderness; forerunner and herald of the Messiah;

- Elijah – temperament and personality of Christ – mistaken for 2 most fiery figures; challenged the prophet of Baal; called to account the nation of Israel; last chapter of OT before 400 years of silence; Mal. 4:5 –
- Jeremiah – weeping prophet
- one of the other prophets

Jesus was not just a good man or a great man but the God-Man

### **3. The Great Examination (:29)**

Jesus poses a follow-up question that is far more personal and revealing; school remained in session; “*You*” is in emphatic position; front loaded in the sentence; forget what others have to say; your eternal destiny rests upon what you say; no second hand religion in heaven; God has many children but no grandchildren;

### **4. The Great Confession (:29)**

Peter nails the confession; blurted it out; the messiah, the anointed one; long awaited expected one; sent by the Father; anointed by the Spirit; to be prophet, priest and king to His people; stating full deity of Lord Jesus; fully divine Son of God; co-equal; co-eternal; Lordship and Saviorhood of Christ; no middle ground – you either confess Him or deny Him; you hail Him or nail Him; **Rom. 10:9**

### **5. The Great Prohibition (:30)**

Strange words when we initially read them; ordered them;

TEXT: Mark 8:31-33 (Parallel passages: Matthew 16:21-23; Luke 9:22)

TITLE: REDEMPTIVE MISSION OF THE SUFFERING SERVANT INTRODUCED

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE REDEMPTIVE MISSION OF JESUS CHRIST CAN ONLY BE EMBRACED BY RELINQUISHING HUMAN AUTONOMY AND SUBMITTING TO DIVINE LORDSHIP [WHICH WILL INCLUDE REJECTION AND SUFFERING]**

**INTRODUCTION:**

**Review:** Chaps. 1-8

As soon as the disciples of Jesus come to grips with **Who He really is** (confession of Peter), Jesus immediately transitions to explaining very clearly to them His **intended Mission**. Close connection between these 2 halves of Mark's Gospel – Luke does not even begin a new sentence here (9:22).

**Parunak:** three predictions of his passion (all given in private to His disciples): **8:31; 9:31; 10:32-34**. Now that they recognize him as Messiah, they are ready to learn a new side to his work.

**John Grassmick:** The structure of this section (**8:31 – 10:52**) revolves around three Passion predictions: 8:31-9:29; 9:30-10:31; 10:32-52. Each unit includes a prediction (8:31; 9:30-31; 10:32-34); a reaction by the disciples (8:32-33; 9:32; 10:35-41); and one or more lessons in discipleship (8:34-9:29; 9:33-10:31; 10:42-52).

**Alan Carr:** For centuries, the Jews had looked for God to send a Deliverer. They anticipated a great military leader who would defeat Israel's enemies, restore righteousness to the land, and who would purify and restore Temple worship to its ancient glory, **Jer. 33:15; Eze. 37:23-24**. The Jews believed that this deliverer would achieve his goals through the force of arms. They were looking for a fighter, a revolutionary and an insurrectionist.

**Who is Jesus and Why did He come to this earth** – if you understand the answer to those 2 questions you have true spiritual insight.

**THE REDEMPTIVE MISSION OF JESUS CHRIST CAN ONLY BE EMBRACED BY RELINQUISHING HUMAN AUTONOMY AND SUBMITTING TO DIVINE LORDSHIP [WHICH INCLUDES REJECTION AND SUFFERING]**

**I. (:31-32a) CLEAR TEACHING REGARDING THE FOUR KEY COMPONENTS OF THE REDEMPTIVE MISSION OF THE SUFFERING SERVANT**

**(:31a) Strategic Turning Point -- Transition to the New Focus:**

*“And He began to teach them”* Mark 4:1; 6:34

Καὶ ἤρξατο διδάσκειν αὐτοὺς

Talking to His disciples here – in vs. 34, He begins talking to the crowd as well as His disciples

We must sit at the feet of the Master Teacher and allow Him to authoritatively explain the mind of God and the divine purposes and decrees; we must be in the role of submissive learners.

This is a clear Master-Disciple relationship – not one of equals

### **A. Shocking Reversal of Expectations – Suffering of the Messiah – The Son of Man**

*that the Son of Man must suffer many things” Luke 17:25*

ὅτι δεῖ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου πολλὰ παθεῖν

Introduction of this key identification of Jesus as *The Son of Man*

**James Edwards:** “*Son of Man*” occurs fourteen times in Mark, and only from the mouth of Jesus.  
3 categories:

- 1) apocalyptic contexts -- **Dan. 7:13-14** – coming in judgment
- 2) twice it refers to Jesus’ earthly authority to forgive sins (2:10) and supersede the Sabbath (2:28)
- 3) most predominant usage is with regard to the **suffering of Jesus** (8:31; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33, 45; 14:21 [twice], 41)

Fulfilling God ordained role and purpose

Free of political connotations

**Wessel:** The combining of the motif of eschatological glory with that of suffering and death is what characterizes the Son-of-Man idea in Mark’s Gospel as elsewhere in the Synoptics.

Why not: “Suffer ONE thing” = Death on the cross??

**MacArthur:** What do You mean *many things*? Betrayal, arrest, denial, abandonment, injustice, prison, mockery, beating, crucifixion, disaffection from His disciples, etc., etc.

**Humbled Himself** in laying aside the visible manifestation of His glory and taking on the limitations of human flesh

“*must*” -- Such suffering is unavoidable from the divine perspective; unalterable;

**Sproul:** He saw these events not as mere possibilities in the future but as certainties, things that simply had to occur if He was to fulfill His vocation. Why did Jesus use this **language of necessity**? He spoke in these terms because, from the foundation of the world, the Father had determined that the Son would suffer, be rejected, and ultimately be killed to redeem His people from God’s righteous wrath against their sin.

“suffering” of Christ – used of His death in Acts:

**Acts 1:3** *To these He also presented Himself alive, after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days, and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.*  
**Acts 3:18** *But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He has thus fulfilled.*

**Acts 17:3** explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ."

## **B. Shameful Rejection of the Messiah by the Religious Leaders**

*"and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes,"*

καὶ ἀποδοκιμασθῆναι ὑπὸ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων καὶ τῶν ἀρχιερέων καὶ τῶν γραμματέων

should have been embraced by the religious leaders

**Hiebert:** *"be rejected"* – subjected to an official examination and, like a spurious coin, be disapproved . . . did not meet their standards for the Messiah

**MacArthur:** And the strange, bizarre aspect of it is that it's not going to be by pagans and it's not going to be by self-confessed, wicked, godless men, but all of this is going to come by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes. The Sanhedrin conducted all of that. They were the ones responsible for His betrayal. They bought Judas for His arrest. They were the ones who brought about the mock trials. They were the ones who handed Him over to the Romans for all the physical abuse. They were the ruling counsel of Judaism. They were the elite, 70 men, they were made up of elders, judges, tribal heads, chief priests...those would be the temple system priests, the Sadducees, the religious liberals, and then there were the scribes who would be the Pharisees. So it was a coalition government made up of Pharisees, Sadducees who were enemies theologically, and other important leaders in the community and judges and they constituted this coalition, religious governing body over Israel and it was they who would be responsible for the killing of the Messiah.

**Alan Carr:** This council was made up "elders", these were influential lay leaders [ men of wealth and were the leaders of aristocratic families - **Constable**]. The "chief priests" refers to the High Priest, any former high priests, and the leaders of the 24 courses of priests within the tribe of Levi. Most of these men were Sadducees. They were the theological liberals of the day. The word "scribes" refers to the Pharisees who were on this council. The Pharisees were the religious conservatives. They were responsible for knowing, preserving and protecting the Law of God.

**James Edwards:** The chief priests included the current high priest of the Sanhedrin and his predecessors, as well as their family members. The chief priests all belonged to the sect of the Sadducees, and in Jesus' day they included Caiaphas, who ruled from A.D. 18 to 36; his father-in-law Annas, who ruled from A.D. 6 to 15; and Caiaphas's successor Jonathan and his brother Theophilus.

## **The Heart of the Gospel Message – next 2 points:**

### **C. Sacrificial Reality of the Slaughter of the Lamb of God -- Crucifixion of the Messiah**

*"and be killed,"*

καὶ ἀποκτανθῆναι

violent death at the hands of sinful men  
yet a death that He submitted to willingly

## D. Supernatural Resurrection of the Messiah as the Supreme Vindication

*“and after three days rise again.”*

καὶ μετὰ τρεῖς ἡμέρας ἀναστῆναι·

Picture of Jonah in the belly of the great fish

**Hiebert:** The evidence of the Septuagint and later Greek writers shows that *after three days* and *“on the third day”* (Mt and Luke) could be used with identical meaning.

- Vindication of the Claims of Jesus regarding His Identity
- Vindication of the Father’s acceptance of the propitiatory work of the Son
- Vindication of the Coming Judgment against the enemies of the Kingdom of God

### (:32a) Straightforward Presentation -- Clarity of the Teaching:

*“And He was stating the matter plainly.”*

καὶ παρρησία τὸν λόγον ἐλάλει.

outspokenness, frankness, plainness of speech -- plain, direct speech – comes from sense of freedom; no inhibitions (Paul uses it more in terms of boldness and confidence)

Up to this point, He had taught them many things in parables and in ways that were purposely difficult to understand; here he speaks opening and plainly and clearly – and yet still His words are not understood because they must be spiritually discerned

**James Edwards:** *“plainly”* -- in John’s Gospel often refers to Jesus’ bold disclosure of his purpose (7:26; 10:24; 11:14; 16:25, 29; 18:20), appears only here in the Synoptic Gospels and, ironically, only in connection with impending suffering. The explanation [of Jesus as Messiah] results in bewilderment and dismay, not only because of its implications for Messiahship but equally because of its implications for discipleship.

**Lenski:** More than two years before this time, behind the temptation after the forty days of fasting, Jesus saw the shadow of the cross. When he cleansed the Temple the first time he spoke of the temple of his body which the Jews would destroy, and he would raise up. To Nicodemus he said: *“The Son of man must be lifted up.”* But the time had now come for plainer language.

## II. (:32b-33) CONFRONTATIONAL EXCHANGE REGARDING THE NATURE OF THE REDEMPTIVE MISSION OF THE SUFFERING SERVANT

### A. (:32b) Peter Rebukes the Lord

*“And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him.”*

καὶ προσλαβόμενος ὁ Πέτρος αὐτὸν ἤρξατο ἐπιτιμᾶν αὐτῷ.

Here we have Peter attempting to straighten the Lord out regarding His theology [Peter a key source for Mark’s gospel account]

**Parunak:** Like a political handler working a presidential candidate. "

**Alan Carr:** Do you know why people hate the message of the cross? It is because the cross spells the end of human self-sufficiency! If we believe that we can only be saved by receiving Jesus and trusting His death and resurrection, we are declaring our own helplessness before God.

## **B. (:33) The Lord Rebukes Peter**

### 1. Addressing All the Disciples – Peter = Spokesperson

*“But turning around and seeing His disciples,”*

ὁ δὲ ἐπιστραφεὶς καὶ ἰδὼν τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ

Key teaching moment – all eyes were on this confrontation

### 2. Targeting the Ultimate Antagonist

*“He rebuked Peter, and said, ”Get behind Me, Satan;”*

ἐπετίμησεν Πέτρῳ καὶ λέγει· ὕπαγε ὀπίσω μου, σατανᾶ,

no patience or gracious words here; deals with the situation decisively – with authority and firmness

**MacArthur:** Peter didn't want a cross. These guys were looking for glory. Do we remember that Peter . . . James and John had come with their mother to ask if they could sit on the right and the left in the Kingdom? I mean, it was all about elevation, glory, power, prosperity. Jesus says, “You are an offense to Me,” according to Matthew. “You're a *skandalon*. *Skandalon* means you're a trap, you're a baited trap. You're a Satan trap. You're a Satan stumbling block. If you're trying to dissuade Me from the cross, you're on Satan's side. Get out of My sight.”

**James Edwards:** According to **Matt. 4:10**, Jesus rebuked Satan in the wilderness in the same words with which he rebukes Peter here.

**Sproul:** Luke tells us that Satan “*departed from Him until an opportune time.*” There is an element of foreboding there, the hint that Satan was not finished with his temptation, but a day would come when he would return and try to seduce Jesus with the same cheap way to glory. Who could have foreseen that the “*opportune time*” would follow right on the heels of the highest confession of faith among the disciples? Who could have foreseen that Satan would come and speak through the spokesman of the disciples, the man who had said, “*You are the Christ*”? But Jesus recognized the work of Satan right away.

### 3. Identifying the Key Point of Distinction

*“for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's.”*

ὅτι οὐ φρονεῖς τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀλλὰ τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων.

God's thoughts are not our thoughts



**Parunak:** "to think, to set the mind." Same word used in **Rom. 8:5** ("for those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh") or **Col 3:2** ("Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth."). We need to cultivate God's mind on things, else we will become tools of Satan as Peter does here.

**Hiebert:** Mindset denotes what dominated and swayed Peter's thoughts. He was motivated, not by the things of God, things related to God's purposes, but the things of men, the concerns of fallible human beings.

- whenever we put human reasoning, logic, emotions, desires before God's word, our minds are set on the things of men

### **CONCLUSION:**

A wrong view of Messiahship leads to a wrong view of discipleship – as we will see in the next verses which are tied to our same theme.

### **1 Cor. 1:18-25**

\* \* \* \* \*

### **DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) Why did Jesus choose to refer to Himself as the Son of Man?
- 2) How does any religion that includes some meritory aspect of human works a direct denial of the necessity of the death of Jesus Christ?
- 3) When have well-meaning friends given us counsel that was not aligned with God's will for our lives?
- 4) What is a good indicator of whether we are concerned with worldly things or with the plans and purposes of God?

\* \* \* \* \*

### **QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:**

**Alan Carr:** Maybe what shocked them the most was the word "*must*". This indicated that the things Jesus would endure were part of God's plan for the Messiah. Messiah would be rejected and He would die for several good reasons.

- It was God's will – John 3:16; Rom. 8:32
- It was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy – Psa. 22; Psa. 69 and Isa. 53.
- It would satisfy the demands of God's Law – Eze. 18:4; Gen. 2:17; Rom. 5:12-21; 2 Cor. 5:21

· It was His Own will to die for sinners – John 10:11; 2 Cor. 8:9; Gal. 2:20; John 15:13; Mark 10:45

## Steven Lawson: The Way of the Cross

### I. The Strategic Instruction

To this point the Lord has spoken with obscure metaphors only; not plain speech about his death;

- John 2:19 -- Destroy this temple and in 3 days I will raise it up
- Mark 2:20 – bridegroom will be taken away – veiled symbolism
- Matt. 12:40 – just as Jonah was 3 days and 3 nights in the belly of the sea monster

Disciples could not have handled the ramifications of this truth before this point; death of Christ would mean that they would be on their own

Time has come for Lord to speak bluntly and plainly and clearly – we are going to Jerusalem now and I will be killed

Disciples had trouble understanding this clear teaching in this middle section of Mark's gospel – repeats the teaching 3 times about His impending death and resurrection

Time to speak the full counsel of God

This is a defining moment; has the cross and Jerusalem immediately before Him

Application: maybe you are at a point where you can handle spiritual truth better; Christ takes his disciples from stage to stage as we grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ

### II. The Shocking Contradiction

Jolt to their system: that the *Son of Man must suffer many things*; humility; identity with mankind; sovereignty and supreme authority; dominion over all of God's created order; investiture of authority to judge the earth; **Dan. 7**; Ancient of Days is God the Father – His eternality and wisdom; ready to preside in judgment; absolute holiness; sinless perfection; no blemish; blazing glory; official presentation of the Son of Man to the Ancient of Days; invested with supreme authority – total everlasting domination of the universe; glory and a kingdom that will not be destroyed (unlike Babylonians, Medo-Persian, Greek, Roman empires);

**Mark 14:62** = final reference in Mark to *Son of Man* – will endure 3 Jewish trials followed by 3 Roman trials; are you claiming to be divine, the Messiah sent by God? “*I am*” = a clear declaration of his full deity as the son of God – the day is coming when you will stand before the Son of Man – quotes Dan. 7:13-14; no further need for additional witnesses because Jesus was clearly claiming to be God; Sanhedrin condemned him to death;

This is why this was so shocking to the disciples – had not ever heard this teaching so clearly and plainly before

**Mark 10:35ff** – had no comprehension of the suffering that must precede the glory

### III. The Shameful Rejection

3 main groups of the Sanhedrin that brought about the rejection of Jesus Christ

Killed a violent death – a bloody murder; like an animal being slaughtered

He would be killed before their very eyes

### IV. The Sovereign Vindication

- That Jesus is exactly who He claimed to be – Son of Man and Son of God; ultimate apologetic; Rom. 1:4
- That the atoning sacrifice of Christ was a perfect sacrifice, fully accepted by the Father as payment in full for our sins; Rom. 4:25; a dead savior is no one's savior
- That all that Jesus ever said was true; if he could back up this greater claim, then every

lesser claim must be believed; Matt. 28:5-6

**V. The Satanic Opposition (vs 32)**

Jesus was speaking repeatedly and openly and clearly

TEXT: Mark 8:34-38 [Parallel -- Matt. 16:24-27, Luke 9:23-27.]

TITLE: THE HEAVY COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE REDEMPTIVE MISSION OF JESUS CHRIST CAN ONLY BE EMBRACED BY RELINQUISHING HUMAN AUTONOMY AND SUBMITTING TO DIVINE LORDSHIP AS A GENUINE DISCIPLE [WHICH WILL INCLUDE REJECTION AND SUFFERING]**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Remember the flow of the passage in this key heart of the gospel of Mark -- chapter 8: **Confessing** Who Jesus really is = testimony of Peter = “*Thou are the Christ.*” Understanding His Messiahship led to Christ teaching his disciples about His **Mission** – the key elements of Suffering, Rejection, Death, Resurrection – teaching these things clearly. Now Jesus is going to move to the true meaning of **Discipleship**.

Huge debate in Christian circles today over whether the category of “**Disciple**” is a subset of Christians or synonymous with Christians. If you are not a disciple are you not even a Christian? Or can you be some type of carnal Christian and be on your way to heaven and just not have made the higher commitment to following Jesus as your Lord? **Context** here is clear that the downside of not embracing discipleship is the loss of eternal life

**Mark 10:17, 30** – the reward is **eternal life** (not some crown for being an elite believer);

**John 8:12** “*to have the Light of Life*”; to attach yourself to Jesus by faith

**Alan Carr:** Jesus would have been a public relations manager’s nightmare! Every time He began to attract a large following, Jesus would up the ante. He would tell them how high the cost of following Him would be and the crowds would vanish. Jesus did this so that people would know the truth. He wanted them to know that it would not be cheap or easy to be His disciples . .

**THE REDEMPTIVE MISSION OF JESUS CHRIST CAN ONLY BE EMBRACED BY RELINQUISHING HUMAN AUTONOMY AND SUBMITTING TO DIVINE LORDSHIP AS A GENUINE DISCIPLE [WHICH WILL INCLUDE REJECTION AND SUFFERING]**

**AUDIENCE:**

“*And He summoned the multitude with His disciples, and said to them,*”

εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· Καὶ προσκαλεσάμενος τὸν ὄχλον σὺν τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ

widening the audience --

This is a message Jesus intended to be delivered to the **masses**, not just to his inner core of followers; there is tremendous opportunity to be aligned with Jesus, to be part of the kingdom of God ... but there is tremendous cost as well ... don’t misunderstand the distinction between the wide gate that leads to destruction and the narrow gate that leads to salvation

Many were only following Him because of His miracles

**MacArthur:** Those of us who have been in the church for any length of time are used to invitations. They have been a part of the church, at least in America, for many, many years. Perhaps today there will be thousands of invitations given across America in churches to sinners to come to Christ. However, I think I'm safe in saying that few of them will follow the pattern of our Lord's own invitation. Here is the standard. Here is the archetypal invitation. Here is the model for all invitations and one that is not always followed. . .

**Context:** Jesus says, "I'm going to die." And then He says this, "By the way, if you follow Me, there's a cross for you too...there's a cross for you too. There's no glory without suffering. There's no crown without a cross. And here comes the invitation. "If anyone wishes to come after Me," it's an open invitation, isn't it? If anyone wishes to come after Me? If anyone.

## **I. (:34) COMMITMENT TO DISCIPLESHIP**

### **A. Universal Invitation to Discipleship – Do You Want to Follow Jesus Christ?**

*"If anyone wishes to come after Me,"*  
εἴ τις θέλει ὀπίσω μου ἀκολουθεῖν,

Summary Requirement: "*Come after me*"

Attach oneself to Jesus as a disciple of His; allegiance to Jesus

### **B. Universal Requirements for Discipleship – Emphasizing the Heavy Cost Followers of Jesus Christ Must Make 3 Irrevocable Commitments:**

Not 3 things that happen in chronological order ... first one, then the next ... but rather 3 things that are an indication of true conversion happening all at once – followed by a lifelong pursuit of sanctification

Requires the grace of God; impossible by human effort

**Hiebert:** Three conditions are laid down. The first two are decisive acts, the third is a continuing relationship.

#### **1. Self Renunciation = Relinquish the Throne -- Surrender**

*"let him deny himself,"*  
ἀπαρνησάσθω ἑαυτὸν

**MacArthur:** What it means is, to disown, to refuse to associate with, or to companion with someone. That's what the verb means. What you are saying is, "I no longer want to associate with the person that I am. I realize my sinfulness. I realize I cannot earn this. I abandon myself effort. I abandon the works/righteousness system that dominated Judaism and dominates all religion in the world, you can be good enough for God to accept you. I abandon all self-effort. I abandon all self-confidence. But it's more than that. I abandon all self-will. I abandon my own ambitions, my own agenda, my own plans."

Not just denying yourself certain things you might want to have; this is the repudiation of your sovereign autonomy

Cf. Catholic practice of denying themselves something for Lent ... as if there is some type of meritorious grace that accrues to them if they give up their special dessert for a season

**Hiebert:** as a definite act, renounce the claims of self as no longer the supreme object of regard. The aorist imperative stipulates this as a crisis duty. 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.

**Example of Apostle Paul: Phil. 3:7-11** gave up his former life and did not count it as having any value to gain him eternity

**2. Cross Bearing = Embrace Rejection and Suffering (Even to the Point of Death) – Sacrifice**

*“and take up his cross,”*

καὶ ἀράτω τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ

**Hiebert:** Aorist imperative again demands the acceptance of the cross as a definite act.

this is what the condemned prisoner was forced to carry on the road to his execution; but here the genuine disciple must commit to carry his cross willingly, voluntarily  
Not the Prosperity Gospel here

**James Edwards:** An image of extreme repugnance, the cross was an instrument of cruelty, pain, dehumanization, and shame. The cross symbolized hated Roman oppression and was reserved for the lowest social classes. . . designed to punish criminals and quash slave rebellions.

Wrong views of Cross Bearing:

- Common sufferings experienced in life
- Some special difficulty that is peculiar to you – like Paul’s thorn in the flesh

**MacArthur:** The cross here is kind of a metaphor for **suffering**. Not every believer who comes to Christ will die, but they’re suffering along the way, rejection by family, by relatives, by the people we work with, and people we know, people we care about.

**David Legge:** To take up your cross means to deliberately choose a pathway of rejection, of suffering, of loneliness, of betrayal, of denial, of hatred, of insults, of persecution, of mental anguish - even death for Christ's sake, for Christ's and the Gospel's! That's what it means to take up your cross.

**3. Submissive Obedience = Commit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ -- Submission**

*“and follow Me.”*

καὶ ἀκολουθεῖτω μοι.

**Hiebert:** Present tense denotes a continuing relationship

Involves imitation of Christ

**1 Peter 2:21** *“For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you,*

*leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,”*

**Repentance and Faith** – followed by **Baptism** – are the first steps along that discipleship path

**Brian Borgman:** 2 inter-related aspects of following Jesus:

- To participate in the **salvation** which He offers (**Mark 10: 17,21** – question deals with salvation; answer is “Come, follow me”) – I surrender all – get rid of the obstacle that is between you and the kingdom (selling all you have is not a prescription for everyone);
- To participate in the **sufferings** of Jesus – not the imitation of Christ in terms of monkish self asceticism; embrace the sufferings involved in being the servant of Christ; *all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution; Blessed are you when men persecute you* – Sermon on the Mount; John 15 – if the world hated me it will hate you; gospel spreading most where it costs the most to follow Jesus Christ;

**Application:** Are you truly a follower of Jesus Christ?

## **II. (:35-37) CASE FOR CHOOSING DISCIPLESHIP**

**Sproul:** Lesson in spiritual economics

**Lawson:** Why would anyone every accept such a radical invitation as Jesus has just given?

Next 4 verses start with “*For*” (gar) – explanatory

3 reasons given for choosing to embrace path of discipleship to Jesus Christ

### **A. (:35) Paradox of Discipleship – How Can You Save Your Soul?**

**Embracing Discipleship is the Only Way of Salvation**

*“For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it;*

*but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's shall save it.”*

ὅς γὰρ ἐὰν θέλῃ τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ σῶσαι ἀπολέσει αὐτήν·

ὅς δ' ἂν ἀπολέσει τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ καὶ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου σώσει αὐτήν.

**Alan Carr:** This verse is a paradox. A paradox is a statement that seems contradictory, but is still true. Jesus says that if you believe that having your own way, living life on your own terms and being your own lord is more important than surrendering to His Lordship, you will lose your life. However, if you will yield your life to Him, giving up total control over all you have and are to Him, you will actually save it. From a human perspective this makes no sense, but from heaven’s viewpoint, nothing else makes sense.

**Illustration: John 12:24-26** *“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. 25 “He who loves his life loses it; and he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal. 26 “If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall My servant also be; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.”*

**Ryle:** One object of our Lord in saying these words was evidently to prevent His disciples looking for good things in this life, if they followed Him. They must give up their Jewish ideas about temporal rewards and honors in Messiah’s service. They must understand that His kingdom was entirely spiritual, and that if they were His disciples they must be content to lose

much in this life, in order to gain the glory of the life to come. So far from promising them temporal rewards, He would have them distinctly know that they must give up much and sacrifice much if they wanted to be saved.

The other object our Lord had in view in saying these words was to teach all Christians in every age, that like Him they must make up their minds to sacrifice much, and to die to the world, in the hope of a harvest of glory in a world to come. Through death we must seek life. Eternal life must be the great end, a Christian looks to. To attain it he must be willing to give up everything.

look at all the things you can lose in life – just don't lose your soul

**Illustration:** got Karen a **Tile** for Christmas – new technology – help you find your car keys or anything you attach the tile to

## **B. (:36-37) Precious Value of the Soul – What is Your Soul Worth? Embracing Discipleship Reflects the True Value of the Soul (of Eternal Life)**

### 1. (:36) Soul is More Valuable Than the Whole World

*“For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?”*

τί γὰρ ὠφελεῖ ἄνθρωπον κερδοῦσαι τὸν κόσμον ὅλον καὶ ζημιωθῆναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ;

**Illustration:** Profit and Loss statements – the financial balance sheet that you look at every month in running a company

### 2. (:37) Soul is More Valuable Than Anything Imaginable

*“For what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”*

τί γὰρ δοῖ ἄνθρωπος ἀντάλλαγμα τῆς ψυχῆς αὐτοῦ;

How valuable is your soul?

Quote by missionary **Jim Elliott**: “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.”

**Illustration:** Shark Tank – all about the valuation of your company and what type of financial deal makes sense

## **III. (:38) CONDEMNATION OF COUNTERFEIT DISCIPLESHIP**

**Reason #3:**

**Embracing Discipleship is the Only Way to Escape Condemnation at Final Judgment**

### **A. The Exposure of Counterfeit Discipleship**

*“For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words”*

ὃς γὰρ ἐὰν ἐπαισχυνθῇ με καὶ τοὺς ἐμοὺς λόγους

Who is Jesus talking about here?

**1 John 2:28** passage “Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.”

**Matt. 10:32-33** “everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My



*Father who is in heaven.”*

**Alan Carr:** The true believer may suffer in this life, but the true believer will enter into the joys of Heaven when this life ends. The lost person, on the other hand, might enjoy the best this world has to offer, but when this life is ended, they will face God in judgment and spend eternity in Hell. Which ending would you prefer?

### **B. The Peer Pressure Against Authentic Discipleship**

*“in this adulterous and sinful generation,”*  
ἐν τῇ γενεᾷ ταύτῃ τῇ μοιχαλίδι καὶ ἀμαρτωλῷ,

**James Edwards:** Jesus repeats the language of the prophets, who accused Israel of infidelity, hardness of heart, and spiritual adultery (Isa 57:3-13; Ezek 16:32-41; Hos 2:2-6).

### **C. The Denunciation of Counterfeit Discipleship**

*“the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him”*  
ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ ἐπαισχυνθήσεται αὐτόν,

Steven Lawson: **Matt. 7:23** *“I never knew you”*; **Matt. 25:41**; the way of the cross will be seen to have been the way of glory; Jesus will deny you and throw you out

### **D. The Timeframe for the Final Accounting**

*“when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”*  
ὅταν ἔλθῃ ἐν τῇ δόξῃ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ μετὰ τῶν ἀγγέλων τῶν ἁγίων.

**2 Thess. 1:7** – context of suffering for the cause of Christ followed by return of Jesus Christ in glory with His holy angels to repay with eternal retribution

## **CONCLUSION:**

You can't be a friend of the world and a friend of God

You can't serve both God and Mammon

Only 2 gates – the narrow gate and the broad gate

Is your allegiance to the kingdom of God or to the kingdom of this world which is really the kingdom of darkness, the kingdom of Satan.

Which way will it be in your life?? Are you committed to following Christ as His loyal disciple??

\* \* \* \* \*

## **DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

1) Having renounced self, how can you try to take back control of your life and resist the

lordship of Jesus Christ?

2) In what ways did the Apostle Paul command believers to imitate him?

3) How can one try to compare the temporary pleasures and wealth of this world with the eternal blessings of eternity?

4) What other passages speak of being ashamed before the presence of Jesus Christ?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Alan Carr:**

### **I. (:34) Jesus Shares A Pattern**

True salvation, however is not some form of “easy believing” that leaves you unchanged. True salvation, when it happens in your life, will make such a radical change in your life that you will begin to act like a different person. Your desires and habits will change. Your interests and commitments will change.

When you come to Jesus Christ and are truly saved, you will want to follow Him. Where Jesus is, is where you will desire to be. . .

This phrase had much meaning for the people in Jesus’ day. Historians estimate that over 30,000 people were crucified by the Romans during Jesus’ lifetime. Thus, every person who heard Jesus say these words knew what He was saying to them.

In that day, a cross was not a piece of jewelry or a decoration on a church building. A cross was an instrument of shame, humiliation, suffering, torture and death. When a man took up his cross, he was beginning a death march.

When a man took up his cross, he carried the instrument of his own death on his own shoulders. When he reached his destination, he was laid down on the cross he had carried; he was nailed to it; he suffered on it and he die on it.

When Jesus called these people to take up their cross, they knew exactly what He was talking about! Sadly, that message has become clouded in our day.

Some people think that the burdens of life are a cross they must bear. Some people say that a lost, abusive spouse, a wayward child or a crazy boss is their cross. Some people think that an illness or a physical handicap is their cross. The trials and hardships you face in this life are not your cross!

When Jesus tells His disciples to take up their cross and follow Him, He is calling us to die to ourselves. He is calling us to commit to a lifestyle of living death, Gal. 2:20.

He is calling us to willingly bear the shame, the reproach, the humiliation, the suffering, the hatred, the alienation and even the death that may come to those who are associated with Him.

We take up our cross when we choose the narrow way over the way of the world, regardless of the cost. We take up our cross when we live out biblical ethics in our personal lives and in our business relationships, regardless of the cost. We take up our cross when we are willing to suffer any attack for Jesus' sake.

## II. (:35-37) Jesus Shares A Paradox

These three verses are designed to teach us that the spiritual side of our lives is far more important than the material side. That is not the way most people think. Most people live their entire lives trying to take care of the physical and material needs they have in life, while they give little attention to the spiritual side of life. Jesus wants us to know that only the spiritual side of life really matters in the end.)

## III. (:38) Jesus Shares A Penalty

### Brian Borgman: Biblical Christianity Recovered

Far too many counterfeit gospels and counterfeit Christians today; at issue is our eternal destiny; Has just spoken of His suffering, rejection, death and crucifixion

What is Jesus talking about: “*to come after me*”? Not a call to a higher or deeper life of discipleship; no difference between believing in Jesus and following after Jesus

Giving the invitation to life to the sinful masses ... not the invitation to a deeper life

What does it look like to be a follower of Christ? Jesus gives more details:

- *Deny yourself* – denying someone, not something; relates to a person; a radical renunciation of self; repudiation of establishing me as the center of my own universe; must renounce and repudiate oneself; cast himself away; Phil. 3 – testimony of Paul; Calvin: “We are prepared to be reduced to nothing in order that God may reign and live in us”; is this a works approach to salvation? NO; Faith means nothing in my hand I bring; puts us at odds with our culture; when did you see a seminar on renouncing self; look at self books in bookstore; parents must deny children principles of self-indulgence; don't make them self-indulgent little brats; they cannot always get their way;
- *Take up your cross* – misconstrued statement – not just bearing burdens; not bucking up under life's burdens; disciples knew what a cross was; bloody symbol of execution and death; pick up your instrument of execution; pick up your electric chair; for the Christian we are all on death row – willingly because we have chosen to follow Jesus Christ; we must be ready to die – not just to self and to the world and to the sins of the flesh – but actually die; *To live is Christ and to die is gain*;
- *Follow Me* – present tense (others were in Aorist); habitual and permanent attachment to Jesus Christ and His sufferings; not a momentary issue; 24/7 commitment; no days off;

Call to lifelong repentance and faith

### Steven Lawson: Why You Must Follow Christ (vv. 35-38)

These verses follow the most radical call that Christ ever issued; Why would any sane person accept this type of radical call? Why deny yourself instead of indulge yourself? Why not live like you want to live? Why follow someone who is on His way to His death? Why not follow someone who is headed in a more comfortable direction?

Jesus could have let the call stand on its own on the basis of His authority; but instead He graciously gives the explanation Why; very first word of each of these 4 verses = “*For*” (gar) –

introduces an explanation;

Vs. 34 – What we must do – The Invitation – shocking, startling, sobering call

Vs. 35-38 – Why we must do it – The Explanation – otherwise you are committing intellectual suicide

**1. (:35)** If you do not follow Christ and accept these terms and become a follower of Christ, **you will lose your life** forever – black and white terms; you are either saved or lost; memorable paradoxical expression for impact; polar opposites;

To save your life for yourself and keep it for your own selfish purposes; clings to the control and will not yield control to Christ;

Trusts in his own religiosity and self-righteousness and meritorious works to save himself;

“lose” = destroy; your own efforts at self-preservation will result in your own destruction; this is the greatest loss of all – **John 12:25** *He who loves his life loses it*; greatest tragedy of all;

Warns but then invites – to *lose your life* is code (signature phrase, condensed version of vs. 34) for following Christ; loyalty and allegiance to Christ; their life is no longer their own; under the Lordship of Christ; you will be saved; you will be delivered out from under condemnation; salvation from eternal destruction and damnation; the greatest thing you can do with your life is to lose it for Christ and you will preserve it; John 12:25; this is why we must follow Christ

**2. (:36-37)** Second reason why we must follow Christ: **2 penetrating questions** in tandem; otherwise **you will forfeit your soul**; “*profit*” drawn from world of financial transactions; commercial metaphor; calling for us to balance the books and do an internal audit; arguing from the greater to the lesser; for the sake of argument let’s assume that you were able to inherit the whole world; how does that stack up vs. the value of your soul; this would be a bad deal; must *seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness*; spiritual riches last forever; yet this is the value system of the world – prioritizing acquiring earthly, material possessions; you would lose everything of any importance; Matt. 19:16 rich young ruler; Jesus diagnosed the condition of his heart; no one can have their soul saved while they are indulged in the primary pursuit of the things of this world; it is not wrong to have things; it is wrong for things to have you; *do not love the world or the things that are in the world*; do not live for these things;

Vs. 37 – second question – you can never buy back your soul from God; you don’t have the spiritual or moral capital to buy it back;

**3. (:38)** If you don’t step out of the world to identify as a follower of Christ, **He will deny you in the end**; a universal truth – “*whoever*”; to be ashamed of Christ = to deny Christ; to resist this call of Christ; instead to belong to the world and have the approval and applause of the world; Satan is the ruler of this age and the god of this world; characterized by spiritual adultery and unfaithfulness; you want nothing to do with the claims of Christ on your life; unwilling to stand for him publicly; fearing the repercussions of following Christ;

Timeframe = the end of the age; when you need an advocate to represent you before the judgment of God and plead your case

**Lenski: Godet** says that three things are necessary in travelling: first, to say farewell (to self); secondly, to carry our baggage (the cross); thirdly, to proceed with the journey (follow me). The only question is our will to make this journey.

**John Yoder: A Disciple of Jesus Christ** – 2 essential elements of discipleship:

1) *Deny self* – surrender control of one’s own interest and goals; submit your will to another; abandon all of one’s reliance upon self; give up self-admiration (look at me), self-serving, self -

determination (that's what I'm going to do); giving up being selfish = the controlling force in natural man; live totally committed to Jesus Christ; we only boast in the Lord; live a Christ-centered life; 2 Cor. 5:14ff; 1 Pet. 4:1-2 moving from the cross to the purpose of the Christian life; living no longer for the lust of men but for the will of God

2) Cross bearing – not simply enduring hardships or irritations in life; those things are common to all men; defined in the context as “losing your life”; has to do with suffering for living for Christ; These are proof of grace

**Walt Chantry: The Shadow of the Cross:**

- Cross bearing is intentional; something that we choose to do
- It is perpetual – Luke 9:23 *take up his cross daily*
- It is painful – represents suffering; it will be costly
- It is mortal – leads to death

This is not what is heard in most churches today;  
You might think: I'd rather not;

Jesus not gives 3 reasons why you should embrace discipleship: supporting vs. 34

1) (:35) It is the only way of salvation – play on words – life and soul are same word used in different ways; if you wish to save your earthly, physical existence will mean losing your eternal existence; a paradox of sorts

2) (:36-37) It reflects the true value of the soul or of eternal life; asks 2 rhetorical questions – comparing things which cannot be compared; don't make a bad deal; the soul is invaluable; priceless

3) (:38) The choice you make regarding discipleship makes all the difference on the day of judgment; if you reject Christ on earth, He will reject you on the day of judgment;

**9:1 – Different views: word of comfort** – their lives spent in service of Christ will serve to advance the kingdom of God on the earth; you are part of a bigger plan

- Transfiguration
- Resurrection and ascension
- Kingly reign of Christ manifest on the earth – open, visible manifestation of his reign after His resurrection; coming of Holy Spirit; growth of church in the world; seeing the rule of Christ in power – making disciples;
- Second coming or another coming

**Context** is the key – spoke of taking up your cross – meant physical death for these disciples; something to do with being a disciple; certainly does not refer to the Second Coming; none of them would have died so not a reference to the Transfiguration??

Kingdom of God is a present reality in the hearts of God's people

TEXT: Mark 9:1

TITLE: *BOOM GOES THE DYNAMITE -- REASSURANCE REGARDING THE MISSION OF JESUS CHRIST*

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE HEAVY COST OF DISCIPLESHIP PALES IN CONTRAST TO THE MIGHTY DISPLAY OF POWER IN THE COMING KINGDOM OF GOD**

The disciples of Jesus now understand His Messianic identity as *the Christ*. They have been introduced to His **Mission** of suffering and rejection and death and resurrection. They have been challenged to embrace the **heavy cost of discipleship**. They have even been graciously given some fundamental reasons to align themselves with Jesus Christ and **Renounce Self, Take up their Cross and Follow the Master**. The final accounting at the Second Coming is put before them: The Son of Man will come “*in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.*” But after hearing what to their ears would have amounted to a very difficult challenge (a far cry from the type of kingdom experience they have been anticipating in the short term), they needed **words of reassurance** to give them courage and boldness in facing anticipated suffering and persecution.

Look at how the words of reassurance directly correspond in chiasmic structure to the revelation that has just been communicated:

**Overview:**

- A1. (8:27-30) Clarity Regarding the Person of Jesus Christ
- B1 (8:31-33) Clarity Regarding the Mission of Jesus Christ
- C. (8:34-38) Challenge Regarding the Heavy Cost of Discipleship –  
                    Allegiance to His Person and Mission
- B2 (9:1) Reassurance Regarding the Mission of Jesus Christ
- A2 (9:2-13) Reassurance Regarding the Person of Jesus Christ

Remember that the **chapter and verse divisions** were added at a later point in time -- not part of the original inspired scripture. While very helpful, they are not always positioned at the best point – such is the case with **9:1**. It really is tied more directly to what precedes. The disciples have been challenged to follow the way of the cross which will lead to suffering for all true disciples and violent and painful death from persecution for many of the Apostles standing before Jesus. How can they take courage and act boldly moving forward – knowing that they may soon “*taste death*” because of their allegiance to Jesus Christ?

Remember also the concept of “*Already and Not Yet*” (sermon by **Joseph Greer** – first time I have borrowed from him). We need to know that there is a sense in which we already are living under the **dominion of Jesus Christ** in the kingdom of God; while there yet remains a future aspect to the kingdom that has yet to be realized. This dual nature of “*Already and Not Yet*” must be maintained. Very important text ... but very enigmatic . . . very difficult to interpret . . . many good scholars with a wide range of interpretations – can’t be dogmatic here . . . but the **application** is clear.

**THE HEAVY COST OF DISCIPLESHIP PALES IN CONTRAST TO THE MIGHTY DISPLAY OF POWER IN THE COMING KINGDOM OF GOD**

**Sproul:** this text is used frequently by skeptics and by higher critical scholars in the academic world to deny the credibility of Jesus and of the New Testament. When Bertrand Russell wrote his essay “Why I Am Not a Christian,” he cited this text as his number one argument for not believing in Jesus.

## **I. EXPOSITION – THE MISSION OF JESUS CHRIST WILL RESULT IN HIS VICTORIOUS DOMINION BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

*“And He was saying to them, “Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who shall not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.”*

Remember the 4 elements of the Mission of Jesus Christ:

His suffering, rejection, death, resurrection

This passage looks forward to what will happen after those events have transpired.

### **A. Importance and Certainty of the Prophetic Word**

1. “*And He was saying to them*” –

**Greer:** Splices this verse with preceding discourse yet makes it stand out on its own by introductory phrase

Jesus still speaking to the multitude here ... not just His immediate disciples

2. “*Truly [Amen] I say to you*” –

This well-known formula occurs 13 times in St Mark, 31 times in St Matthew, 7 times in St Luke, 25 times in St John.

**Greer:** what follows will happen; Mark 3:28-29; it is a certainty; Mark 8:12

Enigmatic statement follows – mysterious; have a prophetic ring to them – fulfillment is coming;

**MacArthur:** a solemn statement appearing only in the gospels, and always spoken by Jesus. It introduces topics of utmost significance.

### **B. Additional Observations**

**Hiebert:** “*taste death*” – a Hebrew idiom for physical death. The figure regards death as a bitter poison which all, sooner or later, must taste. . . *having come* (perfect participle), hence present

**Dale Crawford:** “*the gospel of the kingdom*” -- Luke 8:1 – *kingdom of God* was the heart of the gospel message that Jesus preached; Matt. 4:23; Kingdom at the very heart of the parables – particularly in Gospel of Matt. – 13:24; etc. Wants us to understand the nature of this kingdom; important aspect also of preaching of apostles; Acts 28:23; 30-31

**C. Possible Interpretations:** Have to look at both what Jesus meant and what He didn’t or couldn’t have meant; what He said and what He didn’t say

#### 1. The Second Coming of Jesus Christ

If there were no problems with this view, it would be the logical connection to 8:38 that clearly speaks of the Second Coming.

However, **the timeframe** indicated by the word “*until*” makes it impossible to hold to inerrancy of Scripture and truthfulness of Jesus Christ and still take this view. That will certainly be the ultimate display of the power of the coming Kingdom of God ... but that cannot be the mighty “Boom Goes the Dynamite” that is in view in this context. Context is everything.

## 2. The Transfiguration

This view is very attractive and probably the most popular among theologians in our circles. Certainly the chapter and verse division show that it has been customary to see a close connection between vs. 1 and what follows in each of the Synoptic Gospels = the account of the Transfiguration.

### 3 Problems:

- **Timeframe** does not seem to make sense – after just 6 days – how could there even have been the possibility of anyone dying in the short intervening week? Yet the timeframe seems to be an important part of the prophecy given – why would Jesus narrow the focus down to “*Some of you*” when in reality all of them will not have tasted death ...
- The Transfiguration seems to be more about the display of glory and majesty of the preeminence of the Person of Jesus Christ than it has to do with the manifest display of the **Power** of the kingdom of God (but **2 Pet. 1:16-17** “*eyewitnesses of His majesty*”)
- This interpretation does not tie as directly to the **Mission** of Jesus Christ and what He was charging His disciples to undertake as reflected in the Great Commission of Matt. 28.

## 3. Jesus’ Resurrection and Ascension

These are important for what they make possible ... but not the ultimate interpretation. Certainly there could be no Ascension back up into heaven until after the victory and power demonstrated in the Resurrection. Certainly the Resurrection and Ascension make possible the Exaltation of Jesus to the right hand of God the Father and ultimately the sending of the Holy Spirit. While this view looks too close to the events right at hand ... the next view I think looks too far into the future

## 4. The Destruction of Jerusalem by Rome in 70 AD

This interpretation looks the farthest into the future that is possible while maintaining the timeframe limit of restricting the view to something that is experienced by the immediate generation to whom Christ was speaking. There would have been many of the Apostles who would have been martyred by this point in time; at the same time there would have been a few (certainly John who lived to about 100 AD) who still would have been alive to see this dramatic and climactic end to the temple worship in Jerusalem. By this point it was clear that the Old Covenant had given way to the New Covenant. Yet I think this is too specific a reference to an event that had more to do with earthly kingdoms than with the struggle between the two kingdoms that are really in view here: the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of God as depicted in 8:33 – are you following the interests of God or the interests of Satan? Everyone is either in one or the other of these 2 radically opposed kingdoms.

**Sproul:** When these terrible events occurred in AD 70, the Christian church was finally understood as an entity distinct from Judaism. It was no longer considered a subset or a sect within Judaism. The triumph of the Messiah’s church was made visible and manifest in power with the judgment of God on the Jews. And some of those who were present when Jesus prophesied the manifestation of the power of the kingdom did, in fact, die between His announcement and the coming of the kingdom in power in 70.



The key to the passage (and remember I cannot be dogmatic here) is **the connection between the manifestation of power and the agency of the Holy Spirit**. That is why the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost and the subsequent activity of the Holy Spirit in the spread of the gospel in the early church seems to be the correct view to me.

#### 5. The Powerful Coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and Spreading Dominion of Christ in the Church

You can see that those from the Amillennial persuasion might be more disposed to adopt this view or the previous one regarding the destruction of Jerusalem. But that doesn't mean that those who believe God still has a millennial kingdom of 1000 years in view for the future can't still hold to this view as well. This is part of that "Already and Not Yet" perspective we discussed earlier. Not a postmil perspective that the gospel is going to conquer the world – yet where the gospel is effective it proves to be the *power of God for salvation to everyone who believes (Rom. 1:16)*

**Greer:** "after it has come and been established in power" – not speaking of a one-time thing but the presence of the kingdom after it is established; something permanent; you will see it;

**William Barclay:** At the moment Jesus had only once been outside Palestine, and on that occasion he was just over the border in Tyre and Sidon. Only a very few men in a very small country had ever heard of him. Palestine was only about 120 miles from north to south and about 40 miles from east to west; her total population was 4,000,000 or thereby. To speak in terms of **world conquest** when he had scarcely ever been outside such a small country was strange. To make matters worse, even in that small country, he had so provoked the enmity of the orthodox leaders and of those in whose hands lay power, that it was quite certain that he could hope for nothing other than death as a heretic and an outlaw. In face of a situation like that there must have been many who felt despairingly that Christianity had no possible future, that in a short time it would be wiped out completely and eliminated from the world. Humanly speaking, these pessimists were right.

Now consider what did happen. Scarcely more than thirty years later, Christianity had swept through Asia Minor; Antioch had become a great Christian church. It had penetrated to Egypt; the Christians were strong in Alexandria. It had crossed the sea and come to Rome and swept through Greece. Christianity had spread like an unstoppable tide throughout the world. It was astonishingly true that **in the lifetime of many there, against all expectations, Christianity had come with power**. So far from being mistaken, Jesus was absolutely right.

**Hendriksen:** Here in 8:38; 9:1 Jesus regards the entire state of exaltation, from his resurrection to his second coming, as a unit. In 8:38 he refers to its final consummation; here in 9:1 to its beginning. . . Momentous events would occur: the becoming "of age" of the church, its extension among the Gentiles, the conversion of people by the thousands, the presence and exercise of many charismatic gifts, etc.

Usage of "power" (dunamis):

1) OT Background:

**1 Chr. 29:10-13** "Both riches and honor come from Thee, and Thou dost rule over all, and in Thy hand is power and might; and it lies in Thy hand to make great, and to strengthen everyone."

David in awe at the sacrificial response of the people in giving offerings for the construction of

the temple

**2 Chr. 20:6** *“and he said, ‘O LORD, the God of our fathers, art Thou not God in the heavens? And art Thou not ruler over all the kingdoms of the nations? Power and might are in Thy hand so that no one can stand against Thee.’”* Moab invading Judah; King Jehoshaphat turning in prayer to God to seek help

**Ps. 62:11** *“Once God has spoken; Twice I have heard this: That power belongs to God;”*

**Dan. 2:20** *“Daniel answered and said, "Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, For wisdom and power belong to Him.”* Power of God often associated with wisdom and with Truth

## 2) Anticipation of the Sending of the Holy Spirit

**John 7:39** *“the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified”*

**John 14:12** *“he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do because I go to the Father”*

**Vs. 16** – *“He will give you another Helper”*

**John 16:7** *“It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you”*

Not some little helper but a mighty helper like the one who could turn back the armies of Moab in the days of King Jehoshaphat

**Lk. 24:49** *“And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”*

**Acts 1:8** *“but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”*

## 3) Demonstration of the Power of the Holy Spirit

Day of Pentecost – **Acts 2 – vs. 41** – *“that day there were added about three thousand souls”*  
Not inflated numbers; not false conversions; genuine new believers

**Acts 4:33** *“And with great power the apostles were giving witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all.”*

**1 Cor. 4:20** *“For the kingdom of God does not consist in words, but in power.”*

## **II. APPLICATION: ARE WE FOLLOWING JESUS IN A WAY THAT IS CONSISTENT WITH OUR IDENTITY AND OUR MISSION?**

### **A. Who Are We?**

#### 1. Disciples of Jesus Christ

- Our Identity does not come from our Ancestry
- Our Identity does not come from our Job
- Our Identity does not come from our Possessions
- Our Identity does not come from our Accomplishments

Are we continually learning at the feet of the Master?

Are we doers of the Word and not Hearers only?

Are we making our boast in our Lord Jesus or ashamed of Him?

## 2. Indwelt by the Holy Spirit of Power

Surrounded by Christians who are in denial about the power that resides within each of us

- We feel we lack power over whatever sins are our specialty
- We feel we lack power to witness effectively
- We feel we lack power to effectively use our spiritual gift

**2 Cor. 4:7** *“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves;”*

**Eph. 1:19** *“and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might”*

**Col. 1:29** *“And for this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.”*

**2 Tim. 1:7** *“For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.”*

**We need a power revival** – don’t surrender the reality of Holy Spirit power to the domain of the charismatics – we criticize them from a theological standpoint – saying they put too much emphasis on emotions and experience ... but we could be criticized on the other side of the spectrum for not fully embracing the power of the Holy Spirit  
Christian life is all about balance in our perspectives

## **Live by the Power of the Holy Spirit**

Right now is the age of Holy Spirit power – we don’t have to look for power to come to us in the future; we have the Holy Spirit indwelling us right now

### **B. What is Our Mission?**

1. Fulfill the Great Commission = Making Disciples on a Worldwide Basis  
Sense of Mission – Matt. 28; Acts 1

Witness Boldly in Anticipation of Victorious Results

**Rom. 1:16** *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”*

Maximize the Use of My Spiritual Gift for Ministry in the Context of the Body of Christ  
Every member is important and plays a key role – Importance of the local church

### **1 Cor. 12**

Can’t get distracted

Can't serve two masters  
Must seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness

2. Embrace the Heavy Cost of Discipleship Without Reservation

**Rom. 8:18** *“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”*

- Renounce self
- Take up our cross daily
- Follow after Jesus

**CONCLUSION:**

**THE HEAVY COST OF DISCIPLESHIP PALES IN CONTRAST TO THE MIGHTY DISPLAY OF POWER IN THE COMING KINGDOM OF GOD**

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**DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) In what circumstances do you tend to feel powerless?
- 2) What demonstrations of Holy Spirit power in your life and in the lives of others have you witnessed?
- 3) In what sense is the kingdom of God both “Already and Not Yet”?
- 4) How does this passage encourage and embolden you to press forward on the path of genuine discipleship – whatever the suffering that might involve?

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**QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:**

**Joseph Greer: Already and Not Yet**

**8:3-9:1** is the most important section of Mark to grasp; tells us what it means to be a Christian; very difficult, controversial and misunderstood passage; approach with care to mine out exactly what Jesus is saying and Why and to whom; Fundamental beliefs:

- inerrant word of God;
- Jesus has never lied and never will
- Context is the key to understanding the bible

**I. Exposition** – We must see the kingdom of God as something that is both here and on the way

Possible meanings of this passage – what it means and what it cannot mean:

- Most obvious interpretation – referring to the transfiguration since that is what follows in each Synoptic gospel; Problems:
  - o Transfiguration happened within 1 week; most likely nobody listening to his

- words had died; taste death implies a violent death by persecution or oppressors
  - This could be part of the intention but not fully
- Refers to the kingdom that has already come, Mark 1:15 – kingdom of God has already come
  - Does not seem to fit the language used which sounds like predicting a future event
- Speaking of Death, Resurrection and Ascension into Heaven – would include coming of Spirit at Pentecost
  - Judas did not see this
  - Involves less interpretative acrobatics; it sort of fits
- Jesus' return in glory to judge the living and the dead at His Second Coming
  - Then Jesus got it wrong because everyone within earshot of His words did not see that happen
- Jesus gives a timeframe in this passage; “Until” implies a timeframe; something that will happen within this generation; consider what Jesus did not say: “until I return” – does not say that  
*“after it has come and been established in power”* – not speaking of a one-time thing but the presence of the kingdom after it is established; something permanent; you will see it; Dan. 7 – Son of Man given authority and power and dominion from Ancient of Days; Matt. 28:18-20 all authority has been given to Jesus already; if you are waiting on the kingdom to show up you are missing that you are part of the kingdom right now; foretelling among other things the destruction of the Jewish temple in 70 A.D. which marks the end of the Jewish era; the believer is now the temple of God – no more need for the physical temple in Jerusalem; the Jewish leaders had killed Jesus; the church explodes under the persecution of Nero and Roman emperors; transition to New Covenant; the final event is the destruction of the temple; includes everything from death of Christ until this event; the power of the Holy Spirit in the believer is the key; ability to serve God; to reach others with the gospel; this interpretation includes the concept of the heavy cost of discipleship; preparing his people for suffering on account of His name; persecution coming in the near future

## **II. Application** – What does all of this mean to me now?

Jesus speaking about events that occurred before the end of the first century

### **We must live in the kingdom of God while waiting on the kingdom of God**

We are part of the kingdom of God; The kingdom of God has been coming for 2000 years, yet it is here at the same time

#### What does it mean to live in the kingdom right now?

- To live in the power of the Holy Spirit
- To walk with the Spirit; to keep in step with the Spirit; follow Christ in obedience to what He has called us to do = to reach the nations with the gospel; live in purity and holiness; walk in light; speak truth; not to tear down but to build up; to make disciples; we teach our children the way of the Lord
- We have the power right now – God the Holy Spirit dwells in His people
- We must seek His kingdom and His righteousness; then Christ appropriates the power that is in us already for His own glory

Anybody with any common sense will not be dogmatic about their interpretation of this passage

## **Dale Crawford: The Kingdom of God**

Chapters and verses added later; not a part of the original; verse 1 fits best at the end of Chap. 8;  
synonymous terms: *kingdom of heaven, kingdom of Christ*

Dominion of Christ; continuation and fulfillment of Davidic kingdom; Dan. 2:44;  
Transfiguration fits the context but emphasis is more on the Lord's exaltation and glory than the mighty display of the kingdom power (*dunamis, dynamite*) of His dominion; some say it refers to the destruction of Jerusalem – 70AD – absolutely wasted; some apostles witnessed the terrible destruction; end of Old Covenant for sure; but something much greater being taught here; better to put 9:1 at the end of previous section in chap. 8; all Peter heard was message of defeat = the Messiah, the King would be rejected and killed; maybe didn't even hear message of resurrection; the Resurrection set the stage for his Ascension (Phil. 2 leading to his dominion) which set the stage for His exaltation and the coming of the Holy Spirit; Acts 1 – Jesus foretells Pentecost – you will receive “*power*” – if you narrow it down too much you miss the fullness of the interpretation; we are ambassadors for the one in power; we are not begging people to believe; we represent the King; 8:33 – which kingdom are you going to be a part of? God's interests or man's interests? Radical kingdom; requires a total transformation; absolute allegiance to the kingdom

## **When and How did the Apostles Die?**

[http://amazingbibletimeline.com/bible\\_questions/q6\\_apostles\\_die/](http://amazingbibletimeline.com/bible_questions/q6_apostles_die/)

**Summary:** The Bible only mentions the deaths of two apostles, **James** who was put to death by Herod Agrippa I in **44 AD** and **Judas Iscariot** who committed suicide shortly after the death of Christ. The details of the deaths of three of the apostles (**John, the Beloved, Bartholomew and Simon the Canaanite**) are not known at all, either by tradition or early historians. The deaths of the other seven apostles are known by tradition or the writings of early Christian historians. According to traditions and the Bible, eight of the Apostles died as Martyrs. At least two of the Apostles, **Peter** and **Andrew** were crucified.

**Simon** Called **Peter** by Christ died 33-34 years after the death of Christ. According to Smith's Bible Dictionary, there is “satisfactory evidence that he and Paul were the founders of the church at Rome and died in that city. The time and manner of the apostle's martyrdom are less certain. According to the early writers, he died at or about the same time with Paul, and in the Neronian persecution, A.D. **67,68**. All agree that he was crucified. Origen says that Peter felt himself to be unworthy to be put to death in the same manner as his Master, and was, therefore, at his request, crucified with his head downward.”

**James the son of Zebedee:** He was put to death by Herod Agrippa I shortly before the day of the Passover, in the year **44** or about 11 years after the death of Christ. From Acts 12: 1-2.

**John:** No death date given by early writers. Death date is by conjecture only and is variously assigned as being between 89 AD to 120 AD

**Andrew:** No accurate death date given. A variety of traditions says he preached in Scythia, in Greece, in Asia Minor and Thrace. He is reported to have been crucified at Patrae in Achaia.

**Philip:** Again, the Bible does not say when he died nor do we have accurate information.

According to tradition, he preached in Phrygia and died at Hierapolis.

**Bartholomew:** There is no information concerning his death, not even by tradition

**Matthew:** He must have lived many years as an apostle since he was the author of the Gospel of Matthew, which was written at least twenty years after the death of Christ. There is a reason to believe that he stayed for fifteen years at Jerusalem, after which he went as a missionary to the Persians, Parthians and Medes. There is a legend that he died a martyr in Ethiopia.

**Thomas:** The earlier traditions, as believed in the fourth century, say he preached in Parthia or Persia and was finally buried at Edessa. The later traditions carry him farther east. His martyrdom whether in Persia or India, is said to have been by a lance. And is commemorated by the Latin Church on December 21 the Greek Church on October 6, and by the Native Americans on July 1.

**James Alpheus:** We know he lived at least five years after the death of Christ because of mentions in the Bible. According to tradition, James son of Alpheus was thrown down from the temple by the scribes and Pharisees; he was then stoned, and his brains dashed out with a fuller's club.

**Simon the Canaanite** – No information either in the Bible or by tradition.

**Jude (Thaddeus):** according to tradition Jude taught in Armenia, Syria and Persia where he was martyred. Tradition tells us he was buried in Kara Kalisa in what is now Iran.

**Philip:** Philip, the first of Jesus' disciples, became a missionary in Asia. Eventually, he traveled to the Egyptian city of Heliopolis, where he was scourged, thrown into prison, and crucified in **54 AD.**

**John:** John was the only one of the original disciples not to die a violent death. Instead, he passed away peacefully in Patmos in his old age, sometime around **100 AD.**

**Judas Iscariot:** Shortly after the death of Christ Judas killed himself. According to the Bible he hanged himself, (Matthew 27:5) at Aceldama, on the southern slope of the valley of Hinnom, near Jerusalem, and in the act he fell down a precipice and was dashed into pieces.

**Dr. John Oakes:**

In Mark 9:1 Jesus is talking about the promised coming of the kingdom of God which happened in Acts 2:1-41 on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came with power. This "coming" of the kingdom was prophesied in Joel 2:28-32, Isaiah 2:2-4 Daniel 2:44 and many other Old Testament passages. John the Baptist also predicted the coming of the Kingdom (Matthew 3:1) at Pentecost. In Acts 1 Jesus was talking after his resurrection about the kingdom, telling his disciples to wait in Jerusalem to wait for the coming of the kingdom "with power." All this was fulfilled when the Spirit was poured out on the apostles, wind, "fire" and speaking in tongues were signs of a new aspect of the Kingdom of God as anticipated throughout the Old Testament and as prophesied by Jesus in Mark 9:1.

<http://evidenceforchristianity.org/looking-at-mark-91-and-1-cor-1551-it-is-clear-that-jesus-and-paul-were-mistaken-about-the-second-coming-how-do-you-cope-with-this/>

TEXT: Mark 9:2-13 (Matt. 17:1-13; Luke 9:28-36)

TITLE: REASSURANCE REGARDING THE IDENTITY OF THE MESSIAH –  
AND THE CONNECTION BETWEEN HIS SUFFERING AND HIS GLORY

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE SON OF MAN MUST SUFFER IN ORDER FOR THE SON OF GOD TO BE SEEN  
IN THE FULL RADIANCE OF HIS GLORY**

It's possible to say a lot of nice things about Jesus without fully grasping **Who He Is**. Just look at the Christological teaching in liberal Protestant seminaries across our country. It's possible to say a lot of nice things about Jesus without fully understanding **Why He Suffered and Died** on the Cross. For the most part, you don't hear the world trashing Jesus. They certainly use His name in vain all of the time ... but when they are asked their impressions of Jesus, they have favorable things to say. But the key is: they don't **Get It**.

In the Gospels we witness the growing understanding of the disciples as they truly **Get It**. In this crucial mid-section of Mark's Gospel, the disciples of Jesus have just testified to His Messianic identity as the Christ. They have been introduced to His Mission which will involve suffering and death and challenged to embrace for themselves the heavy cost of discipleship. To:

- Renounce Self
- Take up their Cross
- and Follow the Master.

At this point they needed **words of reassurance** -- Because they still struggled with understanding the pathway of rejection and suffering and even the prospect of physical death for the Messiah. They also did not grasp the reality of the soon-to-come resurrection. So we saw last week in **9:1** that Jesus Reassured them regarding **the Mission** of the Messiah – He will be victorious and will send the Holy Spirit at Pentecost in power to accomplish the spread of the gospel of the kingdom. So here Jesus Reassures them regarding **His Identity** as He walks them through this amazing mountaintop experience of the **Transfiguration** to reassure them that death for the Messiah is essential in order for the end game to be glorious.

**THE SON OF MAN MUST SUFFER IN ORDER FOR THE SON OF GOD TO BE SEEN  
IN THE FULL RADIANCE OF HIS GLORY**

**THREE WORDS OF REASSURANCE:**

**I. (:2-3) WORD OF REASSURANCE BASED ON THE TRANSFORMATION OF  
JESUS AS HE IS SEEN IN GLORY AND MAJESTY**

**A. Importance of the Vision**

1. When – Timeframe – The **Context** Shows the Importance  
“*And six days later,*”

It is like the confession of Peter has started the **clock ticking**; Jesus is now setting his face to go to Jerusalem to suffer and die on the cross. He is leaving Caesarea Philippi and beginning his final journey. So we see this time reference that ties the event of the Transfiguration to what had immediately preceded regarding clarification of the Identity and Mission of the Messiah.



**Constable:** This event not only fulfilled Jesus' prediction in verse 1, but it also confirmed what Peter had confessed in 8:29. Despite Jesus' coming death (8:31-32), it assured His disciples of eventual glory (8:38). Jesus had just finished addressing a wide audience (8:34). Now He spoke to a very narrow one (v. 2). . . Perhaps the reference to six days followed by revelation should recall **Exodus 24:15-16**. Moses was on Mt. Sinai for six days and then God revealed Himself on the seventh.

**MacArthur:** Matthew and Mark place the Transfiguration “six days” after Jesus’ promise (v.1); Luke, no doubt including the day the promise was made and the day of the Transfiguration itself, describes the interval as “some eight days” (Lk 9:28).

## 2. Who – Participants – The **Chosen Audience** Shows the Importance *“Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John,”*

**Edwards:** Peter, James, and John appear elsewhere in the Gospel (**5:37; 13:3; 14:33**) as Jesus’ inner circle.

What a privilege to be in this inner circle – and what a responsibility  
Talk about a life-changing experience – these three men would never be the same  
What a boost to their faith and confidence  
What a preparation for future leadership in the oversight of the Christian church

**MacArthur:** Why did He take three? Deuteronomy says that truth is confirmed in the mouth of two or three witnesses. Matthew 18:16 says when you’re dealing with people’s sins in the church, you confirm their response in the mouth of two or three witnesses. Second Corinthians 13:1, Paul says, “When I come to you, the Corinthian church, and I’m going to deal with the people who are there, I’m not going to go willy-nilly through the church but I am going to confirm sin before I deal with it, it will be confirmed in the mouth of two or three witnesses.” In 1 Timothy 5 it tells us that an elder before he’s rebuked must have whatever sin confirmed in the mouth of two or three witnesses, the proper number of eyewitnesses to confirm the truth...very trustworthy, the most trustworthy, the most intimate of Christ’s followers.

**Alan Carr:** Of course, this isn’t the first time Jesus singled these men out for a special time of ministry, nor would it be the last time He would do so. The first time Jesus singled these three men out was when Jesus raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead, Mark 5:37. He singled them out here. Jesus would also take these men “a little deeper” with Him in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before He went to the cross, Mark 14:33. These men were privileged to see things the other disciples never got to witness.

## 3. Where – Setting – The **Closeness to God** Shows the Importance *“and brought them up to a high mountain by themselves.”*

Probably a fairly rigorous climb up the mountain – not surprising that the disciples had trouble staying awake while Jesus devoted himself to prayer

**Alan Carr:** The Kingdom will come in its time, listen to what He says about His death. The transfiguration, obviously, is a glimpse of glory, but its main point was to demonstrate that the glory is later and the cross was now.

**Parunak:** Mountain stories in the OT--the place to meet God, in one of two ways:

a> Direct encounter; God speaks with people

1> Abraham's offering of Isaac, Gen 22. Divine voice; others waiting at the bottom, father and son

2> Giving of the law on Mt Sinai, Ex 19. Divine voice; others waiting; shining face (Exod 34:29).

3> Elijah's journey to Horeb (1 Kings 19): divine voice

b> In death

1> Burial of Aaron, Num 20:22-29. Witnesses, death

2> Death of Moses, Dt 32:48-50; 34:1-5. Death.

## **B. Impact of the Vision**

### 1. Reality of the Transfiguration

*“And He was transfigured before them;”*

Not a lot of details given here regarding the actual experience

#### **2 Peter 1:16-17**

**MacArthur:** And while they're asleep and Jesus prays alone, He was transfigured before them. The word is *metamorphoo* from which we get metamorphosis, two Greek words, *morphe* meaning body or form, *meta* meaning change. His form was changed. Nothing changed on the inside, right? He's God. But the outside changed. This word literally means to transform the *morphe*, the form, the body, the exterior. It's used four times in the New Testament and always means a radical transformation. It's used here once and Matthew 17:2 in that text on the transfiguration it's the same verb to describe the same thing. In Romans 12:2 it says as believers we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. And in 2 Corinthians 3:18, that great verse, it says that if we gaze at the glory of the Lord, we will be transformed into His image from one level of glory to the next by the Holy Spirit. So we're talking about a **radical kind of transformation.**

### 2. Radical Nature of the Transfiguration

*“and His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them.”*

**MacArthur:** Light is often associated with God's visible presence (cf. Ps 104:2; Da 7:9; 1 Ti 6:16; Rev 1:14; 21:23).

**Matt:** the face of Jesus *“shone like the sun”*

**Sproul:** As far as I am concerned, the most profound chapter in American literature is found in Melville's *Moby Dick*. It is the chapter titled *“The Whiteness of the Whale.”* In this chapter, Melville explores how whiteness is used in history, in religion, and in nature. He describes the whiteness by use of such terms as *elusive, ghastly, and transcendent horror*, as well as *sweet, honorable, and pure*. He openly states that the whale was the symbol of all these things. Thus, if the whale embodied all that is symbolized by whiteness – that which is terrifying, pure, excellent, horrible, ghastly, mysterious, incomprehensible – he embodied the traits that are found in the fullness of the perfection of God Himself. It is this same deity that Jesus manifests in the

purity that contains no spot, no wrinkle, and no blemish.

Cf. experience of Moses in **Ex. 33:18-23; 34:29-35** and the reaction of the Israelites -- Moses' radiant face was just a reflection from having had a momentary backwards glimpse of the glory of God; imagine the brilliance of the glory of the face of Jesus Himself; disciples here saw actual glory, not reflected glory -- (**Heb. 1:3**)

## **II. (:4-8) WORD OF REASSURANCE BASED ON THE TESTIMONY OF THE FATHER AS JESUS IS EXALTED ABOVE MOSES AND ELIJAH**

### **A. (:4) Association of Jesus with Elijah and Moses**

*“And Elijah appeared to them along with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus.”*

**Edwards:** they appear as representatives of the prophetic tradition that, according to the belief of the early church, would anticipate Jesus. *“All the prophets testify to [Jesus]”* (**Acts 10:43**). It is probably too specific to maintain that Moses stands for the law and Elijah for the prophets, because each figure was associated with both the law and prophets. According to **Deut 18:15, 18**, a passage that is recalled in v. 7, Moses is considered the prototype of the eschatological Prophet, and Moses is frequently regarded as the representative figure of the prophetic tradition in Judaism.

**Luke 9:31** – they were talking about his coming death – *“speaking of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem”*

**MacArthur:** Don't they wait to get a glorified body until Daniel 12:2 says, “The establishment of the Kingdom and the resurrection of the Old Testament saints? Yes. However, for this occasion provided them a visible form.

Moses is the greatest leader in Israel's history, rescuer of the nation from captivity, its greatest general, can we say? God was the one who drowned Pharaoh's army but Moses was the victor by divine power. In authority he was a king, though he never had a throne. In message he was a prophet. In service to God he was every bit a priest, serving God on behalf of His people. He was the author of the Pentateuch, the agent by which God gave His holy Law. He's the greatest. If you're going to have somebody give testimony to the fact that the Messiah needs to die, you couldn't get a better witness than Moses, unless it was Elijah. He could stand with Moses because he fought against every violation of that law. He battled the nation's idolatry and he battled it with great courage and words of judgment and he validated his preaching with miracles. **There are only two miracle eras in the Old Testament**, the time of Moses, and you know what the miracles were, they were in Egypt and the time of Elijah. You can read them in 1 Kings 17 to 19, 2 Kings 1 and 2. There was no law giver like Moses and there was no prophet like Elijah. Moses gave the Law, Elijah was His greatest guardian. Here are the most trustworthy eyewitnesses. No one could bring the apostles more assurance and confidence that the death of Jesus was in the plan than to hear it from Moses and Elijah, the very men that they look to as the heroes of the Old Testament faith.

**Alan Carr:** These two men also represent the two ways the people of God meet death. Moses died and was buried, Deut. 34:5-6. Elijah was taken up alive into Heaven, 2 Kings 2:11. Like Moses, many have and many will die. Like Elijah, some will be taken up alive into Heaven to meet God, 1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thes. 4:16-18. Like Moses and Elijah, regardless of how you leave

this world, if you know the Lord, you will be with Him in glory someday! What a truth and what a blessing!

## **B. (:5-6) Homogenization of Jesus by Blundering Peter**

“To make uniform or similar”

### 1. (:5) Characterizing Jesus as Good Can Be Bad

*“And Peter answered and said to Jesus,  
‘Rabbi, it is good for us to be here;  
and let us make three tabernacles,  
one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.’”*

Peter thought he was raising Jesus up – in actuality he was insulting him.

### 2. (:6) Careful What You Say

*“For he did not know what to answer; for they became terrified.”*

Usually when you don’t know what to say, it is prudent to keep quiet.

## **C. (:7) Differentiation of Jesus Demanded by the Father**

*“Then a cloud formed, overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud, ‘This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!’”*

### **Deut. 18:15ff Listen to Him**

**Matt** adds some detail here: *“When the disciples heard this, they fell face down to the ground and were terrified. And Jesus came to them and touched them and said, ‘Get up, and do not be afraid.’”*

**Mark Copeland:** The command, *“Hear Him!”* implies...

- a. That God would now speak through His Son, not the Law (Moses) and the Prophets (Elijah) - cf. He 1:1-2
- b. That the rule and reign of God would be exercised through His Son, as He would be given all authority in heaven and earth - cf. Mt 28:18

**Constable:** A "cloud" frequently pictured God's presence and protection in the Old Testament (e.g., Exod. 16:10; 19:9; 24:15-16; 33:1; 40:34-38; Num. 9:15-22; 1 Kings 8:10-11, Isa. 4:5). Probably the cloud enveloped and concealed Jesus, Moses, and Elijah, rather than simply overshadowing them. The heavenly "voice" assured the disciples that, even though the Jews would reject Jesus and the Romans would execute Him, He was still pleasing to the Father (cf. 1:11). It also helped these disciples understand Jesus' superiority over the greatest of God's former servants (cf. Deut. 18:15; Ps. 2:7; Isa. 42:1).

**MacArthur:** The Kingdom will come in its time, listen to what He says about His death. The transfiguration, obviously, is a glimpse of glory, but its main point was to demonstrate that the glory is later and the cross was now.

**Alan Carr:** Whatever Peter's motives may have been, one thing is sure, God did not like what Peter had to say. All of a sudden Jesus and the other five men on that mountain are overshadowed by a cloud. Out of that cloud booms the very voice of God Almighty. God declares the supremacy of Jesus over the Law and over the prophets. God does not tolerate Peter placing Jesus on the same level as Moses and Elijah.

#### **D. (:8) Isolation of Jesus to Emphasize His Preeminence**

*“And all at once they looked around and saw no one with them anymore, except Jesus alone.”*

**Parunak:** now Elijah and Moses are gone. Before the coming of Christ, the law and the prophets, whom they represent, were the guide for the people of God; now our attention is turned directly to the Messiah. **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.”*

### **III. (:9-13) WORD OF REASSURANCE BASED ON THE TYPOLOGY OF ELIJAH AS FULFILLED BY JOHN THE BAPTIST**

#### **A. (:9-10) Suffering Must Precede Glory**

##### 1. (:9) Promise of the Resurrection Implies Death of the Messiah

*“And as they were coming down from the mountain, He gave them orders not to relate to anyone what they had seen, until the Son of Man should rise from the dead.”*

##### 2. (:10) Perplexity on the Part of the Disciples

*“And they seized upon that statement, discussing with one another what rising from the dead might mean.”*

#### **B. (:11-13) Rejection and Suffering Foreshadowed in John the Baptist**

##### 1. (:11-12a) Question Posed by the Disciples

###### a. (:11) Asked

*“And they asked Him, saying, ‘Why is it that the scribes say that Elijah must come first?’”*

###### b. (:12a) Answered

*“And He said to them, ‘Elijah does first come and restore all things.’”*

##### 2. (:12b-13) Question Posed by Jesus

###### a. (:12b) Asked

*“And yet how is it written of the Son of Man that He should suffer many things and be treated with contempt?”*

###### b. (:13) Answered

*“But I say to you, that Elijah has indeed come, and they did to him whatever they wished, just as it is written of him.”*

**Constable:** If the multitudes heard about this demonstration of Jesus' glory, it would only fuel the fires of popular messianic expectation that created pressure for Jesus to depart from God's will. This is the last command to maintain secrecy in this Gospel. It is also the only one with a time limit. The people the disciples would soon tell the transfiguration story to would only understand it after Jesus arose from the dead. With His resurrection behind them, they could appreciate the fact that He would return in glory to establish the messianic kingdom.

**Constable:** The disciples thought Elijah still had to come, but Jesus explained that he had come. His enemies had done to him what the Old Testament recorded. Jesus was speaking of John the Baptist (**Matt. 17:13**). The Old Testament passage to which Jesus referred was **1 Kings 19:1-3 and 10**. There Ahab, and especially Jezebel, swore to kill Elijah. They "wished" to execute him. This is exactly what "King" Herod Antipas, and especially Herodias, really did to John the Baptist. Now we see why Mark recorded the story of John's death (**6:17-29**). It was to show that John the Baptist fulfilled the prophecies about Elijah coming. . . The fulfillment was not complete, however, because someone will come in the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare the way before Messiah's second coming (**Mal. 4:5; cf. Rev. 11**).

### **CONCLUSION:**

Look at how Peter Got It – in terms of understanding the Identity and Mission of the Messiah: **Acts 3:11ff** – Peter now has a much better understanding of who Jesus is and the necessity of his suffering followed by his resurrection; Peter learned what Jesus had taught

\* \* \* \* \*

### **DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) How do you know if someone really **Gets It** regarding the Identity and Mission of the Messiah?
- 2) How can we draw confidence and reinforce our faith from this historical account of the Transfiguration?
- 3) How does this passage reinforce both the sovereignty of God and human responsibility as it relates to the putting to death of the Messiah?
- 4) If Jesus speaks of John the Baptist as the fulfillment of the prophecy of Malachi, can there still be a reappearance of Elijah in the last times as spoken of in Rev. 11?

\* \* \* \* \*

### **QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:**

**MacArthur:** Why the vision? To anchor them in confidence of the glory to follow the suffering. This is really the high point of this gospel. This is the visible revelation of the nature of Christ. . . This is assurance by sight that He is God. . .

Now these are Jewish men, Peter, James and John, and they know God has appeared in the Old Testament. He appeared, He revealed Himself in visible form and it always some kind of light, a cloud, a light in a cloud like an iridescent cloud, fire, the Shekinah glory. The appearances of God were light phenomena. At the initiation of the priestly service in Leviticus 9, God appears in light. In Exodus verses 7 to 10, God appears to Israel as light. In Exodus 24 God appears to Moses as light. In Exodus chapter 40 verses 34 and 35, the tabernacle is completed and God appears in the Shekinah glory as light. At Kadesh-Barnea, you remember in Numbers chapter 14 where the children of Israel rebelled against God. Again He appears in light.

A couple of chapters later in the sixteenth chapter of Numbers at the exposure of the sins of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, God again appear as light. Numbers 16, the same chapter, at the rebellion of Israel against Moses and Aaron, God appears. In Numbers chapter 20 God appears as light at Meribah where Israel was thirsty. And then when the temple was completed, it is recorded in 1 Kings chapter 8 verse 11 that the glory of God descended on the place. And God was there in His blazing glory in 2 Chronicles 7:1 when the first offering was made in the temple. . .

There was evidence that Jesus was God by what He did, but there was no visible evidence in looking at Him. Nobody could see any difference in Him on the outside. And yet, Hebrews 1 says, “He is the brightness of the Father’s glory.” He is God manifest.

Second Corinthians talks about the glory of God shining in the face of Christ. All of God’s attributes contained in Him because He is fully God. He is called the Lord of glory. But that is all veiled through His life and you have to come to the conclusion that He is God by what He does, not how He appears. And the disciples got to that point by what He did, by what He said, “You’re the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” But as this thing started going downhill from that pinnacle, and headed toward the cross and suffering and rejection, including their own suffering, they needed something more than the faith they had to hang on to. The Lord knew He knew Himself, they needed sight. And so He gave them this vision.

### **Mark Dever: Whom do Men Say That I Am? The Son**

Danger: thinking that you know who Jesus is simply because you have a high opinion of Him; quotes from famous people regarding Who Jesus is; How do you find out who Jesus really is? Turn to the Gospel accounts

Clarifying our vision as to who Jesus is – Clarifying Lenses:

#### **1. The Transfiguration Itself**

A. When – timing – after 6 days; Mark almost never gives specific references of time; this is tied to prediction of Christ’s sufferings; disciples were confused and dispirited; given a visual reassurance of who Jesus is;

B. Where – the place – up on Mountains – big events often occurred on mountains; this is going to be an important event

C. Who – look who Jesus took with Him – showed His closeness to Peter, James and John, and special responsibility they would bear

D. What happened there – not much detail given; dazzling brightness of his metamorphosis;

appearance of his face changed; did not change into a being unrecognizable to the disciples; something inexplicable and awe-inspiring to the disciples

E. Why did this happen? Jesus knew he was just about to undergo something that would be particularly difficult for his disciples and most difficult for those closest to him; wanted them to have a particular assurance and certainty about his messiahship; starting gun goes off when Jesus testifies “You are the Messiah” -- Hang in there; if you are skeptical about the supernatural really happening, How are you so certain? What is your basis for being an agnostic? Takes more faith not to believe than to truly believe

## **2. The Heavenly Company That Appeared Around Jesus – Moses and Elijah**

Peter was ready to start the kingdom right here and now;

What they saw in vs. 4 is the point

Consider who these 2 were = a summary of all the OT – the law and the Prophets; testifying to the legitimacy of Jesus

Should have eliminated any doubt about how special Jesus is

Illustration: If I am speaking at a conference and afterwards, the President comes up and speaks with me, that is honoring; but if Lincoln and Washington come up to me ... that is truly amazing

Walt Kaiser: *The Messiah in the OT*;

The whole of the Bible points to Jesus; don't ignore the OT

## **3. A Voice from Heaven**

In case visuals were not enough; God added the sound and explained the significance of what they were seeing

Peter wanted to honor all 3 in undifferentiated fashion; 3 shelters; put them all in the same league; such reverence (putting Jesus in the same league as Moses and Elijah) was too low;

Cloud is often a symbol of the presence of God

Jesus was much more than just one of these 3 great leaders;

Utterly unique as Son of God; just like utterance in 1:1, 11 at the baptism

Learn from Jesus; believe what He says; **Deut. 18:15ff** fulfillment – you must listen to him

Jesus was left alone in their vision to reinforce his unique status

## **4. Fulfillment of Important Prophecies – vs. 11ff**

Expectations that Elijah would come back to prepare the way for the Messiah; Mal. 4:5-6 – sets the expectations

They connected His resurrection with resurrection of all that would happen at the last days; so is this the last days??

Startling news: Elijah has come!

Does that mean the end is upon us? What about the promised restoration?

The rejection of John the Baptist is the “or else” from the Malachi prophecy;

John's rejection foreshadowed the rejection of Jesus;

Everything true is not always obvious to everybody;

Jesus is definitely the Messiah; but was his fate to be suffering or glory? Both.

Why the silence: Jesus wanted time to teach them; only after the Resurrection would they truly understand the mission of Jesus



TEXT: Mark 9:14-29

TITLE: DEALING WITH SPIRITUAL POWER FAILURES AND NAGGING DOUBT

**BIG IDEA:**

**STAY PLUGGED IN TO THE POWER OF GOD VIA THE HONEST PRAYER OF FAITH**

**INTRODUCTION:**

In my business, people bring us problems all day long. Their heavy duty truck or their bus is broken-down and won't function as intended. They have been counting on that vehicle to make them money and now it has let them down.

Customers have the same set of needs:

- They have a **problem they need solved** – They can't solve it themselves because they don't have their own shop with techs or they don't have the expertise or time to make this particular repair;  
**They need us to be Available** with the resources they require
  
- They have a **problem they need solved NOW** -- sense of urgency because the situation is costing them money and productivity – They want to get back on the road as quickly and painlessly as possible;  
**They need us to Care**
  
- They have a **problem they need solved with finality** -- need a solution that will fix the problem the first time so that it stays fixed with no comebacks;  
**They need us to be Skilled**

Customers can put up Obstacles to a Good Outcome:

- Usually they are very demanding – not very helpful
- Sometimes they are unrealistic – Want it fixed immediately and don't want to pay what the repair is worth.
- Sometimes they refuse to accept the diagnosis – We will get another opinion or try to limp along and hope it is not as bad as you say. As if they were the experts even though they took it to the repair shop in the first place because they were unable to fix it themselves

**STAY PLUGGED IN TO THE POWER OF GOD VIA THE HONEST PRAYER OF FAITH**

**I. (:14-18) THE PROBLEM = POWER FAILURE – DISCIPLES UNABLE TO CAST OUT THE DEMON**

**A. (:14-15) Reputation of the Lord at Stake**

**1. (:14) Failure of the Disciples Creates Mocking and Contention**

*“And when they came back to the disciples,  
they saw a large crowd around them, and some scribes arguing with them.”*

Why are the scribes arguing with the disciples?

Reputation of our company takes a hit every time a repair does not meet with customer expectations. Sometimes justified; sometimes not justified. Amazing how long a customer will stay bitter and talk badly about our capabilities.

**Alan Carr:** A powerless church portrays Jesus Christ in a bad light – Because the disciples lacked power, the father assumed Jesus lacked power too.

## 2. (:15) Presence of Jesus Creates Expectations

*“And immediately, when the entire crowd saw Him, they were amazed, and began running up to greet Him.”*

Why was the crowd amazed when it saw Jesus?

His coming was unexpected

His coming raised expectations

**Parunak:** What justifies this strong word? Not just the Lord's approach. Most likely theory: the lingering radiance of the transfiguration.

**MacArthur:** Some people have said, “Well that’s because Jesus had glory on His face, like Moses did when he came down the mountain, because Jesus was still shining from His Transfiguration and the presence of God.” No, that’s not possible because in verse 9 Jesus said, “When you go down the mountain, don’t tell anybody what we’ve just experienced. That would be contradictory to that.” That’s not the issue. The issue is simply that He was the healer, He was the wonder worker, He was the miracle man, and the crowds were always attracted to Him.

## **B. (:16-18a) Immediate Problem: Demon Possesses Son Needs Healing**

### 1. What’s the Problem?

*“And He asked them, “What are you discussing with them?”*

Neither the scribes nor the disciples respond

- Scribes had been put down by Jesus before
- Disciple embarrassed by their failure

Father in desperation had not problem crying out

### 2. Presenting Symptoms – Demonic Activity

*“And one of the crowd answered Him, ‘Teacher, I brought You my son, possessed with a spirit which makes him mute; and whenever it seizes him, it dashes him to the ground and he foams at the mouth, and grinds his teeth, and stiffens out.’”*

**Edwards:** Convulsions, foaming at the mouth, outcries, lockjaw, and bodily rigidity followed by loss of consciousness are the symptoms of tonic-clonic (grand mal) seizures, rightly identified as epilepsy in Matt 17:15.

## **C. (:18b) Ultimate Problem: Disciples Powerless to Fix the Problem**

### 1. Demanding Attitude

*“And I told Your disciples to cast it out,”*

## 2. Defining Issue

*“and they could not do it.”*

The father had come hoping he would find Jesus to heal his demon-possessed son; Not finding Jesus available, he tried the next best thing = his luck with his disciples.

The scribes had come to expose Jesus and his disciples as charlatans. Lots of hype and supposed miracles in other areas; but here we can document their failure and mock them before the watching crowd.

The crowd loved the spectacle of the confrontation and were debating among themselves which side to take.

The disciples were self-confident because of their past success and now bewildered at their present inability to produce results. What is going to happen when Jesus departs long term and they are on their own to carry on the ministry?

This was a **power failure** of huge proportions.

What type of power failures do we experience in our Christian walk?

What types of things that make us turn to the Lord and cry out, “If only you had been here with me, helping me, things would have turned out differently?”

## **II. (:19-24) THE DIAGNOSTICS = LACK OF FAITH**

### **A. (:19a) Irritation With Disciples Over Persistent Lack of Faith**

*“And He answered them and said, ‘O unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you?’”*

Jesus identifies lack of faith as the issue

How long do I have to put up with this **remedial class of disciples** who don’t get it?

Cf. Karen teaching remedial math at CCBC

**Parunak:** “*Generation*”: Not a physical generation of 20-40 years, but those who inhabit the present *aiwn* or age (cf. Luke 16:8), which is intrinsically evil (Gal. 1:4). In Mark and Luke, serves much as *kosmos* does in John.

**Alan Carr:** Jesus is expressing His displeasure toward everyone assembled there that day. He is hurt that no one seems to be able to believe. The disciples, who have seen His power first hand, don’t have faith. The religious leaders don’t have faith. The gathered crowds lack faith. Even this broken hearted father does not have the faith necessary to see his son delivered from this demon. Jesus sees this lack of faith and He cries out, “*How much longer am I going to have to put up with you?*” It was a heartbreaking moment from Jesus, following as it did immediately after the

transfiguration and His Father's affirmation. Jesus was ready to get back to His Father's house! The saddest aspect of this whole scene is not the condition of the boy; the spirit of the scribes, or the anguish of the father. The saddest part of this whole account is the powerlessness of the disciples. These men had seen Jesus perform countless amazing miracles, yet they still lacked genuine faith. These men had even cast out demons in the past, **Mark 6:7; 12-13**. These men had seen the miracles and they had performed the miracles themselves, but now it is said of them "*and they could not.*"

## **B. (:19b-20) Interaction with Demonic Spirit**

### 1. Confrontation of the Interaction with Demonic Spirit

*"Bring him to Me!*

*And they brought the boy to Him."*

### 2. Chaos of the Interaction with Demonic Spirit

*"And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit threw him into a convulsion, and falling to the ground, he began rolling about and foaming at the mouth."*

Why did the spirit respond this way upon seeing Jesus?

**Cf. Scooter** and his epileptic fits – frightening – walking him in the neighborhood and he seizes up; limbs out of control; them becomes rigid

## **C. (:21-22a) Investigation of the Problem with the Desperate Father**

### 1. Duration of the Demon Possession – Long-Standing Problem

*"And He asked his father, 'How long has this been happening to him?'*

*And he said, 'From childhood.'"*

### 2. Danger Posed by the Demon Possession – Lethal Potential at Any Moment

*"And it has often thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him."*

## **D. (:22b-24) Interaction with the Desperate Father**

### 1. Plea for Compassion and Mercy

*"But if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!"*

**Parunak:** Instead of the demanding tone, he now asks the Lord (22), "have compassion on us, and help us." Acknowledges

1) His own inability: "*help us.*" Before he was complaining about what the disciples could not do. Now he is acknowledging what he cannot do.

2) His own unworthiness: "*have compassion on us.*" He has no right to the healing, but asks for the Lord's mercy.

### 2. Key Lesson

*“And Jesus said to him, ‘If You can!’  
All things are possible to him who believes.”*

What type of “All things” are possible for us today?

3. Honest Struggle to Grow in Faith

*“Immediately the boy's father cried out and began saying,  
‘I do believe; help my unbelief.’”*

**Matt. 17:20** *faith as a grain of mustard seed* -- that is all you need

Here is where we all find ourselves from time to time

*“I do believe; help my unbelief”*

Important to be honest with the Lord

Doubt is not fatal like persistent unbelief – doubt wavers between belief and unbelief in temporary status

**III. (:25-29) THE CURE = POWER OF GOD ACCESSED BY FAITH VIA PRAYER**

**A. (:25) The Application of the Cure – Applying the Power of God in Rebuking the Demon (and Silencing the Mocking Scribes)**

1. Discretion in Healing

*“And when Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering,”*

2. Authority in the Healing

*“He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, ‘You deaf and dumb spirit,  
I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again.’”*

**B. (:26-27) The Application of the Cure – Applying the Power of God to Restore the Boy to Full Health (and Bring Joy and Relief to His Desperate Father)**

1. (:26a) Struggle Resolved

*“And after crying out and throwing him into terrible convulsions, it came out;”*

2. (:26b) Spiritual Insight Required

*“and the boy became so much like a corpse that most of them said, ‘He is dead!’”*

Scribes and crowd still not tuned in to what Jesus was doing; they imagine the worst – great; look at this outcome; the boy looks dead

3. (:27) Supernatural Power Rewarded

*“But Jesus took him by the hand and raised him; and he got up.”*

Father went home with tears of joys – cf. **prodigal son** – raised up by God

## C. (:28-29) The Application of the Cure – Applying the Power of God to the Needy Disciples

### 1. (:28) Key Question

*“And when He had come into the house, His disciples began questioning Him privately, ‘Why could we not cast it out?’”*

**Sproul:** it appears that the power Jesus gave the disciples for their trial mission was temporary. Their real empowerment for ministry did not happen until Pentecost, when Jesus, having returned to heaven, sent the Holy Spirit on them as He had promised (Acts 1:8; 2:1-4). . . the church today has more power at her disposal than even the disciples had before Pentecost.

### 2. (:29) Key Lesson

*“And He said to them, ‘This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer.’”*

**Alan Carr:** Failure to exercise spiritual discipline and pray with faith --

**We are commanded to pray,** 1 Thes. 5:17; Luke 18:1. He has promised to hear our prayers, Jer. 33:3; Isa. 65:24. He has promised to answer our prayers, Matt. 7:7-11; Mark 11:24; John 14:13-14; 15:7. Genuine, faith-filled praying is the key that will open the door of revival and power for this modern age!

Why did the boy become like a corpse instead of instantly being revived?  
Why did he need the touch of the hand of Jesus?

**Parunak:** Note the demon's response: "*cried*," just as the father did in 24. Mark wants us to compare the responses of the two individuals with whom the Lord has been engaged. The father takes the option of faith; his "cry" is for help, and he is delivered. The demons have no such option; their "cry" is of despair and anguish before their judge, and such will be the cry of all who do not cast themselves on the mercy of the Lord. . .

they were presumptuous, not humbling themselves before God in prayer and fasting. They had apparently presumed that they possessed the power to cast out demons intrinsically, and did not cast themselves on the Lord for this case. . .

The attitude of the disciples in the case of this demoniac is the same as the father's, one of proud presumption rather than self-humbling and beseeching.

**MacArthur:** Prayer is the highway that faith takes into the power of God. . . This is simply a lesson on how to access the power of God on behalf of the things that God wills to do.

**Edwards:** Prayer is the focusing and directing of faith in specific requests to God. Both faith and prayer testify that a spiritual power is not in oneself but in God alone, and both wait in trust upon his promise to save.

## CONCLUSION:

**How to solve Power Failures;** how to deal with doubts? Be honest with Jesus – “I believe, help my unbelief” – Turn to the Great Physician;

Only He has both the accurate diagnosis and the sure cure for doubt and unbelief

\* \* \* \* \*

### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why should we not be surprised when doubts arise?
- 2) What is the strategy of Satan as he seeks to destroy our faith?
- 3) How honest are we with Jesus in coming to Him with our struggles with power failures and doubts?
- 4) What is the connection between prayer and accessing the power of God?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**MacArthur:** In this last segment of a few months, the focus of Mark is on **lessons taught to the disciples** and therefore to us. It is interjected by a few references to the coming cross. But the primary emphasis is instruction on issues that were critical for the training of His disciples and Apostles. The first lesson before us is on faith, the power of faith. Then there's a lesson on humility. And then there's a lesson on offenses. And then there's a lesson on the seriousness of sin. And then there's a lesson on marriage and divorce. And then there's a lesson on the place of children in the Kingdom. And then there's a lesson on earthly riches. And then there's a lesson on true wealth. And then there's a lesson on leadership and sacrificial service. And then there's a final lesson in chapter 10 verses 46 to 52 on faith again. So all these lessons are bracketed by a lesson on faith at the beginning and a lesson on faith at the end. The lessons come to a conclusion at the end of chapter 10 and in chapter 11 verse 1, He enters Jerusalem for the final week of His life.

### **Brian Borgman: I Believe, Help My Unbelief**

**Illustration:** Christian and Hopeful in Pilgrim's Progress – fall asleep and awakened by a giant named Despair; “It would be better if you took your own life than to live like this.” What a picture of the doubting believer; living in the dungeon called Doubt  
Troubles that come from within greater than those that come from without

### **A. (:14-18) The Situation that comes about**

Finds the other 9 disciples in theological debate with the scribes

First time the disciples did this (Mark 6) they were only sent out 2 by 2; now we have numbers; How hard can this be?

Smirks on faces of scribes getting bigger and bigger as disciples fail over and over – cannot cast out 1 single demon;

What's wrong today, boys – I notice you don't have the power you claim to have?

When Jesus shows up, the crowd recognizes him as the real deal and rush over to him;

Question directed to the scribes: What is the argument about?

Dead silence – both disciples and scribes reluctant to speak

Father speaks out in his desperation – I created this controversy; he had a spark of faith to bring his son to Jesus ... but spark being extinguished by incompetent disciples who were not strong or mighty enough to perform the job; can you imagine the suffering he saw his son subjected to? Hopes dashed to the ground

**B. (:19) Jesus Rebukes His Disciples**

Gives them a name He had attributed to this wicked generation  
Seems like harsh and stinging words; you should know better by now!

**C. (:20-21) Jesus Turns to the Father and Demon Reacts**

Jesus asks investigative questions very calmly while the son is being afflicted  
Diminutive ending = from a small childhood – this has been happening for years  
Demon trying to destroy the child – trying to destroy believers today like a roaring lion;  
Satan more subtle in dealing with us but his goal is the same  
Our only hope is finding refuge and strength from King Jesus;

**D. (:22-24) Pleading of the Father and Response of Jesus – If you are able ...please have compassion on us**

His faith has been dashed to the ground  
What is in question is not the power of Jesus but the faith of the father and the disciples  
Of course I am able  
Jesus sets forth the standard – you need to put your trust in the one who can do all things; lay hold of him by faith – Trust God – simple cure; not the therapy that counselors today would recommend – you don't need therapy, you need faith  
Honest response – I have faith, help my doubts; Lord pleased with this honesty  
Crowds are never optimistic  
It is only through death and resurrection that the works of the evil one are destroyed

**E. (:25-29) – Dealing with Disciples**

You can't live today on yesterday's grace and power; you need to be connected to Jesus right now; you can't rest on your laurels; you had better be dependent on me; you can't do it on your own  
Guinness: "I believe in doubt" -- doubt is not permanent – wavers between belief and unbelief; there is a very serious aspect of doubt in faith at times  
Doubt can occur because of trials, or because of sin, because of taking shortcuts; because of neglecting means of faith; ethical issues often at the heart of supposed intellectual doubt;  
Doubt can erode into unbelief so that we fall away from the living God

Take your doubts to Jesus



TEXT: Mark 9:30-37

TITLE: GREATNESS IN THE KINGDOM

**BIG IDEA:**

**GREATNESS IN THE KINGDOM MUST BE MEASURED FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE CROSS**

**INTRODUCTION:**

I wanted to begin this morning by considering some famous quotes on the subject of Greatness – what makes someone attain to Greatness? What is the pathway or the secret to Greatness?

“Be not afraid of greatness. Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and others have greatness thrust upon them.” Greatness comes in various forms; you need to embrace it, not fear it  
– **William Shakespeare, Twelfth Night**

“You were put on this earth to achieve your greatest self, to live out your purpose, and to do it courageously.” Be the best YOU (sounds more like the Joel Osteen self-help approach)  
– **Steve Maraboli, Life, the Truth, and Being Free**

“The mark of a great man is one who knows when to set aside the important things in order to accomplish the vital ones.” Matter of priorities  
– **Brandon Sanderson, The Alloy of Law**

“All greatness of character is dependent on individuality. The man who has no other existence than that which he partakes in common with all around him, will never have any other than an existence of mediocrity.” Be the unique YOU  
-- **James F. Cooper**

Probably closest to the truth – but still not capturing the biblical perspective:  
“A great man is always willing to be little.”  
– **Ralph Waldo Emerson**

Nothing wrong with having **ambition** and wanting to make a difference with your life – in fact there is something very wrong with not caring about greatness and excellence and just being comfortable with **mediocrity**

It is a matter of our motivation and whether we are self-centered or God-centered

What does Jesus teach and what did Jesus practice with respect to the **Pathway to Greatness**?

**GREATNESS IN THE KINGDOM MUST BE MEASURED FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE CROSS**

**I. (:30-32) FUNDAMENTAL LESSON: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF THE MESSIAH – DEATH IS NECESSARY BUT RESURRECTION IS CERTAIN**

The **perspective of the Cross** is fundamental to all that we are as Christians; it is fundamental to all that we do as Christians

**A. (:30-31a) Urgent Need for Indoctrination**

*“And from there they went out and began to go through Galilee, and He was unwilling for anyone to know about it. For **He was teaching His disciples and telling them,**”*

Shift to what has been called the **Retirement ministry** of Jesus – where He pulls back from the crowds and invests his final time (**last 6 months**) in intimate training of his closest disciples; journey from the northern area of Galilee down to Jerusalem in the south of Judah

People today don't place much importance on indoctrination

Cults do – they make it a point to carefully educate their members in all of the details of the catechism of their religious system

But evangelicals today place a very low priority on systematic instruction – Why is that?

- Jesus taught **Truth** – He presented Himself as the Way, the Truth and the Life
- Jesus taught the Truth with **authority** – not just suggesting some possible interpretations of what God might want to communicate; not a sharing or pooling of ignorance
- Jesus taught the Truth with **repetition** – understood that His disciples were slow to pick up on new truths; used everyday illustrations to make the truth memorable
- Jesus taught the Truth with **practical application** – not just ivory tower truths; these were essential truths for wise living – listen to Dean belting out the simple gospel song: The wise man built his house upon the rock ...
- Jesus taught the Truth to those He was equipping to **teach others** the exact same content

**Edwards:** Although Mark often refers to Jesus as a teacher, he seldom reports what Jesus taught. This pericope is an exception, however.

**B. (:31b) Significance of His Death – Death is Necessary – 8:31** – followed by interaction with **Peter; 9:31** – followed by interaction with **John; 10:33-34** – followed by interaction with **James and John**

*“The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him;”*

*“delivered”* -- Technical, legal term used for a criminal being handed over to judgment and punishment

**Hiebert:** a futuristic present – carries a note of the certainty of the thing announced

Contrast between *“Son of Man”* and sinful *“men”*

**MacArthur:** It starts with Judas who delivers Him up, to the Jews. The Jews deliver Him up to Pilate. Pilate delivers Him up to the executioners. But the real story is not understood until you read **Acts 2:23** where Peter on the Day of Pentecost says, “This man,” meaning Christ, *“delivered by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God.”* God delivered Him up. Judas delivered Him up. The Jews delivered Him up. The Romans delivered Him up. And after all of that, He is crucified. He was delivered into the hands of men. Judas put Him in the hands of the

Jewish leaders. The Jewish leaders put Him in the hands of Pilate. Pilate put Him in the hands of the Roman executioners.

### C. (:31c) Significance of His Resurrection – Resurrection is Certain

*“and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later.”*

The Death of Jesus is not the end of the story

**Hendriksen:** Mark represents Jesus as predicting that he shall “*rise again*”; Matthew, “*be raised up*.” These are not in conflict. Both are true. What Mark reports Jesus as saying is that he is going to rise again by his own power. This is in harmony not only with Christ’s own teaching as found elsewhere but also with other passages of Scripture.

**John 10:17-18** “*For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father.*”

### D. (:32) Two Impediments to Learning

#### 1. Lack of Comprehension – Too Short-sighted

*“But they did not understand this statement,”*

Why didn’t they understand?

#### 2. Lack of Humility – Too Proud

*“and they were afraid to ask Him.”*

Why were they fearful?

## II. (:33-37) LESSON ON STATUS IN THE KINGDOM – THE PATHWAY TO GREATNESS IS HUMBLE SERVICE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE CROSS

### A. (:33-34) Lesson Introduced – Concern Over Status in the Kingdom

*“And they came to Capernaum; and when He was in the house, He began to question them, ‘What were you discussing on the way?’ But they kept silent, for on the way they had discussed with one another which of them was the greatest.”*

**MacArthur:** They’d been walking for a long time, we don’t know exactly how long, but it would be a significant journey from...for miles, 20, 30 who knows miles, up Caesarea Philippi, coming all the way down to Capernaum. And on the way, they were having a discussion, it was a prolonged discussion. It was a heated discussion. It was, frankly, a really ugly discussion. . . Pride destroys unity.

**Edwards:** a jarring contrast between Jesus’ humility and the disciples’ desire for distinction and recognition. . . Jesus speaks of surrendering his life; the disciples speak of fulfilling theirs. He counts the cost of discipleship; they count its assets. The disciples have yet to learn that the rewards of discipleship come only as a consequence of following Christ on the costly way to Jerusalem.

**Hiebert:** The dispute shows that the disciples did not regard Peter as having been assigned a position of primacy among them at Caesarea Philippi (Mt 16:17-19).

“*the house*” in Capernaum – possibly Peter’s

**Illustration:** all the politics at work regarding who has the parking spot closest to the door – the spot of rank and distinction; just as you would assign seats at a banquet

Greatness in Christ’s kingdom is different than kingdoms of men - cf. **Mt 20:20-26**

What is the **pathway to Greatness?**

- Hard work?
- Sacrifice and Discipline?
- Great Intellect?
- Impressive Achievements?
- Loyalty and Faithfulness?
- Popularity?
- Riches?
- How does Trump plan to “Make America Great Again?” – compete and win
- How does Hillary Clinton plan to “Keep America Great?” – everyone has their platform; their gameplan; their pathway that they expect will lead to Greatness

**B. (:35) Lesson Taught – The Way Up is Down**

*“And sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them,  
‘If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all, and servant of all.’”*

**Surprising and Shocking** when Jesus first said this

Despite Jesus having clearly laid out this proven road map centuries ago – you still don’t find people today advocating for such an approach – it is still Surprising and Shocking

**Edwards:** The challenge is to be great in things that matter to God. Nothing is greater in God’s eyes than giving, and no vocation affords the opportunity to give more than that of a servant (10:43).

**Hendriksen:** their idea of what it means to be “*great*” must be changed, in fact, radically reversed. True greatness does not consist in this, that from a towering height a person, in a self-congratulatory manner, has the right now to look down upon all others (Luke 18:9-12); but in this, that he immerses himself in the needs of others, sympathizes with them and helps them in every way possible. So, if any person – whether he be one of the Twelve or anyone else – wishes to be first, he must be last; that is, servant of all.

What does it look like to be last of all and servant of all??

**Luke 22:27** “*For I am among you as one who serves*”

Cf. the role of a **deacon** in the church

**C. (:36-37) Lesson Illustrated and Applied – Greatness in the Kingdom is Measured by How You Humbly Serve the Most Insignificant?**

*“And taking a child, He set him before them, and taking him in His arms, He said to them, ‘Whoever receives one child like this in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me does not receive Me, but Him who sent Me.’”*

Ministry to those who need it most

Child is not here just an example of humility – but one of being insignificant and helpless

**Hendriksen:** Jesus is telling his disciples to forget all about rank, pre-eminence, prominence. Instead, they should concentrate their attention on the needs of one, *any* one, even just one, of such little ones; for example, the child which Jesus is now holding in his arms, or any similar one. . . in his weakness, need, and humble dependence

**Constable:** A child was the least significant person in Jewish and in Greco-Roman culture. By using "a child" as His object lesson, Jesus was saying that service involves caring about people, even insignificant people such as children.

**CONCLUSION:**

The **lessons of the Cross** are foolishness to our human reasoning – these lessons can only be comprehended by the insight provided by the Spirit of God – 1 Cor. 1-2 *“For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of the clever I will set aside.’”*

**Phil. 2:1-11** Look at Jesus Christ and His humble service for our **pattern for Greatness**

\* \* \* \* \*

**DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) How can I focus more on the centrality of the gospel – the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ?
- 2) What are some indicators that people are concerned about their spiritual status?
- 3) What are some illustrations in my life of actively serving others in a way that puts me last and makes me the servant of all?
- 4) What ministries do I perform to individuals whom society would judge to be relatively insignificant?

\* \* \* \* \*

**QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:**

**MacArthur: The Virtue of Being Last** – Lessons on Humility

In our society, to diagnose people's ills because they lack self-esteem, our culture has poured gas on a fire. Nobody lacks self-esteem. That's a lie. People are dominated by self-esteem, dominated by pride. It just comes in many forms. And in those forms people manipulate the things around them and the people around them the way they want to manipulate them and using the means they use. Nobody lacks self-esteem, everybody is consumed with himself, or herself, in one way or another. . .

God is looking for humble people. Micah 6:8 says, "What does the Lord require of you but to walk humbly with your God." Luke 14:11; 18:14, our Lord says, "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted." That is a spiritual principle. Ephesians 4:1 and 2 where we are enjoined to walk worthy of the calling to which we are called is followed by, "Walk with all humility." Colossians 3:12, "Put on a heart of humility." James 4:6, "God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble." Verse 10, "Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord and He will exalt you."

**Edwards:** At first glance the material in this unit seems to be a sundry patchwork of unrelated sayings lacking a unifying theme. Closer inspection, however, reveals an underlying theme of humility and suffering that is demonstrated by Jesus, in word and deed, as he is with the disciples on the way to Jerusalem. Jesus establishes the theme by a second reminder of his own impending rejection and death (9:30-32). He follows this with lessons intended to inculcate an attitude of humility in the Twelve: warnings against pride and an exhortation to receive the small and powerless (vv. 33-37), appeals for clemency and mercy for outsider (vv. 38-41), warnings against causing "*little ones to stumble*" (v. 42), and the necessity of suffering in fulfillment of God's kingdom (vv. 43-50). This collage of instructions and object lessons forms an extended commentary on Jesus' call to self-denial and cross-bearing (8:34), which was ratified by the divine ultimatum at the transfiguration for the disciples to "*hear him*" (9:8).

### **Brian Borgman: True Greatness in the Kingdom**

Jesus = a man with a mission = death by crucifixion; headed to Jerusalem; time of intensive instruction for his closest disciples; gives the gospel in a nutshell; they were totally ignorant of the words Jesus spoke; Why were they afraid to ask for clarification: Mark 8-9 – chastised for having hard hearts and being slow to get it – "Do you not yet understand?" cf. rebuke of Peter; 9:19; they had been stung by their Master's rebuke before – so they had another debate among themselves – ended up being rebuked anyway!

Disciples keep silent because of their embarrassment; Matt. reports that they then blurted out the subject matter of their debate; Jesus has just set the context for this teaching; Jesus' death has everything to do with true greatness in the kingdom and they missed it; Son of Man did not come to be ministered to but to serve and to lay down his life for others; Jesus does not criticize their desire for greatness; He doesn't say "You shouldn't want to be great." He redirects them to what true greatness really is. Spoke against unworthy motivation; self-centered motivation;

Kingdom of God is always counter-cultural; against the values of the world; you want to be great? Wait on people; do the most menial tasks for someone else; true greatness begins with killing pride and carnal ambition and putting on genuine humility; humble yourself under the mighty hand of God; with a proud heart we will never serve anyone but ourselves; whom do you welcome and embrace? Cf. example of great men starting orphanages: George Whitfield, George Mueller, Charles Spurgeon [Abraham Thomas] ... importance of mother and father pouring their lives into their children; SS workers and nursery workers; those who work at

community pregnancy centers; those who save little babies from abortion ... that is greatness in the kingdom of God

Vs. 38ff – must be patient in serving God’s servants; John and James (sons of thunder); John’s conscience is pricked about the possible wrong deed that was done in trying to stop this man; no prospect of neutrality (Matt. 12:30 = the counterpart – not saying the same thing – different context); this person does have faith – he has acknowledged the power of Jesus; not a warrant for indifference; there is a need for patience on the part of the disciples;

- The first mark of true greatness – revealed by **those whom you receive** – embracing little children
- The second mark of true greatness – revealed by **those whom you serve** – serving God’s servants

Even in what might seem the most mundane of matters – like giving him a cup of cold water in the name of Jesus (instead of trying to hinder him) – then you won’t lose your reward

Where is your ambition? What drives you? What do you want to be great at? Choose an ambition that won’t be burned up before the judgment seat of Christ; have a holy ambition to be great in His kingdom and labor by His grace for His glory; be a servant; become last; don’t give a false piety; serve the lowliest; serve the very servants of Christ; you run the risk of not being properly thanked or recognized; some people don’t serve because of pride; some people don’t serve because of low ambition; needs abound – not hard to find opportunities for service

### **Steven Lawson: Jesus Foretells His Death**

Sense the drama in Mark’s account (John’s gospel focused on the discourses; Matthew on fulfilled prophecies; Luke on the parables)

Christian faith built on substitutionary death and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ;

Church is built with His shed blood and empty tomb;

No other religion in the world compares to this;

Concentrate on this core of the gospel and you will be majoring on what is major;

Key central feature of these middle chapters of Mark – repetition of teaching on the cross – 8:31; 9:12; 9:31; 10:33

Insider information – only told to the Twelve – not to the multitude;

Disciples never really understood despite the simplicity and clarity of these prophecies;

#### **1. (:30) The Isolation Jesus Sought –**

Passing through NE Galilee; headed for Capernaum – sits on top of Sea of Galilee in NW corner; progressing without any prolonged stay in any one place; intentionally bypassing the multitude; He is in a withdrawal mode; pouring His life into the 12; His public ministry in Galilee is now ended; door of opportunity closed; strategic 6 months of training the 12; sometimes when we are in isolation, Jesus is preparing us for future ministry;

#### **2. (:31) The Instruction Jesus Gave –**

The reason for the withdrawal in previous verse; full disclosure of full counsel of God is commanded in the Great Commission; said these things repeatedly;

- The **humility** of Jesus’ death – “*the Son of Man*” -- Son of God became the Son of Man in His incarnation; laid aside His crown to take up a cross; His favorite way to refer to Himself; used 83 times in the gospels and always from the lips of Jesus; Messianic title from Daniel 7; He has come down to our level; born of a woman; came for a purpose

- The **sovereignty** of Jesus' death – "*is to be delivered*" by God the Father Himself; Jesus was not a victim; not an out of control situation; Acts 2:23;
- The **certainty** of Jesus' death – "*they will kill Him*" – 8:31 "*must suffer*" – Jesus had to die in order to save sinners and reconcile them to a holy God; there is no other way; there is no Plan B; this will certainly come to pass; inevitability and immutability of this plan that God is orchestrating; no turning back;
- The **extremity** of Jesus' death – "*kill*" – a violent death that He would suffer; a gruesome and gory death; not simply passing away; crucified Him; nailed Him to the cross; put Him to death; put to death by hanging Him on a cross; pierced through; crushed; cut off out of the land of the living;
- The **victory** of Jesus' death – "*He will rise the third day*" – no swoon theory possible;

### **3. (:32) The Ignorance Jesus Faced –**

"*But*" – sad transition – they are so dull of understanding; they had their own preconceived ideas in their own little minds of how the Messiah would come to Jerusalem; stubborn; "*filled with deep grief*" – but could not grasp the significance and full reality of this death;

Why were they afraid to ask Him – because of how Peter had been stung with rebuke earlier; unwilling to swallow their pride and humble themselves and ask for further clarification



TEXT: Mark 9:38-42

TITLE: LESSON ON SECTARIANISM

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE PATHWAY TO GREATNESS IS RESPECTING DIVERSITY IN KINGDOM MINISTRY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE CROSS**

**INTRODUCTION:**

More important to get the big picture and how it all hangs together in this section

**Overall context:** Jesus has turned his focus to the **Cross**

- Headed to Jerusalem in a physical sense to go to the cross
- Oriented his teaching to focus on his inner circle of disciples
- Emphasizing to them the significance of His coming death and resurrection
- Training his disciples to assume leadership when he departs this earth

**Cost of Discipleship**

- Deny self; Take up your cross; Follow Me – what will that involve?
- Servanthood; Suffering; Persecution

Immediate Context – **Issue of Greatness in the Kingdom**

Disciples were driven by the **motivation of Competition** – each wanted to be the best; they wanted their lives to count

Last week we saw how that motivation for competition manifested itself in their relationship with one another as insiders – as members of the inner circle of Christ’s team of Apostles

This week we will see how that motivation for competition manifests itself in their relationship to ones they view as outsiders – ones who do not embrace all of the same distinctives as they do; ones who march to the beat of a different drummer and don’t fall into step with their marching band;

This message is especially important to us as we experience a very segmented denominational structure within the overall Church of Jesus Christ – we have many camps – and we are always in danger of looking with disdain on those who are outside our particular group

- We hold to certain distinctives – like believer baptism
- We all have close friends or even family members that hold to infant baptism

How should we relate to one another?

- We hold to the distinctive of plurality of elder government
- We are in the minority here; most churches have a Senior Pastor structure with a major differentiation between his role and that of other church leaders

How should we relate to one another?

Have you ever thought how sad it would be if our distinctives were so narrow and confining and even off base that Jesus himself would not be able to join our church and satisfy our membership criteria?? You can't embrace both infant baptism and believer baptism – they are not both correct

Jesus is not asking us to throw away all distinctives and water down our commitment level to the lowest possible denominator so that we can all be together organizationally in one group – Instead He urges us to study and develop biblical convictions and to live out those convictions

Yet the spirit in which we interact with other genuine believers is very important – this lesson is crucial for people like us that are so zealous for truth; that place such a high priority on our biblical convictions

### **III. (:38-42) LESSON ON SECTARIANISM – THE PATHWAY TO GREATNESS IS RESPECTING DIVERSITY IN KINGDOM MINISTRY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE CROSS**

#### **A. (:38) Lesson Introduced – How to Deal with Believers from Different Camps**

*“John said to Him, ‘Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we tried to hinder him because he was not following us.’”*

Why did John speak up here? Very unusual for the sayings of John to be singled out --

2 Possibilities: (there may be more)

1) Conscience of the apostle John is now pricked – one of the sons of Thunder – probably acting in concert with his brother James – had just been involved in a situation where he had tried to enforce his status on a fellow believer -- He had acted in pride; he had acted as an elitist; he had acted as if he had the final word on truth and ministry methodology – now he wondered whether he had done the right thing

2) Looking for commendation from Jesus? Thought that Jesus would approve of their aggressive and loyal action; still operating from the mindset of what would make them greatest in the kingdom; in their insecurity over the apparent success of another ministry, they came up with a way to put that ministry down in order to exalt themselves

Clearly John had not gotten the point of Jesus' teaching that “the Way UP is Down”

**Lane** quoted by **Constable**: It is striking . . . that after each of the three major prophecies of the passion the evangelist inserts the response of one of the three disciple who were closest to Jesus: Peter (Ch. 8:32f.), John (Ch. 9:38), and James, with John (Ch. 10:35-37). Mark shows in this way that even the most privileged of the disciples failed to understand what the passion signified for their life and mission.

This situation hits home for me – we are quick to point out the faults in the ministry of others; wanting to legitimize our decisions and the path down which we feel the Lord Jesus has led us; we have such confidence in our interpretation of truth – often coming across as if we have a corner on truth; where is Humility? Where is our concern for our own areas of blindness and weakness?

Important to recognize several details about the individual he had confronted:

- This person was a **believer** – ministering in the name of Jesus Christ; under His

authority; concerned for His glory; spreading His gospel; supporting His cause; only 2 groups from the perspective of Jesus: believers and non-believers --

- This person was **effective** in casting out demons – not part of the kingdom of Satan, but evidently an effective minister for the kingdom of God – interesting since the disciples had just proven themselves ineffective in a similar role

**Edwards: Gundry** rightly notes the absurdity of the Twelve’s telling the independent exorcist to stop doing what they could not do in **9:14-29**.

- This person was **not interfering** with the ministry of the disciples; on the contrary it was John and his compatriots who had taken the initiative to stick their nose in his business
- This person was **acting independently** of the team of the Apostles; not in their camp; not traveling around with them; not eating and fellowshiping with them; not making ministry plans and executing them in partnership with them

Action that John and the Apostles had taken was to try to **hinder** the ministry of this man:

- Sincere in their desire to **maintain purity** of doctrine and practice
- Sincere in their desire to **protect the reputation** of Jesus Christ

Think of people you know that stand in this same relationship – they are genuine believers; they are sincerely ministering in the name of Jesus; the gospel they preach is authentic (not some false gospel as Paul condemned in Gal. 1)

In order for us to effectively apply what Jesus teaches here, we must have some concrete examples in mind

## **B. (:39-40) Lesson Taught – Allow for Diversity in the Kingdom**

1. Negativity is Forbidden -- How could we try to hinder the ministry of others: restrain, forbid, prevent, hold back

*“But Jesus said, ‘Do not hinder him,’”*

- **Disparaging their ministry** – speaking against them in a negative way; trashing them; minimizing what they are accomplishing; questioning their motives; criticizing their methods; tongue is a powerful tool – like a fire – look at the strife it can stir up – **James 3-4**
- **Distancing ourselves** – not only will we have nothing to do with them but we command others to have nothing to do with them as well – approach of Diotrophes in **3 John 10**
- **Denying them resources or assistance** –

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**(1 Cor. 3:3b-4) SECTARIANISM DERIVES FROM JEALOUSY AND PRODUCES STRIFE IN THE CHURCH – DESTROYING UNITY AND STUNTING**

## **SPIRITUAL GROWTH – CHECK OUT WHETHER YOU HAVE THE SPIRIT**

### **A. Signs of Carnality**

1. Root Indicators: Jealousy  
    *“For since there is jealousy”*
2. Surface Indicators: Strife  
    *“and strife among you,”*

Signs of the Holy Spirit would be in contrast to these traits:

- the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ, not the individual
- the Holy Spirit promotes peace and unity in the body

**Stedman:** Now the mark of spiritual babyhood, Paul says, is *"jealousy and strife."* Where you have Christians who are still baby Christians and who are all too long in that condition, you will always have divisions, factions, strife, and breaking into little cliques and groups in the Church. This arises out of a sense of competition.

### **B. Carnality Should Trigger an Examination of Whether You Possess the Spirit**

1. Fleshly = Unnatural State for the Believer  
    *“are you not fleshly,”*
2. Not Manifesting the Spirit = Danger Zone  
    *“and are you not walking like mere men?”*

### **C. (:4) Sectarian Spirit Makes Us No Different Than the World of the Unsaved**

*“For when one says, ‘I am of Paul,’ and another, ‘I am of Apollos,’ are you not mere men?”*

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**MacArthur:** **Pride creates exclusivity.** . . . There’s diversity in the kingdom.

#### 2. Not a Threat

*“for there is no one who shall perform a miracle in My name,  
and be able soon afterward to speak evil of Me.”*

We should not view such people and such ministries as Threats  
They are involved in something positive for the Name of Christ – can’t just flip flop like a politician and be destructive in the next moment to the kingdom of Christ

Nothing for us to fear; why would we want to hinder them?

**Hiebert:** This brief incident stands as a firm rebuke to the spirit of sectarianism. It condemns that exclusive attitude which insists that only those who carry on their work in harmony with our own views and practices can be accepted as really doing God’s work. If they demonstrate that they are on God’s side in the war with Satan, even though their views may be imperfect, they must not be condemned for such work or regarded with abhorrence.

**Numbers 11:26-29**

**Hendriksen:** spirit of intolerance, narrow exclusivism – Let us not be more restrictive than was Moses. Let us not be less broadminded than was Paul (**Phil. 1:14-18**). Let us follow the teaching of Jesus and, while maintaining what we ourselves regard as purity of doctrine, let us reach out the hand of brotherhood to all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ and build upon the firm foundation of his infallible Word.

### 3. Neutrality is not an Option

*“For he who is not against us is for us.”*

Recognize that they ultimately are on our side in the spiritual warfare that counts – the one between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan

**Matt. 12:30** *“He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters.”*

**No neutrality;** no sitting on the fence; no being in both camps – you are either supporting the kingdom of God or the kingdom of Satan – only 2 mutually exclusive options; there is not a third option

## **C. (:41-42) Lesson Illustrated and Applied – Greatness in the Kingdom is Measured by How You Humbly Serve Fellow Disciples of Jesus Christ**

### 1. (:41) Positive Illustration and Application – Reward for Ministering to the Saints

*“For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because of your name as followers of Christ, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward.”*

Cup of cold water seems trivial – but look at the role of itinerant preachers – how they were dependent on the hospitality of others for the meeting of their basic needs

**2 John 10** – if someone is preaching a false gospel, do not even let them into your home; don't give them a drink of cold water

**Constable:** This is one of the rare occasions when Jesus used the title "*Messiah*" of Himself. His use of it here makes the lesson even more forceful. The person giving the cup of cold water might have only a superficial understanding of Jesus. Nonetheless, if that person offered simple hospitality to one of Jesus' disciples—"because" he was a disciple of "*Messiah*"—that one would receive God's blessing.

**Matt. 10:40 ff** – especially supporting those who are ministering the gospel; you can share in the reward of the prophet

These outsiders who would minister to you a cup of cold water have a guaranteed reward . . . But if you try to hinder their ministry and become a stumbling block to them, your reward is in danger

### 2. (:42) Negative Illustration and Application -- Punishment for Endangering the Faith of Believers

*“And whoever causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble, it would be*

*better for him if, with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he had been cast into the sea.”*

Strong words for John to hear; trying to shut down the ministry of a genuine fellow believer was serious business; not a pleasant way to die pictured here – take note: cult leaders; doctors performing abortions ...

“*little ones*” – in the faith – just forming their convictions; life is tenuous; very vulnerable  
Cf. baby Moses

**Key:** these outsiders (as you perceive them) are insiders from the standpoint of the Cross – they are those for whom Jesus has died; they are **genuine believers**

### **CONCLUSION:**

This is the type of **Diversity Training** that is needed in today’s culture

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### **DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) Who would we consider as outsiders – even though they are genuine believers – but outside of our camp?
- 2) Have we ever experienced being treated as an outsider? What was our reaction?
- 3) How can I still exercise proper discernment and hold to my biblical convictions while at the same time being tolerant of diversity in the kingdom?
- 4) When do I speak negatively or disparagingly about the Christian ministry of other groups?

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### **QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:**

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Disciples keep silent because of their embarrassment; Matt. reports that they then blurted out the subject matter of their debate; Jesus has just set the context for this teaching; Jesus’ death has everything to do with true greatness in the kingdom and they missed it; Son of Man did not come to be ministered to but to serve and to lay down his life for others; Jesus does not criticize their

desire for greatness; He doesn't say "You shouldn't want to be great." He redirects them to what true greatness really is. Spoke against unworthy motivation; self-centered motivation;

Kingdom of God is always counter-cultural; against the values of the world; you want to be great? Wait on people; do the most menial tasks for someone else; true greatness begins with killing pride and carnal ambition and putting on genuine humility; humble yourself under the mighty hand of God; with a proud heart we will never serve anyone but ourselves; whom do you welcome and embrace? Cf. example of great men starting orphanages: George Whitfield, George Mueller, Charles Spurgeon [Abraham Thomas] ... importance of mother and father pouring their lives into their children; SS workers and nursery workers; those who work at community pregnancy centers; those who save little babies from abortion ... that is greatness in the kingdom of God

Vs. 38ff – must be patient in serving God's servants; John and James (sons of thunder); John's conscience is pricked about the possible wrong deed that was done in trying to stop this man; no prospect of neutrality (Matt. 12:30 = the counterpart – not saying the same thing – different context); this person does have faith – he has acknowledged the power of Jesus; not a warrant for indifference; there is a need for patience on the part of the disciples;

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### **Steven Lawson: Jesus Confronts Narrow-Mindedness**

The danger of being more narrow-minded than what the truth actually is; Liberalism is the leaven that causes people to be wider than what the truth actually is; Legalism is the polar opposite; that which causes people to be more narrow than the truth; easy to be pulled into either one of these two extremes; Sadducees were the liberals; Pharisees were the legalists of the day; Marked by intolerance, small-mindedness, bigotry, spiritual elitism; exclusive attitude; party spirit; causes you to shoot your own soldiers; makes your own rules for what defines spirituality; most often exists with those who have a special zeal to be guardians of the truth

James and John known for their fiery spirits, sons of thunder

#### **1) (:38) The Prejudice –**

Lord has turned away from the crowd and devoting his focus to his disciples; only time in Mark's gospel where John speaks; only time he is mentioned alone; the setting is the same as the previous verses; vs. 37 – receiving another disciple who is like a child is the subject on the table; proliferation of demonic activity in day of Jesus; dealing with demons plural; this is not a fraud or fake disciple; not a wannabe exorcist; shaking the very gates of hell; we exerted great effort to

oppose him; he was not following “us” = emphasis; they had been lacking in faith and prayer and in spiritual weaponry since they had been inept and unable to cast out demon in 9:14; so their pride was wounded; some jealousy involved here; they want to protect their own turf; they are in a recovery mode; trying to regain spiritual power they have lost; someone succeeding where they had failed; natural response of the flesh = envy and jealousy; operating on attitude of narrow exclusiveness; this man is not part of their tight circle; he is an outsider; festering of a party spirit; unhealthy elitism; refusing to acknowledge the reality of this ministry and actively opposing it;

## 2) (:39) **The Prohibition** –

Jesus will reject their rejection; He prohibits their prohibition; Jesus had no sympathy for this type of exclusive spirit; gives the explanation; Jesus assumes there was a legitimate powerful miracle that had been performed; impossible and incongruous to be in both camps at the same time; law of consistency; congruency;

## 3) (:40) **The Principle** --

Jesus explains his answer by giving a general principle that lies behind his prohibition; “For” – ripple effect of explaining Why – vs. 39, 40, 41 – puts it in proverbial form; an axiom or maxim; tightly worded phrase – “*For he who is not against us, is for us*” – this is the guiding principle; put in the positive; cf. Mat. 12:30 – put in the negative

There is no middle ground concerning Jesus Christ; Jesus is not speaking as a liberal and widening the pathway of truth; no room for neutrality regarding spiritual things; no fence straddling; 2 categories are polar opposites: against us vs. for us;

Does not mean there is no need for correction regarding some area of doctrine or truth;

## 4) (:41) **The Picture** of what this looks like

Concrete example of the principle that he had stated in vs. 40; goes a step further; not only should we not oppose this man, but we should understand that such a man will be rewarded by Jesus on the last day; the “*whoever*” refers back to vs. 37-38 – the one who receives one child like this in my name = receives me; Jesus is not introducing some new thought; this is the caboose on the previous train; the “*you*” refers to the 12 disciples, those on the inner circle; cup of water refers to the smallest act of hospitality; important for them to have their needs met as they are itinerant gospel preachers;

“*Truly, truly*” – this is one of those more important, more strategic sayings of Jesus; this own whom you are hindering and opposing will be rewarded by Me; you are at cross purposes with me when you are hindering one through whom I am working; to hinder one such as this is to hinder Christ

**Matt. 10:40ff** -- important how one responds to the prophets that God sends out; team effort; you will share in the same reward; prophet is one proclaiming the word of the Lord; to receive means to support and aid him on in his ministry

### Requires:

- **Discernment** of who is a genuine disciple of the Lord vs. the fraud (**1 John 4:1-6**); the fraud is loved by the world because he brings a worldly message; both use the name of Christ; who preaches the true gospel; who truly opposes Satan
- **Deference** towards the one who is a true believer; don't hinder such a one; give them a cup of cold water and receive a cup from them; don't divide over differences of preference
- **Decision** – let us realize what is primary vs secondary; are you for or against Jesus?



### David Thompson:

Follow up section to Jesus' teaching about Greatness in the Kingdom;  
People have a desire to be great at something; cf. movement politically: Make America Great Again;

Fiery personality of John; he responds to instruction of Jesus in an odd way; point people to Jesus Christ and do not hinder them because what is at stake is heaven vs. hell; hell is a very real place; a place where the fire never burns out and where no one ever dies – no annihilation; a place of permanent punishment;

**1) The program of God is all about Jesus' name, not our name (:38-39)** – they don't ask Christ if He had authorized this miracle worker; this person is not following the disciples; maybe legitimate out of zeal; maybe out of jealousy; rogue believer; had tremendous faith in the Lord; could spot someone who was demon possessed and cast out the demon; must have been strong in prayer; if they didn't graduate from our schools or attend our denomination or church, we tend to write people off; but it is about believing in Jesus Christ; not excusing the doctrinal ignorance or error of someone; He is doing this in the name of Jesus; don't hinder him; not a mandate for ecumenical partnership with anyone who just mentions the name of Jesus;

**2) If someone is not against us he is for us** – "*For*" is explanatory – no neutrality when it comes to Christ;

**3) Whoever does something nice for them because of their association with Christ will be rewarded;** assume that this rogue minister did something nice for the Apostles – maybe gave them water – not only is this guy on our side, but he is laying up treasure in heaven; support for God's saints does matter;

**4) Whoever causes a young disciple to stumble in his faith will be harshly punished** – talking about those who are children in their faith; just growing up in their relationship to the Lord; heavy millstone – had to be pulled by a donkey; not just tying a brick on someone's neck; this would drop them to the bottom of the sea very fast; don't hinder them in any way; you are supposed to be encouraging their relationship with the Lord; don't be a spiritual child molester; awful to be pro-abortion; awful to be a cult leader; a horrible death

**Get rid of anything that moves you away from a close relationship to Jesus Christ --** series of *If* clauses – hypothetical situation; any sin could be forgiven if you believe in Jesus; do not be guilty of preventing people from coming to Jesus; not all body parts that cause sin are mentioned here; tongue is not mentioned here; heart is not mentioned here; you better get rid of anything you are involved with that could trip up anyone else or trip up yourself; mutilating yourself forbidden in the law; note change of pronouns – focus on self – don't mess around – just get rid of what you do or where you go or what you spend your time doing if it is not helpful;

**5) Everybody will be judged** – fire of punishment; fire of purification; sacrifices were to be salted;

**6) Have a salty ministry** – salt is ruined by exposure to air; believer loses his saltiness by exposure to the world

## **Mark Fitzpatrick: Receiving and Not Forbidding**

He is Lord and He will decide who is to be received and who is to be censured

### **I. (:36-37) Illustration of Child – Receiving Every Believer in the Name of Christ**

Talking about the least believer in Christ

Had been talking about who was the greatest

If my goal is to advance self, there will be no room for peripheral people;

In the world, survival of the fittest; church is to find room for the weak and include the weak;

Implication of receiving the least believer (:37) – opposite in play as well

Every believer so joined to Christ and God – Gal. 6:17 --

### **II. (:38) Response by John**

Who was this one? Not just trying to cast out devils; but actually doing it; maybe a disciple of John the Baptist??

### **III. (:39-40) Response by Jesus**

Don't go around making unnecessary enemies; you will have enough of them;

We can disagree with other believers but don't view them in our minds as against us;

We are fighting on the same side; all of us have wrong views in different areas;

Maybe we see them as ones who need correction and better teaching; but we do not have the right to forbid their ministries

We do have a role in teaching them – Acts 18:24-26 – other extreme of never approaching these other groups is wrong as well; woman may communicate in private regarding truth of scripture

### **IV. (:41) The Least Work Done in Name of Jesus is Accepted and Rewarded**

The feeblest service accepted and rewarded; done for love for Christ

Look at how easy it is to serve God and be rewarded

What an encouragement to live for Jesus – how can we be a blessing to one another – spur one another on to love and good deeds; we are His body

### **V. (:42) Solemn Danger of Offending and Stumbling Child of God**

carrot and the stick; to entrap or trip up; how do I feel when another believer slips? Do I get some sort of satisfaction or am I pained?

Zech 2:8

TEXT: Mark 9:43-50

TITLE: LESSON ON SALTINESS – BE PURE . . . BE POTENT . . . BE PEACEFUL

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE PATHWAY TO GREATNESS IS PROTECTING YOURSELF AGAINST THE CANCER OF SIN WHILE POSITIVELY IMPACTING OTHERS FOR CHRIST AND PROMOTING PEACE AMONG BELIEVERS**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Figure it out ... Live it out ...

Other messages started with the teaching and then moved into illustration and application. In this lesson, we start with some illustration and application and then get the teaching on the back end.

**Vs. 42** we studied with the section above – but it is a transitional verse – just as you need to make sure you don't cause other Christians to stumble, you must as a priority give heed to your own moral purity

**Parunak:** Regarding background of usage of salt: For us, salt is a cheap, common substance, used mainly to flavor food, and we are most conscious of it as something that physicians try to get us to avoid. In ancient times, it was much more rare, thus precious. Roman soldiers received part of their pay in salt, a payment called *salarium*, from which we get our modern word "salary." In addition, it was more than a seasoning, though it was that (Job 6:6). But it was also important as a medicine and a preservative for food. In this sense the Lord here uses it as a metaphor for something important in the Christian's life.

**I. (:30-32) FUNDAMENTAL LESSON: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF THE MESSIAH – DEATH IS NECESSARY BUT RESURRECTION IS CERTAIN**

**II. (:33-37) LESSON ON STATUS IN THE KINGDOM – THE PATHWAY TO GREATNESS IS HUMBLE SERVICE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE CROSS**

**III. (:38-42) LESSON ON SECTARIANISM – THE PATHWAY TO GREATNESS IS RESPECTING DIVERSITY IN KINGDOM MINISTRY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE CROSS**

**IV. (:43-50) LESSON ON SALTINESS – THE PATHWAY TO GREATNESS IS PROTECTING YOURSELF AGAINST THE CANCER OF SIN WHILE POSITIVELY IMPACTING OTHERS FOR CHRIST AND PROMOTING PEACE AMONG BELIEVERS**

**A. (:43-49) BE PURE – Protect Yourself Against the Cancer (Leaven) of Sin in Light of**

## Eternal Accountability

### 1. (:43-48) Protect Yourself Against the Cancer (Leaven) of Sin

#### a. (:43-44) Illustration of Hand of Temptation

*“And if your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life crippled, than having your two hands, to go into hell, [into the unquenchable fire, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched].”*

What “*life*” is in view here? Not this present life – you already are living in that; but eternal kingdom life that is in contrast to eternal punishment in hell

Look at **yourself** – don’t go around attacking the ministry of fellow believers and trying to hinder them – first take the speck out of your own eye – plenty to be concerned with  
Hands speak to human activity – what types of things are you doing?

Jesus speaking by way of **hyperbole** – nobody advocating for the physical mutilation of one’s body

Speaking to taking sin seriously; understanding the awful reality of hell

There are consequences for sinful behavior

Do whatever it takes . . . no matter how difficult . . . no matter how painful, to avoid hell

**Constable:** "Hell" translates the Greek word *gehenna*, the transliteration of the Hebrew phrase *hinnom* (lit. "Valley of Hinnom"). This valley, just south of Jerusalem, is where apostate Jews formerly offered human sacrifices to the pagan god Molech (cf. Jer. 7:31; 19:5-6; 32:35). King Josiah terminated this practice and converted the site into a city dump where rubbish burned constantly (2 Kings 23:10). The fire never went out at Jerusalem's *gehenna*, and the worms that fed on the garbage never died off. "Unquenchable fire" must mean *eternal*. External "fire" and internal "worms" are Old Testament pictures of destruction (cf. Isa. 66:24). Thus *gehenna* became a picture of the place of eternal punishment (Enoch 27:2; 90:26), not annihilation. The word *gehenna* appears 12 times in the New Testament, and in all but one of these occurrences Jesus spoke it (i.e., James 3:6).

#### b. (:45-46) Illustration of Foot of Temptation

*“And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame, than having your two feet, to be cast into hell, [where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched].”*

Feet speak to where you go – the path that you take

#### c. (:47-48) Illustration of Eye of Temptation

*“And if your eye causes you to stumble, cast it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes, to be cast into hell, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.”*

**Song:** “Be careful little eyes what you see . . . for the Father up above is looking down in love”

Eye speaks to the sins of lust and covetousness and envy

**1 Cor. 6:9ff** “*Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.*”

**Mark Dever:** your worst enemy is your own sin; forsake your own sin; we are in a life and death struggle with sin; no negotiation; no compromise; will be painful to root it out; sin is deceptive by its very nature; no way for us and sin to thrive together; take sin seriously

No doctrine of annihilation in Scripture

**Hendriksen:** One hears the objection, “But does not Scripture teach the *destruction* of the wicked?” Yes, indeed, but this *destruction* is not an instantaneous annihilation, so that there would be nothing left of the wicked; so that, in other words, they would cease to exist. The destruction of which Scripture speaks is an *everlasting destruction* (**II Thess. 1:9**). Their hopes, their joys, their opportunities, their riches, etc., have perished, and they themselves are tormented by this, and that forevermore. . . What is perhaps the most telling argument against the notion that the wicked are simply annihilated but that the righteous continue to live forevermore is the fact that in **Matt. 25:46** the same word describes the **duration** of both the punishment of the former and the blessedness of the latter: the wicked go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into everlasting life.

## 2. (:49) Embrace Accountability from the Perspective of Eternity

“*For everyone will be salted with fire.*”

How broad is the “*everyone*” referenced here?

Some would apply this more to believers – speaking of the **purification** performed by trials and sufferings and persecution in this life

Seems to be a broader reference than that – Jesus has just been talking about a fire that will be applied to all unbelievers in hell for all eternity – certainly at least that must be in view

Salt is associated with **permanence** – we are going to be stamped for all eternity as either believers or unbelievers

**Fire** here seems associated with **judgment**:

- For unbelievers, it will be the eternal hell fire of punishment and suffering
- For believers, it will be the judgment fire applied to our works at the judgment seat of Christ -- **1 Cor. 3:13ff** – again, it is not our mission to go around judging the ministry of other believers and hindering their ministry because they are not in our camp
- For believers can also be the fire of purifying and preserving our faith right now thru fiery trials

**Cambridge Bible:** Salt and fire have properties in common. Salt, like a subtle flame, penetrates all that is corruptible, and separates that which is decaying and foul, whilst it fixes and quickens that which is sound. Fire destroys that which is perishable, and thereby establishes the imperishable in its purest perfection, and leads to new and more beautiful forms of being. Thus both effect a kind of transformation.

Fire and salt associated with sacrifice of the **grain offering** that the Israelites were required to offer up:

**Lev. 2:11,13**

*Every grain offering you bring to the LORD must be made without yeast, for you are not to burn any yeast or honey in an offering made to the LORD by fire. 13 Season all your grain offerings with salt. Do not leave the salt of the covenant of your God out of your grain offerings; add salt to all your offerings.*

**Parunak:** Grain offerings must be accompanied with salt, and must not have leaven or honey in them. Leaven and honey promote fermentation; salt preserves food and protects it from spoilage. The offerings that we bring to the Lord should not be liable to change and deteriorate on their own, but should be stable.

Think of how as believers we are to offer up our whole being as a living sacrifice continually to the Lord – dedicated to His service – **Rom. 12:1-2**

Offering of consecration – total dedication – idea of permanence; God will remain faithful to His covenant and we are pledging our permanent commitment

### **B. (:50a) BE POTENT – Embrace Distinctiveness -- Positively Impacting Others for Christ**

*“Salt is good; but if the salt becomes unsalty, with what will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves,”*

Purity was mentioned first as the prerequisite for any positive impact on the world; no possibility of ministry if you have not taken care of the moral foundation of your life

Seems to be somewhat of a mixed metaphor with what just was referenced previously

Salt is in contrast to **Leaven** – with the Pharisees, this was the leaven of false doctrine  
Salt is a positive concept – used as currency in the day of Jesus; of value; provides distinctiveness

In what sense is salt “good”: Only good when it is performing its intended function

- **Preservative against corruption and decay in the world**

Cf. washing mouth with salt after dental procedures; protection against infection

- **Positive flavor of grace and wisdom**

Regarding conduct towards unbelievers – **Col. 4:6** “*Let your speech always be with **grace**, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.*”

- **Personal biblical convictions lived out in the context of a wicked world**

You will be peculiar in this sense – distinct – remember before you were encouraged to respect diversity in the kingdom – but not at the expense of watering down and throwing away your own biblical convictions

1 Pet. 2:9 (KJV) “*But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a **peculiar** people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light*”

How does salt become unsalty:

- When no more effectiveness as a preservative against corruption and decay
- When no positive flavor of grace and wisdom
- When it no longer functions as salt = no different than the world; hypocritical; insipid
- When no distinctiveness remains of holding firm to your biblical convictions

**Parunak:** refers to rock salt deposits; sometimes the salt is mingled with gypsum, or else the rain has washed the salt out leaving only tasteless minerals that cannot preserve. So we must **guard against becoming insipid in our commitment to the Lord.**

Exhortation to “*Have salt in yourselves*”

Not go running about judging other believers to see if they have salt in themselves

The renowned Baptist pastor, **George Truett** once said...

"You are either being corrupted by the world or you are salting it."

**Hendriksen:** have within oneself those qualities that promote truth, kindness, peace, joy, etc.

### **C. (:50b) BE PEACEFUL – Respect Diversity in the Kingdom -- Promoting Peace Among Believers**

*“and be at peace with one another.”*

Danger when you are being salty with your full potency that you would run roughshod over others and fail to be considerate and gracious

Negatively:

- Not striving to be the greatest in a selfish spirit of competition – jealousy, envy
- Not trying to exalt yourself by hindering the ministry of other believers who are not in your particular camp
- Should not be a lot of personal drama in the church – with all sorts of factions

Instead, Positively:

- Exercising patience and forbearance
- Being **gracious** and kind towards others even as Christ has been towards you

Regarding conduct towards unbelievers – **Col. 4:6** “*Let your speech always be with **grace**, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.*”

- Pursuing peace whenever possible

How did **Jesus** fulfill this command to “*be at peace with one another*”?

Certainly not by sacrificing His commitment to Truth – He did not shrink back from exposing the hypocrisy of the Pharisees or the doctrinal error of the Sadducees  
Truth can be divisive – we are not talking about peace at any price

But as much as possible be gracious towards others especially in the matter of patience and forbearance so that you are not always asserting your own rights; act in humility; act as a servant; submit yourselves to one another in Christ; keep your focus on kingdom objectives rather than personal preferences

The Apostle Paul had to address this matter of maintaining peace in personal relationships in the church at Philippi – **chap. 4:1-5**

“Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, so stand firm in the Lord, my beloved. <sup>2</sup> I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord. <sup>3</sup> Indeed, true comrade, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in *the cause of the gospel*, together with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life. <sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! <sup>5</sup> Let your forbearing *spirit* be known to all men. The Lord is near.”

“*be of the same mind*” – **Phil. 2:2**

### CONCLUSION:

The Lord Jesus was our example in each of these respects:

- Pure in His Life and Conduct\
- Potent in His Impact on Others
- Peaceable in His Relationships with Others

\* \* \* \* \*

### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Where do I need to be more radical in my fight against sin?
- 2) Am I impressing upon others the reality and the duration of everlasting punishment in hell?
- 3) Where is my salt losing its saltiness?
- 4) How can I do better at promoting peace among fellow believers while still maintaining my biblical convictions?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**MacArthur:** Verse 49, very cryptic, “**For everyone will be salted with fire.**” For everyone will be salted with fire. What does that mean? That is so cryptic as to be very difficult to understand. I ask a simple question, where in Scripture is the place where fire and salt come together? In Ezra 6:9 it says that salt has to be stored up to be used in sacrifices. And in Ezekiel



43:23 and 24, we have salt also used with sacrifices. And that's the answer to the question...where do salt and fire come together? Because sacrifices are burned. **Salt was added to sacrifices as a symbol of God's enduring covenant. Salt is a preservative.**

But there's one particular sacrifice that really fits perfectly here, Leviticus 2. In the opening five chapters of Leviticus, you have Scripture instruction on the five offerings...five offerings. In chapter 2 you have the **grain offering**...the grain offering. And it describes that offering. But I want you to go down to verse 13, "*Every grain offering of yours moreover you shall season with salt so that the salt of the covenant of your God should not be lacking from your grain offering. With all your offerings, you shall offer salt.*" Salt symbolizes God's promise, God's covenant, God's enduring faithfulness as you make the offering.

Now what is the grain offering? Well there were five offerings. There were four of them that were animal sacrifices...burnt offering, peace offering, sin offering, guilt offering, you see them in the first five chapters there. Those are all animal sacrifices and they all represent the need for atonement for sin. This is not an animal offering. This is not a sin offering. **This is an offering of consecration.** This is an offering of devotion and dedication. It symbolizes total devotion to the Lord. You gather up the grain, you gather up and you make a sacrifice of your grain on the altar. This then is covered with salt which speaks of the durability, the endurance and the permanence of this offering to God. God will keep His part and by sprinkling salt on it God we know will be faithful. His covenant, His lasting enduring faithfulness is symbolized in the salt and so should ours be as well. We are making a total sacrifice, a long-term, enduring, permanent offering. This is consecration, total consecration. So I call this radical sacrifice...radical sacrifice.

**Parunak:** 49-50, the lesson from salt

a) Background (quoted above)

b) 49, the value of salt Two sayings about being "salted." There are two OT passages that speak of being "salted." The second saying clearly alludes to the second; I think the first saying perhaps alludes to the first.

1) "Everyone shall be salted with fire."

a> Ezek 16:4 shows young babies were rubbed with salt, to toughen their skin and guard against infection. Without this care, the child cannot stand the harsh environment that the world presents.

b> Application: In Ezek 16:4, it is the Lord who provides the salt to toughen and protect the infant Israel. He is often depicted as a consuming fire (Deut 4:24; Heb 12:29). According to Mal 3:2,3, he is **like a refiner's fire, purging out all that is unclean.** Isa 33:13-17 declares that only the righteous can abide in the presence of "devouring fire" and "everlasting burnings." So when we stand before the Lord, our works shall be "tried by fire," 1 Cor 3:13. The fire of God's presence that destroys the wicked in 9:43-48 also purges and strengthens the believer. "Take up your cross," recognize that God purposes to kill whatever in you is displeasing to him. c> In this context, warns against the response of Pride; cf. Isa 57:15, where the ones who can endure the Lord's presence are "of a contrite and humble spirit."

2) "Every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.

a> Quoted from Lev 2:13.

b> Application: Now the salting element comes, not from the Lord, but from the believer. We are responsible to **guard against corruption**; to "hold fast the faithful word as [we have] been taught" (Titus 1:9).

c> In this context, warns against insecurity and abandoning our distinctives in the face of challenges from others.

c) 50a, the risk of losing salt There is no danger that the fire of God's presence will lose its heat, but the salt of our commitment may grow slack, so the Lord warns against this.

1) Salt that has lost its savor:

2) This saying appears in three different contexts, in Mt, Mk, and Lk.

a> Mt 5:13, in the Sermon on the Mount, along with the light of the world, in the context of persecution. Don't let opposition tempt you into being non-distinctive. Dare to stand out for the Lord.

b> Here, in an exhortation to respond correctly to differing Christian groups. Don't abandon what the Lord has showed you.

c> Lk 14:34, in context of the need to take up the cross and follow him, a warning to the multitudes (14:25) of the needed sacrifice. **Basic exhortation to distinctiveness.**

**Constable:** Jesus continued to use "salt" as a figure for testing. He said that tests from God, as salt on food, are "good" for us. Salt preserves food, prevents decay, and enhances flavor. The trials that God allows people to experience should have similar beneficial effects on them (cf. James 1:2-4). However, if salt becomes bland, it will not achieve its desired results (cf. Matt. 5:13). Likewise if God's trials lose their bite—if we become insensible and unresponsive to the self-discipline that He is seeking to teach us, by hardening our hearts—these trials can cease to benefit us. Therefore we must "*have salt in*" ourselves, namely, accept the trials that God sends us that demand self-discipline, rather than rejecting them. Furthermore we must live peacefully "with one another," rather than becoming sectarian (v. 38) or self-seeking (v. 34).

**Brian Borgman: Salted with Fire** [different approach]

Vs. 49-50 very difficult passage

We are not as aggressive against sin as we should be in hacking of limbs and gouging out eyes; so God graciously helps by salting everyone with fire

God is going to **purify** and **preserve** us (all disciples) by trial; **Lev. 2:13**; offerings brought to God need to be salted; terminology of the covenant of salt; symbol of purifying the offering before God and the preservation of the enduring covenant; unbreakable;

1) all who profess to be followers of Jesus Christ are to be sacrifices to God –

**Rom. 12:1-2** "*living sacrifice*"

**Rom. 6:12-13** "*present yourselves to God*"

2) all of Jesus' followers are to be salted – purified and preserved

**1 Pet. 1:3ff** "distressed by various trials" – what is the purpose of these trials?

Our faith must be purified and stress tested; be glad for trials that God sends

Where would we be today were it not for the fires of yesterday

3) a quality to the value of what God is doing to purify and preserve you  
Alkaline mixed in with sodium chloride – would have a repugnant taste  
Salt is good; has done its job; value in it; quality in it

TEXT: Mark 10:1-12 (Matt. 19:1-9; Luke 16:18)

TITLE: *WHAT GOD HAS JOINED TOGETHER MUST STAY TOGETHER*

**BIG IDEA:**

**HARD HEARTS COMPLICATE SIMPLE COMMANDS IN THE CASE OF DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE**

**INTRODUCTION:**

The **importance** of this topic cannot be overstated. We all know people who have been involved in some aspect of divorce and remarriage issues. It would be far preferable to determine our biblical convictions before we were under the emotional pressure of dealing with specific individuals and specific circumstances that hit close to home. But regardless, we have come upon the topic at this point in our study in Mark and must address it here.

**Statistics:** very disputed

1910 – **10%** of US marriages ended in divorce

1948 – percent had grown to **25%**

In the United States today, researchers estimate that 40%–50% of all first marriages, and 60% of second marriages, will end in divorce. [ these stats regarded as a myth by others] There are some well known factors that put people at higher risk for divorce: marrying at a very early age, less education and income, living together before marriage, a premarital pregnancy, no religious affiliation, coming from a divorced family, and feelings of insecurity. The most common reasons people give for their divorce are lack of commitment, too much arguing, infidelity, marrying too young, unrealistic expectations, lack of equality in the relationship, lack of preparation for marriage, and abuse.

**How can civilization survive** when the most basic unit of the society is so broken???

Now we are redefining gender and redefining the basic composition of marriage – no longer just between one man and one woman.

Then you have the great masses of young people that are rejecting or at least minimizing the institution of marriage altogether and just choosing to cohabit on a long term basis. They would look at today's discussion as an antiquated argument.

- The divorce rate for a third marriage is 73%—When it comes to marriage, practice doesn't make perfect. In fact, it only seems to make you worse. That's why **the divorce rate continues to get higher for each additional marriage**. Nearly 3 out of every 4 adults who are on their third marriage end up divorced again.
- Christian couples have the same divorce rate as the national average—It seems there's little truth to the saying "The family that prays together stays together." Protestant Christian couples are just as likely to get divorced as their secular counterparts. In fact, Atheists have a much lower divorce rate than Christians. [but how do you define Christians?]

**Approach:** study through this text on its own; but it merits a much wider treatment on a topic level throughout the Scripture to make sure that our interpretation is consistent and holds up against the various objections that could be lodged (**Matt. 19, 1 Cor. 7:15**)

Then address the more complicated objections and case study issues that arise and pastoral implications of how to respond in a wide context of situations --  
Value of study completed by **H. Van Dyke Parunak**

Today's lesson will not fully satisfy you and is not intended to answer all your questions. But we will start with this simple teaching from Mark's gospel. (gave you some homework to dig deeper)

## **HARD HEARTS COMPLICATE SIMPLE COMMANDS IN THE CASE OF DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE**

### **I. (:1-2) CONTROVERSY INITIATED BY PHARISEES = WHEN IS DIVORCE LAWFUL?**

#### **A. (:1) Setting**

1. Significance of the Geographical Region – confrontation between Herod and John the Baptist

*“And rising up, He went from there to the region of Judea, and beyond the Jordan;”*

*Καὶ ἐκεῖθεν ἀναστὰς ἔρχεται εἰς τὰ ὄρια τῆς Ἰουδαίας [καὶ] πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου,*

**Parunak:** In the Gospels, the Jewish leaders often try to force the Lord into a position that will make enemies for him. They spring one of these traps as he travels from Galilee to Jerusalem just before his crucifixion. Several roads lead from Galilee in the northern part of Israel to Jerusalem in the center.

Both Galilee and Jerusalem are west of the Jordan River, so most routes stay on the west side of the Jordan. One very popular route, though, is east of the Jordan, through the territory of Perea. The Lord follows the eastern route on his last journey to Jerusalem (Matt. 19:1; Mark 10:1).

The ruler of Perea is Herod Antipas, who beheaded John the Baptist. Herod did not dislike John, and in fact rather enjoyed listening to him preach (Mark 6:20). But John spoke out against Antipas' marriage to Herodias, whom he had seduced to divorce her first husband so that he could take her. John's preaching convicted Herodias, and to silence the prophet, she persuaded Antipas to imprison John and later to execute him (Mark 6:17-28).

The Pharisees know that divorce is a sensitive subject in Perea. They also know that the Lord's position on divorce, as presented in the Sermon on the Mount, is similar to John's. When they find Christ in this region, they try to lure him into saying something about divorce that will enrage Herod's wife, so that she will destroy him as she did John. Matthew and Mark record portions of the resulting conversation.

#### 2. Switch back to Public Teaching Ministry

*“and crowds gathered around Him again,”*

*καὶ συμπορεύονται πάλιν ὄχλοι πρὸς αὐτόν,*

### 3. Systematic Teaching

*“and, according to His custom, He once more began to teach them.”*  
καὶ ὡς εἰώθει πάλιν ἐδίδασκεν αὐτούς.

#### **B. (:2) Setup**

##### 1. Initiated by the Pharisees

*“And some Pharisees came up to Him,”*  
Καὶ προσελθόντες Φαρισαῖοι

Did not come to Jesus because they had a sincere interest in his teachings on this important subject.

They saw an opportunity to discredit the ministry of Jesus and put him at odds with the crowd. Remember, he was quite popular at this point. The Pharisees were feeling insecure and had experienced numerous defeats in confrontations with Jesus.

##### 2. Intended to Trap Jesus

*“testing Him,”*  
πειράζοντες αὐτόν.

Need to examine our **heart motivation** in studying this topic; is our intent to truly learn God’s heart on the matter of divorce?

If so ... why would we not be satisfied with a simple OT declaration: *“God hates divorce”*

When would you want to commit yourself to a particular behavior that God clearly hates??

##### 3. Involved Case Law in the Area of Divorce and Remarriage

*“and began to question Him whether it was lawful for a man to divorce a wife.”*  
ἐπηρώτων αὐτόν, εἰ ἔξεστιν ἀνδρὶ γυναῖκα ἀπολύσαι

What about this situation .... What about this situation ...

You can’t really separate the two issues ... if you are asking questions about the one topic (divorce), the answers have implications for the second topic (remarriage) – you must consider the two issues together

Remember the **two camps** represented at the time: both rabbis were near contemporaries of Jesus  
School of Shammai – conservatives – interpreted the law more rigidly; no divorce except for the case of sexual immorality

School of Hillel – liberals – interpreted the law more loosely; divorce could be legitimate for almost any justification you could imagine; anything that embarrassed, disgraced, or even displeased her husband; the wife burned the toast; etc.

Both schools believed in the legitimacy of divorce – just under what conditions .... So this is really an abbreviated question ... Pharisees were asking: is it lawful to divorce under any grounds other than immorality?

**Voddie Baucham:** camps in Christendom today

1) Permanence View -- no divorce or remarriage under any circumstances – Boice, Pentecost, Piper, Voddie Baucham

2) Semi-Permanence – You may divorce but not remarry

3) Permissive View – allows for divorce and remarriage – MacArthur

- **one clause view** – adultery only

- **two clause view** – also abandonment of believing spouse by an unbelieving spouse

- **liberal view** – just about for any reason

Righteousness has to exceed that of Pharisees – but on this one Jesus would agree?? Makes no sense

## **II. (:3-9) CLEAR TEACHING = NEVER DIVORCE**

### **A. (:3-5) What Did Moses Command?**

#### 1. (:3) Question Posed by Jesus

*“And He answered and said to them, ‘What did Moses command you?’”*

ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· τί ὑμῖν ἐνετείλατο Μωϋσῆς;

Jesus knows that their thinking will revert to the case study of Deut. 24 ... but the thinking of Jesus goes back to what God had set up from creation – recorded by Moses in the early chapters of Genesis

#### 2. (:4) Response Put Forth by the Pharisees

*“And they said, ‘Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away.’”*

οἱ δὲ εἶπαν· ἐπέτρεψεν Μωϋσῆς βιβλίον ἀποστασίου γράψαι καὶ ἀπολῦσαι.

In their minds, Moses legitimized divorce – the only issue was under what circumstances was it allowed

**James Edwards:** a text of concession, not a text of intention. You do not learn to fly an airplane by following the instructions for making a crash landing; you will not be successful in war if you train by the rules for beating a retreat. The same is true of marriage and divorce.

#### 3. (:5) Rebuttal Proclaimed by Jesus

*“But Jesus said to them, ‘Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment.’”*

ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· πρὸς τὴν σκληροκαρδίαν ὑμῶν ἔγραψεν ὑμῖν τὴν ἐντολὴν ταύτην.

Your confusion and lack of understanding on this issue can be traced back to one fundamental problem = *your hardness of heart*

*“this commandment”* from Deut. 24 that you are referencing is not a command to divorce; you have not answered the question that I asked initially; it was a command prohibiting certain actions when you were confronted with a specific situation

Moses teaches that:

IF a couple is divorced,

and IF the wife remarries,  
and IF that second union ends, whether by death or by divorce,  
THEN the original couple may not remarry.

**Parunak:** That is, Moses knew that the people had hard hearts, and that they would stumble into divorce. He wrote Deut. 24:1-4 to tell people what to do when they find themselves in such a circumstance. But God never intended that man and wife should separate. Christ reminds the Pharisees that the same Moses who wrote Deut. 24:1-4 also recorded the institution of marriage in Genesis:

**Piper:** The remarkable thing about these four verses is that, while divorce is taken for granted, nevertheless the woman who is divorced becomes "*defiled*" by her remarriage (**verse 4**). It may well be that when the Pharisees asked Jesus if divorce was legitimate he based his negative answer not only on God's intention expressed in **Genesis 1:27** and **2:24**, but also on the implication of **Deuteronomy 24:4** that remarriage after divorce defiles a person. In other words, there were ample clues in the Mosaic law that the divorce concession was on the basis of the hardness of man's heart and really did not make divorce and remarriage legitimate.

**Baucham:** Initiating a divorce is never lawful -- You are reading the case law wrong; Moses did not command a certificate of divorce to be given; Moses assumes the issue of the giving of the certificate; he is writing about the remarriage issue; **putting restrictions on a practice that was rampant**; he allowed that stuff to continue but not by way of commandment; **never lawful to divorce your wife**

**Transition:** Raise the bar ... from asking what Moses commanded . . . to now revealing what God has commanded since creation began (Moses did not come on the scene until thousands of years later)

## **B. (:6-9) What Does God Command?**

### 1. (:6) Origin of Gender

#### a. Time Stamped

*"But from the beginning of creation,"*

ἀπὸ δὲ ἀρχῆς κτίσεως

goes back way before the days of Moss

#### b. Two Mutually Exclusive Genders

*"God made them male and female."*

ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ ἐποίησεν αὐτούς.

This simple explanation of the origin of gender would solve a lot of controversial social problems today

You can't go around saying today I identify as a female even though God made me with male parts ... or vice versa

Is this too rigid and too harsh on God's part? Locking each person in to a specific gender?  
Not at all; the Creator knows what is best for His creatures; knows their very nature from even



before the point of conception

## 2. (:7-8) Essence of Marriage

### a. Creation of a New Household Unit

*“For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother,”*

*ἕνεκεν τούτου καταλείψει ἄνθρωπος τὸν πατέρα αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν μητέρα*

**Edwards:** a husband’s allegiance to his wife in the union of marriage surpasses his allegiance to father and mother

### b. Creation of a New One Flesh Relationship

*“and the two shall become one flesh;*

*consequently they are no longer two, but one flesh.”*

*καὶ ἔσονται οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν· ὥστε οὐκέτι εἰσὶν δύο ἀλλὰ μία σὰρξ.*

**Parunak:** The Bible regards marriage as the only legitimate context for physical union between man and woman. Physical union, though, is not enough to make a couple man and wife before God. The Lord Jesus makes this clear to the woman at the well of Sychar when he tells her that the man with whom she is presently living is not her husband (**John 4:18**). In the next chapter, we will see that at least three things are true of unions that the Bible recognizes as marriage.

- The man and woman enter into a covenant or commitment to one another.
- They make this commitment in keeping with the standards of their society and culture.
- They unite physically.

**Baucham:** **Wedding vows** are permanence view vows – for better or worse – adultery covered here; until we are parted by death; next issue addresses on Sermon on the Mount is vows!

## 3. (:9) Defining Principle Prohibiting Divorce

*“What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.”*

*ὃ οὖν ὁ θεὸς συνέζευξεν ἄνθρωπος μὴ χωριζέτω.*

The husband is not in control of the marriage – terminating it as he will; God is in control of the marriage union

Why no **exceptions** cited here?

**Piper** [cf. his position paper on his website – not the position of his church elders]: Before we jump to the conclusion that this absolute statement should be qualified in view of the exception clause (*“except for unchastity”*) mentioned in **Matthew 19:9**, we should seriously entertain the possibility that the exception clause in **Matthew 19:9** should be understood in the light of the absolute statement of **Matthew 19:6**, (*“let no man put asunder”*) especially since the verses that follow this conversation with the Pharisees in **Mark 10** do not contain any exception when they condemn remarriage.

What we studied last week about the Lesson on Saltiness was complicated; this by contrast is as **simple** a teaching as you can find in Mark’s Gospel

**Parunak:** The Pharisees see divorce as a right guaranteed by the Law, following the three law interpretation of Deuteronomy 24. The Lord says that it merely makes provision for man's sin. He supports the interpretation of the entire paragraph as a single command.

If no divorce ... then no remarriage apart from the death of the spouse – or else you have a situation of adultery

### **III. (:10-12) CLARIFICATION REGARDING REMARRIAGE (IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS FROM THE DISCIPLES) = ADULTERY (EXCEPT IN THE CASE WHERE THE SPOUSE HAS DIED)**

#### **A. (:10) Clarification Needed**

*“And in the house the disciples began questioning Him about this again.”*

Καὶ εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν πάλιν οἱ μαθηταὶ περὶ τούτου ἐπηρώτων αὐτόν.

The teaching of Jesus did not resolve the issue for the disciples. They needed further clarification and instruction.

#### **B. (:11-12) Case Studies**

##### 1. (:11) Husband Divorcing a Wife

*“And He said to them, ‘Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her;’”*

καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· ὃς ἂν ἀπολύσῃ τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ καὶ γαμήσῃ ἄλλην μοιχᾶται ἐπ’ αὐτήν.

Only 2 possible situations to address since marriage is between one man and one woman  
Divorce does not end the marriage relationship in the eyes of God

##### 2. (:12) Wife Divorcing a Husband

*“and if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery.”*

καὶ ἔὰν αὐτὴ ἀπολύσασα τὸν ἄνδρα αὐτῆς γαμήσῃ ἄλλον μοιχᾶται.

**Parunak:** The disciples' next question shows that they have always thought of divorce as a possible escape from a bad marriage. His disciples say to him,

*“If the case of the man be so with the wife, it is not expedient to marry” (Matt. 19:10).*

If there really is no escape from marriage other than death, then one had better remain unmarried. The disciples' suggestion shows how strong they understand the Lord's teaching to be. Some modern readers may try to find loopholes in the Lord's words. To the disciples, who hear the teaching over and over and discuss it with the Lord, there are no loopholes.

The Lord's answer to their comment certainly doesn't add any, either. He said to them, "Not all

receive this word, but those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let him who is able to receive it, receive it" (Matt. 19:11-12).

Their analysis is correct, as far as it goes. He who can follow it, should. But the disciples need to realize that not everyone can live a godly life as a single person. Celibacy requires a special gift from God. Most people should marry—and marry with the understanding that only death can end their union.

What about objections like the desertion of an unbelieving spouse?? **1 Cor. 7:15**  
Believer is freed from the obligations of marriage ... the cares of providing for that spouse .. but only death breaks the marriage bond and frees the individual to remarry.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Need to ask God to give us soft hearts on this issue ... not hard hearts that are clouded by the messiness of sinful practices and sinful traditions.

Need to go back to the divine intention from creation – What is the essence of marriage?

Need to understand that God intends for marriage to be permanent until the death of a spouse.

Need to embrace this view of the permanence of marriage – regardless of the pressures from society around us.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) If *God hates divorce*, why would any Christian choose to initiate this process and think that they are consistent with the will of God?
- 2) If adultery is a legitimate ground for divorce, why would Jesus omit that important exception in this critical teaching that addresses the very topic of “When is divorce permissible?”
- 3) Where do we find evidence in history of a society which has rejected God’s definition of marriage and later reversed their thinking to embrace biblical marriage?
- 4) Why would the disciples consider the teaching of Jesus so radical in this area if He was consistent with the School of Shammai?

\* \* \* \* \*

### **QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:**

**Parunak:** Matthew includes the fornication clause because his Jewish readers should know **Deuteronomy 22** and catch the Lord's pun on "dismiss." Gentile readers, not knowing that the Law requires a fornicator to be stoned, might misunderstand the clause and think that it justifies remarriage in the case of fornication. This is exactly what the Lord does not teach. Mark and Luke, keeping their Gentile audience in mind, avoid possible misunderstanding by leaving the

clause out.

Each component of the Lord's teaching emphasizes that marriages are made in heaven, but divorce is a purely human product. Every party involved in divorce and remarriage is guilty of adultery. The Lord condemns the mate who initiates the divorce, and (if remarriage follows the separation) the one who is put away and the second partner. The fornication clause seems to make an exception. But it was only recorded for Jewish audiences, and they should know from their own Scriptures that fornication leads, not to divorce, but to death.

TEXT: Mark 10:13-27

TITLE: LESSON ON KINGDOM REQUIREMENTS –  
WHO CAN ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

**BIG IDEA:**

**ENTERING THE KINGDOM OF GOD REQUIRES A SENSE OF NEEDINESS AND  
DEPENDENCE VS ENTITLEMENT AND SOPHISTICATION**

**[ENTERING THE KINGDOM OF GOD CAN BE INCREDIBLY EASY OR  
INCREDIBLY DIFFICULT]**

**INTRODUCTION:**

In our circles we are quick to criticize what we have termed “Easy Believism”. We reject the notion that one can accept Jesus as merely a Get-Out-of-Hell card while refusing to bow the knee to His authority as Lord and God. So we turn to passages like this one about the rich, young ruler and demonstrate how the evangelistic approach of Jesus is so unlike the approach of those today who would try to sweep all such Seekers into the kingdom indiscriminately.

Yet the value of today’s message is the **balance** that the teaching of Jesus provides as we set side by side the contrast between these **two** incidents that are recorded by Matthew, Mark and Luke. This is why I don’t want to preach on these two incidents in separate sermons. They must be seen together to bring out the **contrast** that Jesus is presenting.

In some sense entering the kingdom of God can be incredibly **easy** ... while in another sense it can be incredibly **difficult**. It all depends on your attitude and orientation in coming to Jesus.

Remember the earlier teaching in Mark 4 regarding the Parable of the Soils; we have those different types of soil reflected here in Mark 10

**Parunak: 10:1-31**, three encounters by the way.

These illustrate the soils once again:

- a> Roadside: Pharisees seeking to trap him.
- b> Good Soil: children with their simple faith.
- c> Thorny Soil: rich man clinging to his wealth. [no rocky soil here -- persecution]  
Someone with divided allegiance. The clearest example yet of thorny soil, drawn away by "*the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things.*"

Often the sticking point in presenting the gospel to someone is getting them to honestly and sincerely come to that point of brokenness where they reject the notion of their inherent goodness and come to grips with their own bankruptcy and neediness. There can be no message of Good News until that sense of a need for a Savior has been established.

**ENTERING THE KINGDOM OF GOD REQUIRES A SENSE OF NEEDINESS AND  
DEPENDENCE VS ENTITLEMENT AND SOPHISTICATION**

**I. (:13-16) ENTERING THE KINGDOM OF GOD REQUIRES A SENSE OF**

## NEEDINESS AND DEPENDENCE – SO SIMPLE AND EASY EXAMPLE OF A CHILD

### A. (:13) Pattern of Exclusivity Practiced by the Disciples

*“And they were bringing children to Him so that He might touch them; and the disciples rebuked them.”*

Καὶ προσέφερον αὐτῷ παιδιά ἵνα αὐτῶν ἅψηται· οἱ δὲ μαθηταὶ ἐπετίμησαν αὐτοῖς.

We probably picture the Moms bringing their little infants to Jesus here ... but the **masculine** plural pronoun is used here = “*them*” – probably the fathers bringing the children – or both parents together [good Father’s Day message]

Verb tense — **imperfect** – action in process -- this was happening over and over; not a one-time occurrence; iterative effect

**How old** were these children? A mix for sure

**Copeland:** Mark uses a word (*paidia*) that can mean children up to twelve, while Luke uses a word (*brephos*) that indicates infants - Lk 18:15

Mark later says Jesus “*took them up in His arms*”, suggestive of infants or young ones - Mk 10:15

This was not a surprising action on the part of parents who wanted the best for their children; What would be the expected benefit of Jesus touching them? They had seen power go out from Jesus and what His touch had accomplished in other settings

- Peter’s mother-in-law healed of fever – Mark 131 – touched her and raised her up
- Touching and healing the leper in Mark 1

But here the children are not sick; more like the blessing that the **Jewish patriarchs** had the authority to communicate to their children

Simply seeking whatever blessing Jesus could dispense; in our day would be accompanied with a photo opp

**Edwards:** The word for “*rebuke*” is a severe description, used elsewhere in Mark of exorcisms (1:25; 3:12; 9:25), opponents of God’s will (4:39; 8:30-33), or of outright censure (10:13, 48). Like Peter, the disciples “*do not have in mind the thing of God, but the things of men*” (8:33).

### B. (:14-15) Principle of Childlike Neediness and Dependence (vs. Sophistication)

*“But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant and said to them, ‘Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it at all.’”*

ἰδὼν δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἠγανάκτησεν καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· ἄφετε τὰ παιδιά ἔρχεσθαι πρὸς με, μὴ κωλύετε αὐτά, τῶν γὰρ τοιούτων ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ. <sup>15</sup> ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ὃς ἂν μὴ δέξηται τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ ὡς παιδίον, οὐ μὴ εἰσέλθῃ εἰς αὐτήν.

“*indignant*” -- Aroused to anger; vent oneself in expressed displeasure

“*hinder them*” – 9:39 still had not learned their lesson; disciples should have been facilitating access to Jesus and the blessings He could freely provide; not hindering access

Sophistication – as a result of education, worldly experience . . . Vs. helplessness, needy

**Edwards:** In this story children are not blessed for their virtues **but for what they lack:** they come only as they are – small, powerless, without sophistication, as the overlooked and dispossessed of society. . . Whatever a child receives, he or she receives by grace on the basis of sheer neediness rather than by any merit inherent in him or herself.

“*such as these*”

**Parunak:** This passage is sometimes cited to prove infant baptism (Westminster Confession, ch. 28, art. 4) or the salvation of infants, but note the emphasis that the Lord here places on the fact that these youngsters “*come to*” and “*receive*” him. They are not infants, but young people capable of repentance and faith. (But there were infants among them, Lk 18:15 *brephos*)

**Mark Copeland:** Some use this passage to support infant baptism:

- a. Though the earliest mention of infant baptism is around 200 A.D.
- b. It began only after the doctrine of original sin developed, that infants are born in sin
- c. The practice increased as baptism became viewed as a sign or seal of the covenant God has with His people, akin to circumcision - cf. Gen 17:10-12
- d. This connection is further assumed from Paul’s mention of baptism as a spiritual circumcision - cf. Col 2:11-12
- e. Yet both here and in Colossians, it is reading into the text (eisegesis) what is not there

Contrary to Biblical evidence regarding baptism and the new covenant:

- a. There is no real evidence of infant baptism in the scriptures
- b. The guilt of sin is not inherited - Eze 18:20
- c. Baptism requires faith and repentance, of which infants are incapable - Mk 16:16; Ac 8:37; 2:38
- d. In the new covenant, no one has to be taught to know the Lord; unlike the old covenant where infants had to be taught to know the Lord (infant baptism would make that distinction of the new covenant meaningless) - cf. He 8:6-13
- e. Paul’s comparison of baptism to circumcision pertains to the act of cutting away, not of being a seal or sign of the covenant - Col 2:11-12

**MacArthur** wants to take this passage as the key text on what happens to all infants before age of accountability – answering the question of whether or not they all go to heaven????

Stay on point with the principle Jesus is trying to teach here

**Alistair Begg:**

- 1) the kingdom of God is for the weak, the helpless and the unimportant
- 2) unless we receive the kingdom of God on that basis we will never enter it

### **C. (:16) Picture of Divine Blessing**

“*And He took them in His arms and began blessing them, laying His hands upon them.*”

καὶ ἐναγκαλισάμενος αὐτὰ κατευλόγει τιθεὶς τὰς χεῖρας ἐπ' αὐτά.

Jesus did more than just touch the children – took them in His arms and blessed them

**Constable:** Mark also wrote that Jesus "took" the children "in His arms" and blessed them fervently (Gr. *kateulogei*). This was the act of a father in Jewish life (cf. Gen. 27:38). This Greek word appears only here in the New Testament. The disciples viewed the children as individuals unworthy of Jesus' attention, but Jesus saw them as important in their own right and possessing important qualities that adults need to cultivate. Mark recorded eight times that Jesus touched someone, and in each case the effect was beneficial (cf. 1:41; 3:10; 5:28, 41; 6:56; 7:32; 8:22; 10:13).

Song “*Just as I Am*” – that is how we must come

## **II. (:17-27) ENTERING THE KINGDOM OF GOD CAN BE INCREDIBLY DIFFICULT – THE OBSTACLE OF ENTITLEMENT AND SOPHISTICATED – EXAMPLE OF RICH YOUNG RULER**

### **A. (:17-20) Enthusiasm Regarding Eternal Life**

#### 1. (:17) Seeker Mentality

*“And as He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and began asking Him, ‘Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’”*

Καὶ ἐκπορευομένου αὐτοῦ εἰς ὁδὸν προσδραμῶν εἷς καὶ γονυπετήσας αὐτὸν ἐπηρώτα αὐτόν· διδάσκαλε ἀγαθέ, τί ποιήσω ἵνα ζῶν αἰώνιον κληρονομήσω;

**Constable:** The young man thought he could obtain the kingdom with works and self-assertion, not as a little child. . . Mark and Luke wrote for Gentiles for whom "*inheriting*" clarified what was in the rich young ruler's mind. He was talking about getting something that he as a Jew thought that he had a right to obtain because of his ethnic relationship to Abraham.

**Mark Copeland:** In our text, we read of a rich man who was so right, yet wrong...

- a. He came to the right person - Mk 10:17
- b. He asked the right questions - Mk 10:17
- c. He certainly received the right answers - Mk 10:19-21
- d. But in the end, he made the wrong decision - Mk 10:22

#### 2. (:18-19) Slap in the Face

- a. (:18) Understand the Person of God

*“And Jesus said to him, ‘Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.’”*

ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτῷ· τί με λέγεις ἀγαθόν; οὐδεὶς ἀγαθὸς εἰ μὴ εἷς ὁ θεός.

Don't make reference to the person of God in some careless or undiscerning fashion -- make sure you understand who you are dealing with ...



b. (:19) Understand the Requirements of God

*“You know the commandments, Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.”*

τὰς ἐντολὰς οἶδας· μὴ φονεύσης, μὴ μοιχεύσης, μὴ κλέψης, μὴ ψευδομαρτυρήσης, μὴ ἀποστερήσης, τίμα τὸν πατέρα σου καὶ τὴν μητέρα.

3. (:20) Superficial Commitment

*“And he said to Him, ‘Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up.’”*

ὁ δὲ ἔφη αὐτῷ· διδάσκαλε, ταῦτα πάντα ἐφυλαξάμην ἐκ νεότητός μου.

**Constable:** At age 12, a Jewish boy became a "son of the covenant" (Heb. *bar miswah*, from which comes Bar Mitzvah). The Jews regarded themselves as responsible for their obedience to the Law from that age on. It is probably that the man meant he had observed the Law from the age of 12.

**B. (:21-22) Exposure of Sinful Priorities that are Obstacles to Eternal Life**

1. (:21) Acid Test

*“And looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him, and said to him, ‘One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.’”*

Ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἐμβλέψας αὐτῷ ἠγάπησεν αὐτὸν καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ· ἓν σε ὑστερεῖ· ὑπάγε, ὅσα ἔχεις πώλησον καὶ δός [τοῖς] πτωχοῖς, καὶ ἔξεις θησαυρὸν ἐν οὐρανῷ, καὶ δεῦρο ἀκολούθει μοι.

Compassion of the Lord for the lost

**Constable:** He was trusting in his wealth, wealth he probably viewed as evidence that his good works made him acceptable to God. The Old Testament taught that God normally blessed the righteous with physical prosperity (e.g., Job 1:10; 42:10; Ps. 128:1-2; Isa. 3:10). He needed to abandon that essentially self-confident faith, and he needed to trust in and follow Jesus. He had also made wealth his god rather than God. His reluctance to part with it revealed his idolatry. By selling all he had, giving it to the poor, and following Jesus—he would confess his repudiation of confidence in self and affirm his trust in Jesus. Then he would "have treasure in heaven," something that would last forever.

2. (:22) Abject Failure

*“But at these words his face fell, and he went away grieved, for he was one who owned much property.”*

ὁ δὲ στυγνάσας ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ ἀπῆλθεν λυπούμενος· ἦν γὰρ ἔχων κτήματα πολλά.

## C. (:23-27) Explanation of the Degree of Difficulty in Obtaining Eternal Life

### 1. (:23-24a) Degree of Difficulty Stated

*“And Jesus, looking around, said to His disciples,  
‘How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!’  
And the disciples were amazed at His words.”*

Καὶ περιβλεψάμενος ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγει τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ· πῶς δυσκόλως οἱ τὰ χρήματα ἔχοντες εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσελεύσονται. <sup>24</sup> Οἱ δὲ μαθηταὶ ἐθαμβοῦντο ἐπὶ τοῖς λόγοις αὐτοῦ.

### 2. (:24b-25) Degree of Difficulty Emphasized by Way of Illustration

*“But Jesus answered again and said to them, ‘Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.’”*

ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς πάλιν ἀποκριθεὶς λέγει αὐτοῖς· τέκνα, πῶς δύσκολόν ἐστιν εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσελθεῖν. <sup>25</sup> εὐκοπώτερόν ἐστιν κάμηλον διὰ [τῆς] τρυμαλιᾶς [τῆς] ῥαφίδος διελθεῖν ἢ πλούσιον εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσελθεῖν.

Speaking of **Impossibility** here

### 3. (:26-27) Degree of Difficulty Does Not Apply to God’s Saving Power

#### 1. (:26) Bar Seems Set Too High Humanly Speaking

*“And they were even more astonished and said to Him,  
‘Then who can be saved?’”*

οἱ δὲ περισσῶς ἐξεπλήσσαντο λέγοντες πρὸς ἑαυτούς· καὶ τίς δύναται σωθῆναι;

#### 2. (:27) Barrier Only Broken by the Sovereign Power of God

*“Looking upon them, Jesus said, ‘With men it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God.’”*

ἐμβλέψας αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγει· παρὰ ἀνθρώποις ἀδύνατον, ἀλλ’ οὐ παρὰ θεῶ· πάντα γὰρ δυνατὰ παρὰ τῷ θεῷ.

**Parunak:** the Lord confirms that salvation is impossible, unless God intervenes. God is the only one who can deliver sinful people from the bondage in which their own lusts hold them.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector – **Luke 18:8-14**

What a contrast!

\* \* \* \* \*

## DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Do we love children like Jesus loved children?
- 2) Where am I asserting autonomy and independence and resourcefulness where I should be exhibiting neediness and dependency on my Savior?
- 3) What is my perspective towards money and possessions?
- 4) Who controls entrance into the kingdom of God?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Mark Copeland:**

### **THE PROBLEM WITH RICHES**

#### **A. THE ABSORBING INTEREST OF RICHES...**

1. Riches do not satisfy, and we foolishly think that simply more riches will bring satisfaction - cf. Ec 1:8; 5:10
2. With riches comes the preoccupation with them: how to use, maintain, store, etc.  
-- Like a black hole, the accumulation of riches can absorb what time and energy we have so that we have little for anything else (such as family, church, the Lord)

#### **B. THE DECEITFUL PROMISE OF RICHES...**

1. Jesus warned about the deceitfulness of riches - Mk 4:19
2. Riches promise much, but really offer little in return
  - a. They can easily disappear, rust, or be stolen - Pr 23:5; Mt 6:19
  - b. They cannot buy one's salvation - Ps 49:6-9,16-20
  - c. Neither can they protect one from God's wrath - Zep 1:18  
-- Riches can deceive one into thinking they are in need of nothing; the parable of the rich fool illustrates the folly of such thinking - Lk 12:16-21

#### **C. THE FOOLISH PRIDE OF RICHES...**

1. Wealth tends to promote a sense of arrogance and pride - cf. Deu 8:11-17
2. It was such pride that was the downfall of Sodom and Israel - Eze 16:49-50; Hos 13:4-6  
-- Blinded by such pride, one will not seek God - Ps 10:4

#### **D. THE HARDENING SELFISHNESS OF RICHES...**

1. The wealthy, while in a position to help others, often close their hearts to the cry of the poor
2. This was one of Israel's sins - Am 2:6; 5:11-12; 8:4-6  
-- Abusing the poor to make money, failing to respond to their cries for justice, interested more in money than the welfare of the poor, such are the problems that often afflict the rich  
[Certainly not all who are rich are guilty of such things]

### **LESSONS GLEANED FROM THE PROBLEM OF RICHES**

#### **A. THE FOLLY OF COVETOUSNESS...**

#### **B. THE DUTY OF CONTENTMENT...**

C. THE NEED FOR SYMPATHY FOR THE RICH...  
D. FAITH IN THE POWER OF GOD...

**Parunak:** Does this mean we must sell all that we have? The practice in the NT varies.

- 1) In Jerusalem in the early days, faced with widespread poverty, the church did pool its goods for the relief of the poor (2:45; 4:34).
- 2) But in Corinth, individuals retained control over their own purses (16:1).
- 3) Conclude: this is something concerning which the Spirit of God may lead different people differently. This man's attachment to his wealth was such that for him it was his bankbook or his soul. We need the let the Lord search our hearts.

**MacArthur:** Matthew, Mark and Luke all follow up this incident with the story of the rich, young ruler. You remember that story is the classic example of a self-righteous religious Jew who, though self-righteous and religious, had no place in the Kingdom. This is a man who said, "I have kept all the Law since my youth." And this man had no place in the Kingdom and here are babies who couldn't keep the Law at all and they have a place in the Kingdom. This is a dramatic contrast. . . The elders used to say that when you pray for your child and you pray blessing on your child, you pray this, that the child would be famous in the Law, faithful in marriage and abundant in good works

**MacArthur:** So our Lord says, "These babies go into the Kingdom purely by sovereign grace. They have nothing to commend themselves." And this is the greatest illustration of how everybody goes into the Kingdom who goes into the Kingdom. It's by sovereign grace, not because of your achievement. You have achieved no more than a baby could achieve. It's a gift of grace. And thus **John Calvin** wrote, "The passage gives Kingdom citizenship to both children and those who are like children." [??]

**MacArthur: The Tragedy of a Selfish Seeker**

Here we learn from the life of our Lord the reality of how to deal with a selfish shallow seeker who in this case is extremely religious. And the central point of this encounter is that proud, selfish people, no matter how much they may say they want eternal life, are not prepared to receive it. This young man failed the greatest test of his life. He was offered a choice between himself and God, between fulfillment here and now and fulfillment in the life to come. The question was...what was more valuable to him? God and the life to come? Or his own will and the present life? . . .

He's young and he's wealthy and he owns a lot of property and he has achieved spiritual respect and spiritual status by being made the chief of a synagogue. It means the people have great respect for him. He's a moral man. He hadn't gained his wealth immorally and he's respectable. And yet there is in his heart a deep fear that he does not possess what he needs most and that is salvation, eternal life, the hope of heaven. . .

Here is the most damning delusion that any mind can ever believe, that I'm good. That's it. That I'm good. When you tell people they are wicked, evil, corrupt, and not good at all, they don't believe that. They didn't believe it then, they don't believe it today. People don't believe that. So they go to hell believing they're good. And until they believe they're not, there's no hope for them.

## **Alistair Begg: Like a Little Child**

“I refuse to join any club that would have me as a member” – **Groucho Marx** – entry requirements for any club – Jesus turns human evaluation upside down and makes entry into his kingdom dependent on none of the things we use to define our significance;

- 1) the kingdom of God is for the weak, the helpless and the unimportant
- 2) unless we receive the kingdom of God on that basis we will never enter it

Jesus is speaking concerning entrance into the kingdom of God; men need to turn from their own kingly rule and embrace His rule

### **I. Description –**

- A. The parents’ expectation is understandable – they want this increasingly famous rabbi to bless their children; could I have a photo while you do this
  - B. The disciples’ reaction is unacceptable – they set up a barrier instead of providing access;
  - C. Jesus’ indignation is unmistakable – strong, graphic word used here
- These children had no standing in society; that was not a reason to dismiss them;  
The point is not: Jesus was nice to children and we should be nice to children too

### **II. Instruction – “He said to them”**

“*such as these*” – not specifically children

“*verily, verily*” – big statement coming

- A. the kingdom of God is for the weak, the helpless and the unimportant  
They understood the nature of children – not cute, cuddly and the center of our universe ...  
Children are not innocent! If you think that, you don’t know children  
They are not to be the center of our universe  
Small, weak, helpless, at the bottom of the social structure, have no say in decisions; have no claim or merit; the epitome of the needy; entirely dependent on parents providing them with nourishment and cleanliness and care; want a life left on in the dark night; feel sense of aloneness; they have no obvious importance; zero status

Must receive the kingdom of God on this basis or we will never enter it –

- can’t claim it as a right;
- can’t attempt to earn it as a reward

it is about accepting a gift of grace; not achieving something; Rom. 6:23; don’t distort the grace of God

- B. unless we receive the kingdom of God on that basis we will never enter it

### **III. Application**

This story humbles our pride for all for whom status is the issue and picks us up in our fallenness  
Independent spirit: we are basically good; we are benefactors rather than beneficiaries = pride  
Welcomes those who are broken and of contrite heart – “Do you mean you would give such a wonderful gift to one such as me?”

**Groucho Marx:** “a child of five would understand this; send someone to fetch a child of five”

## Mark Dever: Children Teach Us

What is our attitude towards children? Tells us much about the future; future of our society; are we aware of how important children are? This passage a goldmine for eisegesis – reading things into the text

### I. What the Passage Does Not Teach – Six Things:

1. That you are saved by having Christian parents – picture of parents bringing their children to Christ – I wish it were that easy
2. That all infants are saved – topic is about salvation; but language of metaphor and analogy; symbol and illustration – “*such as*” . . . “*like*” – The advantage Jesus is speaking of is not of age but of a specific attitude; not speaking of innocence of children; study other passages that speak more directly to the subject; don’t try to support what we would like the passage to say
3. That infants should be baptized – appears to be a pretty dry passage; Calvin called this passage a “shield against AntiBaptists” -- Spurgeon – no connection to infant baptism – even though we value children; cf. **Acts 2:39** – Peter does talk about the promise being for your children – in that it endures through the generations; “and for all who are far off” does not teach baptism of foreigners – promise is for all whom the Lord will call; you can find passages with babies and passages with baptism . . . but no passages with both
4. That children should be baptized at low age – not clear what age children are involved here; something a bit older than infants is suggested here; “*come*” themselves to me . . . speaks more to the attitude that an older person should have if they want to enter the kingdom
5. That we should have a ceremony of infant dedication – that may be argued upon its own merits; but Jesus never instituted such a ceremony; hesitancy of creating new ceremonies or rituals
6. That children should be church members at young age – danger of deception of wrongly baptizing short-lived decisions; what is requirement for a credible profession of faith to precede baptism

### II. What the Passage Does Teach – 3 Things:

1. Love Children – not the way children were treated in that time and culture – consider how revolutionary were the actions of Jesus – everybody made in image of God; not valuing them for how they can benefit you; society kills the children and the elderly; show how God has loved us; make it a priority to care for your children
2. Evangelize Children – kingdom of God is not something that we bring about like social justice;
3. We Enter the Kingdom by Being Like a Child – in what sense?? Not some romanticized view of children; a willingness to believe and trust; meekly and humbly depend upon; you will never come to Christ thru intellectual skepticism; littleness and neediness; we are without power

## Mark Dever: Money Lies

Do you have enough money this morning?

How important is money to you?

Jack Benny: Criminal demands: Your money or your life? I’m thinking . . .

Money allows us to keep score -- the currency by which we evaluate our life;

Money talks; money promises; and money lies – can be very deceptive; anything in the place of God is an idol; Jesus surprising the disciples;

What is eternal life? Vs. 21 – having treasure in heaven is how Jesus interprets it

This young man looks like a seeker; clearly religiously motivated; how many times does a rich man run? Falls on his knees – not a normal activity for this guy – shows vulnerability and

transparency in asking the most important question you can imagine – not asking to show how much you know; he really wants to know the answer  
What is the most important issue in all of life?? Not politics  
My job is not the most important thing in my life

(10:17-31)

1) Know Who God is – God is uniquely good; do you perceive who I am?? Our hope is in Jesus  
Use the Law to expose the Moral Need

2) Give up other securities like trust in wealth – Jesus showed compassionate love;  
Use all that you have for God; not preaching asceticism but stewardship;  
Some people never want to hear about Lordship of Christ over their money;  
Money has made a lot of promises that have not worked out; beware of the power of money to separate you from God  
Be rich in good deeds; give all that you can  
Rich young man is not so eager now  
Lottery will never use this verse: great wealth made him sad!! He knows down deep in his heart that he is missing out  
The sudden importance of the ultimate turns light on so you begin to see what ultimately matters;  
Had to be more concerned about saving his soul than saving his money;  
Having a lot of money is not bad; use it positively and productively; but potentially dangerous and deceptive; Christ is to be our security

3) Despair of living a good life on your own (vs. 23)

TEXT: Mark 10:28-31

TITLE: ABUNDANT RATE OF RETURN IN CHRISTIAN COMMITMENT

**BIG IDEA:**  
**IT IS WORTH IT TO FOLLOW JESUS**

**INTRODUCTION:**

As the summer Olympics rapidly approach, we will be impressed once again with the sacrifices that these young athletes have made to try to achieve Olympic gold.

\* \* \* \* \*

The path to becoming a champion is paved by great sacrifices. They say it takes hours and hours of practice to become proficient. Many researchers suggest that it takes 10,000 hours. If you practiced your art for 2 hours every day it would take you 13.7 years to reach this mark.

Question: “What was one of the biggest sacrifices you had to make in order to get to the top?”  
Responses from some of the greatest athletes:

**1) Bart Conner – USA Olympic Hall of Famer and World Champion on the Parallel Bars**  
<http://1t1jmj43yo4m291xrgtfdtsq.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Bart-Conner.jpg>  
*“The key issue is for me is that I never saw any of it as a sacrifice, just choices. So, I never felt that I was missing something, only that I chose something else.”*

**Accomplishments:**

Bart is one of the greatest gymnasts to ever compete in the Olympics. He was a member of the gold medal-winning men’s gymnastics team at the 1984 Summer Olympic Games where he won an individual gold medal on the parallel bars.

**2) Kristine Lilly – Professional American Soccer Player and Most Capped Men’s or Women’s Soccer Player In The History Of The**

**Sport**  
<http://1t1jmj43yo4m291xrgtfdtsq.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Kristine-Lilly.jpg>  
*“I’m not sure I would call it sacrifices that I made to be the best I could, or more so just choices to want to play for my country. I always put my training first. Whether it was cold outside and snowy, I still found a way to get a work out in. I always wanted to make sure I was fit enough to be ready to go into training camp with the U.S. national team. I did miss a lot of family functions and birthdays but my family was so supportive we made up for them in other ways. Going after your dream takes a commitment and lots of support and hard work. I had all those pieces to be able to play for the U.S. for over 23 years. I enjoyed my career and all I put into it and got out of it...”*

<http://ashotofadrenaline.net/18-of-the-greatest-athletes-on-earth-share-their-insights-on-the-sacrifices-it-takes-to-get-to-the-top/>

\* \* \* \* \*



Rich young ruler came to the conclusion that it was not worth it to him to follow Jesus.

## IT IS WORTH IT TO FOLLOW JESUS

### I. (:28) SACRIFICIAL COST OF CHRISTIAN COMMITMENT

*“Peter began to say to Him, ‘Behold, we have left everything and followed You.’”*

*“Behold”* – calling attention to what he is now saying

*“we”* – in contrast to the rich young ruler

#### A. What Have We Renounced to Follow Jesus?

*“we have left everything”*

1. Earthly Possessions

2. Earthly Relationships

3. Earthly Status and Security

Still had a boat and a house ...

#### B. What Have We Suffered by Virtue of Identifying with Jesus?

*“and followed You”*

Perfect tense – the following still continues on

1. Material Suffering in the Form of Deprivation

Jesus does not have a place to lay His head

2. Emotional Suffering in the Form of Unjust Attacks

From mocking, unjust criticism, attacks

3. Physical Suffering in the Form of Persecutions

**Constable:** Peter, speaking for the other disciples, was still thinking in physical rather than spiritual terms. He turned the conversation back to the subject of giving up all to follow Jesus (v. 22). The rich young ruler had refused to forsake all and follow Jesus, but the disciples had done just that. "We" is emphatic in the Greek text.

Matthew's gospel includes the rest of Peter's question – assumed here by Mark:

*“What then will there be for us?”*

**Borgman:** Not unspiritual to be **motivated by reward**

God made us with capacity to enjoy His creation and we are driven by the things we enjoy;

What do we desire most? This determines our decision making;

Our ultimate problem is not so much that we think wrong or choose wrong; but that we desire wrong – God changes our desires in regeneration

**Matt. 13:44** – kingdom of God is like a treasure found in the field; a man discovers it and then **for joy** sells all that he has and goes and buys the field

**John 6:35** – Jesus is the bread of life – come and eat and you will be satisfied and have great joy

**Jer. 2:13** – insanity of sin – exchanging riches of holiness for crummy stuff

Rich young man chose acres of dirt over riches of Christ;

Cf. child choosing nickel over a dime because it is bigger; no concept of value;

**Heb. 11:6** – you must believe that God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him;

## **II. (:29-30) SUPREME COMPENSATION FOR CHRISTIAN COMMITMENT**

### **A. Christian Sacrifice Acknowledged**

*“Jesus said, ‘Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel’s sake,’”*

Jesus does not minimize or try to dismiss the sacrifice involved

Only looking in this context at sacrifice in association with following Jesus and proclaiming the gospel and seeking to advance the kingdom of God

High motivation involved – *“for My sake and for the gospel’s sake”*

**Sproul:** Years ago, I became involved in a particularly furious theological battle, and it cost me a number of friends, friends who were very important to me. I became quite depressed about it. But one night, in the midst of that controversy, I thought of one of the lines in Martin Luther’s great hymn, *“A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.”* That line says, *“Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also.”* This is what Jesus calls us to do. He said, *“No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62).* . . . In that kingdom, the only thing that will matter is faithfulness to Christ.

No exceptions to what Jesus promises here

### **B. Short Term Reward**

#### 1. Rate of Return

*“but that he shall receive a hundred times as much now in the present age,”*

not pie in the sky when you die

**Analogy:** hard work and sacrifice of sowing a crop is forgotten in the joy of the abundant harvest that is reaped

Jumps from their thinking in physical terms to the more abiding spiritual realities

Not a justification for some kind of “Name it, claim it” guarantee of physical wealth and riches

**Analogy** -- Financial planning for retirement – pretty meagre rate of return on investments; just

want to be protected and not lose everything

## 2. Currency of the Reward

*“houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms,”*

What is the nature of the reward; in what does it consist; how is it measured; what does it look like; how real is it

**Chiastic structure:** physical blessings – dwelling places / relationships – same generation / relationships – multiple generations/ physical blessings – income producing

You cannot have left more than 1 house and 1 farm; blessed with multiple – in fact one hundred fold

**Lawson:** New relationships:

**Mark 3:35** *“For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother.”*

**Rom. 16:13** – mother of Rufus is also my mother; had cared for Paul during his ministry

**1 Cor. 4:15** *“in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel”*

**1 Tim. 1:2** *“To Timothy, my true child in the faith”*

Calling one another brother and sister in Christ

## 3. Inevitability of Suffering

*“along with persecutions;”*

Unwelcome part of the benefits package – but necessary – presented here as part of the benefits package

We share in the sufferings of Christ

Jesus did not hide this reality from His followers; told them up front – no small print in the contract

If they hated Me, they will hate you too

**Borgman:**

**Phil. 1:29** – it has been graced to you to suffer for the gospel

**2 Tim. 3:12** – inevitability of suffering persecution

**Matt. 5:10-12**

**Acts 5:41** – they left after being flogged; rejoicing because they had been judged worthy to suffer for the sake of the name

Persecutions will come, they are a benefit; they accrue to your reward in heaven; Christ’s community has always been a suffering community

**Edwards:** noteworthy since it is the only negative term in a list of blessings. Its presence in the list reminds disciples that Christian existence is not utopia, and Christian faith is not an insurance policy against adversity and hardship. Not only is this generally true of discipleship, but the presence of “persecution” likely held special meaning for Mark’s congregation in Rome that suffered so profoundly under Nero’s persecutions. Their sufferings – and all suffering that results from faithfulness to the gospel – are not a sign of divine abandonment or disfavor, but an inevitable concomitant of faith. . . Jesus will have no divided allegiances; he will have all of us or he will not have us at all – so jealous is his love.

**Lenski:** Persecutions alone are able to lift us into the company of the prophets to share their high rewards (Matt. 5:10-12).

### **C. Long Term Reward**

*“and in the age to come, eternal life.”*

**Hendriksen:** It should be borne in mind that the concept “life everlasting” is both quantitative and qualitative, with emphasis on the latter. It is the holiness, knowledge, fellowship, peace, joy, etc. pertaining to the life of all those who are in Christ, and as such a life that will last on and on and on forever and ever.

**Constable:** Disciples who follow Jesus wholeheartedly can anticipate three things. First, God will give them more in kind spiritually of what they have sacrificed physically. Second, they will receive persecution as Jesus' disciples. Only Mark mentioned this, undoubtedly for his original persecuted readers' benefit. Commitment to discipleship means "*persecutions*" as well as rewards. Third, faithful disciples will enjoy their eternal life to an extent that unfaithful disciples will not (cf. **John 10:10; 17:3**).

“Keep your eye on the prize”

### **III. (:31) SURPRISING CONSUMMATION – REVERSAL OF ORDER**

*“But many who are first, will be last; and the last, first.”*

Evaluation of Christ is far different from the evaluation of the world  
Different value system

**Constable:** The "*first*" in rank and position in this age, such as the rich young ruler, "*will be last*" in the next. Conversely, "*the last*" in this age, such as the Twelve apostles, will be "*first*" in the next.

**Parunak:** the summary paradox. Those who are now first by the world's standards will be last in God's reckoning; those whom the world despises shall one day be first.

**Hendriksen:** not only are there degrees of suffering in hell (Luke 12:47, 48), there are also degrees of glory in the restored universe (1 Cor. 15:41, 42). There will be surprises however. Not only will many of those who are now regarded as the very pillars of the church be last, but also many who never made the headlines – think of the poor widow who contributed “two mites” (Mark 12:42), and Mary of Bethany whose act of loving lavishness was roundly criticized by the disciples (Matt. 26:8) – shall be first on the day of judgment (Mark 12:43, 44; cf. Matt. 26:10-13). The disciples, who were constantly quarreling about rank (Mark 9:33f.; Matt. 18:1 f.; 20:20; Luke 22:24) better take note!

### **CONCLUSION:**

What is involved in having a model of leadership that is patterned after that of a servant??

**Lawson's Outline:**

**My Outline:**

- |                       |                         |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1) Radical Commitment | Sacrificial Cost        |
| 2) Righteous Reward   | Supreme Compensation    |
| 3) Reversed Order     | Surprising Consummation |

**Illustration:** missionary **Henry Morrison** – left business and family behind to go to Africa; for 40 years they served faithfully; got on a steamer to come back home to the states; sailed into harbor of NYC – Will anyone be there to greet us? As ship pulled into the harbor, there was a band and multitude of people celebrating – but not for them – Teddy Roosevelt was coming back after a safari in Africa; had entourage with him and all the comforts of the Presidency – nobody left at wharf to receive them; dejected; sat on hotel bed; You would think after 40 years after we now come home someone would have remembered: wife replied: “Henry, we are not home yet” Our ultimate reward awaits us in another life

\* \* \* \* \*

**DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) What have you given up for the sake of the gospel in following Jesus?
- 2) What rewards have you already seen in this life?
- 3) What persecutions or sufferings have you experienced?
- 4) What is your expectation of eternal life in the future?

\* \* \* \* \*

**QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:**

**Alistair Begg: Word of Encouragement and Word of Warning**

Be careful that complacency doesn't get you; would be highly dangerous; the fact that they have left all is no guarantee they will remain faithful; Judas was one of the Twelve and Paul was not;

**Steven Lawson: The Last Shall Be First**

When Jesus issued the call to follow Him, He always addressed the cost on the front end; no fine print; full disclosure on the front end; demanded self-denial and cross bearing; total submission and absolute surrender of our life; we must lose our life to gain it; must love him more than our relatives and our own pleasures and our own life or we cannot be His disciple;

In light of such demands, what are the benefits? Do the gains outweigh the pain? Are there more crowns than crosses? Do we receive more in return than we are ever required to give? The benefits of giving it all up to follow after Christ far outweigh the burdens 100 times more; Rate of return of 10,000% = hard to top that; this is for the here and now

Better to be first then and to be last now

What an encouragement for all of us today; a lot of nobodies here are going to be somebodies then

### 1) The Radical Commitment (:28)

We have been with you stride for stride; we have done what the rich young ruler was unwilling to do; with Judas it has all been a façade – never spiritually invested – but Peter is not aware of this and speaks on behalf of the Twelve

Have you done this?

### 2) The Righteous Reward (:29-30)

What is in it for us? Jesus gives the answer

No exceptions to what Jesus promises here

Staggering promise in vs. 30 – absolute certainty; without fail; no qualifiers

Everyone who leaves will receive – far more than they ever gave up now

Not a Name it and Claim it message

Enter into the household of faith and the family of God – 4 aspects of a righteous reward

- New relationships – once you have established the Lordship of Christ as the greatest ruling principle in your life; much deeper relationships; not saying that we disown mother and father; still commanded to honor them; calling for a higher allegiance; network of relationships in body of Christ; Have you not found this to be true?
- New riches, possessions – physical things – houses, farms – speaking of literal houses – you don't realize how rich you are in the Lord; the houses of our new brothers and sisters in the Lord; they invite us into their homes; vastness of the kingdom of God; farms yield the food that they enjoy; believers must share with one another
- New reproaches – along with persecutions; only mentioned by Mark; church in Rome that is suffering much persecution; part of the package; nothing wrong with your faith; there are other houses that are closed to us; we still gain far more than we ever gave up
- Eternal Life – begins the moment you are saved (**John 5:24**); but now emphasizing the eternal state – the best is always yet to come; exponentially heightened

### 3) The Reversed Order (:31)

Consummation and summation of everything Jesus has been saying;

“*first*” – in the possessions and estimation of this world – by no means assures heavenly approval; often the reverse will be true;

Not all who are first will be last; but many

Warning to those who are elevated in this world;

Jesus evaluates things from the eternal, divine perspective – not from world's perspective

Better to be last now and to be first forever – requires eyes of faith;

May we be willing to be last in this world if it means to be in the center of God's will

### **Brian Borgman: The Gospel of Reward – Now and Then**

Don't choose broken cisterns that don't hold water vs the living water;

Gospel paradox: if rich young ruler had given up his great wealth, Jesus would have made him much wealthier

Gospel of great sacrifice and unfathomable reward;

“What then will there be for us?” (Matthew's account)

Peter asks the questions that everyone else is afraid to ask; some self-congratulation in Peter's statement; also element of legitimacy; not just motivation of doing it just because it is right – bible presents motivation of reward as legitimate

The cost of discipleship appears to involve inestimable loss

Self-denial is a temporary denial for a greater and longer lasting joy;

Make no mistake – it costs something to follow Jesus;

No greater joy than giving it all away;  
Sometimes we do this voluntarily; sometimes forcibly seized – Hebrews 10  
Following Jesus always means multiplying family and possessions;  
Bonds of spiritual family stronger than bonds of biological family;  
We belong to one another in Christian community; don't act as if we are all distant relatives  
Brothers and sisters in Christ;  
The blood of the martyrs is seed for the church;  
Thank you for expediting my way to heaven;  
Foundation is being laid for persecution in this country;  
Christ's people never suffer alone  
Pray for the persecuted church in the world

TEXT: Mark 10:32-45 (Matt. 20:17-28; Luke 18:31-34)

TITLE: *THE WAY OF THE CROSS LEADS TO EXALTATION*

**BIG IDEA:**

**SUFFERING AND SACRIFICIAL SERVICE IS THE PATH TO GREATNESS IN THE KINGDOM – NOT SELF-SEEKING AND SELF-PROMOTION**

**INTRODUCTION:**

**Illustration:** Brian Billick book -- **Competitive Leadership: Twelve Principles for Success**

- Be Values Oriented
- Be Prepared
- Be Self Disciplined
- Be Knowledgeable
- Be Performance Oriented
- Be a Communicator
- Be a Motivator
- Be a Problem Solver
- Be a Team Builder
- Be Opportunistic
- Be Self Assured
- Be Courageous

What is missing? Be a SERVANT!

Following the introduction of **Brian Borgman** – going to Amazon.com to look for books on topic of Leadership -- **228,829 results** for "leadership"

Refining search: “servanthood model” – **43 results** -- mostly church related books about office of deacon, etc.

We are continuing in the same themes as we come to the third of these 3 passion prophecies in the central portion of Mark’s Gospel (8:31, 9:31); Always followed by a response of self-seeking and self-promotion on the part of the apostles; Teaching of Jesus centered around the contrast between the world’s concept of greatness and how to be great in the kingdom of God

**MacArthur:** The path to greatness is not the world’s way, it’s God’s way. The world’s way works in the world. God’s way works in the Kingdom.

**SUFFERING AND SACRIFICIAL SERVICE IS THE PATH TO GREATNESS IN THE KINGDOM – NOT SELF-SEEKING AND SELF-PROMOTION**

**I. (:32-34) THIRD PASSION PROPHECY – EMPHASIZING SUFFERING BEFORE GLORY**

**A. (:32) Confidence and Courage Require Repeated and Reinforced Revelation**

**1. Destination Determined**

“*And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem,*”

Ἦσαν δὲ ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ ἀναβαίνοντες εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα,

“going up” –



- speaks to the terrain; heading to higher ground; Jerusalem is only twenty miles from Jericho but 3,500 feet higher in elevation
- speaks to the Psalms of Ascents (120-134) – going up to worship in the Temple; Jesus bringing Himself as the lamb of sacrifice

## 2. Destiny Embraced by the Master

*“and Jesus was walking on ahead of them;”*

καὶ ἦν προάγων αὐτοὺς ὁ Ἰησοῦς,

Imperfect tense – ongoing action; somewhat unusual and so noted by Mark; imagine what was going through His mind

**Is. 50:6-7** voice of Messiah

**Sproul:** Jesus did not linger. He moved quickly, keeping ahead of His disciples, going to His death with a firm step. Most of us, if we knew we were going to our deaths, would drag our feet. Something in the look of his eyes and the purposeful intention of his stride that inspired amazement

**Hendriksen:** He already senses something of the perfidy, the hypocrisy, the calumny, the mockery, the pain, and the shame which like an avalanche threatens to overwhelm him. Yet, he does not retreat or even stand still. With unflinching determination he walks right into it, for he knows that this is necessary in order that his people may be saved.

I’m happy to postpone my routine doctor and dentist trips and put them off as long as possible.

## 3. Dread Overwhelming the Disciples

### **a. The Twelve Were Amazed**

*“and they were amazed,”*

καὶ ἐθαμβοῦντο,

at the demeanor and submission of Jesus – how could He be so determined to head to Jerusalem when He knew the awful suffering that awaited Him there; commitment to obedience to His heavenly Father

Jesus was focused on **His mission of going to the Cross** to sacrifice His life as a ransom for many

### **b. The Other Followers Were Alarmed**

*“and those who followed were fearful.”*

οἱ δὲ ἀκολουθοῦντες ἐφοβοῦντο.

for what lay ahead for themselves – cf. John 9:22; 11:8, 57 – might not be a good thing to be associated with Jesus in Jerusalem

**MacArthur:** The word “fearful” is basically a word that refers to a kind of fear that is a baffling kind of fear. There was some confusion with them. They’re still sort of caught up in the Messianic idea of Judaism, that He’s going to set up His Kingdom, and yet they’ve heard about the things that He said with regard to His death. Their hope is very low and they’re baffled and they’re confused, and it’s that kind of fear. Why is He doing this? Why is He walking in to this deadly danger? . . .

He not only knew what was coming by prophetic Scripture and a perfect knowledge of its interpretation, but He knew what was coming by personal omniscience.

#### 4. Details Communicated to Calm Their Fears

*“And again He took the twelve aside and began to tell them what was going to happen to Him,”*

*καὶ παραλαβὼν πάλιν τοὺς δώδεκα ἤρξατο αὐτοῖς λέγειν τὰ μέλλοντα αὐτῷ συμβαίνειν*

### **B. (:33-35) One Must Embrace Suffering Before Glory**

[*saying,*]

#### 1. Understanding and Embracing the Suffering That Awaits

##### a. Delivered Over to the Religious Rulers

###### 1) Based in Jerusalem

*“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem,”*

*ὅτι ἰδοὺ ἀναβαίνομεν εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα,*

###### 2) Chief Priests and Scribes

*“and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes;”*

*καὶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου παραδοθήσεται τοῖς ἀρχιερεῦσιν καὶ τοῖς γραμματεῦσιν*

Sanhedrin – the Supreme Court of the Jews; here the elders are omitted;

##### b. Delivered Over to the Political Rulers

###### 1) Sentenced

*“and they will condemn Him to death,”*

*καὶ κατακρινούσιν αὐτὸν θανάτῳ*

###### 2) Presented for Execution

*“and will deliver Him to the Gentiles.”*

*καὶ παραδώσουσιν αὐτὸν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν*

**Sproul:** On the Day of Atonement in ancient Israel, an animal was killed and its blood was spread on the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies, then the sins of the people were symbolically transferred to the back of the scapegoat, which then was driven out into the wilderness, outside the camp, into the outer darkness (Leviticus 16). That was what it meant to a Jew to be delivered to the Gentiles. To be placed into the hands of the Gentiles was to be sent outside the covenant community, outside the camp, outside the place where the presence of God was concentrated and focused.

##### c. Executed After Humiliating Treatment

###### 1) Humiliating Treatment

*“And they will mock Him and spit upon Him, and scourge Him,”*

*καὶ ἐμπαίζουσιν αὐτῷ καὶ ἐμπτύσουσιν αὐτῷ καὶ μαστιγώσουσιν αὐτὸν*

more specific details in this account; leads liberals to claim that this account was not a prophecy but recorded only after the fact; that Jesus did not lay out such specific details in advance of the events – Luke 9:31 – Jesus certainly had advance prep to fill him in on the upcoming details

- 2) Final Execution  
“and kill Him,”  
καὶ ἀποκτενοῦσιν,

But this is not the end of the story

2. Understanding and Embracing the Glory That Will Result  
“and three days later He will rise again.”  
καὶ μετὰ τρεῖς ἡμέρας ἀναστήσεται.

**Luke 18:34** – once again the Twelve failed to grasp this pivotal teaching about suffering that precedes the glory to follow

## **II. (:35-45) CONTRAST BETWEEN FLESHLY LEADERSHIP AND SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP**

### **A (:35-37) Presumptuous Request for Exalted Position of Power and Prestige**

#### 1. (:35) Request Rooted in Sense of Entitlement and Self Absorption

“And James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, came up to Him, saying to Him, ‘Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You.’”

Καὶ προσπορεύονται αὐτῷ Ἰάκωβος καὶ Ἰωάννης οἱ υἱοὶ Ζεβεδαίου λέγοντες αὐτῷ· διδάσκαλε, θέλομεν ἵνα ὃ ἐὰν αἰτήσωμέν σε ποιήσης ἡμῖν.

Do we come to Jesus with just a non-ending list of selfish requests = essentially demands – without regard for the program of God and what will enhance His glory?  
Here asking Jesus in effect to sign a blank check – haven’t you promised to give us our requests whatever we ask??

Matthew records that the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus and made the request; but she was accompanied by her sons and they obviously were all involved in seeking these positions of prominence;

**Hendriksen:** their mother Salome . . . seems to have been a sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus (cf. Matt. 27:56; Mark 15:40; John 19:25) [making them cousins of Jesus]

**Phil. 2:3** “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit”

**Edwards:** Following each of Jesus’ passion predictions in 8:31, 9:31, and 10:33-34, the disciples jockey for position and prestige. The request of James and John in v. 37 is the third and most blatant example of human self-centeredness in contrast to Jesus’ humility and self-sacrifice.

#### 2. (:36-37) Request Rooted in Ignorance of God’s Overall Program and Inflated Opinion of Self

“And He said to them, ‘What do you want Me to do for you?’”

ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· τί θέλετέ [με] ποιήσω ὑμῖν;

“And they said to Him, ‘Grant that we may sit in Your glory,

*one on Your right, and one on Your left.”*  
οἱ δὲ εἶπαν αὐτῷ· δὸς ἡμῖν ἵνα εἶς σου ἐκ δεξιῶν  
καὶ εἶς ἐξ ἀριστερῶν καθίσωμεν ἐν τῇ δόξῃ σου.

Disciples still wrongly focused only on the **expectation of glory**

Similar response to **9:31**

Answer will indicate whether James and John are seeking glory of God or their own glory  
Look at the nature of the kingdom they expected – physical and on earth; millennial kingdom

**Critical Error:** We are SPECIAL – Jesus needs our ministry; we need to be catered to and treated as the important ministers that we are

**Borgman:** But He alone is our benefactor upon whom we rely for everything; **Ps. 123:2** – look to whom as the one who supplies all of your needs; there are a lot of Pharisees who thought they were serving God – God has no needs; He is self-sufficient; if you view yourself as the critical role of getting God’s work done as if He needed you, then you are in error; you can never put God in debt to you; God is not served by human hands as if he needed anything – **Acts 17:25**

**Sproul:** quotes pagan philosopher **Friedrich Nietzsche:** what distinguishes man from the animals is not our ability to think but the will to power, the drive within every human being to conquer, to climb the ladder, to reach the highest place of exaltation. Some theologians have argued that sin is simply virtue run amok, because God plants in the heart of every creature an aspiration for significance, but we bend that good aspiration into a desire to dominate others.

**Hiebert:** Clearly, they did not hold that Jesus had assigned the position of primacy to Peter

## **B. (:38-40) Patient Response Promises Suffering But Defers on the Question of Preferential Positions in the Kingdom**

### 1. (:38) Ignorance Regarding What Lies Ahead for Jesus

*“But Jesus said to them, ‘You do not know what you are asking for. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?’”*  
ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· οὐκ οἴδατε τί αἰτεῖσθε.  
δύνασθε πιεῖν τὸ ποτήριον ὃ ἐγὼ πίνω  
ἢ τὸ βάπτισμα ὃ ἐγὼ βαπτίζομαι βαπτισθῆναι;

*Drinking a cup* = fully undergoing a particular experience

**Edwards:** In the OT, a “cup” usually symbolizes something allotted by God. It can signify joy and prosperity (Pss 16:5; 23:5; 116:13), but more frequently it signifies God’s judgment and wrath. . . With reference to himself, “cup” and “baptism” signify the unique way charted for him by God and the means by which his atoning “ransom” (10:45) will be achieved. With reference to the disciples the same imagery refers to the persecutions (v. 30) that they will reap as a consequence of following him. . . Verse 39 seems best read as a reminder and renewed call to discipleship, which ineluctably entails sacrifice and suffering.

*Baptized* = to be immersed, overwhelmed; plunged into

### 2. (:39a) Ignorance Regarding What Lies Ahead for the Disciples --

“And they said to Him, ‘We are able.’”  
οἱ δὲ εἶπαν αὐτῷ· δυνάμεθα.

**MacArthur:** That is arrogant over-confidence, audacious, ridiculous. It’s like Peter in Luke 22, he says, “I will never betray You, I will never betray You,” and then he goes and does it. It’s an over-estimation based on pride. This is typical of human pride. It is self-promoting. It is inordinately and selfishly ambitious. It is arrogantly over-confident. It assumes that it can accomplish anything. Isn’t that characteristic of our world today in people’s attitudes? It’s ugly, it’s absolutely ugly. And, of course, they couldn’t...they couldn’t handle it. They couldn’t handle it. In Matthew 26 verse 31, the Lord quotes the Old Testament prophecy about striking the shepherd and the sheep being scattered and in Matthew 26:56 it says, “They all forsook Him and fled.” They couldn’t handle it. Here they wanted all the glory in the Kingdom, they wouldn’t be there when the trial came, they ran for their lives.

### 3. (:39b-40) Patient Response of Clarification

#### a. (:39b) Promising Suffering After the Pattern of Jesus

“And Jesus said to them, ‘The cup that I drink you shall drink;  
and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized.’”  
ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· τὸ ποτήριον ὃ ἐγὼ πίνω πίεσθε  
καὶ τὸ βάπτισμα ὃ ἐγὼ βαπτίζομαι βαπτισθήσεσθε,

**Hiebert:** They would share the cup and baptism, although obviously their sufferings would not have the redemptive character of His own sufferings [and in the case of John would not extend to actual martyrdom]

#### b. (:40) Deferring on the Question of Preferential Positions in the Kingdom

“But to sit on My right or on My left, this is not Mine to give;  
but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.”  
τὸ δὲ καθίσει ἐκ δεξιῶν μου ἢ ἐξ εὐωνύμων οὐκ ἔστιν ἐμὸν δοῦναι,  
ἀλλ’ οἷς ἡτοίμασται.

Great statement of divine sovereignty – God the Father had already predetermined the outcome from all eternity

### **C. (:41-45) Pattern Reversal for Spiritual Leadership = Sacrificially Serving Others**

#### 1. (:41) Fleshly Leadership Rooted in Pride with Goal of Self Advancement

“And hearing this, the ten began to feel indignant with James and John.”  
Καὶ ἀκούσαντες οἱ δέκα ἤρξαντο ἀγανακτεῖν περὶ Ἰακώβου καὶ Ἰωάννου.

#### 2. (:42-44) Spiritual Leadership Looks Nothing Like Fleshly Leadership

##### a. (:42) Pattern of Fleshly Leadership = Lording Over Others

“And calling them to Himself, Jesus said to them, ‘You know that those  
who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them;  
and their great men exercise authority over them.’”

καὶ προσκαλεσάμενος αὐτοὺς ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγει αὐτοῖς· οἶδατε ὅτι οἱ δοκοῦντες ἄρχειν  
τῶν ἐθνῶν κατακυριεύουσιν αὐτῶν καὶ οἱ μεγάλοι αὐτῶν κατεξουσιάζουσιν αὐτῶν.

##### b. (:43-44) Pattern of Spiritual Leadership = Serving Others

*“But it is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all.”*

οὐχ οὕτως δὲ ἔστιν ἐν ὑμῖν, ἀλλ’ ὅς ἂν θέλῃ μέγας γενέσθαι ἐν ὑμῖν ἔσται ὑμῶν δίακονος, καὶ ὅς ἂν θέλῃ ἐν ὑμῖν εἶναι πρῶτος ἔσται πάντων δοῦλος.

### 3. (:45) Spiritual Leadership Modeled by Sacrificial Service of the Son of Man

*“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”*

καὶ γὰρ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἦλθεν διακονηθῆναι ἀλλὰ διακονῆσαι καὶ δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν.

Signature text of Mark’s Gospel

**Edwards:** This model of ministry cannot come from the secular order, but only from the unique way of Jesus, which defies the logic of this world and its fascination with dominance, control, yields, results, and outcomes. The key to the model both incarnated and commanded by Jesus is in the verbs “to serve” and “to give.” The reason why a servant is the most preeminent position in the kingdom of God is that the sole function of a servant is to give, and giving is the essence of God. . . The death of the Son of Man on behalf of “the many” is a sacrifice of obedience to God’s will, a full expression of his love, and a full satisfaction of God’s justice.

“for” – anti – instead of – substitutionary death

## **CONCLUSION:**

**Phil. 2** gives us the path to exaltation, to greatness in the kingdom

\* \* \* \* \*

## **DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) What Christian leaders have you known that you would apply the label of greatness to and why?
- 2) What are some illustrations you have seen in your own experience (either in the secular world or in the spiritual context) of leaders lording it over others?
- 3) Why did Jesus provide such a detailed account of His upcoming suffering in Jerusalem?
- 4) How would you go about increasing the level of your sacrificial service to others?

\* \* \* \* \*

## **QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:**

**Steven Lawson: Defining Greatness**

The unfolding drama of the story of the life of Christ featured in Gospel of Mark; Peter's testimony; Mark was not there as an eyewitness; Peter disciple John Mark; Barnabas led Mark to Peter (who knew all about failure in ministry);

We live in narcissistic society; adoration of self; absorbed with self; full of self-love; best seller: how to love yourself and improve your self-esteem; all about the strut and the swagger instead of humility and gentleness; a man who is wrapped up in himself makes a very small package; The world says true greatness is all about being served by others, being catered to by others; but the church says the opposite – found in how many people you serve

True Greatness is not found in lording it over other but in humility and servanthood and sacrifice and suffering that comes in serving others

### **1. (:35-37) The Selfish Request by James and John**

Called him Teacher because that was his dominant role towards them

Very immature approach; similar to name and claim it ministries of prosperity gospel adherents; Jesus is not going to commit to a blind promise; a remarkable statement of blindness – Jesus has just spoken of the suffering that must precede his resurrection; they only want to talk about glory; they have selective hearing; pre-conceived ideas; remarkable element of faith as well; they believe he will rule over his kingdom surrounded by attendants and servants,

**Matt. 19:28** – Jesus had promised thrones in the kingdom – future age on the earth when Jesus will make all things new (regeneration)

Mothers love for their sons to succeed in the world

Jesus had to wash their feet in Upper Room to teach them humility because this debate over greatness kept being rehashed

Have no idea of the cost factor regarding who sits on the right hand and left hand

### **2) (:38-39a) Stinging Rebuke**

Did not understand the criteria for greatness in the kingdom; who is willing to pay the price?

Have you thought thru what you are asking?

Idioms intended to convey extraordinary suffering within the context of God

Cup -- involves painful and bitter suffering; active voice – active obedience and willingness

The physical death of Christ was the easiest part of his death;

Suffered under the wrath of God for our sins

In our day we have paid a very little price for following after Christ

Baptism -- Overwhelmed in a deluge of suffering and agony – passive voice; something done to him; passive obedience and humiliation at the cross; humbled himself under the punishment inflicted by the Father

### **3) (:39b-40) Sovereign Purposes**

James will be first to suffer a martyr's death –

John will be the last of the apostles to suffer an ignominious death

They would share the cup and the baptism with Christ; but non-redemptive;

That was part of the sovereign will of God for them; the greater the ministry, the greater the suffering required

Sense of destiny – Eph. 2:10

#### **4) (:41) Strong Resentment**

Didn't like James and John cutting in line; strong emotional resentment; jealousy and envy;  
They had been thinking the very same things; jockeying for position in the kingdom but had not played their cards yet  
We must continually examine our motives

#### **5) (:42-45) Spiritual Paradox**

How things are in the world vs. in the kingdom

#### **Mark Dever: Status Isn't the Point**

Look at all the status symbols valued and coveted in our society;  
Seems that status is life itself; but status is overrated; not all it is cracked up to be  
Cf. endless pursuit of protection and security due to fear despite their status  
Fear of crime, sickness, terrorism, financial crisis, etc.  
Christian grows in maturity and decreases in fear; looks crazy to the world  
Instead of running from the cross (motivated by fear), Jesus ran to the cross (motivated by faith and obedience)  
The Lord alone is to be feared  
Jesus turns our world upside down  
What are you scared to lose today? How good is that greatness you are seeking in life?  
What you need is to be ransomed and delivered and redeemed; that is what Jesus came to accomplish

#### **Brian Borgman: The Son of Man Came to Serve**

Christmas season; message about servanthood; Why did the Son of Man come? Purpose of Incarnation = 10:45

Look at all books on leadership – but they overlook servanthood model

Amazon: 7073 books on leadership; refined it by servanthood – got 11 books – not all those applied

Serving others rubs against our selfishness – we want to be served, not to serve; reality of corrupt human heart; How can I follow my Lord and Savior? How can I be the servant He calls me to be?

**Vs. 32** – resolute determination in heading to Jerusalem;

**Vs. 33** – third passion prediction – more detail this time; and apostles respond the same way each time

Enduring injustice and humiliation and suffering

Indignity of being spit upon; humiliating;

There would be victory and vindication

Ps. 22 – Is. 53 – references to these great passages – Suffering Servant of Jehovah

**Vs. 35** – childish question; “Mommy, I have a question ... do you promise to say Yes?”

All you can think of is yourself – I just talked about my upcoming death; but notice the gentleness here

**Vs. 37** – the audacity – we are very special; focused in only on the upcoming glory and reigning



with the Messiah;

**Vs. 39** – should send shivers down our spine; chilling self-confidence; 1 Pet. 4:13; James and John did not have a clue about what they were talking about; God gave them the grace later to endure suffering for Christ

**Vs. 41** – servanthood is the true pathway to greatness; why is the church trying to imitate the world?

- World has CEO
- World emphasizes marketing

Jesus turns the leadership model upside-down; you must wait on others

You don't have people lining up to be last

**Vs. 45** – in what sense are we the servants of Christ? And of God? Submissive obedience

### **Alistair Begg: Not So With You**

The followers of the Lord Jesus are to operate by vastly different principles and values of operation than the world

Worldly ideas of status and privilege have no place in the kingdom of God;

Error: the more we look like and identify with the world, the more effective we will be in reaching the world; instead we must be counter-culture

How to have a position of significance? Be slave of all;

Not the first occasion Jesus has given them this tutorial:

- Prediction of Passion
- Response of Disciples
- Instruction by Jesus

TEXT: Mark 10:46-52

TITLE: *BEGGARS CAN BE CHOOSERS*

**BIG IDEA:**

**BLIND BEGGARS CAN ACCESS THE SAVING POWER OF GOD THROUGH FAITH IN THE MERCY OF JESUS**

**INTRODUCTION:**

This story provides a stark contrast to how the **rich young ruler** approached Jesus in the previous encounter.

- Man of privilege and distinction vs. the most pitiful creature imaginable = blind beggar
- Man who claimed obedience vs. wretched sinner crying out for mercy
- Man who could not lay aside his great wealth vs. man who had no problem casting aside his only possession, a threadbare coat
- Man who went away sad vs. a man who followed Jesus on the pathway of discipleship with great joy and rejoicing – “Once I was blind, but now I can see .. the light of the world is Jesus”

This story also provides a stark contrast to the interaction with Jesus with **James and John** in the previous section. Same question Jesus asked in **vs. 36** – but different response

- Disciples seeking places of prominence and distinction in the kingdom vs. a simple sinner who wants to be healed of his debilitating blindness
- Disciples who lack the spiritual vision to get the lesson that Jesus has been teaching over and over regarding greatness in the kingdom vs. a humble, bankrupt, lowly sinner whom Jesus blesses with spiritual vision as well as physical vision

Jesus wants each of us to see our self in the story of Bartimaeus. This is the model of how sinners should approach Jesus by faith and receive His power and blessing.

**BLIND BEGGARS CAN ACCESS THE SAVING POWER OF GOD THROUGH FAITH IN THE MERCY OF JESUS**

Let’s learn the **3 LESSONS ABOUT FAITH** that Jesus teaches us here:

**I. (:46-48) FAITH FOCUSES**

**A. (:46) Faith Focuses When the You Are Desperate**

*“And they came to Jericho. And as He was going out from Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, a blind beggar named Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the road.*

*Καὶ ἔρχονται εἰς Ἰεριχώ. Καὶ ἐκπορευομένου αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ Ἰεριχώ καὶ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ καὶ ὄχλου ἱκανοῦ ὁ υἱὸς Τιμαίου Βαρτιμαῖος, τυφλὸς προσαίτης, ἐκάθητο παρὰ τὴν ὁδόν.*

Jericho – located about 15 miles northeast of Jerusalem; lies a little south of OT Jericho [not the same location] about a six-hour walk straight up to Jerusalem.

**Carr:** The name “*Jericho*” means “To smell, or A place of fragrance.” It was a city that abounded

in many fragrant plants like roses, balsam, and cypress. Honey was found there in abundance as well. Travelers passing through Jericho were surrounded by many fragrant smells. It was a city that lived up to its name.

There would be a fragrance in Jericho on this day that had never been there before. “The Rose of Sharon, the Lily of the Valleys” was passing through. As He did, He demonstrated the great fragrance of His glory in the city of Jericho.

Problem: did the miracle occur when Jesus was going out from Jericho or drawing near? Perhaps confusion regarding the 2 cities; Perhaps language just suggests “in the vicinity of”; certainly there is only 1 incident involved here

Also: Matt. Speaks of 2 blind men while Mark just tells the story about Bartimaeus

Situated in a strategic position to have access to the many pilgrims who would be going up to Jerusalem for the Passover; to be successful as a beggar, go where you have maximum access to people

*Blind beggar* – what a pitiful creature – quite a contrast from the rich young ruler in the previous incident – yet he is the one who will teach us lessons about simple dependence instead of covetousness and materialism that choke out faith

**2 Cor. 4:3-4** “*And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*”

**Edwards**: only person healed in the Synoptic gospels whose name is given

**MacArthur**: very possible that this man, Bartimaeus, became a **well-known believer**, a well-known person in the early church, by the time Mark wrote his gospel and this was a way for Mark to tell the conversion story of a familiar believer...Bartimaeus.

**Do you realize how desperate your condition is every day?** How much we are in need of the Lord Jesus?

**Rev. 3:17-18** – you don’t realize you are blind ...

## **B. (:47) Faith Focuses When Jesus is Perceived to be Accessible**

“*And when he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out and say, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’*”

καὶ ἀκούσας ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζαρηνός ἐστιν ἤρξατο κράζειν καὶ λέγειν·  
υἱὲ Δαυὶδ Ἰησοῦ, ἐλέησόν με.

What an opportunity to be sitting beside the very roadside where Jesus is making His final journey to Jerusalem – can you imagine his excitement; the fanning of the flames of hope; here is his one chance; probably his last chance; He knew of the reputation of Jesus the Nazarene

**MacArthur**: Mark uses the verb *keradzo* to shout, it’s a very strong word. It is used in Mark 5 to speak of insane epileptics, demon-possessed people. It’s used also in the Scripture to speak of Revelation 12, birth pain and the screaming of a woman....strong. He begins to scream in anguish and desperation

Here is a blind man who already sees more clearly than the multitudes around him; he is focused in on Jesus

**Hiebert:** recognized Messianic title (cf. **Mk 12:35-37**) and recalled the divine promises made to King David (**2 Sa 7:8-16**)

This beggar had the faith to recognize the Messianic identity and mission of Jesus – the one that Isaiah had prophesied about

**Is. 29:18** “*On that day the deaf will hear words of a book, and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see*”

**Is. 32: 1-4**

**Is. 35:5** “*Then the eyes of the blind will be opened*”

**Is. 42:1-7**

How has Jesus approached you and made Himself accessible to you?

**Do you view Jesus as accessible?**

### **C. (:48) Faith Focuses When We Seek Undeserved Grace Rather Than Claiming Entitlement**

#### 1. (:48a) Prejudice of Disciples in Squelching Faith

*“And many were sternly telling him to be quiet,*

*καὶ ἐπετίμων αὐτῷ πολλοὶ ἵνα σιωπήσῃ.*

No surprise that he was insignificant in his culture;

No surprise that he was despised and ignored and shunned and told to shut up and go away;

No surprise that he did not look like he was deserving of any attention from Jesus

The one who receives mercy and grace from Jesus is the poor despised tax collector who humbly falls before His feet, beating his breasts in sorrow over sin and crying out: “*God be merciful to me the sinner*”

**(Luke 18:13)**

The disciples continue on the same path we have seen earlier in this section of pushing people away from Jesus instead of encouraging them to come to Him

#### 2. (:48b) Persistence of Faith in Seeking Mercy

*“but he kept crying out all the more,*

*‘Son of David, have mercy on me!’”*

*ὁ δὲ πολλῶ μᾶλλον ἔκραζεν.*

*υἱὲ Δαυίδ, ἐλέησόν με.*

Jesus taught many lessons about how we need to persevere in our prayer requests and not lose heart and give up; how encouraging when we can look back and see how Jesus has answered a long standing request after many years of faithful prayer

What causes you to give up in prayer?

Are we oriented towards grace or do we have a works mentality? Do we think that Jesus owes

us something or are we grateful for his gifts of mercy?

**Alan Carr – Illustration** -- I read about a lady who went to a photographer on day and had her picture made. When he showed her the proofs, she was very unhappy and she said, “Well, I don’t like that! Those proofs don’t do me justice.” He said, “Ma’am, what you need is not justice. What you need is mercy!”

How focused are you in your faith?

## II. (:49-51) FAITH ASKS

### A. (:49-50) Faith Asks in Boldness and Courage

#### 1. (:49a) The Call

*“And Jesus stopped and said, ‘Call him here.’”*

καὶ στὰς ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν· φωνήσατε αὐτόν.

Pretty extraordinary circumstances to cause Jesus to stop on His journey to Jerusalem ... we saw his determination and commitment as He set his face to carry out His mission of redemption ... striding ahead of his disciples; not deterred or distracted in his mission ... but here He stops. Something about the desperate call of this pitiful blind beggar that tugged at His heart strings; that awakened his compassion, that caused him to reach out this man in his need

**Borgman:** Jesus doesn’t stop for the mayor of Jericho, or one of the prestigious rabbis or scholars, or rich merchants ... stops for poor, insignificant begging blind Bartimaeus

#### 2. (:49b) Taking Courage

*“And they called the blind man, saying to him,*

*‘Take courage, arise! He is calling for you.’”*

καὶ φωνοῦσιν τὸν τυφλὸν λέγοντες αὐτῷ·

θάρσει, ἔγειρε, φωνεῖ σε.

Tone of surprise on the part of the disciples of Jesus as they encourage the blind man to be bold and to take advantage of this opportunity

You must respond while the opportunity presents itself

Cf. **boldness of Esther** in making her request to the King when the Jews were in danger of being exterminated – takes boldness and courage (**Esther 5:3-4; 7:1-6**)

#### 3. (:50) The Coming to Jesus

*“And casting aside his cloak, he jumped up, and came to Jesus.”*

ὁ δὲ ἀποβαλὼν τὸ ἱμάτιον αὐτοῦ ἀναπηδήσας ἦλθεν πρὸς τὸν Ἰησοῦν.

Why did he cast aside his outer garment??

**Borgman:** spread out on his lap to collect alms; blindness was not going to keep him from getting to Jesus; wasted no time

### B. (:51) Faith Asks for Bottom Line Necessities

### 1. (:51a) Blank Check

“*And answering him, Jesus said, ‘What do you want Me to do for you?’*”  
καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν· τί σοι θέλεις ποιήσω;

same question that Jesus asked of James and John in **vs. 36**; but different heart response

### 2. (:51b) Bottom Line Request

“*And the blind man said to Him, ‘Rabboni, I want to regain my sight!’*”  
ὁ δὲ τυφλὸς εἶπεν αὐτῷ· ραββουни, ἵνα ἀναβλέψω.

Not asking for things from a selfish motivation to increase one’s material possessions or prestige or pride – not following after the things of this world: *the lust of the flesh the lust of the eyes, the boastful pride of life* (**1 John 3:16**)

**James 4:2** “*You do not have because you do not ask ... then you ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your passions*”

What does our faith ask of Jesus?

## **III. (:52) FAITH FINDS**

### **A. (:52a) Faith Finds Salvation and Healing**

“*And Jesus said to him, ‘Go your way; your faith has made you well.’*”  
καὶ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτῷ· ὕπαγε, ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε.

**Edwards:** The word for “healed” also means “*saved*,” combining both physical and spiritual dimensions.

**MacArthur:** There is a word strictly referring to healing, *iaomai*, that’s not the word here. It’s the word *sozo*, your faith has saved you. And we know that that encompasses the healing but also the salvation. The healing is indicated and he regained his sight and the salvation is indicated in he began following Him on the road. The evidence of the healing was obvious, he saw, 20-20 instantaneously. The evidence of salvation was following him. He had received mercy and he gives the sign of a true conversion, he followed.

### **B. (:52b) Faith Finds a Master to Follow**

“*And immediately he regained his sight and began following Him on the road.*”  
καὶ εὐθὺς ἀνέβλεψεν καὶ ἠκολούθει αὐτῷ ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ.

No longer sitting beside the road as an outsider and onlooker; but now on the road with Jesus as one of His followers and disciples

Imperfect – continuing action of following Jesus to Jerusalem

What has our faith found?

**CONCLUSION:**

**Borgman:** When Martin Luther was being prepared for burial, they removed his overcoat and found a small scrap of paper sewn into the lining on the inside:  
“We are beggars. This is true.”

- Faith Focuses
- Faith Asks
- Faith Finds

\* \* \* \* \*

### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What helps you to focus your faith in Jesus?
- 2) What have you asked for recently from your Lord?
- 3) In what ways are we like blind beggars?
- 4) Are you an active disciple following Jesus along the way of life or more of an onlooker?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Sproul:** What was so important about this incident? I think the answer lies in the fact that this account follows Mark’s narrative of Jesus’ discussion with His disciples after James and John requested that He allow them to sit on His right and left in His glory. As we saw in the previous chapter, Jesus took time to teach His disciples that real discipleship does not mean seeking to sit in the place of power and authority. Instead, the greatest in the kingdom of God are the servants. In this context, Bartimaeus stands in stark contrast with the behavior of the disciples as they squabbled among themselves for status and for rank. This man was a beggar by the road; in Hebrew categories, he was the lowest of the low in terms of his station in life, in terms of public exaltation and status. Presumably he was clothed in nothing more than rags as he sat there hoping against hope that someone would drop a coin into his cup, so that he might have his next meal or a place to rest for the evening. By taking time to serve this lowly man, Jesus set a powerful example for His disciples.

**MacArthur:** This is the final miracle, final healing. Jesus’ miracles began way in the north in the town of Nazareth, or the little village next to Nazareth called Cana where He turned water into wine...first recorded in John chapter 2. It ends here a few years later with giving sight to the blind. It all began in the north in Galilee in a really insignificant little village in the foothills atop the sea of Galilee and it ended in the south in Judea in a very historically significant town in the lowlands atop the dead sea. From the north to the south, from the high country to the low country, and all in between, Jesus did miracles. It is fitting that the first and the last miracles bracket the land of Israel which He filled with miracles in virtually every town and village. He did signs and wonders and mighty deeds displaying His deity, His compassion, and His power, and all the while preaching salvation and entrance into His glorious Kingdom.

**Alan Carr:** (Note: Bartimaeus was in a sad condition, but the lost sinner is far worse off than he was.

- The lost sinner is blind, he cannot see God.
- He is deaf, he cannot hear God.
- He is a spiritual cripple, he cannot run after God.
- He has withered hands, he cannot work for God.
- He has a defiled mind, he cannot think of God.
- He has a stammering tongue, he cannot talk to God.
- He has a wounded heart, he cannot live for God.
- He is a leper; he is unclean and defiled in the presence of God.
- Worst of all, the lost man is a dead man, **Eph. 2:1-3**.
- He cannot sense God, feel God, know God, desire God, love God, or come to God on his own.
- The lost sinner is in a tragic condition!)

**Lawson: Blind Bartimaeus**

Can you imagine Jesus saying to you: “What do you want me to do for you?”

John Milton dictated Paradise Lost because he was blind; cf. portrait of blind Milton – able to see with 20/20 vision this biblical account of the Fall of man; blindness is very sad plight; confined to live in a dark prison of night; reduced to begging; dependent on the goodness and kindness of others; understood what it was to come to Christ with nothing to offer

Jericho is last stage in journey to Jerusalem where Jesus will die on the cross;

3 main groups:

- a. Lord Jesus – walking ahead at a brisk pace
- b. The Twelve
- c. Large Crowd – Passover pilgrims – no idea they are traveling with the Passover Lamb Himself

Jesus has now crossed the Jordan River for the last time; OT Jericho is still but rubble and dust; Herod the Great build new Jericho as winter palace; heavy burden rests on His shoulders; His hour has now come;

Not crying out for justice and righteousness but for grace; undeserved favor from Christ; statement of confidence in the Lord Jesus; sternly telling him and chastening him to be quiet; Matt. 7:7-11 – be resilient in our crying out to the Lord

**Brian Borgman: He Still Stops for Those Who Call His Name**



2 discrepancies compared to the other Synoptic Gospels; God never lies; we may not have all the answers at this point in time;

Matthew Henry: "If there were 2 then there was 1"

These are not the 2 most important things in the passage

These crowds would have been singing the songs of ascent (Ps. 120-134); perhaps after each Psalm was sung the Lord offered up His authoritative teaching

Positions himself in strategic place; becoming handicapped meant you had no livelihood; no govt. entitlements; shut up to the charity of others; humiliating and demeaning course = to beg and rest on the charity of others

He makes the most of the opportunity; one who is known to open the eyes of the blind is coming his way

Christ never came to Jericho again

Importunity in prayer – crying out over and over again; lifting up his voice –

**Ps. 120:1** "*In my trouble I cried to the Lord and He answered me*"

**Ps. 130:1-2** "*Out of the depths I have cried to you*"

Humility in prayer – show me pity and compassion and mercy – only beggars pray this prayer

Faith in prayer – "*Son of David*" – understood His Messianic calling; yet David's Lord; Is. 35 – when Messiah comes he will open the eyes of the blind;

One thing beggars completely lack = pride

**Luke 16:3**

Lord takes delight in hearing his people specifically call out for what they need; He knew this blind man needed sight; that is why we pray; telling Jesus "I need you" – acknowledging that we cannot do something but Jesus can

Faith taps into the power and mercy of Jesus; only way to lay hold of Jesus

What did Bartimaeus contribute to the healing? Blindness! You bring the sin and He brings the cleansing

**Illustration:** young black boy before deacons in southern Baptist Church being interviewed as to his salvation experience: "I dun my part and Jesus dun His" ... concerned about semi-Pelagianism creeping into their good church ... what do you mean by that ... "I dun the sinning and Jesus dun the savin"

**Alistair Begg: Encounter with Christ**

People held in the grip of Loneliness even in the midst of many

What is the anguish of loneliness like? Ask the single who arrives home from work alone and prepares a meal for one ... etc. This beggar knew what it was to live with alienation; not part of the in crowd; but the off scouring of society; reality of almost total emptiness

Jesus is uniquely able to answer these longings of loneliness

*"My God, My God, Why hast thou forsaken Me?"*

Jesus deals with us at the very point of our need;

### **1) The Man's Condition**

- a blind man – not an uncommon sight in that day;

- a beggar man – sat by the roadside; unproductive member of society; relied on generosity of others; family or friends could have saved him from this lifestyle; rest of his faculties worked fine – could jump, hear, shout

Marked by helplessness and hopelessness

Not too proud to cry for help

People are blind to the truth of Christ; must understand what we are really like

We must see Christ as a necessity

### **2) The Crowd's Reaction**

Disciples were there with a large crowd; any large crowd is fickle; cf. football crowd

The committed; the intrigued; the hangers-on; etc.

Some of the rebukers became the invitatory

Offered a rebuke

Made a mistake regarding the real need of men and women – Jesus = the only Savior of the world – not offering him as a great thrill

### **3) The Reaction of the Man**

Provided appropriately

Provided immediately

TEXT: Mark 11:1-11

TITLE: THE RECEPTION THAT WASN'T

**BIG IDEA:**

**EXCITEMENT OVER JESUS THAT STOPS SHORT OF WORSHIPING HIM AS KING OVER ALL QUICKLY FADES AWAY**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Following the confession of Peter in chap. 8 that **Jesus is truly the Messiah**, we have seen a growing sense of anticipation and drama in the Gospel of Mark. Jesus has set His face like flint to head to Jerusalem where He will fulfill His mission as the Suffering Servant. He has been educating His closest disciples about **what type of Messiah He is**. He has been explaining over and over that He is much more than just a political revolutionist who will bring about national restoration and throw off the bonds of Roman oppression. He is headed for rejection and suffering and death at the hands of both the Jewish religious leaders and the Roman officials. *His hour has almost come* to glorify the Father. This is why He came into the world as God incarnate. Today we see Jesus arrive in Jerusalem. I cannot overstress the significance of this great event.

Look at what % of the gospel accounts deal with the **final week of Jesus' life on earth** as He goes to the Cross – 1/3 of Mark's Gospel and 1/2 of John's Gospel cover the last seven days of Jesus' life. Significant to understanding the identity and mission of the Suffering Servant.

Various names for this event:

- **The Triumphal Entry** – (maybe the **Triumphal Procession** would be better)
- **Palm Sunday** – occurred on the first day of Passion week – either Sunday or Monday  
Not some symbol of peace and pleasantness as in our Sunday School classes with young children but symbol of Maccabean revolt by political revolutionaries --  
The Palm branches signify the expectation of a **military victory** of their king over the occupying Romans. Look at **Rev. 7:9** the martyrs coming out of the Great Trib.
- What should we call it??? **The Reception That Wasn't** – looking not so much at the procession but what took place upon His arrival

Where does all this excitement and anticipation lead??

**EXCITEMENT OVER JESUS THAT STOPS SHORT OF WORSHIPING HIM AS KING OVER ALL QUICKLY FADES AWAY**

**I. (:1-10) THE APPROACH OF JESUS GENERATES EXCITEMENT**

Anticipation of the coming King and coming Kingdom --

**A. (:1-6) Excitement Implied in the Preparations for Entrance Into Jerusalem**

1. (:1-3) Instructions Consistent with Messianic Royal Procession

a. (:1a) Prophetic Significance of the Targeted Geography

*“And as they approached Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives,”*

*Καὶ ὅτε ἐγγίζουσιν εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα εἰς Βηθφαγὴ καὶ Βηθανίαν πρὸς τὸ ὄρος τῶν ἐλαιῶν,*

Significance of city of Jerusalem – everything in the Gospel of Mark has been targeted towards this entrance into Jerusalem – Jesus had to avoid publicity in his earlier healings and instruct people to keep quiet so he didn't draw too much attention to himself . . . because he was not yet at Jerusalem for this final passion week . . . but no longer; He doesn't tell Bartimaeus to be quiet; he doesn't try to hush the crowd; the time has come for open confrontation with the Jewish leaders in the city of God -- Jerusalem

*Bethphage* = house of unripe figs – we will be studying Jesus cursing the fig tree next week

*Bethany* = house of sorrows or house of dates

Raising of Lazarus had recently taken place in Bethany

Significance of Mount of Olives: End Time events

A North to South ridge about 2 miles long across from the Kidron Valley just East of Jerusalem, known for its abundance of olive trees; center part rises 100 ft higher than Jerusalem

**Ezek. 11:23** – at the Fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC Ezekiel had a vision of the glory of the Lord departing from Jerusalem and settling on the Mount of Olives

**Zech. 14:4** *“In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south.”* – scene of final judgment and the return of the Lord in victory

**14:9** *“And the Lord will be king over all the earth; in that day the Lord will be the only one, and His name the only one.”*

**Alan Carr:** Historians tell us that the population of Jerusalem was around 80,000 at this time. During the Passover, between two and three million people would crowd into the city for the celebration. The people came in anticipation; they were looking for God to do something while they were there. God would do His greatest work of all during this Passover, but most people would miss it altogether.

**MacArthur:** **“The False Coronation of the True King”** -- The year is 30 A.D. by the best chronology. The month is the first Jewish month, Nisan, and the arrival is on the tenth [Monday] and the crucifixion is on the fourteenth [Friday] and that all matters because God has established a very firm time table. . . Coronations aren't humble, they aren't unexpected. They aren't unplanned. They aren't unofficial. They aren't spontaneous. They aren't superficial. They aren't temporary. But this one was all of those. Coronations are not to be reversed in a few days so that the one exalted and elevated becomes rejected and executed, like this one. This was no real coronation. Let it be said, Jesus is the real King, deserving of all exaltation, all honor, all worship and all praise, so this is the false coronation of the true King. . .

It is estimated that as many as two million people would be in Jerusalem at a Passover even in ancient days. And one of the ways we get at that is ten years after this, 40 A.D., there's a record in Jewish history that two hundred and sixty-thousand lambs were slain at that Passover, over a quarter of a million. Usually there was one lamb per ten people. That would put it at two-point-six-million people possibly. It was a massive crowd.

The crowd around Him must have been in the hundreds of thousands. This was the time and this was the place to allow this to agitate His enemies so that He would die in God's perfect timing

. . . according to the Mosaic Law, a sacrificial lamb for Passover was to be selected and set apart

on the tenth of Nisan...the tenth was Monday and that's when the sacrificial lamb arrived. And the sacrificial lamb was to be crucified on the fourteenth and that's Friday when He was crucified.

b. (:1b-2) Messianic Significance of the Unbroken Colt

*“He sent two of His disciples, and said to them, ‘Go into the village opposite you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, on which no one yet has ever sat; untie it and bring it here.’”*

ἀποστέλλει δύο τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ <sup>2</sup> καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· ὑπάγετε εἰς τὴν κώμην τὴν κατέναντι ὑμῶν, καὶ εὐθὺς εἰσπορευόμενοι εἰς αὐτὴν εὐρήσετε πῶλον δεδεμένον ἐφ’ ὃν οὐδεὶς οὐπω ἀνθρώπων ἐκάθισεν· λύσατε αὐτὸν καὶ φέρετε.

“village opposite” – probably Bethphage

**Zech 9:9**

**Gen. 49:8-11** Pre-Christian Jewish texts interpreted **Genesis 49:10** as messianic. **Constable**

**Constable:** The Mosaic Law specified that an animal devoted to a sacred purpose had to be one that had not been used for ordinary purposes (**Numbers 19:2; Deuteronomy 21:3**). Jesus told the disciples to bring both the colt and its mother to Him (**Matthew 21:2**). The colt was unbroken, and Jesus was able to ride on it comfortably. These facts suggested that Jesus might be the sinless Man who was able to fulfill the Adamic Covenant mandate to subdue the animals (**Genesis 1:28; cf. Matthew 17:27**), the Second Adam.

Matt. Indicates that both the mare and her colt were brought to Jesus  
They would not be kept longer than necessary for the specific task

c. (:3) Dominion Significance of the Commandeering of the Colt

*“And if anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ you say, ‘The Lord has need of it’; and immediately he will send it back here.”*

καὶ ἐάν τις ὑμῖν εἴπῃ· τί ποιεῖτε τοῦτο; εἶπατε·

ὁ κύριος αὐτοῦ χρεῖαν ἔχει, καὶ εὐθὺς αὐτὸν ἀποστέλλει πάλιν ὧδε.

“The Lord” – the Sovereign One, the King of the Jews

**Parunak:** Mark is emphasizing the Lord's power and authority, not his humility.

**Edwards:** Jesus thus does not enter Jerusalem as an unknowing victim, but with the same foreknowledge and sovereignty with which he traveled “on the way.”

2. (:4-6) Instructions Carried Out in Obedience to the King

a. (:4) Finding the Colt as Jesus Had Instructed

*“And they went away and found a colt tied at the door outside in the street; and they untied it.”*

Καὶ ἀπῆλθον καὶ εὗρον πῶλον δεδεμένον πρὸς θύραν ἔξω ἐπὶ τοῦ ἀμφόδου

καὶ λύουσιν αὐτόν.

- b. (:5-6) Commandeering the Colt as Jesus had Instruction  
“*And some of the bystanders were saying to them,  
‘What are you doing, untying the colt?’  
And they spoke to them just as Jesus had told them,  
and they gave them permission.*”

καὶ τινες τῶν ἐκεῖ ἐστηκότων ἔλεγον αὐτοῖς·  
τί ποιεῖτε λύοντες τὸν πῶλον;  
οἱ δὲ εἶπαν αὐτοῖς καθὼς εἶπεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς, καὶ ἀφῆκαν αὐτούς.

## **B. (:7-10) Excitement Expressed in Symbolic Deeds and Stirring Words**

### 1. (:7-8) Excitement Expressed in Symbolic Deeds

- a. (:7) Symbolism of Making a Saddle Out of Their Garments

“*And they brought the colt to Jesus and put their garments on it;  
and He sat upon it.*”

Καὶ φέρουσιν τὸν πῶλον πρὸς τὸν Ἰησοῦν καὶ ἐπιβάλλουσιν αὐτῷ τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτῶν,  
καὶ ἐκάθισεν ἐπ’ αὐτόν.

**Constable:** When Israel’s rulers wanted to present themselves as servants of the people, they rode donkeys (e.g., **Judges 10:4; Judges 12:14**). When they acted as military leaders, they rode horses. Normally pilgrims to Jerusalem entered the city on foot. Placing one’s garment on the ground before someone was a sign of royal homage (cf. **2 Kings 9:12-13; 1 Maccabees 13:51**).

- b. (:8) Symbolism of Making a Pathway Out of Their Garments and Cut Branches

“*And many spread their garments in the road,  
and others spread leafy branches which they had cut from the fields.*”

καὶ πολλοὶ τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτῶν ἔστρωσαν εἰς τὴν ὁδόν,  
ἄλλοι δὲ στιβάδας κόψαντες ἐκ τῶν ἀγρῶν.

**Parunak:** A carpet of garments (**2 Kings 9:13**) is a royal honor. For many peasants, their garments were the most valuable thing they owned, and to have them trodden underfoot, especially by a hooved animal, would be a great loss. . .

**Boughs:** calls to mind the final Mosaic feast, **Tabernacles**, the 15th day of the 7th month, as **Passover** (the first feast of the year) is the 15th of the first month (**Lev 23:40**). Looked not only back to the Exodus (thus the booths), but also forward to the Millennium; (cf. Isa. 25:6-8.)

### 2. (:9-10) Excitement Expressed in Stirring Words

“*And those who went before, and those who followed after, were crying out,  
‘Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord;  
Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David; Hosanna in the highest!’*”

καὶ οἱ προάγοντες καὶ οἱ ἀκολουθοῦντες ἔκραζον· ὡσαννά· εὐλογημένος ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου· <sup>10</sup> εὐλογημένη ἢ ἐρχομένη βασιλεία τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν Δαυίδ· ὡσαννά ἐν τοῖς ὑψίστοις.

*Hosanna = “O Lord, save us now”*

Anticipation of the coming King and the coming Kingdom

## II. (:11a) THE ARRIVAL OF JESUS GENERATES . . . NOTHING

*“And He entered Jerusalem and came into the temple;”*

*Καὶ εἰσῆλθεν εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα εἰς τὸ ἱερόν*

Think of what this event teaches us about the **character of Jesus**:

- **What courage** for Jesus to come directly into Jerusalem – knowing what lay ahead for Him; to come into the temple itself despite the evil intentions of the Jewish religious leaders
- **What humility** for Jesus to come as the Suffering Servant riding on a donkey rather than as a conquering warrior riding on a regal stallion; What humility to keep His glory cloaked as He comes to the temple – the very place where the glory of God should shine the brightest – yet Phil. 2 teaches us about the Humility of Jesus
- **What obedience** on the part of the one who trusted His Father implicitly and came to fulfill all righteousness

**Deffinbaugh**: One event in recent days, more than any other, brought the focus of attention on Jesus. He had just recently raised Lazarus from the dead in Bethany, not two miles from Jerusalem, the citadel of opposition to Him. The scribes and Pharisees not only denounced Him, but determined to put both He and Lazarus to death (**John 11:46-53; 12:10**). Word had gone out that anyone who knew the whereabouts of Jesus should report it to them (**John 11:57**). Many of those who thronged the way to welcome Jesus to Jerusalem did so because of the report of the raising of Lazarus (**John 12:17-18**). In such an atmosphere, electric with excitement and expectation (and danger), the highly symbolic act of Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem riding on the back of a young donkey could not be taken lightly. . .

Not headed just for the **city of Jerusalem**, the City of David, the habitation of God – but headed for the very **temple itself** where the glory of God should reside; where a holy God should meet with sinful men; where sacrifices for sin are offered daily; where the high priest ministers his sacred duties

Jesus was very familiar with the temple

- Remember His time there as a young boy – only 12 years old when his parents thought they had lost him and went looking and found him in the temple – the house of His father – He was called to be about His father’s business
- He had made pilgrimages to the temple before for the annual feasts

Yet Jesus is Largely **Ignored**

*“He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.” **John 1:11***

Think about how tragic that was – what about all the **excitement** on the road leading up to His entrance??

**Sproul**: Here is the supreme irony: In 586 BC, Ezekiel saw the glory of God leave the temple,

leave the holy city, and ascend to Bethany on the Mount of Olives. AT the triumphal entry, the One whom the Scriptures define as the brightness of God's glory (Heb. 1:3) descended from Bethany and the Mount of Olives, entered the East Gate of the Holy City, and went to the temple. Do you see it? In 586 BC the glory of God left the temple, but when Jesus came, the glory of God came back. Yet no one understood that the King of glory was in their midst, about to meet the destiny to which He was called and for which He was born.

**Edwards:** Mark's account is noteworthy for what does not happen. The whole scene comes to nothing. Like the seed in the parable of the sower that receives the word with joy but has no root and lasts but a short time (4:6; 16-17), the crowd disperses as mysteriously as it assembled. Mark is warning against mistaking enthusiasm for faith and popularity for discipleship. Jesus is not confessed in pomp and circumstance but only at the cross (15:39). The most expressed messianic symbol in Jesus' entry – the riding on a colt in allusion to the humble Messiah of Zech 9:9 – is either short lived in the midst of the crowd or missed altogether. Jesus enters the temple alone, and having sized it up, he leaves for Bethany with the disciples. This is the first of Mark's clues that the temple is not the habitation of God's Son. Jesus is indeed the Messiah, but he is veiled and unrecognized. Even when he stands at the center of Israel's faith, he stands alone.

### **III. (:11b) THE DEPARTURE OF JESUS WILL GENERATE JUDGMENT**

*“and after looking all around, He departed for Bethany with the twelve, since it was already late.”*

*καὶ περιβλεψάμενος πάντα, ὀψίας ἤδη οὔσης τῆς ὥρας, ἐξῆλθεν εἰς Βηθανίαν μετὰ τῶν δώδεκα.*

Will be seen in the incidents recorded from the following day

*“looking around”*

- Looking comprehensively – not missing anything
- Looking with insight – a penetrating look – seeing into the hearts and motives
- Looking with sadness --

**MacArthur:** Do you remember John 2 describes the beginning of His ministry when He did the same thing, attacked the false system, dismantled the temple? Three years later He's back and He's going to do it again. It wasn't the Romans He would attack, it was the Jews. It wasn't pagan idolatry He would attack, it was the worship of Judaism whose religion had been corrupted, whose praise was selfish and superficial.

Where was the crowd? What had happened to all that excitement and expectation??

What were the disciples thinking? Certainly they had expected more than this to occur after such a grand entrance

### **CONCLUSION:**

Look at how Jesus approaches the vast majority of people today –

- at religious holidays like Christmas and Easter – great anticipation; then largely apathy followed by certain judgment
- in the revelation of His Word --
- in the testimony of His people --



Don't ignore Jesus and cause Him to depart

Look at how Jesus will approach the world from the Mt. Olives in the Last Days – that will truly be the **Triumphal Entry**

### **EXCITEMENT OVER JESUS THAT STOPS SHORT OF WORSHIPING HIM AS KING OVER ALL QUICKLY FADES AWAY**

simple celebration isn't discipleship; enthusiasm isn't faith

Have you responded to Jesus as your **King and Sovereign**?

\* \* \* \* \*

#### **DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) What do you find “Triumphal” in this account?
- 2) Why is the crowd no longer mentioned after Jesus enters the city and then the temple?
- 3) What do you think Jesus saw as He was looking around in the temple?
- 4) When have you seen excitement surrounding Jesus but without genuine submission and worship?

\* \* \* \* \*

#### **QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:**

**Sproul:** Some scholars maintain that Mark compresses the time that Jesus spent in Jerusalem before His death. . . John's gospel shows Jesus in Jerusalem for four months before He was executed. Adding to the idea that Mark probably is compressing this event is the fact that Jesus' triumphal entry likely took place not in spring but in the fall, during the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, for people characteristically had palm branches as part of the celebration of that festival.

#### **Deffinbaugh:**

The error of the crowds was at least three-fold. First of all, their acclaim was almost totally based upon and motivated by the miracles which He had performed (Luke 19:37; John 12:9). It was not His words (His teaching and doctrine), but His works that motivated many to receive Jesus as Messiah.

Second, they failed to grasp the proper priorities for the coming Kingdom. Ultimately, the Messiah would establish a physical, earthly Kingdom, but primarily this Kingdom was based upon a spiritual renewal. The cheering crowds thought only of the material dimensions of the

Kingdom to the exclusion of the spiritual; only the external aspects and not the internal.

Third, they were completely in error as to how the Kingdom was to be established. They thought it would be accomplished by military might and revolution, rather than by rejection, suffering, and a humiliating death for the Messiah, Who was to die as the Lamb of God for the sins of His people (cf. Isaiah 52:13–53:12).

Why then did Jesus carry through with this mission? Let me suggest several reasons.

**(1) To fulfill prophecy concerning Himself.** The gospel accounts stress that this act was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, such as those in Zechariah 9:9 and Malachi 3:1.

**(2) To safely enter the city of Jerusalem.** It may not seem necessary, but the word was out to disclose the location of Jesus as soon as He appeared (John 11:57). Had Jesus attempted to enter Jerusalem secretly, He could have been quietly disposed of. Entering as He did, the religious leaders could not so much as lift a finger against Him (John 12:19).

**(3) To publicly and symbolically give testimony to His identity as Messiah.** Neither the crowds nor the religious leaders missed the implications of His triumphal entry.

**(4) A proclamation of the kind of Kingdom which He was to establish.** Jesus did not march proudly into the city of Jerusalem as a strutting military figure, nor did He ride on a spirited stallion. He rode on a donkey, symbolic of his humble peace-making assignment. This aspect of the triumphal entry was totally overlooked. Only the later events of the week would make this clear, and then the cheering crowds would turn their backs on the Messiah.

**(5) To provoke the opposition and precipitate His own execution on the appointed day.** Nothing could have been more of a catalyst to the opposing forces than this bold public proclamation. Now something had to be done, and fast!

**Alan Carr:** Look again at this crowd. Who is there as the people wave their palm branches before Jesus and pave the road with their clothing? I would imagine Bartimaeus is there. I would imagine Zacchaeus is there. I would imagine that Lazarus was there, along with Mary and Martha. That crowd was full of people He had healed, delivered and ministered to and they were praising Him. I am in that parade too! It's a mighty long parade by now, but it is marching off toward eternity with Jesus in the lead. Those who know Him are still praising His name and worshiping the One Who became poor so that we might become rich in Him!

### **Brian Borgman: The Shadow of the King's Triumph**

This begins Passion Week – from Sunday to Sunday;

**Vs. 1 Approach to Jerusalem** – has just travelled 18 miles from Jericho; city of David, the dwelling place of God; His hour had come; **John 12:23**; the goal of His incarnation is reaching its climax; Jerusalem has long history of killing her prophets;

Mount of Olives – place where much of Jesus' ministry had taken place; also had eschatological significance; place of anticipation of great Messianic glory;

**Vs. 2** – seems like a very mundane mission – fetching a donkey; truly a supernatural event; things happened just as Jesus had told them they would; whole idea of having an animal that had never been ridden = a sacred purpose; set aside for something unique; self-disclosing statement:

the king has need of it – *kurios*; something significant is about to happen; colt itself is a Messianic sign; did not ask for a horse; **Gen. 49:10-11** – Jacob is dying and giving closing prophecies that had application to his various sons and the tribes that will bear their names; tribe of Judah – symbol of sovereignty and rule will not depart – the Messiah would come from the tribe of Judah; enigmatic statement about the colt – there would be a donkey associated with His reign and rule; **1 Kings 1:33-35** – Promise has already been made to David that one of his sons would sit on his throne and rule forever – closing instructions regarding anointing of Solomon – put him on my donkey on the way to this – the greater Son of David comes riding into Jerusalem on a donkey – symbol of royalty but also of humility and peace;

**Vs. 7-10** – disciples and crowd are sensing something of the greatness of Jesus and of the greatness of the moment; makeshift saddle and makeshift red carpet; may have brought back memories to anointing of Jehu by Elisha the prophet – tells him to ride into the city to anointed – the people strip off their garments and spread them on the donkey and the road – he will overthrow the tyranny of Ahab and Jezebel; recognition that Jesus was the Son of David; cf. testimony of Bartimaeus; must have a sense of the building of the momentum around this moment; preparing for the entry of the king

Crowd in front and rear begin to simultaneously shout out songs of praise and adoration; Hosanna – Lord, save us now!

**Ps. 118:26** is quoted – pilgrim songs song at Passover – notice the context

Cf. **vs 22ff** – “*The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief corner stone ...*”

Add a line of their own: “*Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David*”

**Is. 9:6-7** the David hope

“Hosanna in the highest places” – the very heavens themselves – may our cry to God be heard in heaven now that Messiah has come

Yet they did not know what they were saying; did not know He must also lay down His life; Must offer himself up as Passover lamb

Enters into Jerusalem with glory and praise – but it lacks the reality that is worthy of the king

**Vs. 11** – enters the temple and looked around and then left; disciples must have been a little disappointed; I’ve seen all that I need to see; it is time to go back home to Bethany for the evening;

What is the **significance** of Jesus coming into Jerusalem in this way?

- Matthew says it was to fulfill prophecy **21:4** – quotes 2 OT texts: **Is. 62:11** – Jesus Himself is the salvation of the Lord as the embodiment of redemption – both the priest and the sacrifice; **Zech 9:9** – the King is coming – but not in the pomp and circumstance of earthly king – but in suffering and death in the humility of suffering servant; no way to misunderstand the significance of the event; He is worthy of praise

The cleansing of the temple will force the issue with the people of God – will they receive Him or reject Him with stiff neck because He did not meet their expectations

Shouts of crowd were empty and meaningless in terms of their own hearts

5 days later the same crowd with their same lips will shout “*Crucify Him*”

**Application: Reality for us:** King Jesus has been clearly presented to us; His praises have been sung; His grace has been extolled; **Is Jesus your King???**

Are you in sweet and glad submission to His rule?

Who else would you rather have to reign over you?

## Alistair Begg: The Coming Kingdom

Palm Sunday in October; the familiar passages are often the hard ones – both for the teacher and the learners;

Some of us have to be rescued from:

- Sentimentalism – nice story for the children
- Moralism --
- Incipient Skepticism – not sure this is a valid historical incident at all
- 

A donkey being pressed into divine service

### 3 Perspectives:

#### **1) The Actions of Jesus**

a. a deliberate action – premeditation; careful planning; not spur of the moment incident; maybe Jesus had already made plans for this to take place

- seen in the location of the donkey
- seen in the nature of the donkey = unriden – Num. 19; Deut. 21
- seen in the password that would free it up to be taken

b. dramatic action --

A prophetic symbolism to the way in which he will enter Jerusalem – as opposed to doing things in secret; his sitting on the donkey is dramatic – nowhere else described as riding – everywhere else He is walking

c. dangerous action – danger of being misunderstood; when people embraced the notion of His Messiahship and used the correct Scriptures, they had the wrong expectation; only afterwards that even the disciples understood his actions

#### **2) The Reaction of the Crowd**

a. Defined by Passion – vs. 8 – spread their cloaks on the road and cut down branches and spread them on the road; extravagant gesture – **2 Kings 9**

b. Defined by Expectation – clear assertion of Messiahship; they shouted the chants of the pilgrims from Ps. 118 along the lines of the testimony of Bartimaeus; Zech. 9:9 – Who is this person and When will He come? Their passion is fueled by their expectation

c. Defined by Confusion – Didn't the blind just see? Isn't the king coming riding on a donkey? Their expectation is marred by their confusion; Triumphal Procession as opposed to Triumphal Entry – Jerusalem crowd is a different animal [does not agree that the pilgrims were fickle] They are thinking national restoration; political revolution; overturning of Roman authorities; now we will have an earthly kingdom just as we have always wanted; they hate the Romans; did not want to live in subjugation; they would have embraced this type of message; earlier tried to make Jesus king by force – if you can feed the crowd with 5 loaves and fishes you have the economic answers we need  
They were reading their bible selectively

#### **3) Application to Ourselves**

He looked at that temple scene and could hear his own 12 year old voice – holding court with the religious authorities – “*I have to be in my Father's house*” – strange thing to say – now He looks around and sees a materialistic disaster zone; prostituted so that the merchants can make money;

I will deal with this tomorrow;

- Beware of naivety that says of people that are passionate in quoting the bible that they must be OK; here they are flat out wrong; possible to twist the Bible in wrong ways; America is full of people quoting the bible; doesn't mean they are right
- Confused because they did not understand the nature of Messiahship – or the gospel message – did not like the parts about His suffering and death; selective reading; focused only on a triumphant king
- Must keep the gospel in the center of my thinking, prayer and living or we might end up confused as well – creating a Jesus of our own making

### Mark Dever – Jews Liked Jesus

Percentage of Jews shrinking in America:

- Have 2 or less children
- Mixed marriages
- Becoming more secularized; diminished importance of religious heritage

1) Def. of Jew discussed; born of Jewish mom or converted

2) In agreement that Jesus was not the Messiah

Yet look at our story this morning – many Jews confessed Jesus as Messiah; first Christian churches in Acts were Jewish; Christianity a continuation and fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham and David

Why would so many Jews take Jesus to be the Messiah and what type of Messiah would they take Him to be?

Timing His arrival at the beginning of the week of Passover

Preparation time is over; God's purposes are about to be fulfilled

After confession of Peter, Jesus had been teaching them what His messiahship would be like – would suffer and be rejected and die as the Suffering Servant to deal with our spiritual needs as our sacrifice for sin

Political aspirations and more would then be met at His second coming

Jesus fulfilling a rather obscure prophecy – coming riding on a donkey – Zech. 9:9

A visual way to make his messianic claim

Striking: No Jewish leaders in the crowd to welcome Jesus; not so large a crowd that it aroused the concern of the Roman authorities

Palm branches were a symbol of the Maccabean revolt – now the nation of Israel will rise again; Hoping for political revolution and national restoration

Jesus for once allows the celebration – something is now different as he goes into this week

He is divine; not merely a king; actual Son of God incarnate – “Hosanna”

Had become a Passover greeting – but this time seemed infused with more meaning – turned to a particular person and said with a particular urgency –

Demonstrated supernatural knowledge – “*You will find*”

What was Jesus seeing when He *looked around* upon His arrival at the temple?

Preparing to hold court and issue judgment?  
Counting the cost and deciding to proceed?

Jesus has the right to your complete allegiance?  
Have you been tempted to offer Him anything less?

Ezek 34: I will come and shepherd my flock myself

4 Observations about Character of Christ from this passage: He is a model for us all

**1) Jesus is Brave** – had warned his disciples repeatedly about his coming death; publicly challenging the authorities; setting in motion events that would lead to his arrest and execution; Even the greatest salvation acts of Jesus are used to teach us how to live – without detracting from the uniqueness of what Jesus was accomplishing

**2) Jesus is Humble** – Humble means: sits on colt; borrowed donkey; Humble demeanor – has the right to come in war and comes instead in peace – restraining himself; think of His lessons: *“Blessed are the poor in spirit . . .”*  
At Second Coming He will come in power and great glory

**3) Jesus is Trusting God** – simple celebration isn't discipleship; enthusiasm isn't faith  
All of this attention melted quickly away; Jesus was not trusting in the crowd

**4) Jesus Loves Sinners**

TEXT: Mark 11:12-33

TITLE: *HYPOCRISY FIRES UP JESUS*

**BIG IDEA:**

**WHAT GOOD IS RELIGION WITHOUT FRUIT OR WORSHIP WITHOUT REALITY?**

**JESUS CONDEMNS THE HYPOCRISY OF AN UNFRUITFUL NATION WITH ITS EMPTY RELIGIOUS SYSTEM (CENTERED AROUND THE TEMPLE IN JERUSALEM) AND OF ITS EXPLOITATIVE RELIGIOUS LEADERS (THE SANHEDRIN)**

**TWO OBJECT LESSONS (ACTS OF JUDGMENT) FOLLOWED BY TWO CORRESPONDING APPLICATION LESSONS**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Our culture loves to portray Jesus as this mild mannered, gentle teacher who went about doing good and blessing all the little children and spouting off moral platitudes. The two events we are going to study this morning present a far different picture of Jesus. We are now into the second and third day of Passion Week and we are going to see a Jesus who is fired up; one who is truly ticked off; one who responds in anger and judgment. What is it that caused Jesus to go off: Hypocrisy!

**WHAT GOOD IS RELIGION WITHOUT FRUIT OR WORSHIP WITHOUT REALITY?**

**JESUS CONDEMNS THE HYPOCRISY OF AN UNFRUITFUL NATION WITH ITS EMPTY RELIGIOUS SYSTEM (CENTERED AROUND THE TEMPLE IN JERUSALEM) AND OF ITS EXPLOITATIVE RELIGIOUS LEADERS (THE SANHEDRIN)**

This is not a temper tantrum or uncontrolled rage on the part of Jesus  
Controlled display of righteous indignation from the Judge of the universe who is the Truth

**TWO OBJECT LESSONS (ACTS OF JUDGMENT) FOLLOWED BY TWO CORRESPONDING APPLICATION LESSONS**

Acted out prophetic parables with the meaning attached  
Want to treat this as one section – but will require 2 weeks to cover

Fig Tree: boasts of its leaves – but no fruit  
Temple: showy and impressive – but no genuine worship

**I. (:12-14) OBJECT LESSON #1 -- CURSING OF THE HYPOCRITICAL FIG TREE**

**A. (:12) Occasion for the Object Lesson**

*“And on the next day, when they had departed from Bethany, He became hungry.”*

*Καὶ τῆ ἑπαύριον ἐξεληθόντων αὐτῶν ἀπὸ Βηθανίας ἐπείνασεν.*

Parallel: **Mark 11:12-14**

Perhaps staying in the home of Mary and Martha and Lazarus

What were the expectations of the disciples on this Tuesday morning? Having already visited the temple the evening before; knowing that they were going to return there

Humanity of Jesus – limited Himself in taking on human flesh; had normal need for food and water and nourishment; despite having existed from all eternity and having created all things; Breakfast the most important meal of the day!

**Constable:** The next day was Tuesday, which Hoehner dated as March 31, A.D. 33. Apparently the events of "Palm Sunday" took place on a Monday. The incident that Mark recorded next, beginning in verse 12, occurred as Jesus and His disciples walked from Bethany to Jerusalem on Tuesday morning (Matt. 21:18).

## **B. (:13) Expectation**

### 1. (:13a) Hopeful Expectation

*“And seeing at a distance a fig tree in leaf, He went to see if perhaps He would find anything on it;”*

καὶ ἰδὼν συκῆν ἀπὸ μακρόθεν ἔχουσαν φύλλα ἦλθεν, εἰ ἄρα τι εὐρήσει ἐν αὐτῇ,

Caught his attention because it stood out from the other fig trees – it had leaves at this time of year (April)

### 2. (:13b) Hypocrisy Exposed

*“and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs.”*

καὶ ἐλθὼν ἐπ’ αὐτὴν οὐδὲν εὗρεν εἰ μὴ φύλλα· ὁ γὰρ καιρὸς οὐκ ἦν σύκων.

Not the season for fully mature figs ... but it was for the small buds that should be there if leaves were there

**Constable:** Normally, small, edible buds appeared on the fig trees in March, before the leaves did in April. The lack of edible buds indicated that this tree would not bear figs later on, even though there were leaves on this tree. Mark explained that "it was not the season for figs"—for his non-Palestinian readers. Matthew did not add this explanation.

Jesus saw an opportunity to teach His disciples an important truth using this tree as an object lesson. Being a prophet, Jesus performed a symbolic act (cf. Isa. 20:1-6; Jer. 13:1-11; 19:1-13; Ezek. 4:1-15). He cursed the tree to teach them the lesson, not because it failed to produce fruit. The tree was a good illustration of the **large unbelieving element within the nation of Israel**. God had looked to that generation of Israelites for spiritual fruit, as Jesus had hoped to find physical fruit on the fig tree (Matt. 3:8; cf. Jer. 8:13; Hos. 9:10; Mic. 7:1; Nah. 3:12; Zech. 10:2). Israel's outward display of religious vitality was impressive, like the leaves on the tree, but it bore no spiritual fruit of righteousness. It was hypocritical (7:6; 11:15-19, 27-12:40).



**Parunak:** The Lord's expectation: not figs, for it was not yet the season for figs (June at earliest), but the buds appear about the time the leaves do. They're not by any means as good as the figs, but can be eaten.

**Sproul:** The test of whether one could expect figs from a fig tree was not the time of year but whether the foliage of the tree was in full bloom.

### C. (:13b-14a) Judgment = Cursing of the Fig Tree

*“And He answered and said to it, ‘May no one ever eat fruit from you again!’”*

καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν αὐτῇ· μηκέτι εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ἔκ σοῦ μηδεὶς καρπὸν φάγοι.

Seems like an extreme reaction

**Hendriksen:** The pretentious fig tree had its counterpart in the temple where on this very day a lively business was being transacted so that sacrifices might be made, while at the same time the priests were plotting to put to death the very One apart from whom these offerings had no meaning whatever. Plenty of leaves but no fruit. Bustling religious (?) activity, but no sincerity and truth, tremendous promise but a very poor performance! In cursing the fig tree and in cleansing the temple Jesus performed *two* symbolic and prophetic acts, with *one* meaning. He was predicting the downfall of unfruitful Israel. Not that he was “through with the Jews,” but that in the place of Israel an international and everlasting kingdom would be established, a nation bringing forth not just leaves but fruits, and gathered from both Jews and Gentiles.

### D. (:14b) Audience = Jesus’ Disciples

*“And His disciples were listening.”*

καὶ ἤκουον οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ.

Interesting: Jesus is cursing a fig tree ... what will be the outcome? What’s the big deal ... it’s just one tree; only destructive miracle directly accomplished by Jesus (the demons going into the swine and causing them to go over the cliff was an after-effect)

**Bernard Russell**, who wrote an essay titled “*Why I Am Not a Christian*,” cited this narrative as one of his reasons for repudiating Christianity. He said this incident displays Jesus as a man who expressed vindictive fury to an innocent plant, manifesting behavior that was not that of a righteous man, let alone the Son of God.

You have to understand **the symbolism of this fig tree** – what it represented – to understand the righteous indignation on the part of Jesus

## II. (:15-19) OBJECT LESSON #2 -- CLEANSING OF THE CORRUPT TEMPLE

### A. (:15a) Occasion for the Object Lesson

*“And they came to Jerusalem. And He entered the temple”*

Καὶ ἔρχονται εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα. Καὶ εἰσελθὼν εἰς τὸ ἱερόν

### Background of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem: story of repeated apostasy and hypocrisy

- Gen. 22 – Abraham told to go to Mount Moriah and offer up Isaac as a sacrifice; 900 years later, around 988 B.C. David purchased Mount Moriah from Ornan (1 Chron. 21)
- Solomon builds beautiful structure there in accordance with God’s architectural design plans after David was denied the opportunity because he was a man of war (1 Chron. 28:3); overlaid with gold; impressive
- Babylon destroys that temple in 586 B.C., levels it to the ground and plunders its treasures; God’s judgment on the apostate nation of Israel for being hypocritical and unfruitful
- Upon return from captivity, second temple is built and finished in 515 B.C. (Ezra 6:15); but it pales in comparison to original temple (people wept – Ezra 3:12-13)
- Pagan ruler Antiochus desecrates the temple in 168 B.C. by putting a statue of the god Jupiter inside and slaughtering pigs on the altar – a direct affront to the Jewish laws of uncleanness
- King Herod starts rebuilding the third temple in 20 B.C. – actually not completed until just a few years before its ultimate destruction in 70 AD

**Sproul:** The Herodian temple was one of the wonders of the ancient world. It was a huge complex that was divided into four parts: the court of the Gentiles; the court of the women; the court of the Jews; and the Holy of Holies. The court of the Gentiles was the largest part of the temple complex.

**Hendriksen:** This magnificent sanctuary must have been a marvelous sight to behold, since it was built of white marble, richly set off with gold on its front and sides. It was entered by means of a huge double-winged porch or vestibule. . . In front of the doorway to the Holy Place hung a beautifully colored Babylonian veil or curtain. There was also “the second veil,” the one that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies.

### **B. Expectation (not stated here)**

- Temple was the place where the glory of God should reside
- Temple was the place where sinful men could commune with a holy God
- Temple was a place for reverence and devotion and prayer and communion with God
- Temple was a place where there should be no respecter of persons – both Jew and Gentile should be able to respond to God’s revelation and invitation to repent and believe and have one’s sins forgiven

Remember the critical teaching of Jesus in **John 4** about where is the appropriate place to worship? The temple in Jerusalem as held to by the Jews or on Mt. Gerizim as held to by the Samaritans – Jesus overturned all of their notions about the locus of worship

*“God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” vs. 24*

The time was coming when the veil in the temple would be rent in two

The time was coming as Jesus had prophesied when he would tear down the temple and rebuild it

The time was coming when this temple would be destroyed by the Romans and the Jews would be without their beautiful religious crutch

### **C. (:15b-17) Judgment = Cleansing of the Temple**

*“and began to cast out those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who were selling doves; and He would not permit anyone to carry goods through the temple. And He began to teach and say to them, ‘Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations ’? But you have made it a robbers’ den.’”*

ἤρξατο ἐκβάλλειν τοὺς πωλοῦντας καὶ τοὺς ἀγοράζοντας ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ, καὶ τὰς τραπέζας τῶν κολλυβιστῶν καὶ τὰς καθέδρας τῶν πωλούντων τὰς περιστερὰς κατέστρεψεν, καὶ οὐκ ἤφιεν ἵνα τις διενέγκῃ σκεῦος διὰ τοῦ ἱεροῦ. καὶ ἐδίδασκεν καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς· οὐ γέγραπται ὅτι ὁ οἶκός μου οἶκος προσευχῆς κληθήσεται πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν; ὑμεῖς δὲ πεποιήκατε αὐτὸν σπήλαιον ληστῶν.

**Edwards:** Goes beyond an act of cleansing which would be the removing of impurities and restoration to a rightful function (**Is. 55:1-8**); lays an ax at the root of the temple as an institution; the dissolution of the temple; The fig tree thus symbolizes the temple: as the means of approach to God, the temple is fundamentally – “*from the roots*” – replaced by Jesus as the center of Israel.

#### 4 Corrupt Practices that Jesus Shut Down:

- 1) buying and selling in the temple – Commercializing God’s house of worship
- 2) moneychangers – extorting heavy fees for changing currency into what would be accepted for the temple tax
- 3) those selling doves at inflated prices – so you could not bring unblemished animals that would be accepted; you had to buy the official sacrificial animals
- 4) those using the temple as a convenient thoroughfare to get from Point A to Point B

**Hiebert:** 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. Foreign coins with their idolatrous images were refused for this purpose. The money-changers were in the temple court to change the Greek and Roman coins of the pilgrims into the Jewish or Tyrian coinage which alone could be used for the payment.

**MacArthur:** This place was a buzz. It was a cacophony of noises made by people and animals and He went into it and it says He began to drive out those who were buying and selling in the temple and overturning the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves. First of all, those buying and selling were buying and selling animals. There were people who were bringing their animals in, they were being bought and then they were being sold to the people who came to offer sacrifices. It was a scam of the rankest kind because if you brought a sacrifice from home, let’s say you brought a lamb without blemish and without spot from your own flock, and you brought that to the temple to give as a sacrifice, there would have to be a priest who would pass the animal. All the priest had to do was say, “This animal doesn’t pass.” The animal is not good enough for sacrifice and you would be required to buy an animal from the vendors inside the temple at ten times the price.

Then, you would also be required to have the half shekel temple tax in a certain kind of coinage and pilgrims came from all kinds of nations when they came in for the Passover, and if you didn’t have the right kind of coinage, you would have to exchange your coins and the mark up

was...according to one historian...at least 25 percent. If you were poor, you could give a dove as a sacrifice. According to the provision of God's Law in Leviticus 12, poor people could give a dove. And doves in their economy would sell for five cents at your local town but if you bought one in the temple, they say it would be four dollars. This is perversion, prostitution, travesty, extortion, monopoly, just a horrendous operation...noise, traffic. It was anything but a house of prayer. Jesus went in and just ripped into all of this. He started driving out the people buying and selling, the people bringing in their animals and taking them out.

**Hendriksen:** By means of the gates it had become rather easy and convenient to use the temple area as a shortcut; for example, between the city and the Mount of Olives. The sacred place was being used for a purely secular purpose.

**James Edwards:** The enormity of the temple industry [during Passover] may be further appreciated by a comment from Josephus (War 6.422-27) that in A.D. 66, the year the temple was completed, 255,600 lambs were sacrificed for Passover!

2 OT Quotes significant here:

**Is. 56:6-8** quoted here – gathering of the Gentiles

**Jer. 7** quoted here – perversion of people of God and justification for this judgment

**James Edwards:** a specific censure of the Sanhedrin and the temple as the organ of religious exploitation; and asserting that the Gentiles have access to God's self-revelation to Israel on the basis of sincerity of heart rather than by legal and cultic purity

#### **D. (:18-19) Audience = Jewish Religious Leaders**

*“And the chief priests and the scribes heard this, and began seeking how to destroy Him; for they were afraid of Him, for all the multitude was astonished at His teaching. And whenever evening came, they would go out of the city.”*

Καὶ ἤκουσαν οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς καὶ ἐζήτουν πῶς αὐτὸν ἀπολέσωσιν· ἐφοβοῦντο γὰρ αὐτόν, πᾶς γὰρ ὁ ὄχλος ἐξεπλήσσετο ἐπὶ τῇ διδαχῇ αὐτοῦ. Καὶ ὅταν ὀψὲ ἐγένετο, ἐξεπορεύοντο ἔξω τῆς πόλεως.

Why did the religious leaders want to destroy Jesus? He exposed their Hypocrisy

- Threat to their **Popularity**
  - o More Powerful – look at his miracles
  - o More Profound – look at his teaching – taught with authorityAfraid – saw Jesus as a prophet of God – **Matt. 22:46**
- Threat to their **Pocketbook** – they had quite a nice racket going in the temple courts

This event signed death warrant for Jesus --

#### **CONCLUSION:**

How fired up does Jesus get when confronted with hypocrisy? Just check out **Matt. 23** and his indictment of the religious leaders of his day.

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## INTRODUCTION – PART2:

**Religious Hypocrisy** takes many forms. But in all instances, Hypocrisy puts on an external mask to try to look like something it is not. It dresses itself up in the **activities of religion** – lots of prayers; lots of donating money; lots of quoting of bible verses; lots of acts of worship – like baptisms and observance of the Lord’s Supper; singing and listening to sermons – but no heart reality of **genuine faith** and no **submission to the authority** of the Lord. Instead, there is an exchanging of the commandments of God for the traditions of the hypocritical religious leaders.

Jesus takes the two object lessons of the Cursing of the Hypocritical Fig Tree and the Cleansing of the Corrupt Temple and revisits them with these **TWO APPLICATION LESSONS**.

### III. (:20-26) APPLICATION LESSON FROM THE CURSING OF THE FIG TREE – BELIEVE IN GOD AND PRAY IN FAITH AND WITH A SPIRIT OF FORGIVENESS – NOT VINDICTIVENESS

#### A. (:20) Occasion for the Application Lesson

*“And as they were passing by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots up.”*

*Καὶ παραπορευόμενοι πρῶτ' εἶδον τὴν συκῆν ἐξηραμμένην ἐκ ῥιζῶν.*

**Day 3 of Passion Day** is going to be an extremely busy day – much takes place. Jesus got an early start.

**Fig tree** picture of the nation of Israel – **Jer. 24** – 2 baskets of figs – good ones and rotten ones (Jer. 8:13; Hos. 9:10; Mic. 7:1; Nah. 3:12)

Such a radical change (had been a healthy, robust flowering tree) in just a 24 hour period  
Such a permanent change – some water and some nurturing care was not going to bring this tree back to good health

**Constable:** This event happened on Wednesday morning [Day 3]. "*Withered from the roots*" means that death was spreading through the tree, emanating from its sources of nourishment. The "*roots*" of the tree correspond to the religious leaders of the nation. The curse of *spiritual death* would spread from them to that whole generation of unbelieving Jews. Peter connected the judgment with Jesus' words. In parallel fashion, Jesus' pronouncement of judgment on that generation of Jews would have a similar effect. Rather than explaining the symbolic significance of the cursing of the fig tree, Jesus proceeded to focus on the **means** by which the miracle happened.

**Matt. 3:7-10** The ax had been laid to its roots

*“But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 “Therefore bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance; 9 and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham for our father’; for I say to you, that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. 10 “And the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”*

## B. (:21) Incredulity on the Part of the Intended Audience

*“And being reminded, Peter said to Him,  
‘Rabbi, behold, the fig tree which You cursed has withered.’”*

*καὶ ἀναμνησθεὶς ὁ Πέτρος λέγει αὐτῷ· ῥαββί, ἴδε ἡ συκῆ ἣν κατηράσω ἐξήρανται.*

Peter sounds surprised here – how could this have happened so quickly and with such devastating results?

Thing about Hypocrisy: it looks healthy, but it is rotten to the core – that tree that outwardly just the day before had professed such health and vitality with its leaves of promise had already been nothing more than a white-washed sepulcher --

So it should not have been surprising that Jesus reduced it to the withered up shell it was in reality

The exposure of Hypocrisy ... not the extinguishing of life

## C. (:22) Primary Lesson

*“And Jesus answered saying to them, ‘Have faith in God.’”*

*καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγει αὐτοῖς· ἔχετε πίστιν θεοῦ.*

You would have thought that Jesus would have spoken more directly to the issue of **Hypocrisy** – and He actually does by addressing the need for genuine faith instead of a self-righteousness that is oriented towards external works – but he makes the application to the exercise of that faith in believing prayer – talking about the means by which Jesus performed the miracle ... not the significance of the cursing itself

### Steven Lawson:

- the **imperative** of faith – divine command; not a suggestion
- the **object** of faith; not have faith in faith = positive thinking movement
- the **exclusivity** of faith – this is all that Jesus required of them – for salvation; sanctification; not faith plus anything else; sola fide
- the **responsibility** of faith – each and every person is responsible before God to exercise their own will; parents cannot believe for their children
- The **urgency** of faith – right now; not when you can get around to it or feel like doing it

Present tense – abiding faith; keep believing in God

### Hendriksen: But what is faith?

#### Faith is:

- The soul’s window through which God’s love comes pouring in.
- The openhand 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, so that he threw in his lot

with God's sorely afflicted people.

- 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.
- The remedy that cured the centurion's servant and many others.

Scripture also describes faith as:

- Leaning on the everlasting arms.
- Committing one's way to the Lord, trusting in him, knowing that he will do whatever is best.
- Receiving the kingdom (or rule) of God as a little child.
- Being sure of what we hope for, and being convinced of what we do not see.
- The victory that overcomes the world.

The list could go on ... how about in your life – What has faith accomplished? What does faith look like in your life?

#### **D. (:23-26) Expanded Explanation**

*“Truly I say to you, ‘whoever says to this mountain, Be taken up and cast into the sea, and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it shall be granted him. Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they shall be granted you. And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your transgressions. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions.’”*

ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ὅς ἂν εἶπῃ τῷ ὄρει τούτῳ· ἄρθῃτι καὶ βλήθῃτι εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν, καὶ μὴ διακριθῇ ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ ἀλλὰ πιστεύῃ ὅτι ὁ λαλεῖ γίνεται, ἔσται αὐτῷ. <sup>24</sup> διὰ τοῦτο λέγω ὑμῖν, πάντα ὅσα προσεύχεσθε καὶ αἰτεῖσθε, πιστεύετε ὅτι ἐλάβετε, καὶ ἔσται ὑμῖν. <sup>25</sup> Καὶ ὅταν στήκετε προσευχόμενοι, ἀφίετε εἴ τι ἔχετε κατὰ τινος, ἵνα καὶ ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς ἀφῇ ὑμῖν τὰ παραπτώματα ὑμῶν.

Statement of hyperbole for effect and impact

Mountain = the Mount of Olives; sea = Dead Sea – would take a miraculous event to accomplish such a deed

No act is impossible if it is within the scope of God's will and performed by faith in the context of prayer from a loving and forgiving heart

Look at what Jesus is going to teach in John 14:12

**Re vs. 26** -- This verse does not appear in the most important ancient manuscripts of Mark's Gospel. Evidently scribes inserted it later, because they associated the preceding verse with Matthew 6:14.

**Parunak:** In prayer we are not demanding what we are owed, but are asking God for a favor; it is inconsistent to do this while we are embroiled in bitterness with our fellow creatures.

**J C Ryle:** We have no right to look for mercy, if we are not ready to extend mercy to our brethren. We cannot really feel the sinfulness of the sins we ask to have pardoned if we cherish malice towards our fellow men. We must have the heart of a brother toward our neighbor on earth, if we wish God to be our Father in heaven. We must not flatter ourselves that we have the Spirit of adoption if we cannot bear and forbear.

**Sproul:** We have to be very careful with this verse. A whole theology based almost exclusively on this text has permeated the Christian world in our day. The word of faith movement, which espouses the idea of “name it and claim it,” tells us that all we have to do to receive something we want is to claim it as ours in Jesus’ name, and it will be ours. This movement is, in some ways, the Christian parallel to the New Age movement in the secular world. The New Age movement teaches that by visualizing what we want to happen, we can actually change the world around us. The force that is at the bottom of the New Age thinking is really magic . . .

I do not believe that this text or any text in the New Testament teaches that we are obligated to forgive people who sin against us unilaterally without their repentance. All the New Testament teachings on confronting brothers who sin against us, seeking restitution, carrying out church discipline, and so forth do not mean that if someone harms us, we have to say, “I forgive you.” We may do that, but there is an analogy between our forgiveness of others’ sins and God’s forgiveness of our sins. God does not forgive us unilaterally; He requires repentance. But when we repent, He does forgive. We must do the same.

#### **IV. (:27-33) APPLICATION LESSON FROM THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE – JESUS IS GREATER THAN THE TEMPLE – RESPECT HIS AUTHORITY**

##### **A. (:27a) Occasion for the Application Lesson**

*“And they came again to Jerusalem. And as He was walking in the temple,”*

Καὶ ἔρχονται πάλιν εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα. καὶ ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ περιπατοῦντος

All of the focus continues to be in the city of Jerusalem, at the temple of God

Matt. notes that he was teaching as he was walking in the temple

##### **B. (:27b-28) Incredulity on the Part of the Intended Audience**

*“the chief priests, and scribes, and elders came to Him, and began saying to Him, ‘By what authority are You doing these things, or who gave You this authority to do these things?’”*

αὐτοῦ ἔρχονται πρὸς αὐτὸν οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι <sup>28</sup> καὶ ἔλεγον αὐτῷ· ἐν ποίᾳ ἐξουσίᾳ ταῦτα ποιεῖς; ἢ τίς σοι ἔδωκεν τὴν ἐξουσίαν ταύτην ἵνα ταῦτα ποιῆς;

Seems like an official delegation from the Sanhedrin



This was their domain; how could the loyalty of the people be diverted to the teaching of some uncredentialed pseudo-Rabbi??

Jesus was the son of a carpenter from Nazareth ... he did not have the background one would expect; he had not had the training that one would have expected

Yet he was acting with so much authority ... on what basis??

- His teaching had demonstrated great authority – **Mark 1:21-22**
- His miracles had demonstrated great authority
- Not afraid of confrontation with the religious leaders of Judaism – did not shrink back from healing on the Sabbath
- Had demonstrated even authority over demons

They were trying to shut Jesus down

But they did not understand that *one greater than the temple* was in their midst

People today don't respond well to the authority of Jesus; to the authority of the Word of God; nobody is going to tell me what to do; I will read the bible to have it say what I want it to say; I will live my life the way I think best

You can't have the salvation that Jesus offers without the authority that Jesus commands

### **C. (:29-30) Primary Lesson**

*“And Jesus said to them, ‘I will ask you one question, and you answer Me, and then I will tell you by what authority I do these things. Was the baptism of John from heaven, or from men? Answer Me.’”*

Ἦ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· ἐπερωτήσω ὑμᾶς ἓνα λόγον, καὶ ἀποκρίθητέ μοι καὶ ἐρῶ ὑμῖν ἐν ποίᾳ ἐξουσίᾳ ταῦτα ποιῶ. <sup>30</sup> τὸ βάπτισμα τὸ Ἰωάννου ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ἦν ἢ ἐξ ἀνθρώπων; ἀποκρίθητέ μοι.

Remember the mission of John the Baptist laid out in John chapter 1

Here was one recognized as a prophet by the people

Not an intellectual problem as if they did not know the answer to their question; it was a moral problem; did not want to submit to the authority of Jesus in their hearts

Look at how the critics of the Apostle Paul tried to shut down his ministry – accusing him of having no legitimate authority; being self-sent rather than commissioned by God

**2 Cor. 1:12; 3:1; 6:4; 10:7**

**By what authority do I preach this morning?** Where is my certificate of ordination from some mainline denomination?

- I must be examined as to meeting the qualifications of a pastor – laid out in the NT – must continue to meet these; not a one-time check the box type of thing
- Look for the character fruit of the Holy Spirit – cannot be counterfeited or manufactured by human means
- - The gift for teaching and exposition can only come from the Holy Spirit; the discernment of the body of believers must evaluate that gift in light of the word of God
- You will know them by their fruit – good grapes or rotten?

#### D. (:31-33) Expanded Explanation

“And they began reasoning among themselves, saying, ‘If we say, From heaven, He will say, Then why did you not believe him? But shall we say, From men?’-- they were afraid of the multitude, for all considered John to have been a prophet indeed. And answering Jesus, they said, ‘We do not know.’ And Jesus said to them, ‘Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.’”

Καὶ διελογίζοντο πρὸς ἑαυτοὺς λέγοντες· ἐὰν εἴπωμεν· ἐξ οὐρανοῦ, ἐρεῖ· διὰ τί [οὖν] οὐκ ἐπιστεύσατε αὐτῷ; <sup>32</sup> ἀλλ’ εἴπωμεν· ἐξ ἀνθρώπων;- ἐφοβοῦντο τὸν ὄχλον· ἅπαντες γὰρ εἶχον τὸν Ἰωάννην ὄντως ὅτι προφήτης ἦν. <sup>33</sup> Καὶ ἀποκριθέντες τῷ Ἰησοῦ λέγουσιν· οὐκ οἶδαμεν. καὶ ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγει αὐτοῖς· οὐδὲ ἐγὼ λέγω ὑμῖν ἐν ποίᾳ ἐξουσίᾳ ταῦτα ποιῶ.

Acting simply on the basis of **expediency** rather than conviction

How are things going to turn out for me if I answer this way or that way?

What a pitiful, cowardly answer: “*We don’t know*”

This from a group of proud men who always claimed to understand all things; they were not used to professing ignorance

**MacArthur:** Strong challenge. Our Lord is stunningly brilliant. They’re really on the hot seat. If they said the ministry of John is from God, then they have to admit that Jesus is the Messiah because that’s what John said. If they say the ministry of God is not from God, it’s from men, then they’ve got a problem because all the people knew that John was a real prophet. You see, it’s a package deal. You can’t take John without Jesus. And you can’t throw away Jesus without throwing away John.

**James Edwards:** institutional religion, even its pinnacle in the powerful and prestigious Sanhedrin, is vacuous unless it is centered in the “*Stronger One*,” declared to be God’s Son at the baptism of John. John’s significance for Jesus – and in this instance for the Sanhedrin – is as a herald of Jesus’ divine Sonship, with which Mark begins (1,1, 11) and ends (15:39) his Gospel. The “*these things*” of which the Sanhedrin inquires can be understood only if they are seen as consequences of the authority (*exousia*) of Jesus as the Son of God, which John’s baptism inaugurated. What Jesus does as God’s servant has meaning only because of who he is as God’s Son. The *exousia* of Jesus is in fact the *exousia* of God.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

How fired up does Jesus get when confronted with hypocrisy? Just check out **Matt. 23** and his indictment of the religious leaders of his day.

Are we praying with faith in a spirit of forgiveness, expecting Jesus to remove obstacles from our path of ministry so that we can be fruitful?

Are we submitting to the authority of Jesus Christ ... understanding that all authority has been given to the Son who in the Great Commission has sent us out to make disciples of the world in dependence upon him

What kind of ambassadors are we for Jesus Christ?

\* \* \* \* \*

### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) If Jesus came into the world at His first coming for the purpose of salvation and not for condemnation, why did He curse the fig tree?
- 2) How much commotion did Jesus stir up in the cleansing of the temple incident?
- 3) What is the link between the prayer of faith and the spirit of forgiveness?
- 4) Why do so many people reject the link between the lordship of Jesus and saving faith?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**J C Ryle:** Let us take care that we each individually learn the lesson that this fig tree conveys. Let us always remember, that baptism, and church-membership, and reception of the Lord's Supper, and a diligent use of the outward forms of Christianity, are not sufficient to save our souls. They are leaves, nothing but leaves, and without fruit will add to our condemnation. Like the fig leaves of which Adam and Eve made themselves garments, they will not hide the nakedness of our souls from the eye of an all-seeing God, or give us boldness when we stand before Him at the last day. No! we must bear fruit, or be lost forever. There must be fruit in our hearts and fruit in our lives, the fruit of repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, and true holiness in our conversation. Without such fruits as these a profession of Christianity will only sink us lower into hell.

**Jeff Miller:** The point lies in the difference between the appearance of the temple and the tree from a distance and their true condition, which a closer inspection reveals. Does that sound like your life? To most people you appear to be genuine. But what if we examined you closer? What if we could follow you around for a week? Would we find fruit, or have you grown adept at giving the appearance of fruit from a distance?

**Bob Utley:** The cleansing of the Temple recorded in Mark 11:15-19 was apparently the second cleansing by Jesus. The first one is recorded in John 2:15. I do not accept the tenets of literary criticism that telescope these two events into one. Although there is a problem in unifying the chronology of the Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John, it still seems best to me, because of the differences between the two accounts, to hold to two cleansings, one early in His ministry and one near the end. This could also explain the early and growing animosity of the religious leaders of Jerusalem. This cleansing is paralleled in Matt. 21:12-16 and Luke 19:45-47.

**MacArthur:** Now the temple sits at the heart of Judaism. And the curse that comes on the fig tree and thus on the temple demonstrates for us that God is not pleased with the temple. God is not pleased with the leaders of the temple. God is not pleased with the people who come to the temple. In a word, God is not pleased with Israel and the temple is the heart of Israel. If the temple is corrupt, the nation is corrupt. This temple was a massive, massive edifice. Before it was finally completed, it was under construction for 80 years, actually over 80 years. . .

The tree had the appearance of fruit but it had none, not the reality, it was a false profession. And this is a graphic illustration of the pretense of temple worship...religious leaves but no fruit, hypocrisy to the max. Our Lord expands on this, you remember, in **Matthew 23** when He speaks to the leaders of Israel and says, "You hypocrites, you hypocrites, you hypocrites," over and over and over throughout that entire diatribe recorded in Matthew 23. He addresses the hypocrisy of Israel's religion.

### **Brian Borgman: Judgment on the Fig Tree**

2 judgments: on fig tree and on the temple – judgment on the nation and on the temple

2 lessons from the incident with the fig tree:

- Lesson on barrenness
- Lesson on prayer and faith

This fig tree catches his attention because it has leaves – distinguishes it from the other fig trees that he sees at that time of the year – it had leaves – gave promise of fruit

Did not use his supernatural power and knowledge to fulfil his own needs

What about fairness to the fig tree?? It wasn't the season for figs yet; why should it be cursed?

The tree appeared to be an exception by its leafage = promising fruit

Jesus had every right to expect early figs

Radical disparity between what the tree says it is (what it is advertising) and what it is in reality

Condemned to state of perpetual barrenness; disciples heard this and were surprised

#### 4 significant points:

- The fig tree is a symbol in the OT for the nation of Israel – the vine and the fig tree  
Jer. 8:13; Hos. 9:10; Joel 1:7; Mic 7:1
- The presence of leaves with no fruit is symbol of great looking externals but total lack of spiritual reality; a living walking contradiction; hypocrisy – God did everything for the nation to make it a productive plant and came to look for fruit and found none; proud boast of Israel to being God's choice nation; Mic 7: 1; Is. 5 symbolism of vineyard and fig tree connected – What more was there to do for my vineyard than what I have done?
- Judgment symbolizes Christ's judgment on hypocritical, unbelieving nation – Jer. 8:13; Hos. 9:16-17; Matt 8:11-12; 21:42ff
- Jesus had gathered his remnant = his disciples; but the ones in the nation who made the loudest and showiest profession were the ones who were dead and unproductive

### **Brian Borgman: The Judgment on the Temple**

The temple = place where God and man met together; where man came to worship; symbol of covenant relationship and of presence of God

Mal. 3

Ezekiel – chap. 8 – sees all kinds of corruption and idolatry in the temple; chaps. 10-11 the glory of Yahweh departs from temple and stands over Mount of Olives; then the destruction of the temple and of Jerusalem is predicted; chap. 11 – begins to tell us of restoration of temple and regathering of God's people; chap. 40-48 a new temple that is more glorious than Solomon's temple

Busiest week in temple activity – Passover week; over 1 million visitors;  
Court of the Gentiles – turned into a marketplace

This was a day the moneychangers never forgot  
“drive out” – physical force and exertion – quite a scene; manly strength of carpenter – Son of God and Son of Man; a manly man

About 3 years earlier Jesus had come into temple armed with a scourge  
This was not a temper tantrum or fit of rage but measured and controlled display of righteous anger based on truth

Special teaching moment; temple in shambles and all eyes riveted on him; captive audience  
**Is. 56:6-8** – Israel was to be a light to the Gentiles; a gathering in of the Gentiles;  
**Jer. 7:8-11**

Scared the religious leaders to death  
Their authority challenged  
Their profits in danger  
Their influence eroding by the day

Hypocrisy can only react to truth with fear because truth is the greatest enemy of hypocrisy

Began to plot as never before to kill Jesus

### **Steven Lawson: Have Faith in God**

Time and again Jesus drove home the primacy of Faith; When Jesus came to Jerusalem, He found anything but faith; entire nation living in rank unbelief; ton of external religious activity; seemed to be thriving; but no heart belief; we need a true faith, a living faith, a saving faith; not only at outset of entrance into kingdom but every moment of every day;

### 3 Key Headings :

#### **1) The Perishing Tree (:20-21)**

A lot happening on this day; very early in the morning; yesterday it was lush with leaves; looked to be so healthy; now so totally different; killed by the curse of Christ; symbolic representation of nation of Israel in this generation; God has been longsuffering with his people; Peter spoke with some surprise; immediate death to the roots; how swift and severe is the judgment of God when it falls; there is an end to the patience of God; his judgment is irreversible and swift and immediate when it falls; God still gives extended opportunity to the Jews to believe in early chapters of Acts; finality of God’s judgment on apostate Israel – 70 A.D. judgment; cf. our nation; we are a people under judgment – given over to the lust and depravity of our own ways; yet still God offers grace;

#### **2) The Proper Root (:22)**

Response to vs. 21; inseparable link; faith was what was missing in Israel; only religious activity; the root system of Israel was dead; Jesus speaks to his disciples – do not be like this apostate nation; temple and rituals and routines are superfluous;  
Tree is Israel  
Leaves are ritual activities

Fruit is real religion – love, holiness  
Root is faith in God  
Cursing is divine judgment  
Withering is finality of this divine judgment  
“Have faith in God:”

What is faith: The commitment of ourselves to Jesus Christ; the open hand that reaches out to God and receives from Him what we need; open heart that repents of sin

### **3) The Prolific Fruit (:23-25)**

Good root leads to good fruit; you will know them by their fruit  
Hyperbole – intentional exaggerated statement to underscore and highlight an important point;  
Talking about prayer – bringing a matter before God that is impossible to deal with in our own resources; insurmountable mountain or obstacle to performing the will of God in our lives;  
Divine intervention into our human circumstances – God removes the obstacle that is holding us back from doing God’s work in God’s way according to his will in our life;  
We must be rooted and grounded in God and have true faith in God  
This kind of faith stood in contrast to hypocrisy of Pharisees;  
Prayer ultimate exercise in faith; sit still and do nothing and ask God to work on your behalf;  
You cannot have a negative, doubting mindset  
God does not always answer the way in which we ask or think it should be answered  
Do not insult Him by saying, “I don’t know if you will do this” as if He does not love you or have the sovereignty to act  
Root = pray, ask, believe  
Fruit = they will be granted you  
Unforgiving spirit is a problem – cancel out the offense; put it away; does not refer to judicial forgiveness (eternal forgiveness) – reference is to our need to come to God in prayer continually;  
God will withhold his temporal and parental forgiveness in the maintenance of our daily walk with him; can’t bear a grudge; if you withhold forgiveness, God withholds fruit

### **Alistair Begg: The Authority of Jesus**

We don’t like other people interfering in our lives; commanding our attention; demanding our obedience; telling us what to do; especially in matters spiritual; “The Transcendental Interferer” is what C. S. Lewis calls Jesus in *Surprised by Joy*; a struggle about authority with the religious leaders; 1:21 *taught them as one who had authority and not as the teachers of the law*; these leaders had the right training; they were credentialed; reacted against Jesus; review of incidents in Mark of confrontation with the authorities; setting aside the commands of God in favor of the traditions of men

Official representatives of the Sanhedrin show up while Jesus is walking and talking in temple courts; trying to trip Jesus up with one trick question; Where did you get your authority? They are victims of their own invention (like inventor of radar caught in speed trap); envy is flip side of coin of vanity; if I am humble I can rejoice in the success and popularity and success of another; everybody listening and following this upstart rabbi;

Relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus; John 1; what do you say about yourself? A voice preparing the way for the Lord; my role is to point people to Jesus; unholy huddle to discuss answer to Jesus’ counter question; expediency rules; give the lamest answer; We don’t know; outright lie; Jesus said I don’t need to tell you because you know the answer; you have

come to put me on the spot; their problem was not intellectual but moral; threatened by the people;

Application: the issue for each of us in relationship to Jesus is an authority issue; all authority has been given to Jesus Christ so we are commanded to make disciples of the world;

TEXT: Mark 12:1-12

TITLE: RESPECT THE SON

**BIG IDEA:**

**REJECTION OF CHRIST MEANS LOSS OF KINGDOM INHERITANCE AND THE UNLEASHING OF THE WRATH OF GOD (FOR THE WICKED RELIGIOUS LEADERS OF ISRAEL)**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Think of the simple command in the NT addressed to all children: their fundamental responsibility is to Honor, to Respect their parents. How shocking and evil and wicked it is when we see a TV newscast give an account of a child turning against his parents and killing them – the ultimate expression of rejection; the ultimate violation of this simple command.

Our passage this morning looks at the parallel responsibility we all have to Honor, to Respect Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the authority over our lives. We will see the ultimate violation of that command by the religious leaders who conspired to put Jesus to death at the hands of the Roman authorities. But I want you to be thinking of your own response to this overarching responsibility. How are we doing each day when it comes to showing **Respect** for the Lord Jesus?

**REJECTION OF CHRIST MEANS LOSS OF KINGDOM INHERITANCE AND THE UNLEASHING OF THE WRATH OF GOD (FOR THE WICKED RELIGIOUS LEADERS OF ISRAEL)**

**(:1a) TRANSITION: PARABLE MEANT TO CONVICT RATHER THAN CONCEAL - PARABLE OF JUDGMENT**

*“And He began to speak to them in parables:”*

*Καὶ ἤρξατο αὐτοῖς ἐν παραβολαῖς λαλεῖν.*

This is the third day of Passion Week; a lot going on; Jesus still in the temple – having just put down a sneak attack trying to undermine His authority by an official delegation of the Sanhedrin – those leading scribes and Pharisees and chief priests and elders who came to Jesus and questioned the nature and source of His authority.

Matthew records 3 parables; Mark only this one (unless you break it into 2 with same theme – parable of wicked vinedressers and of the rejected stone)

**Sproul:** (4:11-12) most of Jesus’ parables were designed to present a truth about the kingdom of God in a subtle way so that believers would understand but those outside the kingdom would not. However, the meaning of the wicked vinedressers is plain, and those whom it targeted, namely, the religious leaders of Israel, understood it clearly.

**MacArthur:** Now, notice He doesn't say what is the formula for many of the parables, "*The kingdom of heaven is like,*" because this is not about the kingdom of heaven. This breaks the mold. This is about **judgment**, and this is not a parable to hide the realities of the kingdom, but



to reveal the reality of judgment.

## **I. (:1) GOD'S LOVE -- LOVING INVESTMENT IN THE NATION OF ISRAEL**

### **A. Initiative**

*"A man planted a vineyard,"*

*ἀμπελῶνα ἄνθρωπος ἐφύτευσεν*

**Alan Carr:** Jesus is sharing the parable while standing in the Court of the Gentiles. Just over one shoulder is the Mount of Olives with its side literally covered with grapevines. Over the other shoulder is the majestic temple built by King Herod. On the door of that temple is carved a huge and magnificent grapevine. That grapevine is embellished with leaves of pure silver and gold. The grapes that hang down are precious jewels. Often, wealthy Jews would add another expensive leaf or another precious stone to that vine. The Jewish leaders have no doubts about what the Lord is talking about in this parable. He is talking about the nation of Israel.

Requires planning; hard work; perseverance; dedication; commitment

Not easy to clear the land of stones and plant a vineyard

Think of God's sovereign election of the nation of Israel based on His own goodness and initiative – not because Israel was anything special

### **B. Nurture**

*"and put a wall around it,"*

*καὶ περιέθηκεν φραγμὸν*

### **Is. 5:1-7**

establish the boundaries

keep out the wild animals that would eat the grapes

**Hiebert:** Such a hedge or fence might be built of unmortared stone gathered out of the field or be a planted hedge of thorn bushes.

### **C. Expectation**

*"and dug a vat under the wine press,*

*καὶ ὤρυξεν ὑπολήγιον*

talking about real wine; not just grape juice that was produced

you can't preach abstinence from Scripture ... merely refraining from drunkenness – which in itself implies that alcohol is being imbibed

**Hiebert:** The winepress, generally hewn out of the solid rock, was composed of two vats, an upper, broad, and shallow hollow where the grapes were crushed, and the lower, smaller, and deeper, vat, connected by a channel, where the juice was collected.

### **D. Protection**

*"and built a tower,"*

*καὶ ὠκοδόμησεν πύργον*

watch for thieves that might try to steal away the harvest

Took a lot of hard work to clear the land of stones and then prepare the vineyard in this fashion

**Hiebert:** used for shelter and storage as well as an observation post for the watch man. It was often circular in shape, built of stones, with a flat roof, and was as much as fifteen or twenty feet high.

[cf. our fire towers in the forest]

#### **D. Stewardship**

*“and rented it out to vine-growers”*

και ἐξέδετο αὐτὸν γεωργοῖς

common practice of the day; their role was not one of ownership but rather of stewardship and administration on behalf of the owner

Identification of the vine-growers is key to understanding the parable – these are the Jewish religious leaders of Jesus’ day

#### **F. Trust**

*“and went on a journey.”*

και ἀπεδήμησεν.

Luke adds that the owner stayed away a long time

Allowed these tenant farmers the independence of managing the property in his absence

**Illustration:** owner of local 7-11 stores; afraid to go on a vacation because his employees will rob him blind

What a demonstration of the Goodness of God:

**Alan Carr:** Since He is good, He deserves to be praised by all living creatures, *“Let everything that hath breath praise the LORD,”* **Psa. 150:6.**

## **II. (:2-5) GOD’S PATIENCE -- UNREQUITED PATIENCE AND FORBEARANCE**

### **Despite the Consistent, Intensifying Persecution of God’s Prophets**

#### **A. (:2-3) First Instance – Beat Him and Run Him Off**

##### 1. (:2) Reasonable Attempt at Accountability

*“And at the harvest time he sent a slave to the vine-growers, in order to receive some of the produce of the vineyard from the vine-growers.”*

και ἀπέστειλεν πρὸς τοὺς γεωργοὺς τῷ καιρῷ δοῦλον ἵνα παρὰ τῶν γεωργῶν λάβῃ ἀπὸ τῶν καρπῶν τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος.

“*Servant*” = common designation for the prophets in the OT

**Brian Borgman:** Primary role of prophet: call covenant people of God to repentance and back to covenant fidelity; make sure that God got his due

Reasonable expectation on the part of the owner – expects the rent payment – it is harvest time; pay what you owe; nothing burdensome or excessive here

2. (:3) Reaction of Unjust Violence

*“And they took him, and beat him, and sent him away empty-handed.”*  
καὶ λαβόντες αὐτὸν ἔδειραν καὶ ἀπέστειλαν κενόν.

Shocking! Imagine a franchise owner in today’s business world responding in such open violence and aggression – how unfair; how unexpected; how completely unjustified and indefensible

What we are expecting is immediate retaliation and holding these scoundrels accountable  
Instead:

**B. (:4) Second Instance – Severely Injure Him and Humiliate Him**

1. Patient Attempt at Accountability

*“And again he sent them another slave,”*  
καὶ πάλιν ἀπέστειλεν πρὸς αὐτοὺς ἄλλον δοῦλον.

The point is not that the owner is stupid and naïve

2. Reaction of Unjust Violence

*“and they wounded him in the head, and treated him shamefully.”*  
καὶ κεῖνον ἐκεφαλίωσαν καὶ ἠτίμασαν.

"and treated him shamefully" -- This is a verbal form of the name Timothy, which means "honor" or "worth" with the alpha privative. It connotes "to treat with contempt" or "total disrespect" (cf. **James 2:6**). -- **Bob Utley**

God’s ministers not to be concerned with the results of their ministry but with faithfulness of carrying out their assigned tasks

**C. (:5a) Third Instance – Kill him**

1. Forbearing Attempt at Accountability

*“And he sent another,”*  
καὶ ἄλλον ἀπέστειλεν.

2. Reaction of Unjust Violence

*“and that one they killed;”*  
καὶ κεῖνον ἀπέκτειναν,

**D. (:5b) Repeated Similar Instances – All of the above**

1. Longsuffering Attempt at Accountability

*“and so with many others,”*  
καὶ πολλοὺς ἄλλους,

2. Reaction of Unjust Violence

“beating some, and killing others.”  
οὓς μὲν δέροντες, οὓς δὲ ἀποκτείνοντες.

No exaggeration -- **Heb.11:35-38**

**Acts 7:52** "Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become;"

Application to persecuted church today

### **III. (:6-8) GOD'S SACRIFICE – PUTTING HIS BELOVED SON AT RISK**

**Resulting in the Covetous, Treacherous Execution of God's Son**

#### **A. (:6) Final Demonstration of Ultimate Love**

“He had one more to send, a beloved son; he sent him last of all to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.'”

ἔτι ἓνα εἶχεν υἱὸν ἀγαπητόν· ἀπέστειλεν αὐτὸν ἔσχατον πρὸς αὐτοὺς  
λέγων ὅτι ἐντραπήσονται τὸν υἱὸν μου.

**James Edwards:** the son differs from the slaves in several important respects:

- they are many, he is unique;
- they are hirelings, perhaps even themselves property; he is the heir;
- they are forerunners, he is the last and final word of the father.
- Above all, the son is “beloved.” The word recalls Abraham’s love for Isaac (Gen. 22:2), Jacob’s love for Joseph (Gen. 37:3), God’s love for Israel (Isa 5:1)

“beloved Son” – this was the Father’s public term of endearment for His Son

- **Mark 1:11** – at baptism of Jesus
- **Mark 9:7** – at transfiguration

Key point of Parable: **Necessity of Respecting the Son of God** in all we do

strictly *turn back* or *about*; (1) active *put to shame, make ashamed, reprove* (1C 4.14); (2) passive *be put to shame, be ashamed* (TI 2.8); (3) **passive with the middle sense**; strictly *turn oneself toward* someone; hence *respect, reverence, have regard for* (MT 21.37)

How can we Respect the Son?

- Respect His Word and His Authority by our **Obedience** – condemning the religious leaders here for their failure to respect His authority – look at last paragraph
- Respect His Worthiness by our **Worship**
- Respect His Worthiness by our **Witness** – or are we ashamed to identify with Jesus?
- Respect Him by **Giving Gifts** – cf. Mary pouring out precious perfume on his feet; understand what stewardship is all about
- Respect Him by **Imitating Him**; becoming more like Him

#### **B. (:7) Fatal Miscalculation by the Religious Leaders**

*“But those vine-growers said to one another,  
‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours!’”*  
ἐκεῖνοι δὲ οἱ γεωργοὶ πρὸς ἑαυτοὺς εἶπαν  
ὅτι οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ κληρονόμος· δεῦτε ἀποκτείνωμεν αὐτόν, καὶ ἡμῶν ἔσται ἡ κληρονομία.

Cf. **Gen. 37:20** – same words spoken by brothers of Joseph

### **C. (:8) Final Rejection of the Messiah by the Religious Leaders**

*“And they took him, and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard.”*  
καὶ λαβόντες ἀπέκτειναν αὐτόν καὶ ἐξέβαλον αὐτόν ἔξω τοῦ ἀμπελώνος.

*“threw him out of the vineyard” --*

**Heb.13:12,13** *“Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. Therefore, let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach.”*

## **IV. (:9) GOD’S RESPONSE – ONE OF BOTH WRATH AND GRACE**

*“What will the owner of the vineyard do?”*  
τί [οὖν] ποιήσει ὁ κύριος τοῦ ἀμπελώνος;

Can’t believe He has waited this long to respond in wrath and judgment

### **A. Response of Wrath -- Destruction**

*“He will come and destroy the vine-growers,”*  
ἐλεύσεται καὶ ἀπολέσει τοὺς γεωργοὺς

Seems to speak more of the **Second Coming** than the judgment of A.D. 70

Anticipation of the Second Coming – He will come – despite the scoffers and mockers saying where is the promise of His coming; despite people living as if they owe no accountability to their Creator

### **B. Response of Grace – Disfranchising but Diversification**

*“and will give the vineyard to others.”*  
καὶ δώσει τὸν ἀμπελῶνα ἄλλοις.

**Romans 9** describes this process of the Jews being cut off for a time in part and the Gentiles being grafted into the kingdom of God

**Parunak:** -- *“Give the vineyard unto others.”* Cf. **Matt. 19:28**, the role of the Twelve in the coming kingdom. Cf. emphasis in **Rev. 20:4** on the ruling position of the martyrs.

## **V. (:10-11) GOD’S MASTER PLAN – BRINGING BLESSING OUT OF WICKEDNESS**

*“Have you not even read this Scripture:”*  
Οὐδὲ τὴν γραφὴν ταύτην ἀνέγνωτε·

What a dig at the scribes and Pharisees and priests who considered themselves experts in the OT

Switching imagery here – from the cultivation of a vineyard to the building of the temple  
Same lesson – God dealing with the **Rejection** of His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ

### A. (:10) Surprising Value Reversal

*“The stone which the builders rejected, This became the chief corner stone;”*

λίθον ὃν ἀπεδοκίμασαν οἱ οἰκοδομοῦντες, οὗτος ἐγενήθη εἰς κεφαλὴν γωνίας·

Opposite of respecting and reverencing the Son is rejecting Him

(Acts 4:11; 1 Pet. 2:4, 7; Rom. 9:32-33; Ephes. 2:20)

**Bob Utley:** The metaphor of the Messiah as a stone comes from several OT usages.

1. YHWH's strength and stability (cf. **Ps. 18:1-2**)
2. Daniel's vision in chapter 2 (cf. **Dan. 2:34-35,48**)
3. the building component which either
  - a. starts the building (i.e., cornerstone)
  - b. holds the weight of the building (i.e., center stone or keystone in the arch)
  - c. finishes the building (i.e., top stone or cap stone)

The building refers metaphorically to the people of God, the true temple (cf. 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:19-22).

**Parunak:** *Head of the corner:* turns out to be the capstone, finished on three sides rather than just one (like a wall stone) or two (a corner or roof edge). Different not because it doesn't fit, but because it has a unique role.

### B. (:11) Marvelous Providential Fulfillment

*“This came about from the Lord, And it is marvelous in our eyes?”*

παρὰ κυρίου ἐγένετο αὕτη καὶ ἔστιν θαυμαστὴ ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖς ἡμῶν;

## VI. (:12) IMPACT OF THE PARABLE ON THE JEWISH RELIGIOUS LEADERS

### A. Malice

*“And they were seeking to seize Him;”*

Καὶ ἐζήτουν αὐτὸν κρατῆσαι,

**MacArthur:** Here, in this parable on Wednesday, He tells the very people who are going to kill Him that they're going to kill Him. He knows this without question. This is no surprise to Him at all. It is a very moving parable, and Jesus as the ultimate story teller captures His audience with the outrageous behavior of the vine growers, the tenant farmers in this story. The audience of chief priests and scribes and Pharisees and elders are outraged at the behavior of these vine growers, and we'll see that as we go through, and they should have been.

They were the ones who upheld the temple, the sacrifices, the ceremonies, the rituals, and more importantly the law of God. They were the representatives of God in the world, and righteous

behavior and holy behavior was their stock and trade and their expectation of everyone. They're shocked at the behavior of this man. They're shocked at the behavior of these vine growers, the man, meaning the man who owns the vineyard. They're shocked at everything that goes on in this story. Then in the end, the shock hits them right between the eyes.

## **B. Fear**

*“and yet they feared the multitude;”*

καὶ ἐφοβήθησαν τὸν ὄχλον,

should have feared God who could destroy body and soul

## **C. Conviction**

*“for they understood that He spoke the parable against them.”*

ἐγνώσαν γὰρ ὅτι πρὸς αὐτοὺς τὴν παραβολὴν εἶπεν.

They got the point of the parable

They had the knowledge and the conviction ... but they hardened their hearts and continued to resist the truth

## **D. Frustration**

*“And so they left Him, and went away.”*

καὶ ἀφέντες αὐτὸν ἀπῆλθον.

They departed seething in frustration and pent-up anger

## **CONCLUSION:**

### **Psalm 2**

*“Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way, for His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!”*

Let us be found today as those who are respecting the Son of God and taking refuge in His loving care.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) What are some other ways to show respect to the Lord Jesus Christ and honor Him?
- 2) What are other OT examples of the patience and forbearance of God?
- 3) When is God going to give the vineyard to others?
- 4) How does the anticipation of the Second Coming prepare people for judgment?

TEXT: Mark 12:13-27

TITLE: JESUS HAS THE ANSWER

**BIG IDEA:**

**HYPOCRITICAL ATTACKS CAN NEVER UNDERMINE THE WISDOM AND AUTHORITY OF GOD**

**INTRODUCTION – PART 1:**

Christianity today faces all types of attacks from antagonistic hypocrites who seek to mock biblical principles.

- attacks on miracles by the scientific community
- attacks on Creationism by the evolutionists
- attacks on the sanctity of life by those advocating for abortion
- attacks on marriage and sexual identity
- attacks on sexual purity
- attacks on the Second Coming
- attacks on God's program for the nation of Israel in the future
- attacks on the role of parents in educating their children vs the role of the state
- attacks on the rights of believers to pray or to evangelize or to express their convictions
- attacks ...

There are no end to the attacks . . . and from a natural perspective in our country and in our culture it seems like the antagonists are continually gaining ground. Christianity is very much on the defensive. But ultimately there is no way that

**HYPOCRITICAL ATTACKS CAN NEVER UNDERMINE THE WISDOM AND AUTHORITY OF GOD**

**TWO HYPOCRITICAL ATTACKS REBUFFED BY THE WISDOM AND AUTHORITY OF JESUS**

[Two-part message]

Context: the questioning of the authority of Jesus in day 3 of Passion Week

**I. (:13-17) THE HYPOCRISY OF PITTING SPIRITUAL LOYALTIES AGAINST CIVIL RESPONSIBILITIES**

**A. (:13) The Trappers – Odd Alliance of Antagonistic Hypocrites**

**1. Their Identity – Who They Are**

*“And they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Him,”*

*Καὶ ἀποστέλλουσιν πρὸς αὐτόν τινὰς τῶν Φαρισαίων καὶ τῶν Ἡρωδιανῶν*

**Sproul:** an apostle was not simply a messenger, but a messenger empowered with the authority to speak for the one who sent him. . . Thus, this group of Pharisees and Herodians came with the authority of the Sanhedrin behind them. “The enemy of my enemy is my friend.”

**Constable:** Sanhedrin members took the initiative in sending the "Pharisees" and "Herodians." They united against Jesus, whom they perceived as a common threat, even though they differed



among themselves politically. They asked Jesus about a political issue that divided them. . . Since Judea had become a Roman province in A.D. 6, the Romans had required the Jews to pay a yearly "poll (head) tax" into the emperor's treasury. The Zealots later refused to pay it, claiming that payment acknowledged Rome's right to rule over them. The Pharisees paid it but objected strongly to it. The Herodians paid it willingly since they supported Roman rule.

**Alan Carr:** The Pharisees were the religious conservatives of the day. They were very legalistic in that they tried to keep the very letter of the Law of God perfectly. The very name "Pharisee" means "the separatists". Still, they were marked by pride and self-righteousness. They were often rebuked by Jesus because their religious activities were merely external in nature. They had no real faith relationship with God. Yet, the Pharisees were very nationalistic in their political views. They hated being under Roman rule and wanted to be free from it.

The Herodians were a political party among the Jews who were supporters of King Herod. They enjoyed the benefits they received because of the Roman occupation. While the Romans controlled their country, the people enjoyed religious freedom, protection and prosperity. King Herod supported the Romans and sought to bring Roman culture to Israel.

Normally, these two groups had nothing to do with one another. They were polar opposites. They hated one another. Yet, they came together for the common goal of destroying Jesus.

**MacArthur:** They make a very **awkward alliance** here, and I'll tell you why. The Pharisees and Herodians were two sects that co-existed in the land of Israel with an uneasy kind of relationship. The Pharisees were the most religious, the Herodians the least religious. The Pharisees were most concerned with the Law of God. The Herodians were most concerned with the Law of Rome. The Pharisees were most devoted to Israel. The Herodians were most devoted to Caesar. The Pharisees were intensely religious. The Herodians were intensely political. Essentially, the Pharisees hated the Herodians, they had sold their soul. They were sycophants to Rome. The Pharisees despised them.

## 2. Their Motivation

*"in order to trap Him in a statement."*

ἵνα αὐτὸν ἀγρεύσωσιν λόγῳ.

To capture in hunting

What teacher (who is the acknowledged expert in the subject matter) likes to be approached by students with this type of motivation?

Not hard to do with our politicians – don't even have to ask them trick questions; just wait for them to open their mouth

**Parunak:** The Sanhedrin could not trip him up in their official capacity, so now they resort to guerrilla warfare.

**Sproul:** has connotations of violent pursuit. The idea is something like hunting for a man-eating tiger by digging a pit and putting sharp spikes at the bottom so that the tiger will fall in and be impaled.

Not messing around here; serious attack against Jesus

## **B. (:14-15a) The Trap**

## 1. Hypocritical Flattery Disguises the Trap

“And they came and said to Him,”  
καὶ ἐλθόντες λέγουσιν αὐτῷ·

Note chiastic structure here: Essential characteristics for a spokesperson for God

### a1. Teacher of Truth

“Teacher, we know that You are truthful,”  
διδάσκαλε, οἶδαμεν ὅτι ἀληθὴς εἶ

### b1. Impartial – Man of Integrity

“and defer to no one;”  
καὶ οὐ μέλει σοι περὶ οὐδενός·

could not be bribed; did not cater to someone because of their position or status  
man of principle; of high ethical standards  
not a politician who changes course at the tilt of the polls; not a man pleaser;  
won't change the message to try to make it more palatable or acceptable or popular

### b2. Impartial – Man of Integrity

“for You are not partial to any,”  
οὐ γὰρ βλέπεις εἰς πρόσωπον ἀνθρώπων,

### a2. Teacher of Truth

“but teach the way of God in truth.”  
ἀλλ' ἐπ' ἀληθείας τὴν ὁδὸν τοῦ θεοῦ διδάσκεις

**Does Truth float your boat?** Or can you be loose with the truth because you have some type of expedient agenda in mind?

Setting Jesus up so that surely he will be forced to answer their question on their terms

Prov. 26:18-27:2; **29:5** “A man who flatters his neighbor is spreading a net for his steps.”

**Ps. 12:1-4**

Cf. how cults flatter Jesus in how they speak about him

**Alan Carr:** The real danger with flattery was summed up well by **Dale Carnegie**. He said, “Flattery is telling the other person precisely what he thinks about himself.” Jesus could have believed everything good they said about Him because it was all true. We would do well to ignore the good things that are said about us. There is a danger that we might just come to believe them. As **Adlai Stevenson** said, “Flattery is all right so long as you don't inhale.”)

## 2. Springing the Trap by Pretending to Respect the Law of God

“Is it lawful to pay a poll-tax to Caesar, or not?”  
ἔξεστιν δοῦναι κῆνσον Καίσαρι ἢ οὐ;

**Alan Carr:** The poll tax was a “penny” or “a denarius”, which was a day's pay for the common worker.

**Borgman:** A census tax levied starting in 6 A.D.; at that time Judas the Galilean caused a revolt;

claimed it was the first step towards slavery and actually was an affront to God's Kingship; that revolt was still being talked about (Acts 5:37)

**Hendriksen:** collected by the procurator from every adult male in Judea, and was paid directly into the imperial treasury [since A. D. 6]. Since this coinage bore the image of the emperor, who ascribed divinity to himself and claimed to possess supreme authority not only in political but even in spiritual affairs, and since, in addition to this, it reminded the Jews that they were a subject nation, it is understandable that payment of this tax was very distasteful to many a freedom-loving, devout Jew.

### 3. Demanding a Simple Answer to a More Complex Issue

*"Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?"*

δῶμεν ἢ μὴ δῶμεν;

**Alan Carr:** If Jesus said "no", they could label Him as an insurrectionist and have Him arrested for opposing Roman law. If He said "yes" He would lose face with the common people, who also hated paying the tribute money to Rome.

## **C. (:15b-17) The Truth Reigns Supreme**

### 1. (:15b-16a) Exposure of Their Antagonistic, Hypocritical Motives

*"But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, 'Why are you testing Me?'"*

Ὁ δὲ εἰδὼς αὐτῶν τὴν ὑπόκρισιν εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· τί με πειράζετε;

They must have been uncomfortable when they saw that right from the outset Jesus saw right through them and understood their motives and evil intent

**Hendriksen:** All the synoptics employ different terms to indicate His reading of their character. Matthew said that he "*perceived their wickedness*" (22:18) or maliciousness, while Luke noted that He recognized "*their craftiness*" (20:23), their readiness to stoop to any cunning, deceptive means to attain their end. *Their hypocrisy* stresses that they sought to conceal their sinister purpose under the pretense of being honest inquirers.

### 2. (:16b) Simple Object Lesson

*"Bring Me a denarius to look at.' And they brought one. And He said to them, 'Whose likeness and inscription is this?' And they said to Him, 'Caesar's.'"*

φέρετέ μοι δηνάριον ἵνα ἴδω. οἱ δὲ ἤνεγκαν. καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς·  
τίνος ἢ εἰκῶν αὕτη καὶ ἡ ἐπιγραφή; οἱ δὲ εἶπαν αὐτῷ· Καίσαρος.

**Alan Carr:** On the front of the denarius was an engraving of the head of Caesar Tiberius, that was the "image". In Latin on the front were the words "Tiberius Caesar, divine Augustus, son of Augustus." On the back, in Latin, were the words "Pontifex Maximus, High Priest of the Roman nation." Those were the "inscriptions".

It is no wonder the religious Jews bristled at using these coins. After all, they claimed divinity for Caesar and they claimed that Caesar was the High Priest of the Roman Empire.

**Edwards:** One cannot consider political and civil duties apart from faith, but only as expressions of the prior and ultimate claims of God. In the saying of v 27 the unmistakable *exousia* or

authority of Jesus again emerges. Caesar and God were ultimate and uncontested authorities in the political and religious climate of Jesus' day, and yet Jesus presumes to speak for both. That ultimate authority resided with God is clearly implied in Jesus' use of the word "*image*" (v. 16 in Greek), which is the same word used in Gen. 1:26 of humanity's creation in God's image. If coins bear Caesar's image, then they belong to Caesar. But humanity, which bears God's image, belongs to God.

**Hendriksen:** Jesus wanted the coin to come from the pockets of his opponents, so as to impress upon them the fact that they themselves were using this coinage, were benefiting from its use, and had accordingly accepted the resulting obligations.

### 3. (:17a) Profound Practical Application

*"And Jesus said to them, 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.'"*

ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· τὰ Καίσαρος ἀπόδοτε Καίσαρι καὶ τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ τῷ θεῷ.

**Cranfield** (quoted by **Constable**): Though the obligation to pay to Caesar some of his own coinage in return for the amenities his rule provided is affirmed, the idolatrous claims expressed on the coins are rejected. God's rights are to be honored. Here Jesus is not saying that there are two quite separate independent spheres, that of Caesar and that of God (for Caesar and all that is his belongs to God); but he is indicating that there are obligations to Caesar which do not infringe the rights of God but are indeed ordained by God.

**Alan Carr:** Every human being in this world was created in "*the image of God*", **Gen. 1:26-27**. Thus, He owns us and He has the right to demand that we yield ourselves up to His will for our lives. Even if you are not saved, the Lord owns you by right of creation. If you are saved, He owns you by right of creation and by right of redemption, **1 Cor. 6:19-20**.

Just as Caesar has the right to demand what is his, God has the right to demand what belongs to Him. Every human has an obligation to give God their worship, their obedience, their praise, their love and their gratitude. We owe Him that for being Who He is and for all that He gives to us. (i.e. life, air, water, food, shelter, family, etc.)

You bear the image of God! That image you bear is a symbol of divine ownership. God has the right to tell you how to live. He has the right to tell you how to believe. He has the right to demand your obedience. He has the right to demand that you receive His Son as your Savior!

According to **Rom. 13:4**, the state has the "*power of the sword*". When we fail to obey the state, there will be consequences, such as imprisonment and death. When we fail to obey the Lord there are also consequences. There is Hell for the unbeliever and chastisement for the believer.

Jesus is telling those men, and us, that we have an obligation to honor the rule of the state, but we have a higher obligation to commit our lives to the Lord and obey Him and His Word. Yielding to the state is our earthly duty. Yielding to the Lord is our eternal duty!

**MacArthur:** There's no such thing as a sacral society. There was a sacral society, the theocratic kingdom of Israel where God was the ruler. The theocracy, God is the ruler. There was one sacral society, it has been obliterated by the judgment of God. There will be in the future another sacral society where God will be the King and that will be the reign of Jesus Christ in His Millennial Kingdom on earth. In between there is no such thing as a sacral society. There is a separation between the people of God spiritual, and the civil authorities. Civil authority, civil law

is a common grace for the well-being of men, like crops, like water, food, all the common graces. The rain falls on the just and the unjust, that's the idea of common grace.

Christian has duty to civil government that is ordained by God:

**Rom. 13:1-7** *“Render therefore to all their due; taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor”*

**Sproul:** Paul wrote these words at a time when the government, the Roman Empire, was corrupt and godless. Obviously, therefore, the moral behavior of the state is to have no bearing on whether Christians pay their taxes. Christians are called to a special level of civil obedience, which includes paying taxes no matter how burdensome or oppressive they may be. Of course, our commitment to civil obedience does not mean we cannot speak out against taxes or anything else the government does, but we do not have the right to refuse to pay.

**1 Tim. 2:1-6**

**1 Pet. 2:13-17**

#### **D. (:17b) The Treachery Defeated**

*“And they were amazed at Him.”*

καὶ ἐξεθαύμαζον ἐπ’ αὐτῷ.

**Hiebert:** The strong compound verb, found only here in the New Testament, conveys the thought of their grudging admiration, and the imperfect tense denotes the continuation of the feeling. They were justly amazed at His answer. He had not only escaped their trap but had thrown a flood of light on the problem.

Not the outcome that the Sanhedrin expected when they sent this guerrilla warfare team

### **CONCLUSION – PART 1:**

What type of a responsible citizen am I ... even under a wicked government that does not encourage biblical values?

What type of a citizen of the kingdom of God am I? What does God require of me?

**Isaac Watts:** Love so amazing, so divine; demands my life, my soul, my all.

**Ps. 116:12-14** “What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits toward me?

I shall lift up the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord.

I shall pay my vows to the Lord, Oh may it be in the presence of all His people.”

## INTRODUCTION – PART 2:

Section dealing with a **series of attacks** brought against Jesus by various religious leaders to try to discredit Him before the general public and try to get him in trouble with the religious and political authorities.

These first two attacks are grouped together because the motivation of the attackers is the same and therefore they track along the same outline.

Next week we will see a different approach by a scribe; all taking place on the third day of Passion Week.

## HYPOCRITICAL ATTACKS CAN NEVER UNDERMINE THE WISDOM AND AUTHORITY OF GOD

### TWO HYPOCRITICAL ATTACKS REBUFFED BY THE WISDOM AND AUTHORITY OF JESUS

Last week looked at an Attack directed against **Consistency** – How can you balance what God demands in terms of Civil Responsibilities with what God demands in terms of allegiance to Him? -- Issue of Taxation

Today – Attacked directed against **Absurdity** – Using Convoluting, Hypothetical example to try to mock biblical truth -- Issue of the Afterlife – specifically: what will marriage look like in the afterlife?

You can have confidence that the Wisdom of God will never be disproved by arguments of consistency or absurdity.

**David Thompson:** What do other religions say about the afterlife?

- Mormons: say you go to 1 of 3 kingdoms based on approval of Joseph Smith
- Hindus: Reincarnated based on your works
- Muslims, Islam -- Die and go to a pleasure palace; if you die a martyr you get 72 virgins
- Indians: you need to be buried with your bow and arrows as you go to your Happy and Holy Hunting Ground
- Egyptians: be buried with things you can take with you into eternity
- Some Greeks: bury with a coin in mouth so you can pay the fee to cross into the land of the afterlife

Religious people just make it up as they go and people believe it; bunch of crazy views

Important to understand what the Scriptures teach about the afterlife.

## II. (:18-27) THE HYPOCRISY OF USING CONVOLUTED, HYPOTHETICAL EXAMPLES TO TRY TO MOCK BIBLICAL TRUTH

### A. (:18) The Trappers – Sophisticated Movers and Shakers with Theological Blinders

#### 1. Their Identity – Who They Are

*“And some Sadducees (who say that there is no resurrection) came to Him,”*

*Καὶ ἔρχονται Σαδδουκαῖοι πρὸς αὐτόν, οἵτινες λέγουσιν ἀνάστασιν μὴ εἶναι,*

urban, wealthy, and educated Jews

**Parunak:** The Sadducees accept only the five books of Moses as Scripture, and so reject doctrines that are most fully revealed later, such as resurrection. Cf. Paul's use of this tension in **Acts 23:6-9**. Strange partners aligned together to try to attack Jesus -- Don't believe in angels or in the afterlife

**Alan Carr:** The Sadducees controlled all the buying and selling that went on at the Temple. Thus, they were angry with Jesus because He had interrupted their business enterprises when He cleansed the Temple, **Mark 11:12-19**.

When the Temple was destroyed in AD 70 so the Sadducees disappeared from history.

## 2. Their Motivation

*“and began questioning Him, saying,”*  
καὶ ἐπηρώτων αὐτὸν λέγοντες·

We know that their approach was **cynical** and **hypocritical** because they did not even believe in the issue they were interrogating Jesus on – so they were not seeking truth; they did not want to understand God's mind so that they could live a more righteous life; they had searched for some type of question that would expose Jesus as a teacher of the ridiculous; a teacher of the absurd

## **B. (:19-23) The Trap**

### 1. (:19) Hypocritical Flattery -- Biblical Principle – Pretending to Respect the Law of God

*“Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies, and leaves behind a wife, and leaves no child, his brother should take the wife, and raise up offspring to his brother.”*

διδάσκαλε, Μωϋσῆς ἔγραψεν ἡμῖν ὅτι ἐάν τις ἀδελφὸς ἀποθάνῃ καὶ καταλίπῃ γυναῖκα καὶ μὴ ἀφῆ ἕκγονον, ἵνα λάβῃ ὁ ἀδελφὸς αὐτοῦ τὴν γυναῖκα καὶ ἐξαναστήσῃ σπέρμα τῷ ἀδελφῷ αὐτοῦ.

Address Jesus with that flattery title of “*Teacher*” even though they had no respect for His message; they claimed to show great respect for the Pentateuch – but they will be shown by Jesus to be ignorant of the Scriptures

**Alan Carr:** They begin to tell Jesus a story based on the Old Testament law of levirate marriage. This law was taught in **Deut. 25:5-10**. This law made provision for families, tribal names and inheritances intact. If a man died, with no living children, his next of kin would marry his widow and raise up a child in the name of the deceased

The whole point of this law was to ensure two things--first, that the family name continued, and second, that the property remained within the family.

For those people who like to claim that we are still under the Law ... here is an interesting case study to apply to your life today – see how that flies in our culture

So the Sadducees present their biblical principle and case study that will be the basis for their question – now they expand upon it

## 2. (:20-22) Using a Convoluting, Hypothetical Example

*“There were seven brothers; and the first took a wife, and died, leaving no offspring. And the second one took her, and died, leaving behind no offspring; and the third likewise; and so all seven left no offspring. Last of all the woman died also.”*

ἑπτὰ ἀδελφοὶ ἦσαν· καὶ ὁ πρῶτος ἔλαβεν γυναῖκα καὶ ἀποθνήσκων οὐκ ἀφῆκεν σπέρμα· καὶ ὁ δεύτερος ἔλαβεν αὐτήν καὶ ἀπέθανεν μὴ καταλιπὼν σπέρμα· καὶ ὁ τρίτος ὡσαύτως· καὶ οἱ ἑπτὰ οὐκ ἀφῆκαν σπέρμα. ἔσχατον πάντων καὶ ἡ γυνὴ ἀπέθανεν.

This poor woman was worn out – not exactly an ideal situation – in fact this goes beyond a worst case situation – completely ridiculous

## 3. (:23) Springing the Trap by Highlighting the Absurdity of the Situation

*“In the resurrection, when they rise again, which one's wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife.”*

ἐν τῇ ἀναστάσει [ὅταν ἀναστῶσιν] τίνος αὐτῶν ἔσται γυνή;  
οἱ γὰρ ἑπτὰ ἔσχον αὐτήν γυναῖκα.

Assuming several important truths here:

- That Jesus believed in and taught of a physical resurrection and the joys of an eternal afterlife
- That people would recognize one another and continue to enjoy relationships with one another in the afterlife

**Borgman: Reduction to the point of the absurd** – trying to show that a basic belief is untrue because of certain deductions or implications that are taken to the absurd;  
Cf. doctrine of Election: why then pray?? Why then witness??

## **C. (:24-27) The Truth Reigns Supreme**

### 1. (:24) Exposure of Their Deep-Rooted Spiritual Problems

*“Jesus said to them, ‘Is this not the reason you are mistaken, that you do not understand the Scriptures, or the power of God?’”*

Ἔφη αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς· οὐ διὰ τοῦτο πλανᾶσθε  
μὴ εἰδότες τὰς γραφὰς μηδὲ τὴν δύναμιν τοῦ θεοῦ;

Jesus does not mince words; not trying to gain their favor; certainly not responding to their flattery with flattery – telling them the cold, hard truth –

**You have lost your minds!** What are you thinking? You could not be further from the truth ...  
Sometimes we need to shake people up with such clear denunciations; not beat around the bush

**MacArthur:** The verb *mistaken* is *planao* from which we get the word planet, wandering bodies. The verb means to cause to wander, to lead astray. You are leading yourselves astray by your biblical ignorance. You're mentally wandering. You've been cut loose from reality. You've been cut loose from reason. You've been cut loose from truth. That is why false teachers in **Jude**



13 are called *wandering stars*.

Jesus points to Two Fundamental Problems that prevent them from getting it right:

a. **Knowledge Problem** – lack of spiritual insight

Requires sovereign enlightenment from the Holy Spirit to understand spiritual truth; not a function of human wisdom or man's wisdom; in fact that type of sophistication leads only to pride which is a major hindrance to understanding the Scriptures; "*God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble*"

b. **Moral Problem** – disconnected from the reality of the Power of God

Didn't God create the Heavens and the earth ex nihilo? How difficult could anything else be for God? What about creating man out of the dust of the earth and woman from Adam's rib; How about the universal flood or the parting of the Red Sea; What about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah or the bringing down of the walls of Jericho? Is anything too difficult for the power of God?

**Parunak:** Beware of "*foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law,*" **Titus 3:9**. The Pharisees' question [earlier paragraph] was at least a practical one, wrong only in its motive. This one is wrong in both its motive and its substance.

2. (:25) Correction of Inaccurate Theology Regarding the Glorified State

*"For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven."*

ὅταν γὰρ ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναστῶσιν οὔτε γαμοῦσιν οὔτε γαμίζονται,  
ἀλλ' εἰσὶν ὡς ἄγγελοι ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.

Resurrection life is not the same as the present life as we know it now

Upon first blush, this explanation on the part of Jesus can seem a little deflating – especially for married couples – won't their relationship be even better in the afterlife? Doesn't God have something better in mind for us than what we presently experience?

**Alistair Begg:** For those of us who are enjoying the companionship of married life and the joys of every aspect, the concept of a heaven that removes us from this realm is not something that to us is immediately attractive; Precious relationships in this life will not be eradicated but enhanced;

- King David looked forward to being reunited with his dead son
- Paul instructed us not to grieve like unbelievers because our parting is not permanent

**Constable:** Marriage as we know it will not exist when we have immortal bodies, and deathless existence will not require propagation of the human race. The Sadducees denied the existence of the angelic race (**Acts 23:8**), which belief Jesus also corrected. They considered their views enlightened, but Jesus said they needed enlightening. Jesus did not say that when people die they become angels, which they do not, nor that we will be "like angels" *in every respect*, which we will not.

**Alan Carr:** While the relationship of marriage is a wonderful and divinely ordained institution, it is an absolutely earthly institution. Marriage was designed for companionship, Gen. 2:18, continuation of the species, Gen. 1:22, and for the fulfillment of legitimate sexual needs, 1 Cor. 7:2. When we get to Heaven, we will be like the angels, only in the sense that we will be spiritual beings that will have no need for the physical necessities of this earthly life. In heaven, like the angels, we will be deathless, sinless, sexless, glorified and eternal. But, unlike the angels, we will be like Jesus, 1 John 3:2. Life will be different when we get there.

There will be no need for reproduction and childbirth because there will be no death. There will be no exclusive physical relationships like there are here, because in Heaven everyone will be perfectly and intimately related to everyone else, including God.

When we study what the bible teaches about our Resurrection body, we should be excited in anticipation of the afterlife:

**1 Cor. 15:35-49 [sermon notes]**

3. (:26-27a) Zinger Directed to Their More Fundamental Main Issue

*“But regarding the fact that the dead rise again, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the burning bush, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living;”*

περὶ δὲ τῶν νεκρῶν ὅτι ἐγείρονται οὐκ ἀνέγνωτε ἐν τῇ βίβλῳ Μωϋσέως ἐπὶ τοῦ βάλτου πῶς εἶπεν αὐτῷ ὁ θεὸς λέγων· ἐγὼ ὁ θεὸς Ἀβραάμ καὶ [ὁ] θεὸς Ἰσαὰκ καὶ [ὁ] θεὸς Ἰακώβ; οὐκ ἔστιν θεὸς νεκρῶν ἀλλὰ ζώντων·

Important that Jesus used a reference from the Pentateuch (and affirmed authorship of Moses)

Focused in on their major error – **they did not believe in the resurrection and the after life**

Jesus makes his argument on the tense of a verb – instructive on how we are to use the inspired word of God

If He is the God of the living, then where is the absurdity of the doctrine of the resurrection?

We don’t have to worry about silly arguments like how can God put back together a body that was blown up in an explosion or cremated and the ashes scattered ....

**Bob Utley:** There are several texts in the OT that affirm this truth (cf. Job 14:14-15; 19:25-27; Ps. 23:6; Isa. 25:6-9; 26:14-19; Dan. 12:2). Yet the afterlife in the OT is a veiled reality. The progressive revelation of the NT clarifies and defines the reality, but still in veiled, metaphorical language. Heaven is a sure promise and truth, but its exact nature is a mystery.

**Constable:** In concluding that the Old Testament did not teach the resurrection, the Sadducees had overlooked an important passage in the Torah (Pentateuch). They regarded the Torah as particularly authoritative. Exodus 3:6 taught continued human existence after death. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were still alive in Moses' day. The Sadducees not only rejected the resurrection, but also the afterlife in heaven or hell. The Jews had a more holistic view of man than most modern westerners do (cf. Gen. 2:7). The Sadducees concluded that if the material part of man

died, the whole person ceased to exist. Jesus, who held the same unified view of man, argued that if the immaterial part of man lived on, the whole person would live on.

#### **D. (:27b) The Treachery Defeated**

*“you are greatly mistaken.”*

πολὺ πλανᾶσθε.

You are poor theologians

#### **CONCLUSION:**

- Know the Scriptures intimately
- Have faith in the Power of God

\* \* \* \* \*

#### **DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) Where have you seen your biblical convictions under attack?
- 2) Have you been able to identify the hypocrisy behind some of the attacks?
- 3) Where do misguided religious zealots tend to compromise their legitimate civil responsibilities?
- 4) What type of convoluted, hypocritical examples have you seen used by antagonists of Christianity in various arguments or forums?

\* \* \* \* \*

#### **QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:**

##### **Steven Lawson: Giving to God What is God's**

The Day of the Question – relentless questioning of Jesus; He answered with questions;  
First question was about authority; this one is about responsibility;  
Shadow boxing before the real violence takes place

- 1) (:13) The Approach** – *“then”* – happening in rapid-fire succession; one event after another; we are shocked to see this alliance between Pharisees and Herodians; polarized groups but united in common hatred of Christ; they each had their own reasons for wanting to eliminate Jesus;
- 2) (:13b) Their Agenda** – hidden, concealed plans – deceit, trickery  
Trying to ensnare him with his own words
- 3) (:14) The Adulation** – words of insincere flattery; attempt to look as if they are innocent inquirers; give the appearance of being the students of the highly respected Teacher; uninfluenced by what others say; you will never give up the high ground of truth; you do not look at the face of men – do not care if they are rich or poor; learned or unlearned;

You are not teaching the way of the world

4) (:14b) **The Attack** – lethal; posed in form of question; don't have the courage or integrity to be up front and state their true intention; paying of this tax came to be a symbol of their subjection to Roman govt; the amount was not so hateful; it was the principle of the matter that got under their skin; they think they have put Christ in an impossible place;

5) (:15-16) **The Answer** – Jesus knows exactly what this game is all about; writing to the church at Rome so that they will not withdraw from society (like Ana Baptists at time of Reformation); rub shoulders with lost people; give even to ungodly Caesar that which belongs to Caesar; but do not withdraw your influence from the world of salt and light; by far the greater obligation is to God – but it is not an exclusive obligation; What is owed to God? Where is God's image and likeness to be found? Both a natural and moral likeness; to have a mind to know God; to have a heart to love God; to have a will to obey God; your dog will never know God; image of God corrupted in the Fall; Adam gave birth to a son in his own image – passing down of sin nature; salvation (among other things) is the restoration and recovery of the image of God that is imprinted in your soul; Col. 3:10; Rom. 8:29; as long as you live for yourself you are stealing from God what rightly belongs to him

6) (:17) **The Amazing** – couldn't get over the profundity of words of Jesus; kept on being amazed; penetration of power of words with which he spoke; Of course the emperor must receive his due but so must God; we must give our very lives to God

### **Brian Borgman: Whose Image is This?**

Jesus lays out the rightful claims of God on all around him;  
Pharisees have incredible animosity towards Rome; hated paying taxes;  
Herodians supported the Herodian dynasty that ruled under Caesar;

Quoting **Lenski**: Herodians there to serve as witnesses to whatever Jesus might say; they would have more credibility with Roman government leaders

Quoting **Calvin**: There was no artificial coloring in Jesus' teaching

If there was one thing you didn't mess with it was the Roman taxation system; strong arm of Rome had brought about peace for its subjects

Look at this unholy alliance between Pharisees and Herodians --  
How much more hypocritical can you get?

Not a legitimate or sincere question; I know what you are doing

The Jews had their own money; that is why there were money-changers in the temple; took the filthy Roman money and then gave good Jewish money to the worshippers

Worth about 17 cents;

Coin was pagan through and through; an offense; a little bit of embarrassment that they all had that coinage

All authority ultimately comes from God; we as God's people are to be in submission to governing authorities;

**John 19:11** – Jesus did not question authority of Pilate but redirected him to the ultimate source of that authority

The sovereignty of God extends to tyrannical despotic governments  
Responsibility of citizens: Lawful and respectful behavior and taxes

Exception of civil disobedience – Acts 5 – It is better to obey God than man – when there is a conflict between what God requires and Caesar commands; cf. Hebrew mid wives who refused to obey order to kill the Hebrew babies; cf. how Daniel resisted edict of King Nebuchadnezzar who tried to enforce idolatry; willing to endure the penalty

Main point that Jesus wanted to make here is render to God the things that belong to God; these religious leaders had their priorities all wrong

What an awesome thing to be a human being with the imprint of God upon us; higher than all the animals; the crowning achievement of God's created world; renders a special dignity to each of us; we also bear the image of our first father Adam; we owe God love, worship, faith, obedience

**MacArthur:** Now the Sadducees are a sect of Judaism who deny the reality of resurrection. In fact, they deny really the supernatural. They denied the presence, or the identity, or the existence of angels, according to Acts 23:8, they denied the existence of angels. They denied spiritual existence, the existence of spirits. And they denied, therefore, the resurrection. Though they are the minority party in Israel and though they are opposites of the reigning theology, they happen to wield the power in the temple. They run the temple from the High Priest on down through the chief priests they are predominantly Sadducees. It's their turn because they're the majority of the Sanhedrin. It's their turn to come to Jesus and try to discredit Him. . .

This is a very foundational custom. It actually appears, first of all, in Genesis 38, in the household of Judah, son of Jacob. A man by the name of Onan, according to Genesis 38, refused to comply with this and he refused to raise up a child to his dead brother's wife and God killed Onan, very important early in the history of Israel that the tribal inheritances remained in the tribes. The law was originally given in the patriarchal period to preserve the name and honor of the oldest son and his tribe and his land. And when the child was conceived by that second husband, he took the name of the first brother so that his inheritance would go through that child. It was possible thus to continue the family and Moses laid it down as a standard, requiring the nearest kinsman to marry the widow and raise children to perpetuate the family and to hold on to the land and the inheritance.

Now this was only valid when the brothers were still single. Okay, I want to clarify that in case you're a little confused. They weren't supposed to get divorced if they were married, or take an extra wife. This is for the preservation of God's people and the tribal identity and the lands assigned to them. . .

You remember the story of Ruth? Ruth would be a closely related incident that Ruth is a widow, she doesn't have a child to continue the family of her husband. And they're all dead. Everybody's dead. She can't raise up an heir. She meets a man named Boaz...the family, I should say, Elimelech, her father-in-law, is dead and she's alone, Ruth, she's the only heir and she has no husband and no way to raise up a son. She meets Boaz. Boaz is a near relative to Elimelech, her father-in-law, and he qualifies for what is called Levirate marriage, that's the word...Levirate from the Latin referring to a brother. Boaz is willing to be her husband and he is called the kinsman...what?...redeemer. He marries her, gives her a son named Obed and through him comes David and the Messiah Jesus. . .

For us, isn't it wonderful to think about the resurrection? That this is not the end? That this is not the way we're going to be forever in any sense, physical, spiritually, we're going to have a glorified body, perfect in every way in form, and more importantly perfect internally in spirit. We will be perfect lovers of God, perfect worshipers of God, perfect lovers of one another. We'll have perfect knowledge. We'll be perfectly motivated to do perfect service, rendering perfect obedience and doing it all with absolute undiminished joy and we'll do that forever and never ever have to take a deep breath. We'll never be weary, never be tired, never be bored, never be discouraged, never be disappointed, joy upon joy upon joy upon joy. And when we are raised, just so that we don't leave anything up to speculation, it says that when Jesus comes, Philippians 3:20, "He will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself." He's going to give us a form like His resurrection form and a spirit that is perfectly holy. And this is all by grace, isn't it?

### **Alistair Begg – Sadducees - Question 2**

Finishing sermon from addressing the first question;

A cynicism about the way they come to Jesus; want to expose the absurdity of the resurrection itself; come asking a question about a matter in which they did not even believe

Although it is a spurious question, nevertheless Jesus addresses it;

Pushing Levirate law to point of absurdity; would lead to chaos in the afterlife;

A very Jewish question; background Deut. 25; a matter of considerable pastoral significance for those who have been married more than once;

How will it all work out?

You are not going to have to worry about it at all; no need for procreation; no need for marriage; in this respect you will be like the angels;

One of the hard sayings of Jesus vs. 25

We project the best that we have now; supersize it and that is our concept of heaven; we tend to be earthly-minded in our thoughts of heaven

Will resurrection bodies lack reproductive organs???

Will gender differences continue in some type of recognizable form???

Article on Jewish perspective of sexuality of angels: Davis and Allison – don't exclude sexual love even though procreation is out ???

Worship on Sundays supposed to be a foretaste of heaven

How will we know others in heaven?

Precious relationships in this life will not be eradicated in the afterlife but enhanced

We will recognize there those that are known to us here;

Husband will not need a helper nor a wife someone to protect and provide for her;

We still need an inner circle;

Every good thing will be better in heaven than on earth;

It is impossible that we should lose anything good in that place where goodness abounds

The real issue is the notion of the resurrection itself; so now Jesus addresses that

Ex. 3 – passage of burning bush – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were long gone – yet he speaks in the present tense; he is the ongoing God of these patriarchs because they themselves are ongoing; gathered into the presence of God awaiting the resurrection day;

Quotes **Sinclair Ferguson**: God's covenant promise to save His people would not be of any significance if it were overcome and shadowed by death; it would be a tawdry salvation if it ended at death

If the Sadducees had known God's power in the same way the patriarchs had, they would have understood that hope in God is not for this life alone

## MEETING IN THE AIR

VS1

You have heard of little Moses in the bulrush  
You have heard of fearless David and his sling  
You have heard the story told of dreaming Joseph  
And of Jonah and the whale you often sing  
There are many, many others in the Bible  
I should like to meet them all I do declare  
By and by the Lord will surely let us meet them at that meeting in the air.

CHORUS

There is going to be a meeting in the air in the sweet, sweet by and by I am going to meet  
you, meet you over there in that home beyond the sky.  
Such singin' you will hear never heard by mortal ear  
'Twill be glorious I do declare,  
And God's own Son will be the leading one at that meeting in the air.

VS2

Many things will there be missin' at that meeting  
For the mourners bench will have no place at all  
There will never be a sermon preached to sinners for the sinner had refused to heed the  
call  
There will be no mourning over wayward loved ones  
There will be no lonely nights of pleading prayer.  
All our burdens and our anguish will be lifted at that meeting in the air.

REPEAT CHORUS TWICE

TAG

And God's own Son will be the leading one at that meeting in the air.

How different from eternity pictured by Islam and other faiths

**David Thompson:**

**Acts 23:8** – background on Sadducees

**Sadducees:** real intellectuals who don't have to believe in the supernatural; trap Jesus regarding what happens to people after they die; they don't end up looking too bright; came from aristocratic, wealthy families; upper class; very aloof; worldly; political; closely connected to the high priest; don't believe in: resurrection; angels or spirit beings; final judgment; no afterlife  
Only believed in Pentateuch; rejected men's laws and traditions; against the Pharisees;  
Their goal is to mock Jesus; show that His teachings lead to absurdity; playing the game to cater to Roman authorities

**Deut. 25:5** – specific law of OT given to Israel; critical for lineage line to be maintained and for the tribes to maintain their tribes; tied to land inheritance; kept the Jewish family from dying out; an odd law – those of you who think you are still under the law ... think about that one!

Use some extreme illustration in their religious debates to try to prove their point;

Series of 6 answers given by Jesus:

- 1) “*You are mistaken*” – you are deceived; you don’t know what you are talking about
- 2) “*You don’t understand the Scriptures*” – real slap in their face; religious leaders that don’t know their Bible is a big problem today; written to correct faulty thinking; bring light to darkness
  - cf. Bible says women are weaker vessels – just compare times and scores at the Olympics; you don’t know what you are talking about
  - Bible says homosexuality is a choice – exchanging the truth for a lie
- 3) “*You don’t understand the power of God*” – you say you believe the Pentateuch; you must believe that God is powerful enough to create the world out of nothing; can create man out of dust; can create universal flood; yet you don’t think He has the power to raise the dead?
- 4) When people rise from the dead *there are no marriages* – some say that is why heaven will be heaven; does not mean they will not know one another or spend time together; shocking news to Mormons and Muslims
- 5) When people rise from the dead *they are like angels* – they didn’t believe in angels; there are angels in the Pentateuch; [we will also be like the Lord Jesus]; angels have no physical needs; don’t need to see a doctor
- 6) You know nothing about the Mosaic Law you claim to know – you ever read that book? You must have missed a few things; don’t imagine that intellectuals are smarter than you; the Word of God is the power;
  - the fact of the Resurrection is proven by statement of God at the burning bush – why didn’t God say “I used to be their God” ... instead of “I am” ... Moses showed up at the Transfiguration of Jesus;
  - God is the God of the living, not the dead –
  - You are greatly mistaken; badly misled --

Joseph Smith was a liar, Mohammed, Elron Hubbard, Charles Russell; Mary Baker Eddy – all liars

Jesus is the only way to have relationship with God – only one that rose from the dead  
If you want to believe some deception go ahead ... or choose to believe what Jesus said about the after-life

### **Brian Borgman: Eschatology and Bibliology for the Theologically Challenged**

Who were the Sadducees? Origin is debated; aristocratic group of priests; had great wealth; esteem and place of prominence in community; snobbish group; theological liberals of Jesus’ day; the first materialists; man does not have a soul – just matter and motion; denied sovereignty of God; our actions determine our prosperity or adversity – convenient since they were all wealthy

Type of argument: can God make a rock too big for Him to move?

Straw man argument – building a skyscraper on a chicken coop premise –  
To present an unfair characterization of a view and then to demolish it is a common ploy --  
False assumption: that all things would continue on the same in the afterlife – especially marriage relationship

Identifies their theological error as based in self-deception:

- Limited the Scripture to the Pentateuch



- In their pride and arrogance, they sat in judgment on the Scriptures
- They used faulty logic; picking and choosing what they wanted to accept; affirming their own assumptions

It is the power of God that will be demonstrated in the resurrection; you don't have to understand how God will do it;

Jesus just gives a very short word of correction; very brief lesson on eschatology; don't try to expand this into a full-fledged case study – would take too much speculation

If the patriarchs had not existed, then how could God still be there? Those He loves and cares for must be alive – Ex. 3:6 -- makes his argument on the tense of a verb!

#### Applications:

- Lesson of truth and error – there are people who are wrong; we are responsible to point out error and heresy; **Prov. 23:23** “*Buy truth and don't sell it*” – precious commodity; look at various groups of martyrs and the truth that they died for; we are betraying the blood of the martyrs when we sign documents of agreement with Roman Catholics;
- Lesson of biblical inspiration and authority – verbal plenary inspiration – the very words and all of the words are inspired by God; scriptures are final arbiter in matters of faith and practice; we need to get back to the authority of Scripture
- Lesson of biblical precision – give attention to the smallest of details; substitutionary atonement hangs on little preposition *uper*;

TEXT: Mark 12:28-34

TITLE: *SINCERITY IS NO GUARANTEE OF AUTHENTICITY – SO CLOSE BUT SO FAR*

**BIG IDEA:**

**KNOWLEDGE PLUS SINCERITY ISN'T ENOUGH TO GET YOU INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

**INTRODUCTION:**

I am sure you have heard the expression: “*Close never counts except in horseshoes.*” We have all played the game of horseshoes at one time or another. We understand that the object is to throw a ringer around the pole. But there are other ways to score points as well – such as a shoe that ends up leaning against the pole or throwing one closer than the other competitor. But there are a wide range of situations where close just doesn’t cut it. My wife teaches math. I doubt if she gives much credit for an answer that is close to correct. In math,  $2 + 2 = 4$  – you had better come up with that unique result. When it comes to getting into the college of your choice or getting the promotion you want, being close is not very satisfying. When you are in a horrific car accident and the surgeon at the emergency room comes out to bring the tragic news to your family – “We were so close to saving him, but he just didn’t make it” – being so close is actually so far away.

Jesus has been interrogated by a number of different groups of individuals representing various segments of the leadership of Judaism that would have been members in the elite Sanhedrin. The questions brought to Jesus were designed to trip him up – to expose his inadequacies in the 2 realms of **Authority** and **Wisdom**. They were attempts to discredit him before the people and before the Roman authorities.

1) **11:27** – chief priests, scribes and elders – an attack against the **Authority** of Jesus Christ – “*by what authority do you do these things*” – like the cleansing of the Temple -- who demonstrated that He is actually greater than the Temple  
- Followed by a parable of judgment – showing what will happen to those who don’t respect the authority of the Son of God

(grouped these next 2 together because of their similar motivation and approach)

2) **12:13** – Pharisees and Herodians – strange bedfellows – attack on Consistency – Trying to pit Spiritual loyalties against civic responsibilities – regarding taxation  
“*Render to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s*”

3) **12:18** Sadducees – taking their turn -- attack based on Argument of Absurdity – Introducing some convoluted, hypothetical case study – regarding the after-life; Jesus pointed out their lack of knowledge of the Scriptures and their lack of connectivity to the power of God – then affirmed the reality of the Resurrection

4) **12:28** – now instead of a group – it is a single scribe that interacts with Jesus – a question related to **Wisdom**

Jesus is going to end up characterizing the scribe with the curious expression: “*you are not far from the kingdom of God*” – That seems to be the focal point of the interaction – but what is Jesus saying here? Let’s start this morning with consideration of this key phrase. Certainly the scribe did not come to Jesus looking for affirmation that he was a member in good standing in the kingdom of God. He did not think Jesus was even qualified to make such a judgment. That was not the point of his question --

- Most people take this statement of Jesus as a **very positive**, encouraging note that recognizes that this intelligent and sincere and open-minded scribe is progressing in his quest for spiritual truth so that he is right at the **cusp of salvation**
  - o But if this is the interpretation – why the conclusion at the end of **vs. 34** that this interaction with Jesus closed the door to any more interrogation – wouldn’t it have opened the door for additional positive dialogue?? Since by listening attentively to the wise doctrinal answers given by the Teacher, one would be able to make great progress on their spiritual journey towards entrance into the kingdom
- I don’t think the scribe would have taken it in this positive way – to be told that he was still **outside of the kingdom** would have been a slap – how more positive could the scribe have been than to repeat back the very words that Jesus had taught and to describe those words as good and well-taught; yet Jesus was still judging him to be outside of the kingdom?? Who was more self-confident and deceived about his standing in the kingdom than the Dr. of Theology who taught others as a respected scribe – and here you have probably one of the most intelligent and most respected scribes – He thought of himself as not just a fixture in the kingdom, but one of the true **elite**
- I think Jesus is speaking in **cryptic language** here as he addresses the major issue that the scribe has ignored – and that is the **true Messianic identity of Jesus** as the Son of God, the Son of David, the King of the Jews, the one who came to provide salvation and deliverance for His people – because the scribe is **standing in the presence of the King** – he is “*not far from the kingdom of God*”
  - o That is why Jesus goes on in the next paragraph to speak more pointedly of his true Messianic identity which involves his Deity as the Son of God
  - o That is consistent with how Jesus had been introduced at the beginning of the Gospel of Mark
    - Testimony from the Father at the baptism of Jesus: “*You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased*” (1:11)
    - Initial ministry of Jesus following the imprisonment of John the Baptist as he “*came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.’*” (1:14-15) – this is the message that the scribe was still missing – as we study our passage today we will see no signs of repentance and faith on the part of this scribe

## **KNOWLEDGE PLUS SINCERITY ISN’T ENOUGH TO GET YOU INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

You see this scribe is **close to the kingdom**, not because of his intelligence and his sincere desire to understand God’s law; not because of his performance at trying to obey the law and fulfill the command to Love God and neighbor; but he is only close because of the **presence** before him of the very King of the Kingdom – and yet how far away he really is!

Let's work through the short account – noting details from both Matthew's version and Mark's

## **I. (:28) SINCERE PURSUIT OF TRUTH – TRYING TO SATISFY THE DEMANDS OF THE LAW**

### **A. Discernment – Appreciated the Wisdom of Jesus**

#### 1. Listened Well

*“And one of the scribes came and heard them arguing,”*

*Καὶ προσελθὼν εἰς τῶν γραμματέων ἀκούσας αὐτῶν συζητούντων,*

Cf. **Matt. 22:34-35** – has a different tone to it than Mark's account; asked a question “*testing Him*”

Certainly not the hypocrisy and malicious venom we saw in the earlier attacks – which is why we grouped those 2 together

Probably heard both of the hypocritical attacks:

- That by the Pharisees and the Herodians – attack on Consistency – trying to pit civil responsibilities against spiritual allegiance
- That by the Sadducees – attack on Absurdity – trying to make Jesus look silly for his beliefs about the resurrection and afterlife

**Hiebert:** Matthew told the story from the standpoint of the Pharisees as a group, while Mark related it from the standpoint of the questioner himself.

**Hendriksen:** Is it not possible that his own motivation and that of those who put him forward did not entirely coincide; that is, that with him approval had triumphed over misgiving and a desire to discredit?

Listened carefully to both sides of the discussion – evaluating the points being made;  
Able to be objective and not be swayed by the prejudices of his fellow scribes (who were condemned as a group by Jesus at the end of chap. 12)

How well do you listen?

**Illustration:** In work, we have training sessions to have our customer-focused personnel improve their listening skills

What can you do to listen better? Some hindrances to effective listening:

- Too busy preparing your response to really listen
- Interrupting the person and finishing their thought because you are in such a hurry to speak
- Stopping with the superficial presenting symptoms of a problem and not probing to get to the root issues
- Making the person repeat certain details because you failed to concentrate and failed to accurately note what was said
- Failing to demonstrate any empathy with the other person; not making that emotional connection

Pursuit of Truth must start with **good listening skills**

## 2. Evaluated Wisely

*“and recognizing that He had answered them well,”*

ἰδὼν ὅτι καλῶς ἀπεκρίθη αὐτοῖς

Pharisees would have been pleased with how Jesus defended the reality of the resurrection against the Sadducees

Made his own judgment as to who was speaking truth and who was speaking wisdom;  
Not a respecter of persons; had not predetermined whom to support in this controversy

Today, in our culture we don't value **Discernment** highly enough – look at what the book of Proverbs says about the acquiring of wisdom:

### **Chap. 8**

How can you improve your discernment skills?

- People need to be taught to think; to reason; to use logic; to recognize false arguments and straw man approaches
- Christians are not called to react first with emotion; the intellect should lead and the emotions should follow

### **B. Devotion – Prioritizing the Commands that Require Obedience**

*“asked Him, ‘What commandment is the foremost of all?’”*

ἐπηρώτησεν αὐτόν· ποία ἐστὶν ἐντολὴ πρώτη πάντων;

If you had a chance to ask Jesus a question, what would it be?

This scribe showed good judgment in focusing on what was most important –

Not asking which command was given first by God chronologically, but which was most important

Important to understand what was driving the scribe – concerned with his performance in obeying the commands of God – but so many – if he could know where to start and put his focus on what was most important, he would be ahead of the game

Very complicated structure to the OT commands – imagine if you were charged as the Dr. of Theology with teaching a course on OT commands – what would be your unifying principle; how would you organize all of these commands?

**Parunak:** Later Jewish tradition held that there were **613 distinct commandments**, and identifying the most important would be an interesting topic of debate.

**MacArthur:** “Well why would they come up with a number like that? Six-hundred and thirteen, why?” Because that’s how many letters there were in the Decalogue. If you took the Ten Commandments in Hebrew, there’s 613 letters so they said there had to be 613 laws. Pretty silly, but that’s some of the rabbinical nonsense.

**Alan Carr:** Of these laws, **248 are considered positives** in nature while **365 are considered to be negative**. That is, some compel men to do certain things while others forbid men from certain activities.

Some OT passages give a hint of summarizing man's responsibility towards God:

Cf. **Micah 6:8** focusing on man's essential duty

*"He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"*

**1 Sam. 12:24**

*"Only fear the Lord and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you."*

How will Jesus respond?

In what sense could this innocuous question be viewed as a **test** ... trying to trip Jesus up?

**MacArthur:** Now the Pharisees took the whole Old Testament and all their interpretations of it and all the traditions that grew up around it and all of that was their Law. The Sadducees took nothing more than the first five books, the books of Moses, and they said that's all that came from God. So you can see the Pharisees and the Sadducees didn't agree on what was divine Law, but they both did agree that Moses' writings were divine Law; Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy and Numbers. They all agreed that is the Law of God. So the Sanhedrin comes up with a question they can all agree to...what is the greatest commandment, or what is the most important commandment, what is the foremost commandment and their hope is that He's going to give them something that is not found in the Law of Moses, something that supersedes Moses, something above and beyond Moses. They were all zealous for the Law of Moses and the zeal they had for the Law of Moses was only outstripped by the zeal they had for the honor they got by teaching the Law of Moses. The purpose of this approach is to get Jesus to say something they're positive will not be in the writings of Moses because they all have concluded that He's against Moses, He's anti-Judaism, He's anti-Moses. He is setting Himself up as some supreme authority. He is saying things that are not like what we hear, what we teach and what we believe. And if they can get Him to elevate Himself above Moses, then the people will be more likely to turn from Him.

## **II. (:29-31) SUMMATION OF DIVINE REQUIREMENTS**

### **A. (:29-30) Primary Command**

#### 1. (:29) Theological Foundation – the Uniqueness of the One True God

*"Jesus answered, 'The foremost is, 'Hear, O Israel!*

*The Lord our God is one Lord;'"*

*ἀπεκρίθη ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὅτι πρώτη ἐστίν· ἄκουε, Ἰσραήλ, κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν κύριος εἷς ἐστίν,*

reference to **Deut. 6:4-5** -- known as the *Shema* (Heb. "to hear"); recited by every religious Jew in his own morning and evening worship

**Hendriksen:** the *mezuzah* was a rectangular piece of inscribed parchment enclosed in a metal or wooden case, and attached to the upper section of a Jewish dwelling's right hand door post. The

inscribed material consists of the Shema in its longer form. It is written in twenty-two lines, in accordance with definite rules.

“*Hear, O Israel*” – the nation should be united in their pursuit of spiritual truth; not forming into groups and sects centered around the traditions of men; not attacking the very one that God has sent to reveal Himself and to communicate truth – **call for Unity**

You cannot adequately obey the **Commands of God** without first understanding and embracing the **Person of God**.

Study theological works about the character of God – His attributes

**Charnock:** *The Existence and Attributes of God*

Doctrine of Trinity starts with the Uniqueness and Oneness of God –  
No other gods besides the One True God who exists in 3 Persons

Jesus not presenting himself as a second God -- separate from whom the Jews had always recognized as the One True God

**MacArthur:** In other words, you’re never going to be able to be obedient if this is external. This has to be internal. This has to be internal. And notice the foundation of this extensive call to loving God. “*The Lord is our God, the Lord is one.*” It was a polytheistic world which means there were many gods, many nations, every nation had its own deities, its own sets of deities. There were gods all over the place...that is false gods, gods that did not exist, fabrications of demons and men. But there was only one true God, the Lord is the one true God. Therefore you don’t need to worry about dividing your allegiance, right? You only need to love one God because there is only one God and you need to love Him with all your capacities.

## 2. (:30) Practical Application – Undivided, Total Devotion

*“and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.”*

*καὶ ἀγαπήσεις κύριον τὸν θεόν σου ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας σου καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ψυχῆς σου καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς διανοίας σου καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ἰσχύος σου.*

The goal of the commandment is love ... **1 Tim. 1:5** “*from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith*”

**Barclay** says regarding this type of Love:

- Dominates our emotions
- Directs our thoughts
- Dynamic of all our actions

**Alan Carr:** If all of these things are taken together, it becomes clear that the Lord is telling us to love God with perfect sincerity, the utmost of fervency, with the fullest exercise of an enlightened reason and with the entire energy of our being. This is the spirit of the greatest commandment! . . .

*Eros*, refers to "erotic or sexual love." *Storgh*, refers to the love of things. *Phileao* speaks of tender affection for someone. *Agape*, on the other hand refers to a never-ending, unchanging, all-consuming love for someone. This is not the kind of feeling that appears for a time than changes

or disappears. Agape love is forever! It is the kind of love with which God loves sinners. It is a genuine, heartfelt, all-encompassing love that cannot and will be changed by circumstance. It is a love that loves without regard for the worth of the object being loved. This is more than simple affection or some emotional feeling. It is a decision of the will! This is the kind of love that can be seen. Ill. God's love - Rom. 5:8. Our love for Christ is visible as well, John 14:15-24; 15:10-14.

Look at the high bar that Jesus presents here = **the 4 Alls** – not with some, some, some, some  
Why isn't the scribe struck down with conviction at this point as he recognizes how far short he falls of this divine standard?

Yet Jesus stands before him as one who has completely fulfilled this lofty command every moment of his existence on earth. What a contrast! But the scribe doesn't see it that way.

What diverts us from such total, undivided love for our Savior?

Where are we distracted in our mind?

What competes for our emotional commitment?

Where do we find ourselves weak and our strength failing?

How thankful we are for the **blessed gospel** – for the grace of God

#### **Titus 2:11-14**

*“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus; 14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.”*

**Sproul:** Of course, the Israelites were not commanded to love Him simply because of what He had done for them, just as we ought not to love God simply for the gifts and benefits we receive from His hand. Neither are we to love Him simply for His attributes – His infinite wisdom, His limitless power, His peerless justice, and so on. Rather, we are to love Him for who He is in Himself. We do not really progress in the Christian life until we understand that we are to love God simply because He is lovely and wonderful, worthy of every creature's unqualified affection.

**Hiebert:** 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 men.

#### **B. (:31a) Corollary Command**

*“The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'”*

*δευτέρα αὐτῆ· ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτόν.*

Interesting that Jesus does not stop here – even though he has answered the question of the scribe – he continues to raise the bar so that performance by human effort alone might be shown to be impossible and unattainable

Quoting **Lev. 19:18**



Often difficult to love our neighbor – we understand from the story of the Good Samaritan who our neighbor is – ones that have needs that the Lord brings us into contact with

**Thompson:** I pay my own bills; don't care about theirs; I contribute to my retirement plan, not theirs

### C. (:31b) Summation

*“There is no other commandment greater than these.”*

μείζων τούτων ἄλλη ἐντολὴ οὐκ ἔστιν.

Jesus has covered it all; what more can be said; His words will live on for all eternity summarizing the divine standard for obedience

The scribe does not have to look any further to try to identify the unifying principle that is the common thread through all of the commands of God; how will he respond?

## III. (:32-34a) SALVATION REQUIRES MORE THAN KNOWLEDGE PLUS SINCERITY

### A. (:32-33) Intelligent Response of the Sincere Scribe

*“And the scribe said to Him, ‘Right, Teacher, You have truly stated that He is One; and there is no one else besides Him; and to love Him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as himself, is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.’”*

Καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ ὁ γραμματεὺς· καλῶς, διδάσκαλε, ἐπ' ἀληθείας εἶπες ὅτι εἷς ἐστὶν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλος πλὴν αὐτοῦ· <sup>33</sup> καὶ τὸ ἀγαπᾶν αὐτὸν ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς συνέσεως καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ἰσχύος καὶ τὸ ἀγαπᾶν τὸν πλησίον ὡς ἑαυτὸν περισσώτερόν ἐστιν πάντων τῶν ὀλοκαυτωμάτων καὶ θυσιῶν.

He respectfully repeats his title of addressing Jesus as Teacher

He accurately repeats the very words Jesus has spoken to show that he correctly heard the teaching

He expresses his discernment once again by evaluating this teaching as in accordance with Truth

He loves the theological focus on the unique Oneness of the God of Israel

He appreciates the practical connection between loving God and loving one's neighbor

He even goes beyond to provide an additional insight that shows he has some comprehension of the importance of heart obedience rather than mere performance of external religious rites

### 1 Sam. 15:22

This scribe has knowledge; he has sincerity – but his performance still merits the wrath of God;

- All of the correct theology in the world cannot save a person.
- All of the genuine sincerity in the world cannot elevate you to that secure status of an authentic member of the kingdom of God.

Where is his connection to the gospel message?

Where is his commitment to Jesus as true Messiah and Son of God and majestic King?

## B. (:34a) Intriguing Response of Jesus

*“And when Jesus saw that he had answered intelligently, He said to him, ‘You are not far from the kingdom of God.’”*

καὶ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἰδὼν [αὐτὸν] ὅτι νουνεχῶς ἀπεκρίθη εἶπεν αὐτῷ· οὐ μακρὰν εἶ ἀπὸ τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ.

**Edwards:** The encounter closes on a note of irony: the scribe ostensibly has come to pass judgment on Jesus, but it is Jesus who passes judgment on the scribe. The scribe is equipped and authorized to pass judgment on the law, but Jesus possesses a higher authority. In yet another display of sovereign authority, Jesus declares, *“You are not far from the kingdom of God.”* That is a striking remark because the subject of conversation has been the Torah, not the kingdom of God or eternal life. It is hard to imagine an ordinary scribe or rabbi presuming to pronounce judgment on such a matter. The scribe can judge whether or not one is faithful to the Torah; but Jesus, who affirms the essence of the Torah, also supersedes the Torah – as he supersedes every creedal confession and formulation. One draws near to the kingdom of God not by proper theology but by drawing near to Jesus. Jesus exhibits his filial and messianic authority in declaring who is on the threshold of the kingdom of God, which is present not in the Torah but in himself.

**MacArthur:** Near isn’t good enough, you must enter...you must enter...you must enter by faith in Christ in His death and resurrection. But in what sense is this man near? He’s near because he understands that it’s an internal issue, not a ceremonial ritual issue.

Isn’t close good enough – like in horseshoes?

## (:34B) POSTSCRIPT: END OF INTERROGATION PHASE OF PASSION WEEK

*“And after that, no one would venture to ask Him any more questions.”*

Καὶ οὐδεὶς οὐκέτι ἐτόλμα αὐτὸν ἐπερωτῆσαι.

**Sproul:** Jesus’ enemies had enough sense to see that they had utterly failed to catch Him in His words. He was able to spot their snares, with the result that they were embarrassed. Thus, they abandoned their attempts to entrap Him. In the end, they would condemn Him on the basis of false testimony and an improper trial (14:53-65)

## CONCLUSION: What determines Authenticity?

Repentance + Faith in Jesus are the requirements

**John 4** – Woman at the well was not far from the Kingdom – she responded to the identity of Jesus and repented of her sins -- Must worship God in Spirit and in truth

Where is the gospel preached? That is where God presences Himself and one can be not far from the kingdom of God ...

Gospel not preached in very many places in our day

\* \* \* \* \*

## DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) In my life, where have I tried to substitute knowledge and/or sincerity for repentance and obedient faith?
- 2) How difficult do you find it to be to love your neighbor as yourself?
- 3) Why does Jesus respond with 2 commands when He is asked to prioritize the foremost command?
- 4) How can you bring someone near to the kingdom of God?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**MacArthur:** So if someone were to ask, What does it mean to be a believer? What does it mean to be a Christian? It means to be a lover of God. And though we love Him imperfectly, we seek to love Him perfectly and long for the realization of that perfect love in the glory which is to come. . .

**David Thompson:** The law boxes all of us in as guilty and in need of salvation; series of trapping questions from different religious rulers; in every instance Jesus silenced them; expert in bible interpretation; elite biblical scholar; invented all types of man-made religious traditions that people followed like blind sheep; pretended that they were close to God; wrote their own book the Mishna; being close to salvation is not the same as being saved;

Vs. 28 – I think I will take a shot at Christ myself; since He brought up the law, I will use that; all commandments are important in the sense that they will condemn us; James says if you break one of the commands, you break the whole law;

Jesus really gives him 3 answers:

1) *“The Lord our God is one Lord”* – this is what Israel needs to understand; very familiar to them; in little box around their neck; used in opening of synagogue services; the God of Israel, of the bible is the only true God; Elohim is in the plural form – indicates the doctrine of the Trinity – Jesus is member of the Godhead – “I and my Father are One”; plurality among the Godhead members;

**1 Cor. 8:6**

**Ephes. 4** – *one God and Father of all*

**1 Tim. 2:5** – *one God and one mediator*

2) **vs. 30** *“Love the Lord your God”* – mental, intelligent type of love – not emotional nonsense; qualifies how the Triune God is to be loved; preposition *ek* – this is to come out from within you; biblical faith is a thinking faith; not irrational; we have never come close to this standard

3) **vs. 21** *“Love your neighbor as yourself”* --

Scribe replies: You nailed it; was delighted with the answer

Response of Jesus – you are real close to being right with God, but you are not; you are just calling me Teacher and you have a problem – you don't get it – I am part of the One God Trinity; scribe should have been convicted of his failure to perform to the level that Jesus set; should have asked How do I ever get such a righteousness which I do not have?

You could go to church and do the religious stuff and be real close to being saved without ever being saved;

### **Alistair Begg: Not Far from the Kingdom**

Cf. sports analogies: close, but not close enough –

One phrase that stands out in our reading; “*You are not far from the kingdom of God*” – you can get very close to something without experiencing it

Jesus is the King and has come to gather people into His kingdom;

You don't slide in on your own terms; must come via repentance and faith

Unusual King – rode into Jerusalem on a donkey; wore crown of thorns ...

#### **1) The Question the Scribe Makes to Jesus – Clear and Sincere**

Wants to know the big command so that he can assess himself against this;

Comes seeking clarification; more sincere than other questioners;

4 “Alls” – pretty demanding; we might respond: I have not loved Jesus, All, All, All, All, but at least Some, Some, Some, Some

Not always easy to love your neighbor

No push here for greater self-love

Our neighbors are made in God's image – not necessarily the loveliest person because image is fallen and broken – but that is true of us also

Good Samaritan story answers Who is our neighbor

#### **2) The Affirmation the Scribe Makes After Jesus Responds (:32) – Wise and Scriptural**

Is there a tone of condescension here? Well done, teacher

Restates the words of Jesus with some minor changes in language;

- Affirms the uniqueness of God – not like the gods of the heathen who worship idols; This is the God who obligates us to love Him in this way

**Is. 45:5**

- Affirms the priority of internal love expressed by an obedient heart over external sacrifices

#### **1 Sam. 15:22**

#### **3) His Condition as Described by Jesus**

You are on the one-yard line but not in the end zone

Remember response of disciples to interaction with the rich young ruler – “*Who then can be saved*” – religious; concerned about pleasing God – but his riches were an idol; did not love God totally and without reserve

Jesus came to call sinners to repentance; did not come to call righteous people

Unless our religion shows us our need for God, our religion will actually keep us from God

He wanted to know the main commandment so that he could focus on keeping it; Jesus had come ultimately to save him, not just teach him

If perfection is the standard for entry, how is anyone getting in? This is where the gospel comes in.

TEXT: Mark 12:35-44

TITLE: EXPOSING RELIGIOUS FRAUDS

**BIG IDEA:**

**FALSE TEACHERS MUST BE EXPOSED AS RELIGIOUS FRAUDS**

**INTRODUCTION:**

In today's Christian culture there seems to be a reluctance to speak against specific false teachers and to expose and condemn them as religious frauds. It is part of our acquiescence to the political correctness of the ultimate virtue of **Tolerance**. Jesus certainly had no qualms about calling out the scribes and other religious leaders of his day for their hypocrisy and pride and selfish ambition. He labeled them as *blind leaders of the blind* – they not only are headed for eternal damnation themselves but they are trying to get everyone to accompany them to that ultimate lake of fire.

We have seen Jesus patiently responding in Wisdom and Authority to the attacks leveled against him by the various groups that came to him with tricky questions to try to trip him up and discredit him. He turned around all of their arguments and made them all look silly in front of the general public – who were reveling in such exchanges. Now having finally silenced them, Jesus turns on the offensive and levels some scathing critiques of these religious frauds.

**Matt. 7:15** “*Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.*”

Still the third day of Passion Week.

**FALSE TEACHERS MUST BE EXPOSED AS RELIGIOUS FRAUDS**

**3 FATAL FLAWS OF THE SCRIBES (OR ANY FALSE RELIGIOUS TEACHERS)**

**I. (:35-37) WRONG CHRISTOLOGY = THEIR VIEW OF THE MESSIAH –  
CORRECTIVE TEACHING: CHRIST AS THE SON OF GOD**

**A. (:35) Hypocritical Façade -- Attempt to Look Good and Gain Favor**

*“And Jesus answering began to say, as He taught in the temple,  
‘How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David?’”*

Καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἔλεγεν διδάσκων ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ·  
πῶς λέγουσιν οἱ γραμματεῖς ὅτι ὁ χριστὸς υἱὸς Δαυὶδ ἐστίν;

Scribes imagine that they are being complimentary in their assigning of the title “Son of David” to the Messiah; very respectful and positive

Christ is essentially asking:

*“How can the scribes say that God's Anointed King who is to come is merely the human Son of David?”*

**MacArthur:** And this opens up for us the fundamentally wrong conception of the Messiah with

which they were dealing, that He was a man, a gifted man, a great leader, a military man, a man of might, influence, power, etc., etc. And that was all to be true but that wasn't the complete answer.

## **B. (:36-37a) Exposure by Christ – Failure to Recognize the Messiah as the Son of God**

### 1. (:36) Quotation from King David

#### **a. Personal Quotation**

*“David himself said”*

αὐτὸς Δαυὶδ εἶπεν

**Sproul:** David, of course, was Israel's most illustrious king. He was a shepherd, a poet, a warrior, and a brilliant administrator. He extended the boundaries of the nation, was the greatest military genius of Israel's history, and had the finest public-works program of any king who ruled over the Jewish people. Thus, the Jews regarded the reign of David as the golden age of Israel.

#### **b. Inspired Quotation**

*“in the Holy Spirit,”*

ἐν τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἁγίῳ·

#### **c. Divine Quotation – Dialogue among the Triune Godhead**

*“The Lord said to my LORD,”*

εἶπεν κύριος τῷ κυρίῳ μου·

Quote from **Ps. 110:1** -- is the most often quoted Psalm by the New Testament writers.

**Alan Carr:** The first “Lord”, in Psalm 110:1, is the Hebrew word “Yahweh”. The second “Lord” in that verse is the Hebrew word “Adonai”. The idea in that verse is this, “*the Lord (Yahweh) said to my (David's) Lord (Adonai)...*”

*Yahweh* = the name God used to reveal Himself to Moses in the burning bush incident

**Ex. 3:14** “*I am who I am*”

*Adonai* = the one who is absolutely sovereign

Often in the Psalms used together to refer to the one God = **Ps. 8:1** “*O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth*”

Here obviously speaking of 2 persons

**MacArthur:** He took the titles of God...Rock, Stone, Savior, Redeemer, Holy One, Lord of Hosts, King, First and Last, Light, Law-giver, all Old Testament titles for God that Jesus attributed to Himself. Absolutely, unequivocally the testimony of the four gospels is that He is Lord. That then becomes the confession which saves. **Romans 10:9**, “*If you believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead,*” that's the faith element in His work which assumes the cross. But more importantly, “*If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord. He is Lord.*”

#### **d. Significant Quotation**

*“Sit at My right hand, until I put Thine enemies beneath Thy feet.”*

κάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν μου, ἕως ἂν θῶ τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου ὑποκάτω τῶν ποδῶν σου.

Not dealing with trivial matters

**Hendriksen:** Jehovah is promising the Mediator such preeminence, power, authority, and majesty as would be proper only for One who, as to his person, from all eternity was, is now, and forever will be God. See Eph. 1:20-23; Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 2:9; Rev. 5:1-10; 12:5.

## 2. (:37a) Question Raised by Jesus

*“David himself calls Him 'Lord'; and so in what sense is He his son?”*

αὐτὸς Δαυὶδ λέγει αὐτὸν κύριον, καὶ πόθεν αὐτοῦ ἔστιν υἱός;

**William Barclay:** At all times the Jews looked forward to a God-sent deliverer who would be of David's line. (Isaiah 9:2-7, Isaiah 11:1-9, Jeremiah 23:5 ff, Jeremiah 33:14-18, Ezekiel 34:23 ff, Ezekiel 37:24, Psalms 89:20 ff.) It was by that title that Jesus himself was often addressed, especially by the crowds (Mark 10:47 ff, Matthew 9:27, Matthew 12:23, Matthew 15:22, Matthew 21:9; Matthew 21:15). All through the New Testament the conviction that Jesus was in fact the son of David in his physical descent occurs (Romans 1:3, 2 Timothy 2:8, Matthew 1:1-17, Luke 3:23-38). The genealogies of Jesus given in the passages from Matthew and Luke which we have cited are to show that Jesus was in fact of the lineage of David. What Jesus is doing is this--he is not denying that the Messiah is the Son of David, nor is he saying that he himself is not the Son of David. What he is saying is that he is the Son of David--and **far more**, not only David's son but **David's Lord**.

## **C. (:37b) Reaction of the Crowd**

*“And the great crowd enjoyed listening to Him.”*

Καὶ [ὁ] πολὺς ὄχλος ἤκουεν αὐτοῦ ἡδέως.

Enjoyment is not the same as spiritual receptivity and commitment

**Hendriksen:** Mark has used these identical words in another context, namely, in connection with the eagerness with which Herod Antipas listened to **John the Baptist**, the very man whom he, the “king,” was about to murder!

## **II. (:38-40) WRONG MINISTRY MOTIVATION = THEIR PURSUIT OF SELFISH AMBITION IN THEIR ROLE AS RESPECTED LEADERS – CORRECTIVE TEACHING: SERVANT LEADERSHIP**

[cf. 7 Woes proclaimed against the scribes in Matt. 23 – this is an abbreviated summary]

### **A. (:38-39) Hypocritical Façade -- Attempt to Look Good and Be Treated with Respect**

*“And in His teaching He was saying: ‘Beware of the scribes’”*

Καὶ ἐν τῇ διδαχῇ αὐτοῦ ἔλεγεν· βλέπετε ἀπὸ τῶν γραμματέων

Usage by Mark of *Blepo*, *Beware*:

**Mark 4:24** “And He was saying to them, ‘Take care what you listen to. By your standard of measure it shall be measured to you; and more shall be given you besides.’”

\* **Mark 8:15** “And He was giving orders to them, saying, ‘Watch out! Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.’”

\* **Mark 13:5** "And Jesus began to say to them, 'See to it that no one misleads you.'"

**Mark 13:9** "But be on your guard; for they will deliver you to *the* courts, and you will be flogged in *the* synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them."

**Mark 13:23** "But take heed; behold, I have told you everything in advance."

**Mark 13:33** "Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the *appointed* time is."

Insatiable appetite in their Selfish Ambition for:

1. Prominence – They love to be #1 -- Pride

**a. Pompous Parading About**

*"who like to walk around in long robes,"*

τῶν θελόντων ἐν στολαῖς περιπατεῖν

characterized by an ostentatious display of dignity or self-importance; arrogant; conceited

Long white linen robes (everyone else wore bright colors) w/fringes that almost touched the ground.

Associated with honor – dressed like kings or priests who are about to officiate at some ceremony

**b. Popularity and Respect**

*"and like respectful greetings in the market places,"*

καὶ ἀσπασμούς ἐν ταῖς ἀγοραῖς

**Barclay:** The very title *Rabbi* means "My great one." To be so addressed was agreeable to their vanity.

**Hendriksen:** What the men who are here rebuked were always longing for was not a mere token of friendliness but rather a demonstration of respect, a public recognition of their prominence.

2. Privilege – They love their perks -- Selfish

**a. Best seats in the synagogue** – associated with honor and respect

*"and chief seats in the synagogues,"*

καὶ πρωτοκαθεδρίας ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς

**b. Best seats at banquets** – associated with honor and respect

*"and places of honor at banquets,"*

καὶ πρωτοκλισίας ἐν τοῖς δείπνοις,

**B. (:40a) Exposure by Christ – Failure to Exhibit Servant Leadership**

1. Frauds – Greedy Exploitation

*"who devour widows' houses,"*

οἱ κατεσθίοντες τὰς οἰκίας τῶν χηρῶν

God plays a special role in caring for widows and orphans;  
James defines true religion as taking care of widows;



Certainly the exploitation of widows by religious leaders would be an especially grievous violation of God's law

**Barclay:** An expert in the law could take no pay for his teaching. He was supposed to have a trade by which he earned his daily bread. But these legal experts had managed to convey to people that there was no higher duty and privilege than to support a rabbi in comfort, that, in fact such support would undoubtedly entitle him or her who gave it to a high place in the heavenly academy. It is a sad fact that women have always been imposed upon by religious charlatans, and it would seem that these scribes and Pharisees imposed on simple people who could ill afford to support them.

## 2. Fakes – Grandiose Hypocrisy

*“and for appearance's sake offer long prayers;”*

καὶ προφάσει μακρὰ προσευχόμενοι.

### **Matt. 6:1 ff**

**Alan Carr:** Everything they did was geared toward satisfying their pride and making them look good in the eyes of others. They were literally in love with themselves and had no room in their hearts for God.

**Hiebert:** They hid their covetousness under a guise of great personal piety.

### **C. (:40b) Future Condemnation**

*“these will receive greater condemnation.”*

οὗτοι λήμψονται περισσότερον κρίμα.

**Constable:** Their typically "long prayers" presented an impression of piety that masked greed. They pretended to love God greatly, but their aim was to get people to love them greatly. The result would be "greater condemnation" when they stood before God's judgment bar. Here is another indication that there are degrees of punishment (cf. Matt. 11:20- 24; James 3:1; et al.).

## **III. (:41-44) WRONG RELIGIOUS SYSTEM – JESUS EXPOSES THE EXPLOITATION OF POOR WIDOWS**

### **A. (:41) Rich People Gave a Lot**

*“And He sat down opposite the treasury, and began observing how the multitude were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large sums.”*

Καὶ καθίσας κατέναντι τοῦ γαζοφυλακίου ἐθεώρει πῶς ὁ ὄχλος  
βάλλει χαλκὸν εἰς τὸ γαζοφυλάκιον. καὶ πολλοὶ πλούσιοι ἔβαλλον πολλά.

Long day; time to sit down  
Go and see; use powers of observation

Shift in location – from the Court of the Gentiles (large, open area where thousands could hear his teaching) to the smaller Court of the Women where the treasury was located

**B. (:42) Poor Widow Gave a Little**

*“And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent.”*  
καὶ ἔλθοῦσα μία χήρα πτωχὴ ἔβαλεν λεπτὰ δύο, ὃ ἔστιν κοδράντης.

1/64 of denarius small copper coins  
After some computations . . . about \$1.50 in today’s culture

**C. (:43-44) Poor Widow Exploited to Give All She Had to False Religious System**

*“And calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, ‘Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury; for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on.’”*

καὶ προσκαλεσάμενος τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἡ χήρα αὕτη ἢ πτωχὴ πλεῖον πάντων ἔβαλεν τῶν βαλλόντων εἰς τὸ γαζοφυλάκιον· <sup>44</sup> πάντες γὰρ ἐκ τοῦ περισσεύοντος αὐτοῖς ἔβαλον, αὕτη δὲ ἐκ τῆς ὑστερήσεως αὐτῆς πάντα ὅσα εἶχεν ἔβαλεν ὄλον τὸν βίον αὐτῆς.

[commentary by **John MacArthur** on this section convinced me to move away from the traditional understanding that this was teaching sacrificial giving]

**CONCLUSION:**

**Beware of religious frauds** – false teachers – they are out there – trying to gain recognition; serving themselves; pretending to be super spiritual; feathering their own nest; perverting the word of God; very showy and ostentatious in their ministry

- Check out their Christology
- Exercise discernment regarding their Motives – what drives them?
- Make sure they are not exploiting the vulnerable

\*\*\*\*\*

**DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) How in depth is your study of Christology? Is doctrine important to you?
- 2) What are your primary motivations for ministry?
- 3) What false religious leaders today are exploiting the vulnerable?
- 4) What false religious teachers can you identify in today’s Christian context and how are you guarding against their influence?

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**QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:**

**Steven Lawson: Two Voices of Jesus**

Jesus did not treat everyone equally; one voice for the sheep and another for the wolves; held

those who had access to the Scriptures to a much higher level of accountability; greater condemnation

Look how he addressed them: sternly, pointedly, unsparingly

- You brood of vipers, serpents
- White-washed tombs
- Hypocrites

Spoke to common folk with far more tender voice; different vocabulary and tone

## **I. Judgment against the scribes – Condemnation – tear down**

### **A. The Stinging Rebuke** – calling out the scribes publicly

In the large spacious Court of the Gentiles in the temple; continuing his teaching despite interruptions

Be on your guard; watch out with all diligence

Scribes = The copyists of the law; jot and tittle, detail-oriented people; the authorities in interpreting the scriptures; experts in the Mosaic law; spiritual elite of Israel; Pharisees looked to them to validate their teaching; pride, arrogance; legalists

### **B. 6 Distinguishing Features of These Scribes**

1. Wanted to look distinguished; draw attention to themselves as spiritually elite; wore these robes not only in the temple but in marketplace also
  2. Longed to be treated with respect in front of others
  3. chief seats in synagogue – in order to draw attention to themselves
  4. places of honor at banquets – on the right and left of the host – connected with powerful people
  5. scribes lived off of donations or free gifts that were given to them – had become a profession not paid from temple money but from private patrons; positioned themselves next to wealthy widows with ulterior motives; like sharks circling around these vulnerable targets
  6. for appearance sake – to impress others – to flaunt their supposed spirituality – **Matt. 6:1 ff**
- All about motivation – should be out to please God rather than men

### **C. (:40) Bottom Line**

Had exposure to more light and truth and opportunity

Greater condemnation

Christ hates hypocrisy

TEXT: Mark 13:1-13

TITLE: BE ON ALERT – PART 1

**BIG IDEA:**

**ISRAEL (WHO WAS ASLEEP AT THE SWITCH FOR CHRIST'S FIRST COMING) HAD BETTER BE ON THE ALERT FOR CHRIST'S SECOND COMING**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Chapter 13 needs to be **treated in its entirety** despite its length of 37 verses. Therefore, it will take several weeks for us to work our way through the chapter. But we must always have the full context in view. Commentators differ widely on the interpretation of much of this material. We will have to consider the parallel accounts in Matthew 24-25 and Luke 21 as well where there are differences in order to get the full picture.

We will start by **reading the entire chapter** – but this time with a few comments interspersed so that I make sure that I don't lose you. Still separate in your minds the inspired words of scripture from my attempts at explanation.

You can see that the occasion of leaving the temple complex where Jesus had just been interacting with the Jewish religious leaders and exposing their hypocrisy and failure to grasp both the teaching of the Scripture and the power of God **sparked a question** from one of His disciples. The response of Jesus was the gateway to delivering what has been called the **Mt. Olivet Discourse** because of its setting.

The first thing I want you to focus on is the **overall tone** ... the theme ... the main emphasis of the exhortations and warnings here. There is no disagreement on this point. This is a call to **Be On ALERT**. To accentuate that, I will ring a bell every time we read a phrase that communicates that tone.

We have so many Alerts in our culture today, that I am afraid we have become numb to their value. Almost like the phenomena of the boy who cried "Wolf." Alerts are intended to wake us up and cause us to have a heightened sense of awareness so that we are on guard and won't get caught by surprise. We have alerts for:

- **Weather alerts** – even come across your cell phone now as well as your TV
  - floods, hurricanes, tornados
  - smog levels, atmospheric conditions
  - susceptibility to fire, etc.
- **Amber alerts** – when some young child has gone missing or been taken
- **Terrorist alerts** – we have a color coded system to tell us how serious the threat level is at any point in time
- **Breaking news alerts** – to provide information on key stories that can't wait for the usual programming times
- **Health alerts** – the status of the Zikah threat or some flu epidemic or some other threat to our health and well-being
- **Education alerts** – on TV news this week
- **Financial alerts** – condition of the stock market and how it is impacting your portfolio

and your retirement funds; critical action that you must take on a timely basis  
No end to alerts – when the kids were growing up ... I used to mock this ...

But when Jesus calls us to **Be On ALERT** – we had better listen and respond. We can't afford to overlook His warnings or take His exhortations lightly. This must be serious stuff. We know that is true as well because Jesus just has several days left on earth and He concludes His teaching ministry with His disciples with these important words.

So what is the **frame of reference** here for the Alert status?

- Because He starts off talking about the **destruction of the Temple** which could certainly reference the events surrounding 70 A.D., some commentators try to fit this language into an historical or preterist context – saying that what Jesus is warning against here has already taken place.

Cf. quote from **R. C. Sproul**: My main thrust [in his commentary on this passage] is to show that many, if not all, of the details in this discourse can be understood in terms of first-century events. [based on a literal understanding of “*generation*” to refer to a 40 year window for fulfillment]

But when you understand the full scope of what Jesus is describing here, it certainly goes way beyond that destruction to speak of end time events – events that will culminate in the Second Coming of Jesus in power and majesty and glory.

- Also it is obvious that rather a significant amount of time has to pass to provide for the fulfillment of all that is spoken of here. Jesus is not simply going to usher in the kingdom in the weeks to follow. So these precursor events would certainly undermine any teaching regarding the **imminency** of Christ's return.

- This passage also undermines the pre-trib teaching of a secret **Rapture** event. No secret rapture is mentioned here and in fact there are many points of comparison between the language and imagery used here and in Matthew's parallel account and Paul's exhortation in **1 Thess. 4** (the classic Rapture passage) to say that the same events must be in view. Others would argue that points of similarity do not necessarily equate to identical occurrences.

It should be no surprise to us after our careful study of the prophecy of Isaiah, to find that this prophetic passage from the lips of Jesus must be taken on multiple levels. While there seems to be some near term reference to events about to happen in 70 AD, the ultimate fulfillment surely awaits the end time events which include what is called the **Great Tribulation** and the **Second Coming of Christ**. The trigger event is this **Abomination of Desolation** which we must study in detail.

**Derek Thomas**: very often the Bible foreshortens the gap between the first resurrection of Jesus and the second coming of Jesus, and, as it were, sees the whole of that period (including the period we're in) as ‘*the last days*’ - the time between the two advents of Jesus.

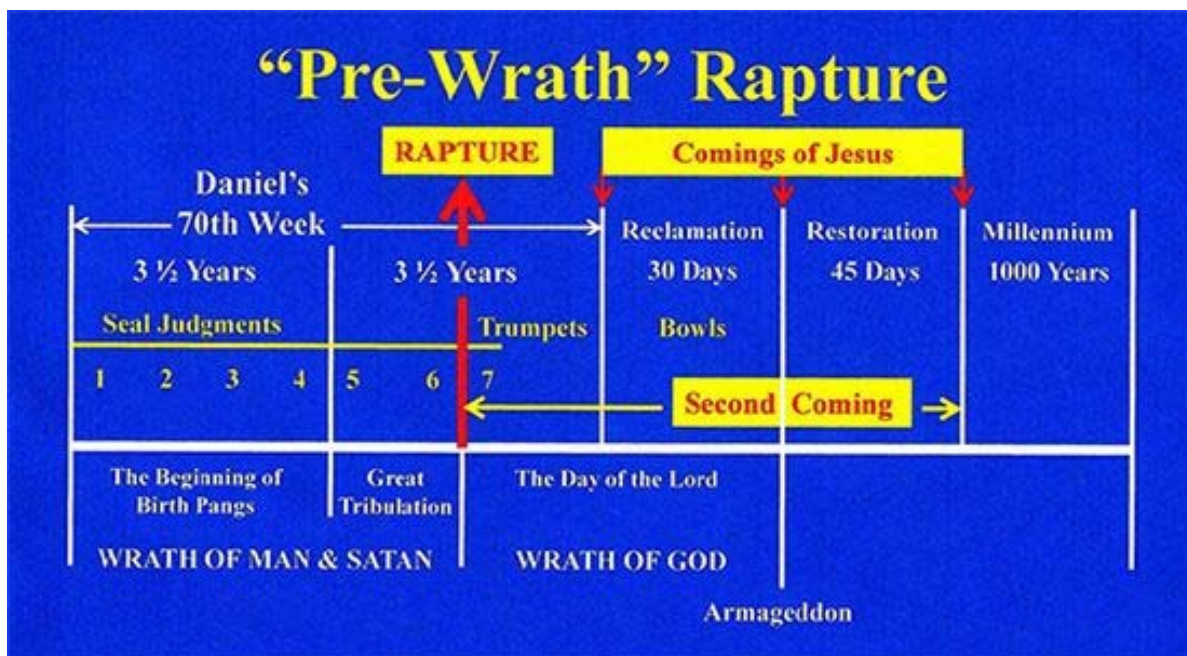
**James Edwards** [note on structure]:

Mark employs “*these things*” (Gk. *tauta*) or “*all these things*” (Gk. *tauta panta*) with reference to the destruction of the temple, not to the end of the age. . . This linguistic pattern is a clue that Mark intends readers to understand **vv. 1-13** and **28-31** with reference to the destruction

of the temple in Jerusalem.

Two other blocks of material in the chapter are held in close connection with the destruction of the temple. They are vv. 14-27, the description of the tribulation and subsequent coming of the Son of Man; and vv. 32-36, the reminder of the unknown day and hour of the return of the Son of Man and the consequent reminder to present watchfulness. These two sections are designated by the expression “those days” (vv. 17, 19, 20, 24; or “that day”, v. 32). “Those days” is a stereotype for the eschaton in the prophets (Jer 3:16, 18; 31:29; 33:15; Joel 3:1), and it appears likewise in Mark 13. Chapter 13 is thus constructed according to a twofold scheme of tension and paradox, alternating between the immediate future (related to “these things”) and the end of time (related to “those days”), in which the destruction of the temple and fall of Jerusalem function as a prefigurement and paradigm for the Parousia.

One must also keep in mind the overall timeline of the Pre-Wrath Rapture:



Let's work our way now through the passage.

## 7 REASONS TO BE ON ALERT IN ANTICIPATION OF THE END TIMES

### I. (:1-2) DESTRUCTION -- BE ON ALERT BECAUSE JUDGMENT IS COMING

*"And as He was going out of the temple,"*

*Καὶ ἐκπορευομένου αὐτοῦ ἐκ τοῦ ἱεροῦ*

Leaving the temple for the final time – Jesus has left the temple for good – very significant Triumphant Entry – not received as the Messiah; observed the corruption and idolatry and hypocrisy; cleansed the temple; came back to continue teaching the people in the temple and confronting the religious leaders; now he goes out for the last time

#### A. (:1b) Futile Attempt to Hold on to the Past

*"one of His disciples said to Him, 'Teacher, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!'"*

λέγει αὐτῷ εἰς τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ· διδάσκαλε, ἴδε ποταποὶ λίθοι καὶ ποταπαὶ οἰκοδομαί.

In the commendation of the widow for giving her only two small copper coins, Jesus had pointed to the different standard of evaluation used by God who sees the heart as opposed to man who is impressed by mere externals ... so this is an uninformed evaluation by one of the disciples who is so focused in on the external beauty of the temple when Jesus has just exposed its internal corruption

Is Judas speaking here??

Does this have to mark the end of the old system – can't we somehow make something good out of this beautiful structure of the OT religious system

### **B. (:2) New Wine Calls for New Wineskins**

*“And Jesus said to him, ‘Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another which will not be torn down.’”*

καὶ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτῷ· βλέπεις ταύτας τὰς μεγάλας οἰκοδομάς; οὐ μὴ ἀφεθῆ ἅδε λίθοι ἐπὶ λίθον ὃς οὐ μὴ καταλυθῆ.

Speaks to the totality of the coming destruction in judgment

**Hendriksen:** As to the fulfillment, when the Jews rebelled against the Romans, Jerusalem was taken by Titus, son of the emperor Vespasian (A.D. 69-79). The temple was destroyed. It is believed that more than a million Jews, who had crowded into the city, perished. As a political unit Israel ceased to exist.

Christians who followed exhortation to flee the city were largely spared ....

Such specific fulfillment of this prophecy of Jesus should reinforce our faith that the other prophecies uttered here by Jesus will likewise be fulfilled in similar fashion – literally

What about the teaching of Jesus that used the destruction of the temple building as a metaphor for His own death on the cross – is that in view here ... at least to some extent??

**Josephus** remarked: 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.”

## **II. (:3-8) DECEPTION AND DISCORD -- BE ON ALERT SO YOU AREN'T DECEIVED REGARDING THE TIMING AND THE SIGNS OF THE END TIMES**

### **A. (:3-4) Key Question – How can I tell when the end is upon us?**

#### 1. (:3a) Setting for the Key Question

*“And as He was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple,”*

Καὶ καθημένου αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸ ὄρος τῶν ἐλαιῶν κατέναντι τοῦ ἱεροῦ

Significance of the Mount of Olives as the place to which Jesus will return on the last day – Just east of the temple; across the Kidron Valley – a beautiful view of a majestic temple

structure;

It's been a long day with much activity; dusk settling over the city of Jerusalem

## 2. (:3b) Audience for the Key Question

*“Peter and James and John and Andrew were questioning Him privately,”*  
ἐπιρώτα αὐτὸν κατ' ἰδίαν Πέτρος καὶ Ἰάκωβος καὶ Ἰωάννης καὶ Ἀνδρέας.

Unusual to see this group of 4 treated together – the two sets of brothers

## 3. (:4) Two Aspects to the Key Question

### a. Timing

*“Tell us, when will these things be,”*  
εἰπὸν ἡμῖν, πότε ταῦτα ἔσται

“these things” - how can we identify what is included in this reference?

### b. Sign

*“and what will be the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?”*  
καὶ τί τὸ σημεῖον ὅταν μέλλῃ ταῦτα συντελεῖσθαι πάντα;

**Matt.** *“completion of the age”*

**Hiebert:** the question assumes that the destruction will be part of complex events culminating in the consummation of the age and the inauguration of the Messianic kingdom.

**MacArthur:** In fact, their question is bigger than the destruction of the temple because in **Matthew 24:3**, Matthew records that they asked about the coming of the end of the age...the coming of the end of the age. And the sign of the end of the age...and even the word “*coming*” means presence, *parousia*. When will there be divine presence, the end of this age, the end of this age, if you will, of apostasy and the fulfillment of all Kingdom promise, how soon will it come? And they're still asking this question 40 days after the Resurrection because in Acts chapter 1, after 40 days of being instructed by Jesus, they still ask the question...*Will You at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?*

**B. (:5-8) Don't Panic** -- Don't mistake birth pangs for the consummation of the end

### 1. (:5-6) Don't Be Misled by Charismatic Religious Leaders

*“And Jesus began to say to them, ‘**See to it** that no one misleads you. Many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am He!’ and will mislead many”*

Ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἤρξατο λέγειν αὐτοῖς· βλέπετε μὴ τις ὑμᾶς πλανήσῃ· πολλοὶ ἐλεύσονται ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου λέγοντες ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι, καὶ πολλοὺς πλανήσουσιν.

These things will happen throughout these “*last days*” in which we are living now ... certainly happened to a limited extent before the destruction in 70 A.D. ... but the intensity will be ratcheted up during the final 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel's prophecy – and especially in the second half which begins with the Great Tribulation as we will see next week

So there is definite application to us right now – we have to be on guard against deception ... But at the end there will be many false Christs ... and especially the AntiChrist Himself ...



Jesus makes it plain that He will come in power and glory in obvious fashion so that there can be no mistaking his return ... these others that appear from the desert or brought forth from inner rooms (**Matt. 24:26**) ... must be rejected as imposters

## 2. (:7-8a) Don't Be Frightened by Dramatic and Dangerous National Events

*“And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be frightened; those things must take place; but that is not yet the end.*

*For nation will arise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom;”*

ὅταν δὲ ἀκούσητε πολέμους καὶ ἀκοὰς πολέμων, μὴ θροεῖσθε· #

δεῖ γενέσθαι, ἀλλ' οὕτω τὸ τέλος. #

ἐγερθήσεται γὰρ ἔθνος ἐπ' ἔθνος καὶ βασιλεία ἐπὶ βασιλείαν, #

**John 14:2** “Do not let your heart be troubled”; believe in God, believe also in Me.”

**Alan Flavel:** [influential Presbyterian minister in Belfast] We get all anxious and run to God when the foundations are shaking, only to find that He is the One who is shaking them.

## 3. (:8b) Don't Be Confused by Natural Disasters

*“there will be earthquakes in various places; there will also be famines.*

*These things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.”*

#

ἔσονται σεισμοὶ κατὰ τόπους, ἔσονται λιμοί· ἀρχὴ ὠδίνων ταῦτα. #

Not exactly an optimistic, post-mill type of response;

**MacArthur:** Human history itself has been a long ordeal of survival against the deadly and dominating effects of sin and corruption. And even as society advances scientifically, as it advances educationally, as it advances technologically, it does not advance morally. It does not advance spiritually. And it does not advance socially. Man is simply a more comfortable beast. Advancement materially from the discovery and the application of the powers and rich resources that are in this planet has in some way only made it more dangerous and increased the threats of death and killing force.

## **III. (:9-13) DANGER -- BE ON ALERT BUT NOT ANXIOUS IN LIGHT OF THE COMING DANGER IN THE END TIMES**

Note chiasmic structure

### **A1. (:9a) Perseverance Requires Vigilance**

*“But **be on your guard**;”*

Βλέπετε δὲ ὑμεῖς ἑαυτοῦς·

**Zeisler:** What do you see when you look at yourself? Do you see that God by his grace has given himself to you in such a way that you will finish the course, that you have been given a love for him that will not ultimately fail **under pressure**?

## **B1. (:9b) Pressure in the Form of Betrayal and Persecution**

*“for they will deliver you to the courts,  
and you will be flogged in the synagogues,*

παραδώσουσιν ὑμᾶς εἰς συνέδρια  
καὶ εἰς συναγωγὰς δαρήσεσθε

### **C1 (:9c -10) Powerful Testimony in Fulfillment of the Great Commission**

*and you will stand before governors and kings for My sake,  
as a testimony to them.  
And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations.”*

#

# καὶ ἐπὶ ἡγεμόνων καὶ βασιλέων σταθήσεσθε ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ  
# εἰς μαρτύριον αὐτοῖς.  
καὶ εἰς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη πρῶτον δεῖ κηρυχθῆναι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον.

**Hiebert:** A twofold fulfillment of this prediction seems evident. The preaching of the gospel throughout the Roman world is affirmed by Paul (**Ro 1:8; Col 1:67, 23**). But **Matthew 24:14** clearly refers to a preaching which relates to the eschatological end.

**Rev. 14:6-8** angel proclaiming the gospel to all the earth in the Tribulation period

No longer is witness concentrated in the temple in Jerusalem – now the followers of Jesus are sent throughout the world to bear witness to the gospel

### **C2 (:11) Powerful Testimony Empowered by the Holy Spirit**

*“And when they arrest you and deliver you up,  
do not be anxious beforehand about what you are to say,  
but say whatever is given you in that hour;  
for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit.”*

καὶ ὅταν ἄγωσιν ὑμᾶς παραδιδόντες, μὴ προμεριμνᾶτε τί λαλήσητε, ἀλλ' ὃ ἐὰν δοθῇ ὑμῖν ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ὥρᾳ τοῦτο λαλεῖτε· οὐ γὰρ ἐστε ὑμεῖς οἱ λαλοῦντες ἀλλὰ τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον.

## **B2. (:12-13a) Pressure in the Form of Betrayal and Persecution**

*“And brother will deliver brother to death,  
and a father his child;  
and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death.  
And you will be hated by all on account of My name,”*

Καὶ παραδώσει ἀδελφὸς ἀδελφὸν εἰς θάνατον  
καὶ πατὴρ τέκνον,  
καὶ ἐπαναστήσονται τέκνα ἐπὶ γονεῖς καὶ θανατώσουσιν αὐτούς·  
καὶ ἔσεσθε μισούμενοι ὑπὸ πάντων διὰ τὸ ὄνομά μου.

## **A2. (:13b) Perseverance Wins Out**

*“but the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved.”*  
ὁ δὲ ὑπομείνας εἰς τέλος οὗτος σωθήσεται.

Cf. same language used in the **Book of Revelation**

**MacArthur:** By your endurance, Luke 21:19, you will gain your lives. You don't earn salvation by endurance. You prove you have the real thing by endurance. Superficial faith will collapse under persecution. "They went out from us because they were not of us," 1 John 2:19. This is basic gospel truth, authentic, God-given faith will endure because the Holy Spirit will provide strength, God will provide grace. Trouble, deception, persecution, suffering will burn up the chaff, it will reveal the shallow, weedy, rocky ground of false profession. And under these kinds of pressures, superficial interest in Christ will have no endurance. And so I say again, we don't earn our salvation by enduring, we don't keep our salvation by gritting our teeth and enduring. We demonstrate our salvation by enduring. We have a salvation that's a gift of grace. It's authenticated in the midst of suffering.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Longest teaching of Christ in the Gospel of Mark – focused on eschatology – but has profound practical implications for how we live our lives today

What are the **characteristics** of someone who is on alert, in a state of vigilance:

**Illustration:** coaching little league baseball – before the ball is pitched, the fielders need to get down in the **ready position** so that they are prepared if the ball is hit to them;

What does that ready position look like for believers?

- Awake . . . not asleep; can't be nodding off – look at what will happen shortly in Jesus' prayer time in the Garden of Gethsemane  
**14:37** "*Could you not keep watch for one hour?*"
- Focused . . . not distracted
- Discerning the signs of the times . . . not oblivious
- Girded for action . . . not paralyzed
- Anticipate . . . not get caught by surprise
- Accountable . . . not irresponsible

\* \* \* \* \*

## **DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) Where are we too impressed by externals and not as concerned as we should be with inward beauty and conformity to God's purposes?
- 2) Why did God destroy the Jewish temple in 70 A.D. and what was the connection to coming end time events?
- 3) What distracts me from living in a state of alertness in anticipation for end time events?

4) What types of deceptions are influencing people today?

\* \* \* \* \*

#### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Steve Zeisler:** After saying, "*See to it that no one misleads you,*" Jesus then goes on to list the kind of things that we might be vulnerable to as we seek to escape the fearsome future. We might be vulnerable to an impressive, striking, powerful, aggressive, self-confident Messianic leader, someone who promises to take care of us, who can command money and people and response, someone who claims to be Christ himself. Or we might be vulnerable to the more subtle approach of, say, scientists who promise that genetic manipulation or new energy discoveries, or whatever will guarantee a safe future for this nation. All of those are kinds of Messianic claims, and when we are under pressure, when we are afraid, we are most vulnerable to that kind of appeal.

The second category Jesus raises concerns the dramatic events in history, such as war, rumors about war, national intrigue, nation raised against nation, etc. As a student I remember seeing the effect the Vietnam War had on Christian student friends of mine, who increasingly set aside the things of Christ in order to be involved either for or against the war. The events of this day are so important that nothing else can supersede them; nothing is more important than throwing ourselves into these events, they would say.

The third category of misleading events that can take place concerns natural disasters of various kinds -- earthquakes, famines, etc. When the physical world itself shakes, when crops stop growing, it is very difficult to believe that the heavens have not also shaken. If the ground itself gives way, how do we know that the promises of God have not also given way? Does he still love me? When the ground under my feet shakes and the roof over my head collapses will he remember me? We are vulnerable to being misled in such times of stress. The more we long for someone other than Jesus to take care of us, the more vulnerable we are in these times. "See to it that you are not misled," Jesus says.

**Dr. Derek Thomas:** The future is not open. The future is not undetermined. The future is not a countless set of possibilities, none of which God has determined. History isn't circular, as the Greeks thought; nor is life to be lived in some kind of existential *nowas* though we should not give any attention to the past or any attention to the future. The whole of history is under the control and supervision of God. It's not a Marxist future that believes that the future is in the control of man to shape and form, but it's actually in the control and under the guidance and direction of Jesus Christ. That's why Jesus can make these prophecies, because future is certain.

#### **Alistair Begg: Introduction:**

Difficult verses; interpretation has been debated; exegetical minefield

How much here has to do specifically with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD and how much with end times; these 2 perspectives are telescoped

Explaining line of approach to the text before we handle the text itself;

Alignment is key to hitting golf ball; how do you stand up to the text of Scripture;

“The main things are the plain things and the plain things are the main things”

God's Word is infallible; but no individual is an infallible interpreter of God's Word

It will take the reality of end time events to enable us to fully understand all of the shadowy aspects of these prophecies; our creeds center on the basics, not the minutia -- focuses on the things that are undeniably clear

The God who initiated time and broke into time in the person of Jesus is the one who controls the end of time and how history will consummate

**Signs of the End:**

Cf. date-setters; fanciful notions – don't let these errors cause us to dim our anticipation of the return of Christ; *"This very Jesus will come back in the same way"* – not another Jesus – will return visibly and physically

Look at the impact on Jesus' teaching about His return on the epistles written by John and Peter with their practical lessons related to this great living hope

Pastoral concern – strengthening and exhorting the faith of His followers

Roman and Jewish historians document numerous charlatans in that time, but not limited to that time; cf. Joseph Smith – founder of Mormonism

No safety in numbers – *"many"* will be led astray

Don't get led astray or be unsettled or be thrown off by persecution because then you won't continue to the end; and if you don't endure to the end you won't be saved

God is the one who keeps us to the end (Jude)

TEXT: Mark 13:14-37

TITLE: BE ON ALERT – PART 2

**BIG IDEA:**

**ISRAEL (WHO WAS ASLEEP AT THE SWITCH FOR CHRIST'S FIRST COMING) HAD BETTER BE ON THE ALERT FOR CHRIST'S SECOND COMING**

**7 REASONS TO BE ON ALERT IN ANTICIPATION OF THE END TIMES**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Everybody understands the **principle of accountability**. We grow up in school facing many days of accountability. I might be caught unprepared by a surprise quiz . . . but when it comes to the Final Exam in a class, I can't imagine not being prepared. We enter the work force and understand that we carry out our responsibilities under the constant evaluation of our supervisor. There may be scheduled Performance Reviews but there certainly is ongoing accountability. We aren't left alone to simply do as we please.

Yet when it comes to living our life, the world would have us to believe that we are only accountable to ourselves. "Do what pleases you." Of course Christians know better. We understand that as James puts it, *the judge is standing at the door* and can return at any moment. A good way to evaluate my present behavior is to keep in mind how Jesus would evaluate what I am watching on TV; what I am scanning on the internet; what I am reading; what I am thinking right now; what I am saying to others; what I am doing right now.

But as we anticipate the return of Christ, it is not just from the perspective of future **accountability** but also from the **comfort** that we derive in our ultimate deliverance from this evil age. We face tribulation and suffering of many varieties; but as God gives us the grace to persevere we anticipate the joy and victory of our ultimate glorification.

As Jesus prepares to depart this world, He wants His closest disciples to live in anticipation of His return. So he takes the occasion of a simple question regarding the coming destruction of the temple to telescope together both the near term historical events that will happen surrounding the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD and the eschatological ultimate events of the end times.

**ISRAEL (WHO WAS ASLEEP AT THE SWITCH FOR CHRIST'S FIRST COMING) HAD BETTER BE ON THE ALERT FOR CHRIST'S SECOND COMING -- 7 REASONS TO BE ON ALERT IN ANTICIPATION OF THE END TIMES**

Last week:

**I. (:1-2) DESTRUCTION -- BE ON ALERT BECAUSE JUDGMENT IS COMING**

**II. (:3-8) DECEPTION AND DISCORD -- BE ON ALERT SO YOU AREN'T DECEIVED REGARDING THE TIMING AND THE SIGNS OF THE END TIMES**

**III. (:9-13) DANGER -- BE ON ALERT BUT NOT ANXIOUS IN LIGHT OF THE COMING DANGER IN THE END TIMES**

\* \* \* \* \*

#### **IV. (:14-20) D-DAY -- ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION FOLLOWED BY GREAT TRIBULATION -- BE ON ALERT BECAUSE THE GREAT TRIBULATION WILL REQUIRE URGENT FLIGHT**

##### **A. (:14-18) Trigger Event = Abomination of Desolation**

###### 1. (:14a) Ugly Event = Key Sign = Abomination of Desolation in the Temple

*“But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where it should not be (let the reader understand),”*

*“Όταν δὲ ἴδητε τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως ἐστηκότα ὅπου οὐ δεῖ, ὁ ἀναγινώσκων νοεῖτω,*

##### **OT Background: Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:9-11**

Requires a temple to exist in Jerusalem during the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel; rebuilding of the temple is a key last days event (**Matt 24:15** “*in the holy place*”)

**MacArthur:** This first referred to the desecration of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes, the king of Syria, in the second century B.C. when he sacrificed a pig on the temple altar. That event was similar in character to what Jesus refers to here, i.e., the Antichrist’s ultimate desecration when he sets up an image of himself in the temple during the tribulation . . .

This isn’t going to happen until this is **written down** in Scripture and **read**. Therefore this is for a future generation of **readers**, not for those who are listening on the Mount of Olives, but for future **readers** of the New Testament.

Some would like to refer this to Titus’ siege of Jerusalem in 70 AD

- Did not trigger an unparalleled time of devastation or the cosmic signs spoken of here

Look at parallels to 2 Thess. 2:3-4

**Edwards:** Both texts depict a blasphemous Antichrist who will do a scandalous deed that will trigger the return of the Lord. Both texts also warn disciples against mistaken eschatological assumptions, especially against being deceived by signs and wonders.

*Abomination:* object of disgust; something loathsome and detestable

###### 2. (:14b-16) Urgent Flight

###### a. (:14b) Summary – Head for the Hills

*“then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.”*

*τότε οἱ ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ φευγέτωσαν εἰς τὰ ὄρη,*

###### b. (:15-16) No Hesitation

###### 1) (:15) Those on Housetops

*“And let him who is on the housetop not go down, or enter in, to get anything out of his house;”*

*ὁ [δὲ] ἐπὶ τοῦ δώματος μὴ καταβάτω μηδὲ εἰσελθάτω ἅραί τι ἐκ τῆς οἰκίας αὐτοῦ,*

housetop reached by an outside staircase

2) (:16) Those in the Field

*“and let him who is in the field not turn back to get his cloak.”*

καὶ ὁ εἰς τὸν ἀγρὸν μὴ ἐπιστρεψάτω εἰς τὰ ὀπίσω ἄραι τὸ ἱμάτιον αὐτοῦ.

3. (:17-18) Unremitting Circumstances – Especially Difficult and Extreme

a. (:17) Pregnant and Nursing Women

*“But woe to those who are with child*

*and to those who nurse babes in those days!”*

οὐαὶ δὲ ταῖς ἐν γαστρὶ ἐχούσαις καὶ ταῖς θηλαζούσαις ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις.

b. (:18) Extreme Weather

*“But pray that it may not happen in the winter.”*

προσεύχεσθε δὲ ἵνα μὴ γένηται χειμῶνος·

in that season the ravines and gorges are swollen and impossible to cross

c. **Matt 24:20** adds – *not on a Sabbath* – would put you in a quandary – stay at home and worship or take flight?? You would be conflicted; can't allow for any hesitation in your decision making; must flee immediately

**B. (:19-20) Tribulation Period Intensity**

1. (:19) Unparalleled in Devastation

*“For those days will be a time of tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the creation which God created, until now, and never shall.”*

ἔσονται γὰρ αἱ ἡμέραι ἐκείναι θλίψεις οἷα οὐ γέγονεν τοιαύτη ἀπ' ἀρχῆς κτίσεως ἣν ἔκτισεν ὁ θεὸς ἕως τοῦ νῦν καὶ οὐ μὴ γένηται.

Think of any long, sustained period of intense suffering and death – this will surpass it [What about Noah's Flood?]

Have to work your way through the Book of Revelation to see the scope of devastation prophesied

**MacArthur:** The best way to understand the characteristics of that period is to follow three sequences in the book of Revelation. Stay with me, now. There are seven seals (**chap. 6**), not animals, seals of a scroll, scrolls being sealed; there are seven trumpets (**chap. 8-9**) and there are seven bowls. Those constitute judgments. And they unfold sequentially, almost telescopically. You have the seven seals and out of the seventh seal come the seven trumpets, out of the seventh trumpet come the seven bowls. The seven seals stretch over the whole period. The seven trumpets cover the middle point and beyond. And the seven bowls are all the rapid fire at the end. So these are the disastrous judgments that come, condensed in these images.

Just look briefly at **Rev. Chap. 16** for the 7 bowls – as things intensify at the end of this period

2. (:20) Unendurable in Duration

*“And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no life would have been saved;*



*but for the sake of the elect whom He chose, He shortened the days.”*

και ει μη εκολόβωσεν κύριος τὰς ἡμέρας, οὐκ ἂν ἐσώθη πᾶσα σὰρξ· ἀλλὰ διὰ τοὺς ἐκλεκτοὺς οὗς ἐξελέξατο ἐκολόβωσεν τὰς ἡμέρας.

The days which are prophesied as being shortened refer to the Great Tribulation period that begins right after the abomination of desolation at the mid point of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week. Therefore, believers are not raptured pre-trib, but at the end of the Great Tribulation.

**V. (:21-27) DECEPTION – IN THE FORM OF FALSE MESSIAHS AND FALSE PROPHETS VS. TRUE COSMIC SIGNS – CULMINATING IN THE GLORIOUS RETURN OF CHRIST --**  
**BE ON ALERT BECAUSE YOU MUST DISTINGUISH THE FALSE FROM THE TRUE**

**A. (:21-23) False Christs and False Prophets With Deceptive Signs and Wonders**

1. (:21) False Christs

*“And then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ'; or, 'Behold, He is there'; do not believe him;”*

Καὶ τότε ἐάν τις ὑμῖν εἴπῃ· ἴδε ὧδε ὁ χριστός, ἴδε ἐκεῖ, μὴ πιστεύετε·

**Edwards:** The language and motifs of vv. 21-22 recall vv. 5-8. But the purpose has now changed, for the earlier warnings referred to messianic pretenders at the fall of Jerusalem as a sign that the end was not yet, whereas here the appearance of false Christs and prophets is a sign that the end is at hand.

2. (:22) False Prophets with Deceptive Signs and Wonders

*“for false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order, if possible, to lead the elect astray.”*

ἐγερθήσονται γὰρ ψευδόχριστοι καὶ ψευδοπροφήται καὶ δώσουσιν σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα πρὸς τὸ ἀποπλανᾶν, εἰ δυνατόν, τοὺς ἐκλεκτούς.

**Hiebert:** *Signs* denotes things, whether frequent or rare, which have significance as pointing to something outside and beyond themselves; they are fingerposts to a higher reality. *Wonders* views these signs with reference to the astonishment that they produce; they are startling, amazement-evoking portents.

3. (:23) Be on Alert

*“But take heed; behold, I have told you everything in advance.”*

ὕμεις δὲ βλέπετε· προεῖρηκα ὑμῖν πάντα.

**Alistair Begg:** Repetition of concept: “I am telling you these things now so that afterwards you will get it;” look at this theme in gospel of John – 13:19; 14:25; 16:1; 16:33  
Some of those “Aha” moments of full understanding will only happen in eternity;

**B. (:24-25) True Cosmic Signs**

1. Timeframe

*“But in those days, after that tribulation,”*

Ἄλλ' ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις μετὰ τὴν θλίψιν ἐκείνην

## 2. Description

### a. Condition of Sun

*“the sun will be darkened,”*

ὁ ἥλιος σκοτισθήσεται,

### b. Condition of Moon

*“and the moon will not give its light,”*

καὶ ἡ σελήνη οὐ δώσει τὸ φέγγος αὐτῆς,

### c. Condition of Stars

*“and the stars will be falling from heaven,”*

καὶ οἱ ἀστέρες ἔσονται ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ πίπτοντες,

**Constable:** The **Book of Revelation** gives further information about the celestial phenomena that will happen then (**Rev. 6—18**; cf. **2 Pet. 3:10**). However, the Old Testament prophets also predicted these things (**Isa. 13:10; 24:23; 34:4; Ezek. 32:7-8; Joel 2:10, 30-31; 3:15; Amos 8:9**). If we take the wars, earthquakes, and famines of verses 7-8 literally, and I think we should, we should probably understand these phenomena literally too.

## 3. Reaction

*“and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken.”*

καὶ αἱ δυνάμεις αἱ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς σαλευθήσονται.

**Hiebert:** in contrast to the preceding three statements dealing with inanimate objects, the reference is to personal powers or hosts in the heavens. Then the most likely reference is to the mighty shaking effect that these events will have on the kingdom of Satan and his hosts.

## C. (:26-27) Glorious Return of the Son of Man to be United with His Elect

### 1. (:26) Manifest Return

*“And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.”*

καὶ τότε ὄψονται τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐρχόμενον ἐν νεφέλαις μετὰ δυνάμεως πολλῆς καὶ δόξης.

Taken from vision of **Dan. 7:13-14** *“And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming”*

Clouds symbolize presence and glory of God

### 2. (:27) Mission of Regathering of Elect

*“And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth, to the farthest end of heaven.”*

καὶ τότε ἀποστελεῖ τοὺς ἀγγέλους καὶ ἐπισυνάξει τοὺς ἐκλεκτοὺς [αὐτοῦ] ἐκ τῶν τεσσάρων ἀνέμων ἀπ’ ἄκρου γῆς ἕως ἄκρου οὐρανοῦ.

## **VI. (:28-31) DISCERNMENT OF THE TIMES -- BE ON THE ALERT BECAUSE YOU MUST RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS – PARABLE OF FIG TREE – CERTAINTY OF FULFILLMENT**

### **A. (:28-29) Signs that the Second Coming is Close**

#### 1. (:28) Parable of Fig Tree

*“Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender, and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near.”*

Ἀπὸ δὲ τῆς συκῆς μάθετε τὴν παραβολὴν· ὅταν ἤδη ὁ κλάδος αὐτῆς ἀπαλὸς γένηται καὶ ἐκφύη τὰ φύλλα, γινώσκετε ὅτι ἐγγὺς τὸ θέρος ἐστίν·

**Edwards:** This section returns to the subject of the fall of Jerusalem of vv. 5-13, as signified by “**these things**” of vv. 29-30, which refer back to the same terminology earlier. In v. 2 Jesus announced the destruction of “*all these great buildings.*” The disciples ask, “*When these things will happen?*” (v.4), and Jesus says of the woes at the fall of Jerusalem, “*These are the beginning of birth pains*” (v. 8). “*These things*” in the present section resumes the same terminology, alerting us that Mark is referring of the fall of Jerusalem and not to the end of the world in the previous section (vv. 14-27). “*These things*” in vv. 29-30 can scarcely refer to the eschatological events of vv. 24-27, which are not *signs* of the end, but rather *the end*.

#### 2. (:29) Application Lesson

*“Even so, you too, when you see **these things** happening, recognize that He is near, right at the door.”*

οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς, ὅταν ἴδητε ταῦτα γινόμενα, γινώσκετε ὅτι ἐγγὺς ἐστὶν ἐπὶ θύραις.

### **B. (:30-31) Certainty End Time Events Will Take Place**

#### 1. (:30) Promise Given

*“Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until **all these things** take place.”*

Ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι οὐ μὴ παρέλθῃ ἡ γενεὰ αὕτη μέχρις οὗ ταῦτα πάντα γένηται.

#### Various views:

**MacArthur:** It means that whatever generation sees these things happening will see Christ come. What else could it mean? “I say to you, this generation, the you who see these things happening, will not pass away until all these things take place.” A generation they say is 40 years and there’s a lot less than that when you see this stuff begin to happen in the time of Tribulation, you know it will be ending soon. The generation that’s alive then will see the end.

**Constable:** Jesus probably meant that the fulfillment of “*all these things*” (v. 4b) would begin in the generation of His present disciples, but complete fulfillment would not come until later. A second view is that Jesus was referring to the specific generation in the future who would observe the signs He just spoke about. A third view is that Jesus meant His contemporaries were those who would see all these things coming to pass. A fourth view is that by “generation,” Jesus meant the entire Jewish race. “All” those things began during *that* generation, if one interprets “all those things” to be the signs as a whole (vv. 9-25). The Greek word *genetai*, translated “take place” (NASB) or “have happened” (NIV), means “have come into existence”—

and permits this interpretation. One could therefore translate this Greek verb: "have begun to come into existence."

2. (:31) Promise Reiterated and Reinforced

*"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away."*

ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ παρελεύσονται, οἱ δὲ λόγοι μου οὐ μὴ παρελεύσονται.

**VII. (:32-37) DOORKEEPER PARABLE -- BE ON THE ALERT IN LIGHT OF THE UNCERTAINTY OF THE PRECISE TIMING OF YOUR DAY OF ACCOUNTABILITY**

**A. (:32) Uncertainty of Precise Timing**

*"But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone."*

Περὶ δὲ τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης ἢ τῆς ὥρας οὐδείς οἶδεν, οὐδὲ οἱ ἄγγελοι ἐν οὐρανῷ οὐδὲ ὁ υἱός, εἰ μὴ ὁ πατήρ.

**Derek Thomas:** Now if Jesus in His human nature does not know the date of the Second Coming, do you think it's remotely possible that you and I can know it? Do you think it's remotely possible that Harold Camping could have been right when he suggested that it was going to be 1994?

**B. (:33) Application: Be on Alert**

*"Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the appointed time is."*

**Βλέπετε, ἀγρυπνεῖτε.** οὐκ οἴδατε γὰρ πότε ὁ καιρὸς ἐστίν.

**C. (:34-36) Parable of Doorkeeper**

1. (:34) Instructions to Stay Alert

*"It is like a man, away on a journey, who upon leaving his house and putting his slaves in charge, assigning to each one his task, also commanded the doorkeeper to **stay on the alert.**"*

Ὡς ἄνθρωπος ἀπόδημος ἀφείλ τὴν οἰκίαν αὐτοῦ καὶ δούσ τοῖς δούλοις αὐτοῦ τὴν ἐξουσίαν ἐκάστω τὸ ἔργον αὐτοῦ καὶ τῷ θυρωρῷ ἐνετείλατο ἵνα γρηγορή.

**Edwards:** Living faithfully in the present, being attentive to the signs, and being ready at any hour for the return of the master is not one job among others; it is the doorkeeper's *only* job. . . The End is unknown and will come suddenly: live in constant readiness.

2. (:35-36) Exhortation to Be on the Alert

*"Therefore, **be on the alert**-- for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening, at midnight, at cockcrow, or in the morning-- lest he come suddenly and find you asleep."*

γρηγορεῖτε οὖν· οὐκ οἴδατε γὰρ πότε ὁ κύριος τῆς οἰκίας ἔρχεται, ἢ ὀψὲ ἢ μεσονύκτιον ἢ ἀλεκτοροφωνίας ἢ πρωτῆ, <sup>36</sup> μὴ ἐλθὼν ἐξαίφνης εὕρη ὑμᾶς καθεύδοντας.

**Constable:** Evening, midnight, rooster crowing, and dawn were the names that the Romans gave the four watches of the night. The porter had to remain watchful (Gr. *gregore*) at night, when the Light of the World was absent from His estate. The opposite of watchfulness is insensibility, lethargy, and inactivity—pictured here as *sleep* (cf. **Rom. 13:11**; **1 Thess. 5:1-11**).

**D. (:37) Application Repeated and Reinforced: Be on Alert**

“And what I say to you I say to all, *'Be on the alert!'*”

ὁ δὲ ὑμῖν λέγω πᾶσιν λέγω, γρηγορεῖτε.

\* \* \* \* \*

**DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) How could I live my life more on the alert than I am currently living?
- 2) What false Messiahs or false prophets have we seen come in our generation?
- 3) Why are miracles not an infallible proof of God’s working?
- 4) What is distracting me from keeping on task and faithfully living as an Ambassador for Christ and a steward of all that He has committed to me?

\* \* \* \* \*

**QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:**

**MacArthur:** That period of seven years is clearly defined in Scripture...clearly. There are 69 weeks of Daniel’s history from the Decree of Artaxerxes to rebuild Jerusalem, to the coming of Messiah. You can track those 69 times seven years and you’ll end up with Jesus came in to Jerusalem on this week. They’re actual seven-year periods. That seventieth week, therefore, must be also a seven-year period. In fact, half way through that period comes the Great Tribulation and the last three and a half is the worst of all. The Bible refers to it as the three-and-a-half period, Daniel called it time, times and half a time...time is one, times is two, and half is one half, so it’s three and a half, if you add it up. He said it’s a period of twelve hundred and ninety days, or twelve hundred and sixty days in Revelation. That again speaks to that three-and-a-half period. So it’s clearly the second half of that seven years when it is most severe. . .

**David Thompson – Ready or Not, Here I Come**

We live in scary times; threats of wars; cosmic phenomena; spirit of lawlessness plaguing the nation; racial tensions running high; terrorist threats;

**James 5:9** The Judge is standing right at the door; time that God’s people wake up; storm is brewing; judgment is on the horizon

Jesus taught us to be very concerned about the future; deny ungodliness and worldly desires; look for the hope of the Second Coming

Danger of becoming indifferent and lax – even for the people of God; many challenges to stay alert; to stay awake

Worldly attitude of just enjoy yourself; don’t worry about anything;

**I. Parable of Fig Tree (:28-31)** -- area filled with fig trees; this metaphor often used with reference to Israel; but not so here; refers to budding signs; when you see branches beginning to bud and put forth leaves you know that summertime is near; loses its leaves in Fall;

**II. Parable of Doorman (:32-37)**

**Alistair Begg – Be On Guard (:14-23)**

Can't see the forest for the trees; too involved with details and losing sight of larger issue; that is significant problem in studying this chapter; what if a disciple interjected in between vv. 22 and 23 – “What do you want us to do with all these things?” Answer: “*Be on Your Guard*”

Important to know in the midst of trials of this world that the Almighty reigns;

What Jesus is doing here is practical and pastoral in terms of encouragement;

Events described here are at least two dimensional: historical and eschatological; obvious and immediate application and end times application;

*Abomination of desolation*: Jews would have been familiar both with Daniel's prophecy and with incident from 168 AD under Antiochus Epiphanes – directing forces of destruction to wipe out the Jewish religion; offering pigs' flesh upon altar; setting up statue of Zeus to be worshipped; Jesus saying there is more of this to come; personifies this; the spirit of Anti-Christ – all that stands against God; historical impact of this is set within the larger eschatological framework;

Quotes **Sinclair Ferguson**: A profession of ignorance about the precise significance of some of these statements is nothing of which to be ashamed. Adding a dogmatic assurance to one's interpretation is no guarantee that the interpretation is correct.

The events as they unfolded were the judgment of God against unbelief; the closer we come to the Second Coming, the more prevalent will be these things; God's people described as the elect whom He chose; He protects them from being deceived by the imposters; Personal responsibility is to be on your guard;

Bible making an immense claim: History is truly His Story; cannot be understood apart from God's revelation of Himself; great battle between God and forces amassed against Him led by the evil one; In the world you will have tribulation but God reigns

TEXT: Mark 14:1-11

TITLE: *EXTRAVAGANT DEVOTION VS. OPPORTUNISTIC TREACHERY – BROKEN AND Poured OUT*

**BIG IDEA:**

**HOW EXTRAVAGANT IS YOUR DEVOTION TO JESUS CHRIST?**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Remember the most important commandment – **love the Lord your God with your whole being**; What does that look like in real life? In Mark 14, as Jesus is just a couple of days away from His death on the cross, we get a vivid picture of what it looks like to be broken and poured out in our love and devotion and worship of our Savior.

**Edwards:** This is a classic Markan sandwich, . . . As in each sandwich technique, **the middle story** provides the key to understanding the whole. The bracketing of the devotion of the woman, who remains an unnamed outsider [John identifies her as Mary the sister of Martha and Lazarus], by the betrayal plot of an intimate insider, creates an acid contrast between **faith** and **treachery**.

*EXTRAVAGANT DEVOTION VS. OPPORTUNISTIC TREACHERY*

Markan Sandwich -- like a:

- **Rose** between two thorns
- **Pearl** placed in between the 2 ugly shells
- **Blazing Light** offset by pitch blackness

**HOW EXTRAVAGANT IS YOUR DEVOTION TO JESUS CHRIST?**

**I. (:1-2) OPPORTUNISTIC TREACHERY PLOTTED AGAINST JESUS BY THE JEWISH RELIGIOUS LEADERS --**

**How did the Jewish religious leaders treat Jesus? A Problem to get rid of.**

(Mt 26:1-5; Lk 22:1-2)

**A. Stressing Over the Complications of Their Problem**

*“Now the Passover and Unleavened Bread was two days off;”*

*Ἦν δὲ τὸ πάσχα καὶ τὰ ἄζυμα μετὰ δύο ἡμέρας.*

Chronology confusion with John’s Gospel; I believe that the Synoptics have the chronology in order -- here represented as **Wed. evening** of Passion week – 2 days before His crucifixion on Friday

John 12 has the time reference as to when Jesus arrived in Bethany . . . then it skips forward to present the anointing by Mary before resuming the time chronology and speaking of the Triumphal Entry and the events which then followed – if you think the anointing took place on this previous Saturday then you have the problem of Judas going to the Sanhedrin before they are represented on Wed. as scheming and trying to come up with some plot to kill Jesus – doesn’t change the impact of our story

Choosing to wait until the festival was over and the pilgrims had left the city

**MacArthur:** That is not incidental information. It is the purpose of God that on that Passover in A.D. 30, on the fourteenth of the month Nisan, at the very hour when the Passover lambs were being slain on the Passover, three in the afternoon, Jesus would die. That's pretty specific. . . Now there were three main feasts the Jews celebrated; the Feast of Pentecost, which was kind of a firstfruits, Feast of Booths, they're remembering the wandering in the wilderness, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

**Barclay:** The Passover was one of the three compulsory feasts. The others were the Feast of Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles. To these feasts every male adult Jew who lived within 15 miles of Jerusalem was bound to come.

**Hiebert:** The view that they meant that they must act at once and not wait until the Passover is improbably because of the shortness of the time and the fact that most of the pilgrim crowd had already arrived (Jn 11:55).

**Hiebert:** The Passover was the solemn, annual, Jewish observance in commemoration of “*the passing over*” of the houses of the Israelites by the death angel in the destruction of the firstborn in Egypt (Ex 12:1-13:16). It was celebrated on the fourteenth day of Nisan (March-April), the first month of the Jewish religious year, and continued into the early hours of the fifteenth; the Passover lamb was slain on the afternoon of the fourteenth but was eaten after sundown, which according to Jewish reckoning was the fifteenth. The Passover observance was immediately followed by the feast of the unleavened bread, in commemoration of their exit from Egypt (Ex 23:15), from the fifteenth to the twenty-first. Popular usage merged the two feasts and regarded them as one, since all leaven was removed from Jewish homes before the slaying of the Passover lamb. In keeping with Deuteronomy 16:5-6, the Passover could be observed only in Jerusalem.

## **B. Scheming to Capture and Destroy Jesus**

*“and the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to seize Him by stealth, and kill Him;”*

*και ἐζήτουν οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς και οἱ γραμματεῖς πῶς αὐτὸν ἐν δόλῳ κρατήσαντες ἀποκτείνωσιν.*

Cf. **Ps 24:4; 32:2; 34:13**. They are the ones pictured in **Ps 41:5-8**

Members of the Sanhedrin – this was not some radical, outsider group – these were the hard core religious leaders of the establishment

Wanted to make their problem go away quietly, with the least amount of commotion;

Certainly did not want to upset the Roman authorities and have any focus put on the Jews;

These were the religious leaders plotting to kill the ultimate Passover Lamb at the very time they were celebrating the feast that pointed to his redemptive work – how ironic

## **C. Scared of His Support Among the Common People at the Crowded Festival**

*“for they were saying, ‘Not during the festival, lest there be a riot of the people.’”*

*ἔλεγον γάρ· μὴ ἐν τῇ ἑορτῇ, μήποτε ἔσται θόρυβος τοῦ λαοῦ.*

**Barclay:** It was just there that the problem of the Jewish authorities lay. During the Passover, feeling ran very high. The remembrance of the old deliverance from Egypt made the people long



for a new deliverance from Rome. At no time was nationalist feeling so intense. Jerusalem was not the Roman headquarters in Judaea. The governor had his residence and the soldiers were stationed in **Caesarea**. During the Passover time special detachments of troops were drafted into Jerusalem and quartered in the Tower of Antonia which overlooked the Temple. The Romans knew that at Passover anything might happen and they were taking no chances. The Jewish authorities knew that in an inflammable atmosphere like that, the arrest of Jesus might well provoke a riot.

**Hendriksen:** It is only on the background of God's decree that its meaning becomes clear. "Not at the Festival," said the plotters. "At the Festival," said the Almighty. That was the divine decree, for which see also Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; Eph. 1:11.

**MacArthur:** In spite of their fears, it was God's determination that not only would He die during the eight-day period which started with the Passover, followed by seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread when Jerusalem had been swelled by hundreds of thousands more people. Not only would He die during that festival, but at the most unlikely, and from their viewpoint, inappropriate and threatening moment and that was in the **afternoon of Friday** when the Passover lambs themselves were being killed and the mass of the population was in and around the very temple area, not far from the hill of crucifixion. But God's schedule was the only schedule that mattered and God's purpose would be unfolded. They would never have planned to have Jesus arrested, tried, crucified and dying on that very Friday. But that was what happened because that was God's plan.

Look at ways in which people try to **dismiss Jesus** from their lives today as if He is a problem they need to rid themselves of:

- **Ignore Him** – fill my life with work and pleasure so that I don't pay any attention to the claims of Jesus on my life
- **Minimize Him** by saying He is just a god among other gods; there are many ways to God – let's respect them all equally; or Jesus is merely a good example to be followed in a moral sense
- **Pervert his Gospel Message of Grace** – so as the Roman Catholics do, they substitute the commandments of men with all of their legalistic regulations (just like the Pharisees of Christ's day) so that the Person of Jesus and His saving work of redemption on the cross is obscured

## **II. (:3-9) EXTRAVAGANT DEVOTION POURED OUT ON JESUS --**

**How did Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, treat Jesus? (identified in John 12:3)  
A God to be Valued and Worshiped.**

### **A. (:3) The Extravagant Anointing by Mary**

#### 1. The Comfortable Setting

*"And while He was in Bethany at the home of Simon the leper,  
and reclining at the table,"*

*Καὶ ὄντος αὐτοῦ ἐν Βηθανίᾳ ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ Σίμωνος τοῦ λεπροῦ, κατακειμένου αὐτοῦ*

*Simon* = common name; must have been a leper healed by Jesus; now responding in thanksgiving and hosting this significant fellowship dinner with some of Jesus' closest friends – the disciples were there along with Mary, Martha and Lazarus

**Relaxed setting** – before all of the tumultuous events would unfold leading to the cross; next mean Jesus would partake of would be the Passover dinner on Thursday ...  
Sharing conversation and fellowship; leisurely dinner

## 2. The Costly Perfume

*“there came a woman with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume of pure nard;”*  
ἦλθεν γυνή ἔχουσα ἀλάβαστρον μύρου νάρδου πιστικῆς πολυτελοῦς,

**Important Interruption** – unusual for a woman to step into such a scene and become the center of attention; very aggressive on her part

How many of you have spent a year’s salary on expensive perfume for your wife?  
She would think you were nuts

**Sproul:** Her alabaster flask, a translucent white bottle, was itself of some value. The very precious perfume it contained, oil of spikenard, was worth more than three hundred denarii. As we have seen, a denarius was typically one day’s wage for a laborer in Israel. The people worked six days a week. So, the contents of this flask cost a whole year’s wages.

**Edwards:** The nard was very probably a family heirloom, in which case it possessed a sentimental value in addition to its monetary value.

## 3. The Consecrated Devotion

*“and she broke the vial and poured it over His head.”*  
συντρίψασα τὴν ἀλάβαστρον κατέχεεν αὐτοῦ τῆς κεφαλῆς.

Broken and Poured Out – title for today’s message – representing her heart of devotion poured out without anything held back

Poured over his feet as well; over his whole body – no discrepancy there

Whole house would have been filled with the fragrance; probably those present would have still had some of the aroma on them during the next couple of significant days there in Jerusalem; they didn’t take showers every day like we do

## **B. (:4-5) The Indignant Response From Some of the Disciples (Led by Judas)**

### 1a. Their Tone

*“But some were indignantly remarking to one another,”*  
ἦσαν δέ τινες ἀγανακτοῦντες πρὸς ἑαυτούς.

must have been an uncomfortable situation for Mary, but she didn’t care

**Hiebert:** Matthew said they were “*the disciples*,” while **John 12:4,5** identified **Judas** as the originator of the criticism.

**MacArthur:** Judas had no real interest in the poor, by the way. **John 12:6** says this, “*Now he said this not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief and as he had the money box, he used to steal what was in it.*” Huh, how long had he been doing that? Well, all along...all along he was embezzling the money out of the little bit that this group had, money that was provided for them by many of the women in the group. He was a thief, he was a devil, Jesus said. And he wanted the money in the box because he stole it.

**Edwards:** Their condemnation obviously demeans the woman and her gift. In asserting that there could be a better use for the money, however, they demean Jesus as well, whom they regard as unworthy of such extravagance.

### 2b. Their Evaluation

“*Why has this perfume been wasted?*”  
εἰς τί ἡ ἀπόλεια αὐτῆ τοῦ μύρου γέγονεν;

Now they challenge her directly – as if she is accountable to them for this act of supreme love and devotion

**Brian Bell:** Mary’s act of worship brought joy to the heart of Jesus & malice to the heart of Judas.

### 2b. Their Evaluation

“*For this perfume might have been sold for over three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor.*”  
ἡδύνατο γὰρ τοῦτο τὸ μύρον πραθῆναι ἐπάνω δηναρίων τριακοσίων  
καὶ δοθῆναι τοῖς πτωχοῖς·

### 1a. Their Tone

“*And they were scolding her.*”  
καὶ ἐνεβριμῶντο αὐτῇ.

**Sproul:** The term *sharply* is a vast understatement in the English. In a bullfight, when the matador taunts the bull, the bull paws the ground and his nostrils flare in anger. That is the image used here. These people were so angry with Mary for wasting the ointment that their nostrils were flaring in their criticism.

## **C. (:6-9) The Exemplary Commendation by Jesus**

### 1. (:6) The Exclamation of the Commendation

“*But Jesus said,*”  
Ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν·

#### a. Command to Stop the Criticism

“*Let her alone;*”  
ἄφετε αὐτήν·

**Edwards:** The disciples judge by appearance; Jesus judges by motive.

#### b. Challenge to Consider Their Motives

“*why do you bother her?*”  
τί αὐτῇ κόπους παρέχετε;

#### c. Commendation of Her Deed

“*She has done a good deed to Me.*”  
καλὸν ἔργον ἡργάσατο ἐν ἐμοί.

**Hendriksen:** He calls what she did “*a beautiful thing,*” And such it was indeed: unique in its thoughtfulness, regal in its lavishness, and marvelous in its timeliness.

**Barclay:** In Greek there are two words for good. There is *agathos* which describes a thing which is morally good; and there is *kalos* which describes a thing which is not only good but lovely. A thing might be *agathos*, and yet be hard, stern, austere, unattractive. But a thing which is *kalos* is winsome and lovely, with a certain bloom of charm upon it.

## 2. (:7-8) The Explanation for the Commendation – Two Reasons

### a. (:7) Understand the Limited Window of Opportunity

*“For the poor you always have with you, and whenever you wish, you can do them good; but you do not always have Me.”*

πάντοτε γὰρ τοὺς πτωχοὺς ἔχετε μεθ’ ἑαυτῶν καὶ ὅταν θέλητε δύνασθε αὐτοῖς εὖ ποιῆσαι, ἐμὲ δὲ οὐ πάντοτε ἔχετε.

Not expressing indifference to the plight and suffering of the poor

### b. (:8) Understand the Significance of the Anointing

*“She has done what she could; she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial.”*

ὃ ἔσχεν ἐποίησεν· προέλαβεν μυρίσαι τὸ σῶμά μου εἰς τὸν ἐνταφιασμόν.

Did Mary herself understand the significance? Seemed to have more discernment than the disciples who were criticizing her action; [interesting how that has proven to be the case even of many wives of Christian leaders – they excel in discernment]

Mary took seriously the prophecies of Jesus about His impending death in Jerusalem.

*“she has done what she could”* – Jesus never asks for anything more – how do we evaluate our devotion to Christ against this standard?

- How about the praise we offer from our lips? How could we be more extravagant in our praise and worship
- How about the money we donate to His cause? How could we be more extravagant in our giving
- How about the stewardship of our spiritual gift? How could we be more extravagant in our service for Christ – our evangelism of the lost; our building up of the saints

## 3. (:9) The Extension of the Commendation Throughout the World

*“And truly I say to you, ‘wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, that also which this woman has done shall be spoken of in memory of her.’”*

ἀμὴν δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν, ὅπου ἂν κηρυχθῇ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον εἰς ὅλον τὸν κόσμον, καὶ ὃ ἐποίησεν αὕτη λαληθήσεται εἰς μνημόσυνον αὐτῆς.

**What a legacy** – today as we preach this passage we are involved in the fulfillment of this prophecy by Jesus

Deeds of kings and important rulers and all of the rich and famous are long gone and forgotten; but the simple act of extravagant love and devotion of Mary lives on in testimony to the worthiness of Jesus Christ

What will be our legacy? What will we be remembered for?

To complete the contrast, we cycle back around to the scheming of wicked men in their attempts to seize Jesus and put him to death

### **III. (:10-11) OPPORTUNISTIC TREACHERY PLOTTED AGAINST JESUS BY THE TRAITOROUS DISCIPLE JUDAS ISCARIOT --**

**How did Judas Iscariot treat Jesus? An Opportunity to Exploit.**

#### **A. (:10) Malicious Initiative**

*“And Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went off to the chief priests, in order to betray Him to them.”*

*Καὶ Ἰούδας Ἰσκαριῶθ ὁ εἷς τῶν δώδεκα ἀπῆλθεν πρὸς τοὺς ἀρχιερεῖς ἵνα αὐτὸν παραδοῖ αὐτοῖς.*

**Mark 9:31** Jesus had predicted this; **10:33**

Motives: covetousness, jealousy, ambition

Probably understood that Jesus had been speaking especially to him in shutting up his criticism of Mary's deed

**MacArthur:** Iscariot means he's from the village of Kerioth, twenty-three miles south of Jerusalem. He is the only non-Galilean among the Apostles. He joined the group for selfish, proud, materialistic reasons, for goods and glory. And when that Kingdom dream, that dream of goods and glory began to collapse, the uncured malignant cancer in his wretched soul metastasized until it corrupted his brain totally. He wanted out but not without compensation for three wasted years. He wanted a Kingdom, not a cross. . .

By the way, Judas didn't operate alone. **Luke 22:3** says, *“Then Satan entered Judas.”* Not just demon possessed, Satan possessed. “Satan was moving on him.” John 13 verse 27 says, “Satan went inside.” Satan operated through Judas, the unregenerate, unbelieving, greedy man. Satan fully possesses Judas.

**Parunak: Psalm 41**[especially **vs. 9**] provides some background: The Psalm sets us up to consider the two different attitudes toward the Lord, one of love and compassion in his suffering, the other of malice. The implied challenge to us is to see which side each of us is on.

#### **B. (:11a) Promise of Blood Money**

*“And they were glad when they heard this, and promised to give him money.”*

*οἱ δὲ ἀκούσαντες ἐχάρησαν καὶ ἐπηγγείλαντο αὐτῷ ἀργύριον δοῦναι.*

Money paid to a hired killer

30 pieces of silver – the amount given to redeem a slave – not very impressive

#### **C. (:11b) Intensified Scheming**

*“And he began seeking how to betray Him at an opportune time.”*

*καὶ ἐζήτει πῶς αὐτὸν εὐκαίρως παραδοῖ.*

**Edwards:** Judas is thus not a victim of circumstances or a pawn dominated by greater forces. He is a sovereign moral agent who freely chooses evil in “*handing Jesus over*”.

## CONCLUSION:

How do you treat Jesus? Are you a Friend or Foe?  
What is the greatest gift you have given to Jesus?  
Have you ever criticized someone for their fanaticism in following Christ when maybe Christ would have praised them for their risk-taking faith?

\* \* \* \* \*

## DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) When have we been inconvenienced in following Jesus and expressing our devotion to Him?
- 2) How could we be more extravagant in the expression of our devotion to Jesus?
- 3) How have we responded to the inevitable opposition that we face for extravagant devotion?
- 4) When have we seen Christians wrongly attacked or criticized for their extravagant devotion?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Edwards:** the two essential truths of Jesus’ passion: the freely chosen evil of humanity, and the overarching providence of God. Divine grace uses even human evil for its saving purposes.

### **Alistair Begg: Whole-Hearted Devotion**

Light of our passage set against the darkness of the bracketing verses; dramatic contrast to hypocrisy and animosity represented in lives of religious leaders and Judas Iscariot; sets the timeframe; Sanhedrin seeking to do what they had wanted to do for some time; crafty in their approach; don’t want to cause a commotion; kill him quietly; won’t be able to do this; Psalm 2 – kings and rulers take counsel against the Lord;

Simon a common name; identified as the Leper to distinguish him from others;

### **Highlight 3 phrases:**

1. (:3) *a woman came* – The Action She Took

Container – alabaster flask – family heirloom; used in her dowry at time of her wedding or on occasion of her death to be anointed for burial

Contents – precious ointment, perfume

Cost – very expensive

Not something the average lady would have had access to

The cost gave rise to the disapproval from the majority of people present on this occasion

So outlandishly expensive; a year's wages  
Aroma would have stuck to all in the house for a couple of days  
Pouring out her future on the head of Jesus; something that represented security to her: At least I know I have that ...  
Her social respectability given up as well as she is criticized by all  
Didn't keep any for herself; broke the flask – complete abandonment; flask had served its purpose  
These kinds of flasks usually left in the tombs with the body after being broken and the contents used  
She anointed both feet and head; his whole body  
**Ps. 23** – anoint my head with oil . . .

## 2. (:4-5) *they scolded her* – The Reaction

She breaks the bounds of propriety; “I can't believe it; did you see that? Unbelievable waste; such extravagance”  
They grumbled among themselves and growled at her and scolded her; why didn't they all cheer?  
Lady expressing devotion to Jesus in dramatic way  
Misuse of resources; response regarding the poor is a thin disguise for their cold hearts and tight fists; Judas only concerned about himself  
Jealousy is a dreadful thing in the service of God  
Calling this woman a fanatic – but here a fanatic is someone who loves Jesus more than they do  
Calling for moderation instead of being sold out for Christ  
If she had held a meeting to ask for permission, this act would never have taken place  
The economics of the kingdom of heaven – makes sense to give all that you have like the widow's mite because Jesus has offered Himself as a sacrifice on our behalf

## 3. (:8) *she has done what she could* -- Jesus' Explanation and Commendation

Jesus became poor so that we might become rich; He is the poor Himself;  
There will never cease to be poor in the land; reminds us of our opportunity and obligation to care for the poor; but in this instance, this opportunity is unique; you take advantage of it or it is gone; this woman has done something beautiful and significant  
Did she know that she was anointing His body in preparation for burial? Probably had at least a sneaking suspicion; had perception and discernment

**Challenge:** Am I on the side of the scolders or on the side of Mary; is there anything in my life that testifies to an extravagant, self-forgetfulness for the cause of Christ; we are still studying her example; pathway to lasting honor is to honor Christ

**Alan Carr:**

### **I. The Demonstration Of Extravagant Love**

#### A. The Setting For The Demonstration

It is a scene of love. Jesus is surrounded, for the most part, by people who genuinely love Him, and by people who truly care for Him.

#### B. The Sacrifice Of The Demonstration

#### C. The Statement In The Demonstration

### **II. The Discouragement Of Extravagant Love**

- A. An Attack
- B. An Accounting
- C. An Accusation

### III. The Defense Of Extravagant Love

#### Mark Dever: Who is Really Jesus' Friend?

Immigration reform – big agent of cultural change of ethnic makeup of United States; numbers of immigrants have increased dramatically; shift to people coming from Asia and Central and South America; corresponding change in religion; now a more fluid religious situation; Fastest growing religious groups: Buddhists, Jehovah's Witnesses, New Age, Unitarianism, etc. Americans tend to assume the good will of God towards them – more like a puppy dog relationship – warm and fuzzy relationship; Christianity neither presents multiple gods nor a single god who remains aloof and shuns personal relationships; but a God who desires a personal relationship of friendship and love

In our story in Mark, look at who were really Jesus' friends; understand how Jesus has loved us and how we are called to love Jesus

#### 1. Were Jesus' real friends the religious leaders?

Students of scripture; certainly we would expect them to embrace the coming Messiah; instead they hated Jesus; their antagonism towards Jesus must have been evident because Judas approached them in this regard; naïve to think that all religious leaders are nice or are friends of Jesus; are we more discerning today than we were a year ago;

#### 2. Was Judas, his close disciple and treasurer a friend of Jesus?

Nothing about Judas being recruited; he went to them to betray Jesus; just appeared to be his friend for a time; association with believers does not make you a disciple of Jesus; keeping up the appearance; God is sovereign even over the most evil actions; Why did Judas choose to do this? [destined] – but what were his personal reasons?  
- 30 pieces of silver; 4 months wages  
Would know how to find Jesus at night away from the crowds;  
What are you preferring to have over Jesus? Money, prestige, popularity ...  
Spurgeon: "A smile from the world has been a bribe sufficient to seduce many"

#### 3. Were Jesus' other disciples really His friends?

Not just that these guys were careful with money; but they still didn't understand who Jesus was; care for Jesus is more important than care for the poor; separating himself from all of humanity; more than a man; worthy of all worship and all honor; followed lead of Judas in criticizing Mary

#### 4. Were the people Jesus' friends?

The people may riot – Why? Jesus was popular; they wanted to hear him; they wanted to see him prosper; 12:12; Judas was their ticket to do their dirty work away from the watching eyes of the crowd; mere sentimental attraction is not friendship; Jesus looking for lasting disciples; not Facebook friends; people who will put their lives on the line to serve Him



## 5. Was the onetime outcast Simon the Leper really Jesus' friend?

Maybe he had been healed by Jesus; he was certainly healed somehow; Jesus was his guest of honor; had been a social outcast; Christianity has always been for the outcasts; James 2 – don't show prejudice

## 6. Unnamed Woman presented as model of discipleship –

8 aspects that mark her out as a true disciple of Jesus

**a. Her actions** – poured incredible perfume over Jesus – John tells us this was Mary; had seen Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead – we don't have to know that this is Mary for story to have intended impact; rare and expensive; might find this in a royal court; simple attempt to honor and worship Jesus; the women seem to best understand who Jesus is

**b. Her devotion** – complete; Whatever I can do for Christ attitude; she did what she could; similar to widow's mite; are you grabbing the most valuable thing you have, breaking the neck of it and pouring it all out in devotion for Christ; does it ever inconvenience you to be a Christian?

**c. Her suffering** – faces opposition for her devotion to Christ; she was rebuked harshly; courageously doing the right thing; what does she get for her good deed? Don't expect to win applause for following Christ from others; don't take it personally; don't think it is loving to never tell them the gospel just because they respond in anger

**d. Acknowledging Who Jesus is** – Son of God

**e. Acknowledged What Jesus did** – preparing him for his burial; about to die as a criminal; would not receive normal preparations for burial; pouring out his life for sinners; what did he come to do; what was his purpose; ransom for sinners; must understand the significance of the cross

**f. Evangelism – pointing others to Christ (:9)**

**g. Exoneration** – (:6)

**h. Surprising often who becomes a disciple**

Entire devotion is the mark of the true Christian

TEXT: Mark 14:12-26

TITLE: THE SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST AND THE CENTRALITY OF THE CROSS

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST AND THE CENTRALITY OF THE CROSS ARE ANTICIPATED IN THE CELEBRATION OF PASSOVER BUT REALIZED IN THE INSTITUTION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER –  
TRANSITION HERE FROM THE OLD COVENANT TO THE NEW COVENANT**

**INTRODUCTION:**

In this key passage as we transition from the celebration of the Passover Feast to the institution of the Lord's Supper, we are moving from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant. This is a watershed moment in human history. We are looking at the events on the Thursday evening before the Friday crucifixion of Jesus Christ – the **central event** to which all of the types and prophecies of the Old Testament pointed. Christianity is all about the **Person of Jesus Christ**. And Christianity is all about the **Cross of Christ**.

*“We preach **Christ crucified**”* proclaims the Apostle Paul to the believers at Corinth – *“to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”* (1 Cor. 1:23-24)

A lot of people claim to believe in the inerrancy of the Scriptures and own Jesus Christ as their Savior. But they still have a huge problem trusting the Lord because they fail to appreciate His **sufficiency**. So they read their Bibles to look for words of wisdom and yet still find themselves caught in the bondage of temptation and sin. To understand their behavior they turn to secular psychologists and counselors in hopes of closing that gap between their Expectations and their Experience. They fail to appreciate the sufficiency of Jesus Christ because they fail to grasp the **significance of the Cross**. What actually did Jesus accomplish on the Cross? What did He mean when He cried out *“It is finished!”*

Our passage this morning walks us through three very critical events in the final hours of Passion Week:

- 1) Preparation for Eating the Passover
- 2) Prediction of Betrayal at the Eating of the Passover
- 3) Institution of the Lord's Supper – providing a Pattern for our celebration of it

**THE SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST AND THE CENTRALITY OF THE CROSS ARE ANTICIPATED IN THE CELEBRATION OF PASSOVER BUT REALIZED IN THE INSTITUTION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER –  
TRANSITION HERE FROM THE OLD COVENANT TO THE NEW COVENANT**

**I. (:12-16) PREPARATION FOR EATING THE PASSOVER –  
THE LORD CAN SHEPHERD US BECAUSE HE KNOWS (CONTROLS) ALL OF  
LIFE'S DETAILS**

**A. (:12) Expectation of Plans** for the Preparation for Eating the Passover -- **Inquiry**

1. Timing of the Preparation

*“And on the first day of Unleavened Bread,*

*when the Passover lamb was being sacrificed,”*

*Καὶ τῇ πρώτῃ ἡμέρᾳ τῶν ἀζύμων, ὅτε τὸ πάσχα ἔθουον,*

**MacArthur:** This takes place, as you know, on Thursday night of Passion Week. It is in the Jewish calendar the fourteenth of Nisan, year 30 A.D. And on that Thursday night is the Passover celebration for all of the **Galilean Jews**. In the Galilee, they celebrated their Passover on Thursday because they mark the Passover day from **sunrise to sunrise**. The **Judean Jews** in the south celebrated their Passover on Friday because they marked the Passover day from **sunset to sunset**. This difference we know from the writings of the Jewish Mishnah which are the official documents concerning the conduct of the Jews, and also from the history of Josephus. That's important because that allowed our Lord to celebrate the Passover on Thursday night for a lot of critical reasons and **still be the Passover on Friday**, because they were two authorized and legitimate celebrations. . .

Now it is essential that our Lord be the Passover on Friday and die at three o'clock at exactly the time the Judeans were slaughtering the lambs for their Passover, for He is the Passover Lamb and God made the timing perfect because Jesus died exactly at that time on Friday. But it also is crucial that He celebrate the Passover and thus this tradition of one on Thursday and one on Friday fits perfectly in to the purpose and plan of God who is in control, after all, of all of history. The Lord needs to celebrate this final Passover because it is commanded to do that and that allows Him again, as always, to fulfill all righteousness. He also needs to celebrate it in order that He might define it as the end and that He might inaugurate the new memorial that we call Communion and make the transition. It is also critical that He have time, prolonged time, from the very beginning of evening till after midnight to instruct His disciples. And all of that instruction is contained in John chapter 13 through chapter 16. It is a crucial area of biblical instruction and it is capped off by the great High Priestly prayer of our Lord recorded in John 17.

God is completely in control of all of the timing and all of the events surrounding the death of His Son as the sacrifice for our sins; very precise  
Blood from the sacrificial lamb had been applied to the door posts back at the time of the Exodus so that God spared their first-born  
Foreshadowing of sacrifice of Jesus Christ – come to pay the penalty for our sins

## 2. Responsibility for the Preparation

*“His disciples said to Him, ‘Where do You want us to go and prepare for You to eat the Passover?’”*

*λέγουσιν αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ· ποῦ θέλεις ἀπελθόντες ἐτοιμάσωμεν ἵνα φάγῃς τὸ πάσχα;*

- Must first secure a **suitable location** – not like Jesus had multiple homes he possessed; how was He going to not get left out in the cold? Knew that Jesus would obey the Scriptures and fulfill all righteousness – he would not skip this important festival; had to find a place large enough – difficult in the crowded city
- Then the details of the **preparation of the meal** had to be taken care of

**Hiebert:** 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.

Disciples look to Jesus to provide the solution to this problem; expect that He has a plan

**Application:** Where do you want me to go in life and what do you want me to do? He is the Good Shepherd; we are the sheep; Lord is sufficient to Guide us; He has a plan

## **B. (:13-15) Explanation of the Plans -- Instruction**

### 1. (:13) Divine Appointment [Lawson came up with same outline point]

*“And He sent two of His disciples, and said to them, ‘Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him;’”*

*καὶ ἀποστέλλει δύο τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· ὑπάγετε εἰς τὴν πόλιν, καὶ ἀπαντήσῃ ὑμῖν ἄνθρωπος κεράμιον ὕδατος βαστάζων· ἀκολουθήσατε αὐτῷ*

Note similarity to the instructions he gave his disciples for preparation for Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem and the location and retrieval of the donkey  
Seems strange to us – show how much God is in control

Here Peter and John are sent (**Luke 22:8**) – interesting that on most missions, the Lord never sent just an isolated person; always teamwork as the principle; required faith and obedience on their part

Huge crowd in the city – seems like the disciples would have requested more details  
Passover must be celebrated inside the city walls

**Edwards:** The effect of both stories is to show Jesus’ knowledge and complete governance of events as his “hour” (**14:35**) of death approaches. Jesus is not a tragic hero caught in events beyond his control. There is no hint of desperation, fear, anger, or futility on his part. Jesus does not cower or retreat as plots are hatched against him. He displays, as he has throughout the Gospel, a sovereign freedom and authority to follow a course he has freely chosen in accordance with God’s plan. Judas and others may act against him, but they do not act *upon* him.

**Hiebert:** It was custom for the women to carry the water jars, while the men carried the water skins. [**Gen 24:11**, Eliezer at Haran, *"the time that women go out to draw water."* v.13, *"the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water."*]

**Thompson:** We might ask what the significance is of the man carrying water. Why not carrying groceries or doing something else? **Ray Stedman** said he thought Jesus has these disciples follow this man carrying water because he would lead them to the place that would feature the One who can give Living Water (**John 7:37-38**).

Sovereign knowledge – speaks to both Omniscience/Knowledge and Control/Sovereignty  
**Is. 46:9-10** -- defining characteristic of God: *“declaring the end from the beginning; and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying ‘My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all my good pleasure’”*

### 2. (:14) Divine Appropriation

*“and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, ‘The Teacher says,*

*"Where is My guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?"*

καὶ ὅπου ἐὰν εἰσέλθῃ εἶπατε τῷ οἰκοδεσπότη ὅτι ὁ διδάσκαλος λέγει·  
ποῦ ἐστὶν τὸ κατάλυμά μου ὅπου τὸ πάσχα μετὰ τῶν μαθητῶν μου φάγω;

This person was just a slave – not the owner of the house; but will lead the disciples to the owner;

Really God is the owner of the house; has given the stewardship of it over to this person for its appointed use in God's appointed time; owner could have put himself in jeopardy by so closely identifying with Jesus

"The Teacher" = all the identification needed to point to Christ; Jesus well known to this house owner – would consider it a privilege to make such a room available for his use

Meal eaten in **context of family** – think of the blessing of having your first born son present; Shows close bond of relationship

**Application:** How do we respond in our role as steward when Christ claims to have need of certain of our resources? Our house, car, health, finances, children ...

*Seek first the kingdom of God ...*

### 3. (:15) Divine Accommodations

*"And he himself will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; and prepare for us there."*

καὶ αὐτὸς ὑμῖν δείξει ἀνάγκαιον μέγα ἐστρωμένον ἑτοιμον· καὶ ἐκεῖ ἐτοιμάσατε ἡμῖν.

- In terms of suitably furnished room
- In terms of suitable preparations for the meal
- 

**Thompson:** Now a furnished upper room would be a room with some tables and pillows. They did not have chairs. So this room was nice. It was not some abandoned factory room. This was a nice place.

Place for Upper room discourse in gospel of John; same place where 120 gather together on Day of Pentecost

**Application:** Synergy of God sovereignly preparing the room and yet charging the disciples with human responsibility of preparing the Passover meal

### **C. (:16) Execution of the Plans -- Implementation**

*"And the disciples went out, and came to the city, and found it just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover."*

καὶ ἐξῆλθον οἱ μαθηταὶ καὶ ἦλθον εἰς τὴν πόλιν καὶ εὗρον καθὼς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς  
καὶ ἠτοίμασαν τὸ πάσχα.

- Go on the prescribed mission
- Arrive at the appointed destination

- Find everything to be exactly as Jesus had described
- Prepare the Passover meal

Why did Jesus direct his disciples in this roundabout way regarding preparations for the Passover celebration? Wanted to keep the location a secret from Judas – did not want anything to interfere with his institution of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper – which He would observe just with the believing eleven.

## **II. (:17-21) PREDICTION OF BETRAYAL AT THE EATING OF THE PASSOVER -- THE LORD CAN JUDGE US BECAUSE HE KNOWS THE DEPTH OF OUR SIN**

### **A. (:17-18) Shocking Announcement**

#### 1. (:17-18a) Intimate Setting

*“And when it was evening He came with the twelve. And as they were reclining at the table and eating,”*

*Καὶ ὀψίας γενομένης ἔρχεται μετὰ τῶν δώδεκα. καὶ ἀνακειμένων αὐτῶν καὶ ἐσθιόντων*

Thurs. evening sometime after sunset, after 6 PM

Walked the 2 miles from Bethany

Chaotic scene in the city with the mass of people there for the feast

Difficult to piece together the chronology of all the events that took place this evening –

- Jesus washing the feet of the disciples
- Lesson on humility and servanthood
- Upper room discourse
- Prayer of John 17

Multi-stage meal

Number of couches arranged in a horseshoe pattern with Jesus at the head of the U-shape; reclining on these couches with table in the middle

**Edwards:** The actual meal was divided into four parts, each concluding with the drinking of a cup of wine. A blessing was first pronounced by the family head over the gathering. Then, in response to a child’s question, “Why is this night different from other nights?” the father recounted the deliverance from Egypt according to **Deut 26:5-9**. Third, the father pronounced a benediction over the various foods that symbolized the bitter captivity in Egypt and both the hardships and blessings of the Exodus: unleavened bread, bitter herbs, greens, stewed fruit, and roast lamb. Family and guests were then invited to partake of the meal. Near midnight the feast concluded with the singing of **Psalms 116-18** and the drinking of the fourth cup of wine.

**Application:** only the blood of the Passover Lamb, Jesus Christ, can adequately cover your sins – otherwise you are under the soon-to-be-executed wrath of God

#### 2. (:18b) Unimaginable Treachery

*“Jesus said, ‘Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me— one who is eating with Me.’”*

*ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν· ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι εἷς ἐξ ὑμῶν παραδώσει με ὁ ἐσθίων μετ’ ἐμοῦ.*

Prophecy of **Ps. 41:9**

Extremely abrupt and dramatic interjection by Jesus  
First time Jesus uttered these words

*Betray*: to deliver over – as delivering a prisoner to prison; breaking the loyalty of an intimate relationship in treachery and deceit

Someone who is in my immediate close circle; rubbing shoulders with me in my 3 years of ministry on the earth – not an outsider; makes this betrayal even more unimaginable

Why does He tell them in advance? So they would understand that this betrayal did not catch Jesus by surprise

**Application:** Don't be surprised if as disciples you experience some level of betrayal as well in your Christian experience from close associates

## **B. (:19) Sober Self-Examination**

*“They began to be grieved and to say to Him one by one, ‘Surely not I?’”*

ἤρξαντο λυπεῖσθαι καὶ λέγειν αὐτῷ εἷς κατὰ εἷς· μήτι ἐγώ;

Deeply hurt that someone in their inner circle would be so disloyal

**Hiebert:** Mark's account does not identify the betrayer personally. According to Matthew, when Judas also asked, *“Is it I, Rabbi?”* Jesus replied, apparently in a low voice, that he was the one (**26:25**). John's account makes it clear that none of the other disciples besides John heard when Jesus made the identification . . . It is commonly accepted that Judas left before the institution of the Lord's Supper.

Opportunity for self-examination – humble response; understanding their own potential for weakness

**2 Cor. 13:5** examine yourself, whether you be in the faith – is your faith and profession genuine?

## **C. (:20-21) Sovereign Plan Coupled with Sinful Treachery**

### 1. (:20) Vague Identification of the Intimate Betrayer

*“And He said to them, ‘It is one of the twelve, one who dips with Me in the bowl.’”*

ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· εἷς τῶν δώδεκα, ὁ ἐμβαπτόμενος μετ' ἐμοῦ εἰς τὸ τρύβλιον.

No new information provided here -- a very generic answer

Only Judas would understand that this pointed specifically to him

Once again – principle that Jesus speaks something in the present that is only fully understood and appreciated after the fact

### 2. (:21) Divine Determination and Human Culpability

*“For the Son of Man is to go, just as it is written of Him;*

*but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed!*

*It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.”*

ὅτι ὁ μὲν υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὑπάγει καθὼς γέγραπται περὶ αὐτοῦ,  
οὐαὶ δὲ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ ἐκείνῳ δι' οὗ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου παραδίδεται.  
καλὸν αὐτῷ εἰ οὐκ ἐγεννήθη ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐκεῖνος.

God's Sovereignty Does Not Relieve Man of His Responsibility

**Acts 2:23 --**

**Acts 4:27-28 --**

**Gen. 50:20** – example of the brothers of Joseph who conspired to kill him

**Sproul:** It is not as though God in His sovereignty coerced Judas to carry out the evil act of betraying Jesus. Rather, the sovereign God worked His will in and through the choices of His creatures. Judas did exactly what Judas wanted to do, but God brought good out of evil, redemption out of treachery.

### **III. (:22-26) PATTERN FOR THE LORD'S SUPPER – THE LORD CAN SAVE US BECAUSE HE KNOWS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HIS DEATH ON THE CROSS**

**A. (:22-24) Presentation of the Elements = The Bread and The Wine**

1. (:22) The Bread

a. Blessing

*“And while they were eating, He took some bread,  
and after a blessing He broke it; and gave it to them,”*

Καὶ ἐσθιόντων αὐτῶν λαβὼν ἄρτον εὐλογήσας ἔκλασεν καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς

**MacArthur:** He took the bread, the *artos*, the flat bread, and He gave thanks, He blessed it. All the giving of thanks is why this is called the Eucharist, the Greek verb for thanks, giving thanks is *eucharisteo*. So the Roman Catholic Church calls it the **Eucharist** because of the blessing on the cup and the blessing on the bread. . .

The Roman Catholic Church has prostituted this into something bizarre, into what is called **transubstantiation** whereby some priestly blessing, what is bread coming out of the kitchen becomes the actual body of Jesus in the hands of the priest. There's nothing in Scripture about that. The Lutherans didn't like that, so they came up with **consubstantiation** which says well it isn't the physical body of Jesus, but it's the spiritual body of Jesus. You're not eating Him physically, you're eating Him spiritually, neither of which is true.

**Don Fortner:** The Lord's Supper is not a **sacrament**, a means by which we obtain grace. It is an **ordinance** by which we celebrate grace bestowed upon us through the precious blood of Christ.

b. Significance

*“and said, ‘Take it; this is My body.’”*

καὶ εἶπεν· λάβετε, τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά μου.

**1 Cor. 5:7** – “Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed”



Significance of Passover sacrifice: deliverance from sin's judgment, from divine wrath can be provided by the death of an innocent substitute.

2. (:23-24) Wine

a. (:23) Blessing

*“And when He had taken a cup, and given thanks, He gave it to them; and they all drank from it.”*

καὶ λαβὼν ποτήριον εὐχαριστήσας ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς, καὶ ἔπιον ἐξ αὐτοῦ πάντες.

**Parunak:** Under the OT, the worshipper could eat the flesh of the peace offerings, and the priests could eat the flesh of the sin offerings, but no one could drink any of the blood. Lev 17:10-16. The blood is the heart of the sacrifice, reserved for God alone. Thus even the sacrificial table, there was always a barrier between God and the worshipper. That barrier is now removed. They drink the blood as well as eat the body.

b. (:24) Significance

*“And He said to them, ‘This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.’”*

καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ αἷμά μου τῆς διαθήκης  
τὸ ἐκχυννόμενον ὑπὲρ πολλῶν.

**Parunak:** Jer 31:31-34; cf. Ezek 36:25-27. CAUSES obedience; transforms the worshipper through the indwelling of God's Spirit; can never be broken. Heb. 9:11-23 develops in the greatest detail the parallels and contrasts between the covenants of Sinai and Calvary. Both must be ratified with blood. By calling the cup "my blood, that of the new covenant," the Lord is identifying it as the ratifying blood of the new covenant.

**B. (:25) Proclamation of Eschatological Consummation**

*“Truly I say to you, I shall never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”*

ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι οὐκέτι οὐ μὴ πῖω ἐκ τοῦ γενήματος τῆς ἀμπέλου ἕως τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης ὅταν αὐτὸ πίνω καινὸν ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ.

**Parunak:** looks forward to the kingdom of God, which is depicted in the OT as a great banquet.

**Isa 25:6-8**

**Psa 22:28,29**

**Rev 19:9**, the marriage supper of the Lamb.

**(:26) Transition – Conclusion of the Meal and Initiation of Final Events**

*“And after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.”*

Καὶ ὑμνήσαντες ἐξῆλθον εἰς τὸ ὄρος τῶν ἐλαιῶν.

## CONCLUSION:

Book of Hebrews presents the most comprehensive comparison between the Old and New Covenants:

**Heb. 8:6** *“But now He has obtained amore excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises.”*

**Heb. 9:22** *“without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness”*

**Heb. 9:25-28**

**Heb. 10:4**

**Heb 10:12**

**Heb. 12:22-24**

\* \* \* \* \*

## DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What encourages you to trust the Lord for all of the details in your life?
- 2) How seriously do you take the responsibility for self-examination before partaking of the Lord’s Supper?
- 3) What are the benefits of the New Covenant?
- 4) How frequently would you like to see your church celebrate the Lord’s Supper and why?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Hiebert:** John’s account seems to present the position that Jesus did not eat the regular Passover but rather an anticipatory meal and actually died at the time that the Passover lamb was slain. There thus seems to be a contradiction between the Passover chronology of the synoptics and the fourth gospel.

**David Thompson:** JESUS CHRIST ORCHESTRATED HIS OWN FINAL MEAL THAT WOULD THEOLOGICALLY CHANGE THE PASSOVER MEAL INTO THE LORD’S SUPPER AND SHOW THE VALUE OF HIS SACRIFICIAL DEATH.

**Steven Lawson:** **The Bread and the Cup** [also listened to his previous 2 messages on our

passage]

We are cross-centered people; only 2 ordinances given to the church – baptism only takes place once in our life; Bible knows nothing of a Christian that only infrequently takes the Lord's Supper; significance heightened because it is the night before the Lord's death

Much blood shed over the interpretation of these verses down through church history; cf. burning at the stake of the English reformers by Bloody Mary over the doctrine of the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the consecrated elements of the Lord's Supper in the form of bread and wine; instead, only symbolically represented; otherwise you fail to believe in the sufficiency of the one and only sacrifice of Christ; Luther and Zwingli divided over this text; Luther held to a half-way position and would not totally forsake this Romish doctrine; Reformation remained somewhat fractured

### **1. The Bread (:22)**

Protracted, multi-course meal that took a good amount of time; instituting the Lord's Supper; thin, flat unleavened cakes (separation from sin and worldliness and Egypt); broke the bread into small pieces so he could distribute it (maybe on a plate);

“*This is my body*” – 4 historical positions:

- Transubstantiation – position of Roman Catholic Church – becomes the real body of the Lord Jesus Christ; Christ is continually being crucified and offered up
- Consubstantiation – Lutheran position; bread is not changed; but the real body and blood of Jesus added to it – “*con*” – *together with* – combined together
- Memorial / Remembrance – position of Zwingli, Baptists – Lawson's position
- Spiritual Presence – still a remembrance of death of Christ; but there is a unique spiritual presence of the Lord in the midst of the service; Presbyterians; these final two very close; God is uniquely present whenever God's people come together ...

Reasons:

- Jesus has used **figurative language** in many other contexts: “I am the door” .... Like a door ...
- Jesus standing there before them in His body – how could the bread also be his body? Could only represent His body and blood
- *Bread* is masculine; “*this*” is neuter – otherwise they both would be masculine
- OT law that it is sinful to eat flesh with blood in it
- A body cannot be in more places than one place at a time

Necessity of the Body:

- For death
- For obedience unto all righteousness
- For revealing God to us; a visual revelation of God to us

### **II. The Cup (:23)**

The fruit of the vine (wine) was in the cup; this was the third cup of wine that was given in the feast; one cup that was passed around;

The Explanation: this represents my blood (metaphorically, symbolically) – anticipates his death the next day; covenant = contractual arrangement, agreement – between God and man; covenant of salvation – terms by which God will save sinners; man cannot cut his own deal with God; must accept the terms of the covenant prescribed by God according to His infinite grace; new

covenant in contrast to old Mosaic covenant – showed sinful man his desperate need for salvation and pictures and types of what the necessary salvation would look like; this is the reality, the fulfillment; God out of his infinite grace and mercy provides a sin-bearing Savior who would be a sacrifice for sinners; benefit of this sacrifice received exclusively by a repentant faith

Absolute divine necessity and certainty of his death that will be accomplished on the next day so he uses the present tense

Intentional act of Jesus pouring out his blood on behalf of, in place of – vicarious, substitutionary – in our place upon the cross

One will die; many will receive the benefit

Jesus did not die for all; did not die for Judas

The atonement was a real, actual atonement; not a hypothetical or potential covenant

**Heb. 9:22** – without the shedding of blood

**1 Pet. 1:19** -- redeemed with precious blood

**Rev. 7:14** – washed their robes and been made white in the blood of the Lamb

TEXT: Mark 14:27-31

TITLE: YOU WILL ALL FALL AWAY – FAILURE DOES NOT HAVE TO BE FINAL

**BIG IDEA:**

**WE CANNOT GUARANTEE UNBROKEN LOYALTY TO OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

In the intensity of warfare there is nothing more disturbing and discouraging than to have a comrade in arms turn tail and become a deserter in the face of the imminent danger. Warfare forges a bond with deep roots where every soldier has the back of every other soldier. I was just watching a Mel Gibson film about the Vietnam War – *We Were Soldiers* – and thankful that I did not have to serve in that bloody conflict. Jesus and His disciples were united together in a far more dangerous and far more significant warfare – that between the kingdom of God and the domain of Satan. As the intensity ratchets up with Jesus just hours away from going to the cross, there never was a time when loyalty and courage would be more in demand. Sadly there never was a time when Jesus would end up being more alone on the battlefield.

John Mark knew what it was like to be labeled a “deserter” and a “failure” in Christian ministry. After he had left the Apostle Paul and Barnabas in the lurch and run back home from Pamphylia (**Acts 16:36-41**), he was later rejected by Paul for inclusion in the next round of missionary visits. Barnabas was more forgiving and encouraging ... so there was a split between Paul and Barnabas and two different teams were formed – Paul and Silas and Barnabas and Mark. Subsequently Mark proved his loyalty and devotion to Christ so that even Paul approved of him in the end.

Certainly Peter also knew what it was like to be labeled a “deserter” and a “failure” in Christian ministry as we are reminded in our present passage in Mark’s Gospel. Remember: Mark got a lot of his material from Peter who was the actual eyewitness to these events of Christ’s earthly ministry. It must have been crushing for Peter to go through the embarrassing episodes of denying Christ – as we will study in coming weeks.

But both Mark and Peter also knew what it was like to be forgiven and restored to positions of ministry and influence by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. They had not been permanently cast aside because of their failures. But their faith had actually been strengthened and they were able to minister even more effectively after they had come to grips with their weakness. They understood that reliance on Christ alone and boasting in him proved the sufficiency of His grace – that His *power is actually perfected in our weakness* (**2 Cor. 12:9**).

**WE CANNOT GUARANTEE UNBROKEN LOYALTY TO OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST**

People make all types of claims and promises they cannot keep – “*I will follow Christ anywhere*” Look at God’s covenant people in OT times pledging to keep all of God’s laws – how did that turn out?

## **Transition Verse (:26) Coming from the spiritual high of celebrating the Lord's Supper**

**Hiebert:** Mark and Matthew agree in placing the warning on the way to Gethsemane, but Luke and John record the warning as given in the upper room. . . It seems best to accept that two different warnings were given, one before and one after they left the upper room.

## **I. (:27) DESERTION/DENIAL WAS PREDICTED BY JESUS ACCORDING TO OT PROPHECY**

Certainly not what the apostles expected to hear from their Master in the last hours before his death

### **Background:**

**Perseverance** is the opposite of **Desertion** – **John 15** – Christ commanded His disciples to *Abide in Him* ... Significant that this prediction on the part of Jesus should follow that teaching;

We know that **Judas** did not Abide – he had gone out before the institution of the Lord's Supper to start things in motion for his betrayal later that night in the Garden of Gethsemane. But the desertion of Judas was on a different level than the desertion of Peter and the rest of the 11 apostles.

**MacArthur:** The shame of Judas was the shame of unbelief. The shame of the eleven was the shame of weakness. The shame of Judas was irretrievable, without remedy. The shame of the disciples was temporary and could be turned to faith.

### **A. Shocking Prediction**

*“And Jesus said to them, ‘You will all fall away,’”*

και λέγει αυτοις ο Ιησοῦς ὅτι πάντες σκανδαλισθήσεσθε,

all, without exception

What does it mean to *fall away*?

**William Barclay:** The Greek verb is *skandalizein*, from *skandalon* or *skandalethron* which meant the bait in a trap, the stick on to which the animal was lured and which snapped the trap when the animal stepped on it. So the word *skandalizein* came to mean to entrap, or to trip up by some trick or guile. Peter was too sure. He had forgotten the traps that life can lay for the best of men. He had forgotten that the best of men can step on a slippery place and fall. He had forgotten his own human weakness and the strength of the devil's temptations

- a. What Jesus does **not** mean – fall from grace or lose salvation

**John 10:27-30** *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one.”*

- b. What Jesus **does** mean here --

**Lawson:** Momentarily and temporarily fall from their commitment of loyalty and allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ;

## **B. Scriptural Fulfillment – Analogy of the Shepherd and the Sheep**

*“because it is written, I will strike down the shepherd,  
and the sheep shall be scattered.”*

ὅτι γέγραπται· πατάξω τὸν ποιμένα, καὶ τὰ πρόβατα διασκορπισθήσονται.

**Zech 13:7** – God’s Word is always literally fulfilled; you cannot thwart God’s agenda

Who is the “I” referenced here as the one doing the striking? Not the Jewish religious leaders or the Roman authorities ... but the person of God the Father Himself;

Just look at the 2 most famous OT prophecies regarding the death of the Suffering Servant, the Messiah:

**Ps. 22:1** *“My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?”*

**Ps. 22:13** *“My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaves to my jaws; and You lay me I the dust of death.”*

**Is. 53:4** *“Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.”*

**Is. 53:10** *“But the Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief”*

He is **the Good Shepherd** – distinction from under-shepherds; he doesn’t run like the hireling when the wolf comes; He loves the sheep to the extent of laying down his life for the sheep

What a sad state of affairs for the sheep to be scattered

**Jer. 23** rails against the false prophets and describes the chaos that ensues when the sheep are scattered and without a shepherd; but the same context promises the ultimate eschatological restoration when the Messiah, the Righteous Branch will return and fulfill his role of reigning as king and shepherding his sheep wisely

## **II. (:28) THE LOVE OF JESUS CAN RESCUE AND RESTORE DESERTERS**

### **A. Promise of Resurrection**

*“But after I have been raised,”*

ἀλλὰ μετὰ τὸ ἐγερθῆναί με

Jesus is going to the cross for their benefit:

- it is the love of God that has driven Him to humble Himself;
- divest Himself of the manifestation of His glory in heaven;
- take on the limitation of humanity and come to earth to live a righteous life
- and then submit to the death on the cross as our sacrifice for sins

But the Cross is not the end of the story -- Here Jesus very explicitly promises that God the Father will be satisfied with His sacrifice; His wrath will be propitiated; He will raise His Son from the dead so that Jesus can be the victorious Savior with all power and all authority on heaven and earth

So Desertion will not be the end of the story of the apostles; this same Jesus will meet them in Galilee just as He had promised

## **B. Promise of Restoration**

*“I will go before you to Galilee.”*

*προάξω ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν.*

I will meet with you at the place where I called you; **16:6-7** – angel reminded them of **vs. 28**; You failed me but I will not fail you; He remains faithful;

The sheep have been scattered; there will be a disconnect in the precious union between the disciples and their Master; certainly that disconnect will never be greater than when Jesus is hanging on the cross and being made sin for them; taking on himself the wrath of God that they deserve; in no position to lead them and nurture them and protect them as the Good Shepherd

But the Good Shepherd will fulfill all of His promises by virtue of His resurrection. He will rise victorious over death; over Satan; over sin; over any temptation that can afflict His sheep

He will finish His work of Training the Apostles and commissioning them for a worldwide ministry of evangelism and disciple making; he will depart and return to His Father in heaven, but will not leave them powerless; He will send the Holy Spirit to empower them and make them effective in ministry

He will rally these men of Galilee around His leadership so that they will appreciate His love and forgiveness and strengthening; they will not be cast aside as rejects and failures

**Application:** What an encouragement to us today – no matter how we have let Jesus down and not been faithful in our loyalty and service to Him; that doesn't have to be the end of our story; The love of Jesus can restore us to useful service and fulfilling ministry

## **III. (:29-30) DESERTION CANNOT BE PREVENTED BY GOOD INTENTIONS**

### **A. (:29) Inflated Opinion of One's Spiritual Ability**

*“But Peter said to Him, ‘Even though all may fall away, yet I will not.’”*

*ὁ δὲ Πέτρος ἔφη αὐτῷ· εἰ καὶ πάντες σκανδαλισθήσονται, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐγώ.*

Peter is always the first one to speak out; **cf. 8:32** – has a pattern of pushing back against predictions of Jesus; his boldness is both a virtue and his greatest vice; he can be stubborn and over confident; here he pushes back against the prophecy that Jesus has just proclaimed

- demonstrates pride and arrogance to contradict Jesus
- demonstrates a self-reliant, over confident belief in his own abilities
- demonstrates a blind spot with respect to coming to grips with his own weakness and sinfulness
- demonstrates an attitude of superiority as he compares himself favorably to the other apostles – what you are saying about upcoming failure may be true of them, but it is definitely not true of me



**Hendriksen:** Peter here commits the sin of treating the words of Jesus with disbelief. At the same time he assumes an attitude of superiority with respect to his fellow disciples. Finally, he clearly shows that he does not know himself. He has an inflated opinion of himself, is over-confident, conceited, as events are quickly going to prove.

**Ron Daniel:** Peter's strength was boldness. He was the kind of guy that ran headlong into everything without thinking of the danger. That was his strongest quality, and he knew it. But overconfidence leaves us underequipped.

## **B. (:30) Deflating Prophecy of Failure and Denial**

*“And Jesus said to him, ‘Truly I say to you, that you yourself this very night, before a cock crows twice, shall three times deny Me.’”*

καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· ἀμὴν λέγω σοι ὅτι σὺ σήμερον ταύτη τῇ νυκτὶ πρὶν ἢ δις ἀλέκτορα φωνῆσαι τρίς με ἀπαρνήσῃ.

The rooster would crow the second time by 3 AM in the morning, before dawn

Deny Jesus not just once ... that would be shameful enough; not just twice; but three times; leave it to Peter to be over the top in everything he did

**Hendriksen:** this very rooster-crowing is also a means of bringing Peter back to repentance, for Christ's reference to it becomes firmly embedded in his mind, so that at the appropriate moment this hidden memory will suddenly pull the rope that will ring the bell of Peter's conscience.

Insight from **Luke 22:31-32** -- Satan wants to sift all you disciples (plural); then Jesus gets singular – I want you to strengthen your brothers; Jesus had a plan for Peter; a plan to use him in ministry

How do we deny Jesus today?

- **Unbelievers** deny Jesus as the characteristic bent of their lives; they refuse to repent of their sins; to see themselves as God sees them; to embrace Jesus as their Lord and Savior; they live in a constant state of denial – they may say nice things about Jesus but they don't confess Him for who He truly is; they have no allegiance or loyalty; or they are like Judas who make a false profession but the wickedness of their heart is ultimately exposed; as 1 John 2:19 speaks of apostates who end up going out from the fellowship of believers to be exposed for the Deserters

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- they truly are

But what about for **Christians**?

- Being ashamed of Him or of identifying with Him in any context – that can happen in a wide variety of circumstances; we remain silent when we should speak up; we fail to confront sin when we should

## **IV. (:31) DESERTION CANNOT BE PREVENTED BY PRESUMPTUOUS SELF-CONFIDENCE**

### **A. Insistence of Peter**

*“But Peter kept saying insistently, ‘Even if I have to die with You,*

*I will not deny You!”*

ὁ δὲ ἐκπερισσῶς ἐλάλει· ἐὰν δέη με συναποθανεῖν σοι, οὐ μὴ σε ἀπαρνήσομαι.

## **B. Insistence of the Rest of the Apostles**

*“And they all were saying the same thing, too.”*

ὡσαύτως δὲ καὶ πάντες ἔλεγον.

**MacArthur:** His knowledge is perfect, and it's set against the background of their ignorance. His courage is magnificent and its set against the background of their cowardice. He stands apart from the ignorant cowards who were the best of men but no match for His character. He is majestic in contrast and His defective disciples cannot diminish the majesty and dignity that we see in His person. Hard to really fathom the disappointment that our Lord must have felt. They were ashamed of Him, ashamed to be identified with Him and yet in Hebrews it tells us that He is not ashamed to call them and us brothers.

## **CONCLUSION:**

**2 Tim. 2:13** *“If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.”*

We tend to think too highly of ourselves; *let him who thinks he stands, take heed, lest he fall; Pride goes before a fall* – if those closest to Christ are capable of desertion and denial and defection – then we must look carefully to ourselves

*The heart is deceitful* – tricks us; tells us lies about how strong we are in ourselves

Pathway of self-reliance always leads to spiritual failure

Understand our **weakness**

But also trust in the Lord's power to forgive and restore and to once against use us in spiritual ministry – He does not cast aside His children

\* \* \* \* \*

## **DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) Where has our pride or self-confidence gone before a fall?
- 2) What are some examples you can give of what it might mean to deny Jesus Christ and what that would look like?
- 3) How was Jesus able to regather His scattered sheep?
- 4) Are we humble and receptive when others point out areas of weakness in us?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

### David Thompson: vv. 26-31

We live in a world that loves **self-confident** people. They get jobs; they make out well in life; but it doesn't quite work that way in God's kingdom; Trust in yourself and not in the Lord and you are destined to fail; all men have a deceitful and sick heart (according to Jeremiah); we have a propensity to do what is evil

You hear claims: "I will follow Christ anywhere!" Presumption is dangerous for anyone following Christ; disciples had been with Christ for over 3 years; had experienced many things; thought that they were *men of steel* ... but they were *men of straw*.

Christ predicting failure for every one of them; but will not throw them aside; will regather them and use them; people are proud; we can fall away just like these disciples;

### 2 Verbal Messages:

#### 1) All disciples will fall away in conformity to biblical prophecy

Jesus had just prophesied the betrayal of Judas; now he gives a prophecy about all of them; you will all run away – not permanently but temporarily – because of prophecy of Zechariah; The process of the smiting of the shepherd has begun; the sheep are about to scatter; I am your guide, protector; one who provides for you; one who will regather you and establish glorious kingdom and reign over the earth – amazing context of this prophecy;

- God's Word is literally fulfilled
- Nobody can change or stop prophecy – not even the people of God who may want something different
- Even those closest to Jesus Christ are capable of defection – must see ourselves as the sinners we are; apart from God's grace we can accomplish nothing; put no confidence in the flesh; but in the Lord; ask God to deliver you not into temptation but to deliver you from evil

#### 2) After I have been raised from the dead, I will meet you in Galilee

Resurrection of Christ is proof that He is who He claimed to be = God – Messiah – King His entire program hinges on His resurrection; no false religious system can save you – the leaders of cults are all dead; You cannot stand on your own – you will fall flat on your face;

### 3 Verbal Responses:

1) Peter: I can see these other guys falling away; but not me; I have confidence in myself; I'm a man of my word; you can count on me; God's people defect all the time; Luke 22:31 adds something here – Jesus didn't shelve his disciples who had faced failure and come to terms with it; inflated opinion of himself; over-confident;

2) Jesus: You won't even make it to dawn tomorrow morning; you will curse me; Mark getting a lot of his information from Peter

3) (:31) don't put a lot of stock in emotional responses of people; like altar call mentality; a real relationship with God is cultivated when you are alone with God; they were sincere in their claims but could not follow through

## 6 Observations:

- Jesus knows the real you; knows you are not perfect; do you know it?
- Very few people know and admit the truth about themselves
- God knows the absolute truth about every one of us; He knows what we will do
- We need to always depend on the Lord; you trust in yourself and you will lose
- If God can forgive and use these guys, He can forgive and use you; meet Him again at Galilee
- The reason Jesus put up with all of this is to save people like us = sinners

### **Steven Lawson: I will never deny you**

*“Those who stand, take heed lest you fall.”* Even strongest believers have feet of clay; Weak in and of themselves; self-reliance, self-confidence, self-centeredness; we promise far more than what we deliver in the spiritual life; only by the grace of God can we be victorious

### **1. The Departure (:26)**

They went out from the upper room in Jerusalem; sing Ps. 115-118 after partaking of the Passover meal was the tradition; middle of night; Judas has already left; the route to the Garden of Gethsemane; some instruction takes place in classroom and some takes place along the pathway of life – more informally as life unfolds

### **2. Disclosure (:27-28)**

Shocking and huge disclosure; they had not anticipated hearing this from the Lord; *“you will all fall away”* – not from grace or salvation; **John 10:27** – *“they will never perish”*  
Reason you will fall away: My Father will strike me down unto death and you will scatter  
God the Father is the striker of the shepherd; primary initiator; **Is. 53:10** *“the Lord was pleased to crush Him”* – primary agent – cross was no accident  
God will have the last word in resurrection (**:28**)  
Reunion in Galilee; will receive grace and power to minister  
Purposes to use weak, failing disciples like these men for His glory – encouraging to all of us  
Restores them to leadership position in ministry

### **3. Denial (:29)**

Jesus has addressed all eleven of them; Peter is always the impetuous one who first speaks out; his self-reliance is part of his Achilles heel spiritually

### **4. Details (:30)**

Response of the Lord; doesn't back off; but intensifies his prediction by giving the details; Everything Peter does is overboard; even when he denies Christ ... it is 3 times! Very little moderation  
Deny is a synonym for falling away; to disown; to disassociate yourself; to refuse to acknowledge a relationship; to completely renounce;

### **5. Denunciation (:31)**

Look at how stubborn, self-deceived Peter responds; you would think he would back off; Peter going toe-to-toe with the Lord on this – again and again; Peter understood that the striking down of the shepherd was a reference to death

**Application:** We do not fully know ourselves! We all have our interest points where we are

experts --

**Jer. 17:9** – your heart is not telling you the truth;

### **Alistair Begg: The Danger of Self-Reliance**

Unprepared to hear and accept what Jesus now told them;

Tone is one of sadness not severity in voice of Jesus; these are His friends; His core group;

#### **1) Prediction (:27)**

The Father gave up the Son for us to provide for our salvation;

The Son also willingly gave Himself up for us; He is not just a pawn being coerced;

“Tis mystery all, the Immortal dies”

“Amazing love, how can it be, that Thou My God should die for me”

#### **2) Promise (:28)**

You will all fall; but He must rise;

Sheep will all be scattered, but He will proceed steadfastly, resolutely on course;

They don't yet understand these things;

Jesus is greatest Teacher and has them 24/7 for instruction and yet they don't get it;

Possible for us to hear the truth and not to heed the truth;

#### **3) Protest (:29-31)**

Quite a protest it was; Peter has a pattern of this type of thing; I am the exception to the rule; the danger of self-trust; you will say you never even knew Me;

You would expect Peter to be apologetic at this point; but he comes back against Jesus even stronger; his heart was in the wrong place; just did not understand himself; fails to face up to his own frailty

Luke context – addressed Peter by his old name, Simon = Shaky ... rather than Rock

Vs. 50 – they all left Him and fled despite all their protests

#### Lessons:

- **Prov. 16:18** -- Pride goes before destruction; he who trusts in Himself is a fool; goes against what culture teaches
- Our hearts are far more wicked than we ever know – not going to get this in public school; must say: I had better watch myself here – **Jer. 17:9**
- Learn to take Christ at His Word and submit our lives to His commands and trust Him
- Be alert to how we may influence others for good or bad
- A reminder here to be gracious in our dealings with each other – we are saved sinners but not angels; how do you respond when someone fails and collapses
- With God, failure is never final

### **Mark Dever: Jesus Predicted Betrayal**

Pride is so visible in others and invisible in ourselves;

Self-blinding price

#### 5 Observations:

**1) Peter's Boast (:29)**

**2) Jesus' Divinity**

**3) Jesus' Humiliation**

**4) Jesus' Love**

**5) Jesus' Victory**

TEXT: Mark 14:32-42

TITLE: GRAPPLING IN GETHSEMANE -- PREPARED HEARTS OR SLEEPING SOULS?

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE PASSOVER LAMB PREPARES FOR HIS MISSION OF REDEMPTION BY GRAPPLING IN PRAYER WITH HIS HEAVENLY FATHER AMIDST OVERWHELMING ANGUISH AND SLEEPING DISCIPLES**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Our passage for this morning gives us profound insight into the humanity of the God-Man, our Lord Jesus Christ. We see the depths of His emotions as He grapples with the imminent reality of the Cross; of the sinless, spotless Passover Lamb being made sin for us and bearing our sin on the cross to accomplish our redemption. Holiness that hates sin is now going to be made sin and suffer the punishment of God for undeserving sinners. The *hour* foreordained by the Father is now at hand. He is preparing Himself to fully drink the *cup* of His Father's wrath, to be baptized with the *baptism* of suffering and death on our behalf. His ministry on earth has concluded. He has reached the culmination of His ultimate purpose in leaving His Father's heavenly home and taking on humanity in the Incarnation and coming to earth on a mission – *to give His life as a ransom for many*.

In His darkest hour of preparation for what lies ahead, He turns to His Heavenly Father in heartfelt prayer in the isolation of the Garden of Gethsemane. He only asks that His band of disciples (minus the traitor Judas who has departed to betray Him) offer Him companionship and support in this time of preparation. He charges them to *watch and to wait* as He goes off to pray alone to His Heavenly Father. These disciples who have made such presumptuous claims of their unwavering loyalty and support; these disciples who have pledged to follow Him even to death, prove to be an utter disappointment as Jesus must grapple alone with His Father over embracing God's will for what lies ahead.

**Hendriksen:** It is with profound reverence that one approaches the Gethsemane narrative. Also with due appreciation of the unique character of the event here described. This uniqueness deserves emphasis, for again and again one will hear a person who has passed through a fiery trial refer to this experience as "my Gethsemane." Better surely is the following poem:

“Joy is a partnership,  
Grief weeps alone,  
Many guests had Cana,  
Gethsemane but One.”

■ F. L. Knowles, *Grief and Joy*

We may see applications to us in terms of need for fervent prayer and to spend time in preparation with our Heavenly Father ... but save those applications for another day; that would be trampling on holy ground in a passage where the focus must remain on the unique suffering and agony of our amazing Savior

**THE PASSOVER LAMB PREPARES FOR HIS MISSION OF REDEMPTION BY GRAPPLING IN PRAYER WITH HIS HEAVENLY FATHER AMIDST OVERWHELMING ANGUISH AND SLEEPING DISCIPLES**

**I. (:32-34) PREPARATION INVOLVES GRAPPLING WITH OVERWHELMING EMOTIONS – WE SEE JESUS ENLISTING THE SUPPORT OF HIS DISCIPLES AS ANGUISH THREATENS TO OVERWHELM HIM**

**A. (:32) Charging His Outer Circle of Disciples to Watch and Wait – Allow Him Time for Heart Preparation**

*“And they came to a place named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, ‘Sit here until I have prayed.’”*

Καὶ ἔρχονται εἰς χωρίον οὗ τὸ ὄνομα Γεθσημανὶ  
καὶ λέγει τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ· καθίσατε ὧδε ἕως προσεύξωμαι.

Historical present tense used 9 times in this paragraph – inserts the readers into the narrative

Maybe a little before midnight – He will be hanging on the cross in about 12 hours

**MacArthur:** The name means “oil press,” and referred to a garden filled with olive trees on a slope of the Mt. of Olives. Jesus frequented this spot with the disciples when He wanted to get away from the crowds to pray (cf. Jn 18:1, 2).

Olive orchard enclosed with a stone wall and having an oil press – quiet and secluded spot; perfect for communion with God in prayer

Don’t just rush life and charge forward without adequate times of private preparation alone with the Heavenly Father

Disciples were very action-oriented; needed to be slowed down by Jesus

Jesus understood His dependence upon His Heavenly Father;  
Prayer was the most important and valuable activity He could pursue at such a time as this

**B. (:33-34) Charging His Inner Circle of Disciples to Watch and Wait -- Support Him in Time of Anguish**

1. (:33) Intimate Insight Into Anguish Experienced by Jesus

*“And He took with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be very distressed and troubled.”*

καὶ παραλαμβάνει τὸν Πέτρον καὶ [τὸν] Ἰάκωβον καὶ [τὸν] Ἰωάννην μετ’ αὐτοῦ  
καὶ ἤρξατο ἐκθαμβεῖσθαι καὶ ἀδημονεῖν

an intimacy in his close association with these three strong leaders among the disciples

Inner 3 saw things that the others had not been privileged to see; Mark 5:37 – raising of Jairus’ daughter; Mark 9 – Transfiguration account

**Robert Rayburn:** Interestingly all three of them had boasted of their mettle, of their fortitude in crisis, and of their willingness to share in the Lord’s suffering

**Hiebert:** *Greatly amazed* (cf. **9:15**) suggests a feeling of terrified surprise. Jesus had long foreseen His coming death, but now that the shadow of the actual cross fell upon Him, He felt the shuddering horror of the terrible ordeal. It came with stunning effect. *Sore troubled* denotes His resultant feeling of extreme anxiety, leaving Him confused and restless.

**MacArthur:** The word *troubled* means to be anguished, to a level of really incomprehensibility. So He is amazed and astonished at the level of anguish that He's feeling over this. This is something new to Him.

**Parunak:** "*Sore amazed*": verb only 3x in Bible, all in Mark

a> 9:15, the people, probably caused by seeing the lingering glory of the transfiguration on the Lord's face.

b> 16:5,6, the women at the empty grave.

c> qambew by itself is "terrified, amazed" also only Mark; ek- addition of ek- might have sense of "scared out of one's wits"???

1> 1:27, the people at his authority over unclean spirits

2> 10:24, impossibility of entering kingdom of heaven through riches

3> 10:32, their attitude at his steadfast approach to Jerusalem

## 2. (:34) Intensive Plea for Support in Time of Overwhelming Anguish

*“And He said to them, ‘My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch.’”*

καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· περίλυπός ἐστιν ἡ ψυχὴ μου ἕως θανάτου·  
μείνατε ὧδε καὶ γρηγορεῖτε.

**MacArthur:** *perilupos*, literally surrounded by sorrow, surrounded by grief. *Peri*, perimeter, periphery, He's engulfed in this grief to the point of death

**Parunak:** "*Exceeding sorrowful*" seems to reflect the deep discomfort we feel when faced with a choice that pits right against comfort. Compare its other non-passion uses:

a> Mark 6:26, Herod's sorrow at having to choose between losing face and killing John the Baptist. A deciding moment: he had been fascinated with John's teaching, v.20. Will he follow the truth, or abandon it? This is his moment of decision, and he fails.

b> Luke 18:23, 24, the rich young ruler's sorrow at having to choose between his riches and following the Lord. Again, a moment of critical decision; again, a failure.

c> So we may see in our Lord's use of the word a summary of the quandry he is in, torn to the point of pain between the agony of Calvary and the misery of leaving his people in their sin.

## **II. (:35-36) PREPARATION INVOLVES GRAPPLING WITH GOD'S WILL – WE SEE JESUS EXPRESSING HIS HEART TO HIS HEAVENLY FATHER**

### **A. (:35-36a) His Desire to Be Spared Such Suffering, Sin Bearing and Death**

#### 1. Wrestling Alone

*“And He went a little beyond them,”*

καὶ προελθὼν μικρὸν

**Thompson:** There are some things in life you will have to face alone. No one else can walk with



you through some of your valleys. In those moments we need to pray because we need God. He is the One who can take us safely through dark valleys.

## 2. Wrestling in Prayer

“*and fell to the ground, and began to pray*”

ἔπιπτεν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ προσήυχετο

Imperfect tense – repeated prayer

## 3. Wrestling in Dread

“*that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by.*”

ἵνα εἰ δυνατόν ἐστιν παρέλθῃ ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ ἡ ὥρα,

*the hour* – the predestined moment, season, or time for something to happen that God had foreordained

**Sproul:** Council of Chalcedon declared that Christ was *vere homo, vere Deus*, that is, “truly man and truly God,” having two natures in one person. . . his two natures are perfectly united in such a way that they are not confused or mixed, divided, or separated . . . each nature retaining its own attributes. . . the communication of knowledge from the divine nature to the human nature is one thing. It is something else to say God communicates a divine attribute. If Jesus knew tomorrow because the attribute of omniscience was communicated to His human nature, we would expect His human nature to know everything. But He Himself indicated there were limits to what He knew. So if we understand that the divine nature communicates information without communicating omniscience, we will not stumble over these passages. . .

They basically admitted that they did not understand how the divine nature and the human nature are co-joined, but they knew how they are not. There is no confusion, mixture, division, or separation. They knew that no matter how the divine nature and the human nature are united, each nature retains its own attributes in that perfect union. The divine nature does not stop being divine. The human nature does not stop being human.

## 4. Wrestling in the Realm of Love and Power and Sovereignty

“*And He was saying, ‘Abba! Father! All things are possible for Thee;’*”

καὶ ἔλεγεν· ἀββα ὁ πατήρ, πάντα δυνατά σοι.

term of intimacy and trust

**Hiebert:** bilingual form of address – *Abba* is Aramaic, while *Father* is the Greek equivalent. *Abba* was an everyday Jewish family term, used in the intimacy of the family. Among the Jews, it was seldom used with reference to God and then always with modifiers which denoted the distance between man and God.

## 5. Wrestling with Personal Desires

“*remove this cup from Me;*”

παρένευχε τὸ ποτήριον τοῦτο ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ.

**What is this cup?**

**Ps. 75:8**; cup of judgment; **Is. 51:17**; **Jer. 25:15-29**; **Rev. 14:10** cup of holy vengeance

**Edwards:** Jesus' prayer is not the result of calm absorption into an all-encompassing divine presence, but an intense struggle with the frightful reality of God's will and what it means fully to submit to it. . . The plea of Jesus suggests that he is genuinely tempted to forsake the role of the suffering servant. Nevertheless, his will to obey the Father is stronger than his desire to serve himself. Throughout his ministry he has disavowed every exit ramp from the pathway of suffering servanthood, including the temptation to remain with Moses and Elijah in glory (9:2-8). His will conforms to his knowledge of God's will, to undergo the "baptism" (10:38), to accept the "cup" (v. 36), to meet the "hour" (v. 35).

**Thompson:** This must have been a very difficult thing for God the Father to hear coming from His perfect Son. Don't you dare arrogantly think you can earn your salvation by your works or religion. Take a good look at this. Why did Jesus Christ have to die? Why did He have to suffer when He did not want to suffer? Why didn't God the Father get Him out of this? Because this is the only way God can save sinners. There is only one way for you to be saved and it is through the finished work of Jesus Christ.

[**Parunak:** takes a different approach – prayer for deliverance from the cup in terms of resurrection; not that the cup would never have to be drunk; The question in his mind, as he feels our sin pressing down on him, is whether God in his justice could ever let him rise up again from the dead.]

## **B. (:36b) His Acceptance of the Father's Will**

*"yet not what I will, but what Thou wilt."*

*ἀλλ' οὐ τί ἐγὼ θέλω ἀλλὰ τί σὺ.*

**Stedman:** Hebrews tells us, "For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning," (Hebrews 4:15 RSV). If he had never felt that divergence of will, that unwillingness to do what he ought to do because the Father wanted it, he could never have sympathized with me, because in my weakness I am frequently unwilling -- and so are you. Jesus did not want to do what the Father wanted him to do. He had to compel himself to go on. And he did it by casting himself anew upon his Father's enabling strength. That is what his prayers in Gethsemane mean. There is much of mystery here. I can go no further into it than that. But yet I see tremendous help here for those of us who struggle with the will of God.

## **III. (:37-41) UNPREPARED HEARTS SUCCUMB TO THE WEAKNESS OF THE FLESH – WE SEE JESUS ENDURING THE DISAPPOINTMENT OF WEAKNESS AND LACK OF SUPPORT FROM HIS DISCIPLES**

### **Repeating Series of 3 Parallel Disappointments**

#### **A. (:37-38) Disappointment #1**

##### 1. (:37) Disappointing Failure

*"And He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter,*

*‘Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour?’*

καὶ ἔρχεται καὶ εὕρισκει αὐτοὺς καθεύδοντας, καὶ λέγει τῷ Πέτρῳ·  
Σίμων, καθεύδεις; οὐκ ἴσχυσας μίαν ὥραν γρηγορῆσαι;

Singles out Peter to address him ... even though all three were in the same condition; just as Peter typically speaks up as the spokesperson for the disciples;  
Again, Mark received most of his material for writing the gospel directly from Peter

**Thompson:** He calls Peter “*Simon*,” which is a subtle rebuke because that was his pre-conversion name (1:16, 29, 36; 3:16). He was not acting like a solid rock (*Petros*), but like his old self.

## 2. (:38) Renewed Charge

*“Keep watching and praying, that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”*

γρηγορεῖτε καὶ προσεύχεσθε, ἵνα μὴ ἔλθητε εἰς πειρασμόν·  
τὸ μὲν πνεῦμα πρόθυμον ἢ δὲ σὰρξ ἀσθενής.

**Edwards:** a necessary reminder that trusting and obeying God are not default responses of disciples of Jesus, but ongoing struggles against temptation and weakness.

**Hendriksen:** “*spirit*” indicates man’s invisible entity viewed in its relation to God . . . “*Flesh*” is the human nature considered from the aspect of its frailty and needs, both physical and psychical. This use of “*flesh*” must not be confused with . . . the human nature regarded as the seat of sinful desire.

Doesn’t say the flesh is inherently sinful here ... but prone to temptation to sin

**Illustration:** Finding strength through prayer:

**Stedman:** at the great cathedral at Worms, Germany, along the Rhine River. . . all the powers of Europe were assembled in that place: the Roman emperor, in all his robes and dignity; the papal delegates, the bishops and archbishops of all the Catholic realms of Europe. It was the most imposing array of power possible on the face of the earth of that day, all gathered in that great cathedral against one lone man, Dr. Martin Luther, on trial for his life. The account tells us that the night before, someone overheard Martin Luther praying and wrote down the words of his prayer. It was a long, rambling, disconnected prayer of a soul in deep distress and fear, crying out to God for help, casting himself anew, again and again, upon the strength of God and reminding himself that there is no source of hope or help except God. All his reliance upon the princes of the German state disappeared. Martin Luther cast himself in naked helplessness upon the grace and sustaining strength of God. I am sure that is why, at that very moment, he received strength to stand and say, "Unless someone can show me from these books and from Holy Scripture the error in my thinking, I will not and cannot recant. Here I stand. I can do no other, God help me!" And though he was condemned as an heretic, it was then that the torts of the Reformation began to spread throughout all of Europe. Nothing could stop the shining forth of the light.

## **B. (:39-40) Disappointment #2**

1. (:39) Renewed Prayer

*“And again He went away and prayed, saying the same words.”*

Καὶ πάλιν ἀπελθὼν προσηύξατο τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον εἰπὼν.

2. (:40) Repeated Failure

*“And again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him.”*

καὶ πάλιν ἐλθὼν εὗρεν αὐτοὺς καθεύδοντας, ἦσαν γὰρ αὐτῶν οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ καταβαρυνόμενοι, καὶ οὐκ ᾔδεισαν τί ἀποκριθῶσιν αὐτῷ.

**Hiebert:** they could find no appropriate excuse for their failure to watch and pray as commanded.

Luke explains that their eyes were heavy because of sorrow (**Luke 22:45**).

**C. (:41) Disappointment #3**

1. Persistent Failure to Watch and Wait

*“And He came the third time, and said to them, ‘Are you still sleeping and taking your rest?’”*

Καὶ ἔρχεται τὸ τρίτον καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· καθεύδετε τὸ λοιπὸν καὶ ἀναπαύεσθε.

2. Time for Preparation has Expired

*“It is enough; the hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners.”*

ἀπέχει· ἦλθεν ἡ ὥρα, ἰδοὺ παραδίδεται ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου εἰς τὰς χεῖρας τῶν ἀμαρτωλῶν.

**(:42) TRANSITION: PREPARATION IN PRAYER CULMINATED IN A HOLY RESOLVE ON THE PART OF JESUS TO FULLY EMBRACE THE FATHER’S PLAN OF REDEMPTION**

*“Arise, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!”*

ἐγείρεσθε ἄγωμεν· ἰδοὺ ὁ παραδιδούς με ἤγγικεν.

Not fleeing, but advancing towards those coming to meet him; towards Judas who was coming to betray him

**Thompson:** Judas was obviously sneaking up on Christ with the thugs who would arrest Jesus. Jesus is God; you cannot sneak up on Him.

Life moves on – your level of preparation or lack thereof notwithstanding;  
Importance of availing yourself of opportunities for prayer and vigilance since you do not know what lies around the corner

Jesus entered into this next confrontation fully prepared, having spent time alone with His Heavenly Father; the disciples were not adequately prepared and would fail miserably as Jesus had predicted they would

**MacArthur:** What did He mean by that? They were up on the slope of the Mount of Olives, there was an entourage coming, made up of the leaders, the Sanhedrin of Israel, and assorted other dignitaries and followers of Judaistic religion, there were the temple police who were the ones who policed the crowds in the temple on behalf of the temple operation and then there was a cohort of Romans which could be as many as 600 soldiers. There could have been a thousand people coming up the hill with torches. He sees it. “Look, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners.” How do they know where we are? How would they know where we are in this private garden in the middle of the night, how would they know? The betrayer.

### CONCLUSION:

**Edwards:** Nothing in all the Bible compares to Jesus’ agony and anguish in Gethsemane – neither the laments of the Psalms, nor the broken heart of Abraham as he prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac (Gen 22:5), nor David’s grief at the death of his son Absalom (2 Sam 18:33). Luke 22:44 even speaks of Jesus’ “sweat falling to the ground like drops of blood” (so, too, Justin Martyr, *Dial. Trypho* 103.8). The suffering of Gethsemane left an indelible imprint on the early church (Heb 5:7). . .

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### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Where have we found the spirit to be willing but the flesh to be weak?
- 2) Do you tend to bottle up your emotions or are you transparent before your Heavenly Father in prayer?
- 3) Why did Jesus want His disciples to wait for Him and to watch while He went off alone to pray in the Garden?
- 4) When have we grappled deeply with the Father in prayer?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Edwards:** Jesus is aware of facing something more than simply his own death. In **10:45** he spoke of the purpose of the Son of Man “*to give his life as a ransom for many.*” . . . Jesus necessarily experiences an abandonment and darkness of cosmic proportions. The worst prospect of becoming the sin-bearer for humanity is that it spells complete alienation from God, an alienation that will shortly echo above the desolate landscape of Calvary.

### **MacArthur: The Agony of the Cup**

We struggle because the power of evil is so strong in us, right? We struggle with sin because the power of evil is so strong in our nature. We battle against ever-present, unholy resident impulses internal and strong, and we struggle to do what is right, to grasp righteousness. Our battle is to fight against the compelling impulses of evil that are in us. Not so, Jesus. He struggled in the exactly opposite way because of His holy nature, because of His sinless purity, because of His total righteousness, because of His perfect love and obedience to God. He struggled because the power of holiness was the only thing in Him, that righteousness was the sole single motive and impulse of His holy soul is clearly indicated in Scripture. And what God was asking Him to do was to embrace sin as a sin bearer...not as a sinner, but as a sin bearer, to take the wrath of God for sin, to receive divine punishment. We struggle because the power of sin is so strong in us. He struggled because the power of holiness was the only power that existed in Him. How can He possibly become a sin bearer and receive the wrath of God.

**Scott Grant:** No doubt he knows the story of David, who fled from Absalom, his traitorous but beloved son. David left Jerusalem, crossed the Kidron Valley and ascended the Mount of Olives (2 Samuel 15-18). David climbed the mountain with his men, passed the summit and fled to safety. As Jesus leaves Jerusalem with his men, crosses the Kidron and ascends the Mount of Olives, he is walking in the footsteps of David.

### **Brian Borgman: Jesus in Gethsemane**

We have come to the holy place; witnessing a private scene; almost seems like we are intruding but God has recorded this so we may be witnesses to Gethsemane;

**Setting:** Supper concluded; new order that Jesus had brought in had been inaugurated with symbols of the New Covenant; predictions had been made about denials of the disciples despite protestations of Peter and others; emotional weight of that evening;

**Prayer** had been very much a part of the Lord's life; engaged his heart and mind; about to pray in a way He had never prayed before

Took with Him the inner three; they had made such incredible boasts throughout His ministry; are you willing to undergo the baptism and drink the cup? James and John had asked to sit in places of power and privilege

Their boasts were empty; could not even stay awake for an hour;

His aloneness is accentuated by their drowsiness;

He became alarmingly distressed – in troubled distress; striking picture; Jesus visibly alarmed and distressed; the strong Shepherd of the sheep filled with anxious distress that He had never known;

My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; deep sorrow; could almost kill Him; Ps. 42 and 45 – refrain – why are you so distressed by soul?

This is the critical moment of our Lord's life; He had faced Satan for 40 days in the wilderness; this is different; nobody has ever faced this type of grief;

**Luther:** no man ever feared death so much as this man;

It was cold that night; Roman soldiers had to build a fire to stay warm; late spring in Palestine Why such Agony? Look to what He prayed; **Heb. 5:7**; cried out loudly with great tears; disciples could hear Him

His particular hour of sacrificial death; **John 12:27**

Shrinking back from becoming the atoning sacrifice for your sin and mine; not just the physical suffering

His whole life had been geared for this hour; the totality of what He had come to accomplish;

Carry away this cup from me; cup of God's wrath; now being lifted up to the holy lips of the Son

of God;

Cup unmixed with mercy; pure wrath;

Sole object of God's eternal wrath against sinners; prays for another way;

Prospect of alienation from God is what creates the horror and dread;

Posture of faith and submission;

Was it right for Jesus to pray in this way? He could have prayed no other way than the way He did; In His holiness, He would have shrunk back from becoming sin

If He truly feared God, he must tremble in this way;

Had to recoil at the thought of drinking the cup of God's wrath; but that is not where He stayed;

he arose with a holy resolve to face the hour and drink the cup; determined to perform the will of God

TEXT: Mark 14:43-52

TITLE: ABANDONMENT LEAVES JESUS ALL ALONE

**BIG IDEA:**

**ONLY THE SUFFERING SERVANT EMBRACES GOD'S PLAN FOR REDEMPTION**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Our story this morning is a very simple narrative. It is a story that we can easily jump over without stopping to grasp its significance. It is a story where preachers at a loss for how to drive home the impact can fall into the trap of vain speculation:

**Alistair Begg:**

- Imagine you were in the Garden of Gethsemane with Jesus; how would you have felt? Who cares? It is not always all about you.
- What does it feel like to be abandoned by your close friends? Who cares? Not why God preserved this account for us.
- Look at all of the references to clubs and swords; what does this passage teach us about gun control today? – What?? Now we are bordering on the ridiculous

**Missing the point entirely!**

Structure of passage shows us the emphasis – same verb used twice – vv. **50, 52** “*fled*” – even though translated differently in the English

Everybody abandons Jesus; Jesus ends up standing alone to face the suffering that lies ahead for him.

*Abandonment:* To withdraw one's support or help from, especially in spite of duty, allegiance, or responsibility; desert: abandon a friend in trouble

Highlights **the nature of the sacrifice for sin** made by our Passover Lamb:

- He is the only sinless substitute that could propitiate the wrath of the Father
- He laid down His life voluntarily; not as some victim of circumstances
- He laid down His life in complete obedience to the will of His Heavenly Father
- He shed His blood to atone for our sins and provide us with undeserved forgiveness

Contrasting responses to this account of betrayal and unjust arrest:

- On the part of Jesus
- On the part of His closest disciples
- On the part of some unidentified follower

The events culminating God's eternally decreed Plan for Redemption are now rapidly unfolding.

**ONLY THE SUFFERING SERVANT EMBRACES GOD'S PLAN FOR REDEMPTION**

**I. (:43-46) THE VOLUNTARY SURRENDER OF JESUS TO THE TREACHEROUS BETRAYAL OF JUDAS AND THE MASSIVE FORCE OF THE ARRESTING AUTHORITIES**

**A. (:43-45) The Complex Scheming**

1. (:43) The Arresting Army



*“And immediately while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, came up, accompanied by a multitude with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.”*

Καὶ εὐθὺς ἔτι αὐτοῦ λαλοῦντος παραγίνεται Ἰούδας εἷς τῶν δώδεκα καὶ μετ’ αὐτοῦ ὄχλος μετὰ μαχαίρων καὶ ξύλων παρὰ τῶν ἀρχιερέων καὶ τῶν γραμματέων καὶ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων.

Follows directly after vs. 42 *“behold, the one who betrays me is at hand”* – Jesus knew exactly what was taking place and fully embraced the Father’s will; ready to move forward towards the onrushing arresting authorities – they came upon Him *“immediately”*

Now the **rapid pace of events** will be intensified; no let up in the action; no time for peace and rest and contemplation

**Constable:** Part of the crowd consisted of Jewish temple police (Luke 22:52) and Roman soldiers (John 18:12). The police carried clubs and the soldiers had short swords.

Cohort = 600 soldiers from the nearby fort in Jerusalem

All the 3 different elements of the Sanhedrin represented here; this was the group that had commissioned both the temple police and the Roman soldiers  
Eager to seize on this opportunity to capture Jesus quietly away from the crowd of pilgrims visiting the city for Passover

How far has Judas fallen? *“one of the twelve”* – position of such privilege; only accentuates his moral degeneration

## 2. (:44) The Subtle Signal

*“Now he who was betraying Him had given them a signal, saying, ‘Whomever I shall kiss, He is the one; seize Him, and lead Him away under guard.’”*

δεδώκει δὲ ὁ παραδιδούς αὐτὸν σύσσημον αὐτοῖς λέγων· ὃν ἂν φιλήσω αὐτός ἐστιν, κρατήσατε αὐτὸν καὶ ἀπάγετε ἀσφαλῶς.

**Ps. 2:11** sign of reverence towards the Son now used as feigned sign of reverence

No Most Wanted series on TV where the face of the fugitive can be broadcast around the world; no posters hung up on post office walls; no internet to provide his picture and make him easy to identify

Could not afford to make any mistake here and arrest the wrong man

## 3. (:45) The Expected Execution of the Plan

*“And after coming, he immediately went to Him, saying, ‘Rabbi!’ and kissed Him.”*

καὶ ἔλθων εὐθὺς προσελθὼν αὐτῷ λέγει· ῥαββί, καὶ κατεφίλησεν αὐτόν·

Kiss should be a mark of intimacy and friendship, but here used of betrayal

*Kataphileo* – expression of friendship and love; intensive form of the word; not some quick peck on the cheek; holding the kiss so that the identification could be clearly made

**Hiebert:** kissed him fervently – apparently, the kiss was prolonged with a show of affection so that those with him would have ample time to note Jesus’ identity.

## **B. (:46) The Simple Capture**

*“And they laid hands on Him, and seized Him.”*

οἱ δὲ ἐπέβαλον τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῷ καὶ ἐκράτησαν αὐτόν.

Mark does not record here the power that Jesus had upon the approaching authorities **John 18:6** *“they drew back and fell to the ground”* when He willingly identified Himself Not without fear and trepidation that the laid hands on Him and seized Him; only could do that if Jesus voluntarily submitted to such rude treatment

## **II. (:47-50) THE CONFLICTED RESPONSE OF THE INNER CIRCLE OF DISCIPLES**

### **A. (:47) Misguided Defense – Violent Resistance**

*“But a certain one of those who stood by drew his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest, and cut off his ear.”*

εἷς δὲ [τις] τῶν παρεστηκότων σπασάμενος τὴν μάχαιραν ἔπαισεν τὸν δοῦλον τοῦ ἀρχιερέως καὶ ἀφείλεν αὐτοῦ τὸ ὠτόριον.

Peter and the disciples had not tried to flee yet; the events were unfolding so suddenly; no time to think things through; Peter took immediate action; went after a significant target; How was he able to escape capture?

**Constable:** He had not only boasted too much (vv. 29, 31), and prayed too little (vv. 37, 40, 41), but he also acted too violently.

### **(:48-49) ASIDE – Response of Jesus**

#### 1. (:48-49a) Criticism of Wrong Characterization

##### a. No Need for Massive Force

*“And Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me, as against a robber?’”*

Καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· ὡς ἐπὶ ληστὴν ἐξήλθατε μετὰ μαχαιρῶν καὶ ξύλων συλλαβεῖν με;

Were your expectations that I am some type of political revolutionary that has galvanized powerful forces and armed them with powerful weapons to try to wage war against the Roman government?

You have had opportunity to observe my character; how can you treat me as a common criminal?

**Hiebert:** While quietly submitting to the arrest, He protested its manner. His protest was directed against the religious leaders promoting the arrest.

**Hendriksen:** the word “*answered*” does not always mean “replied verbally to a question”; it may also mean, as here, “reacted to a situation.”

b. No Need for Elaborate Scheming

*“Every day I was with you in the temple teaching,  
and you did not seize Me;”*

καθ' ἡμέραν ἤμην πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ διδάσκων καὶ οὐκ ἐκρατήσατέ με·

Very open and public ministry; consistent track record; easy to find him and have direct contact with him; no need to come out in the darkness of night searching for Him in obscure places as if He is a fugitive in hiding

He ministered right at the center of their sphere of influence; their home turf

2. (:49b) Submission to God's Plan

*“but this has happened that the Scriptures might be fulfilled.”*

ἀλλ' ἵνα πληρωθῶσιν αἱ γραφαί.

**Key statement** undergirding all of the events taking place in this final Passion Week – OT prophecies regarding the Suffering Servant were being fulfilled in detail – no mystery or surprises; exactly what God had pre-determined would happen; all part of His glorious plan of redemption; gives us hope regarding the as yet unfulfilled prophecies of the future return of Christ and the glorious kingdom He will establish on earth; God has not forgotten His promises – to the nation of Israel; to the people of God

**B. (:50) Unified Abandonment**

*“And they all left Him and fled.”*

Καὶ ἀφέντες αὐτὸν ἔφυγον πάντες.

Final frame is Jesus standing alone

Not the finest hour for the disciples – despite their protestations that they would follow Him even to death and would never deny Him.

**III. (:51-52) THE CONFLICTED RESPONSE OF A FOLLOWER OF CHRIST**

**A. Curious Onlooker**

1. Unidentified Follower

*“And a certain young man was following Him,”*

καὶ νεανίσκος τις συνηκολούθει αὐτῷ

**William Barclay:** It may be that Mark was actually present at the Last Supper. He was young, just a boy, and maybe no one really noticed him. But he was fascinated with Jesus and when the

company went out into the dark, he slipped out after them when he ought to have been in bed, with only the linen sheet over his naked body. It may be that all the time Mark was there in the shadows listening and watching. That would explain where the Gethsemane narrative came from. If the disciples were all asleep how did anyone know about the struggle of soul that Jesus had there? It may be that the one witness was Mark as he stood silent in the shadows, watching with a boy's reverence the greatest hero he had ever known.

**Edwards:** In light of the meagerness of information, speculation about the identity of the lad is pointless. Mark's leaving him unidentified appears to be intentional and purposeful. The young man represents all who flew in desperation when mayhem broke out at the arrest of Jesus. This particular story speaks for all present. His lack of identity also invites readers to examine their own readiness to abandon Jesus. The prophecy of Amos has come to pass among all of Jesus' followers: "*Even the bravest of warriors will flee naked on that day,*" declares the Lord (2:16).

## 2. Urgent Follower

*"wearing nothing but a linen sheet over his naked body;"*

περιβεβλημένος σινδόνα ἐπὶ γυμνοῦ,

Not all bible stories are suitable for reenactment in Sunday School.

**Constable:** He was wearing a rather costly linen outer garment (Gr. *sindon*) without an undergarment (Gr. *chiton*). It may have been his sleeping garment.

Only other NT usage - *sindon*

**Mark 15:46** "*And Joseph bought a linen cloth, took Him down, wrapped Him in the linen cloth, and laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb.*"

## B. Dangerous Predicament

*"and they seized him."*

καὶ κρατοῦσιν αὐτόν.

Quite a contrast in how they were armed to the teeth and he was barely clothed

Quite a contrast in terms of how he resisted capture and how Jesus submitted voluntarily

## C. Total Abandonment

*"But he left the linen sheet behind, and escaped naked."*

ὁ δὲ καταλιπὼν τὴν σινδόνα γυμνὸς ἔφυγεν.

If we had been there, we would have fled as well.

**Constable:** This incident makes little contribution to the story of Jesus' arrest, apart from illustrating that **everyone fled**. Therefore some of the church fathers and most of the modern commentators have concluded that the young man was Mark, the writer of this Gospel. However, there is no solid evidence for this.

**MacArthur:** What's the point? The point is, **Jesus is alone**. Everybody's gone. The Apostles are gone and even a sort of, I don't know, a normal follower of Jesus, just a guy who saw what was going on and the more he saw, the more he knew and he was a follower. He was following Him. Get closer and closer and closer and he's gone too. It's just to show that there's no one left...no one left.

## CONCLUSION:

Like the simple dance played out in children's parties .. *The Farmer in the Dell* ...  
"The cheese stands alone"

## ABANDONMENT LEAVES JESUS ALL ALONE

- Jesus stands alone
- Jesus stands Tall; does not shrink back but is there voluntarily
- Jesus stands Bravely, courageously, boldly, with backbone
- Jesus stands in our place, taking our punishment that we deserved to take
- Jesus stands ultimately as a Champion, not a Victim but a Victorious Warrior

\* \* \* \* \*

## DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What do we learn from the betrayal of Judas, formerly a trusted member of the inner circle?
- 2) How does love for fellowship make abandonment even more painful?
- 3) What type of weapons should Peter and the disciples been relying upon instead of the sword?
- 4) Why do you think Mark does not identify either the disciple who slices off the ear or the follower of Christ that escapes naked?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Parunak: (:51-52.) Who is the young man?**

1) Short answer: we cannot know for sure.

2) Indices:

a> Fills out the "one plus many" pattern established in 43 with Judas and the guard. Not just added color. Ought to be someone **significant**, as Judas is in the first panel.

b> OT allusions:

1> Gen 39:12, flight of Joseph from Potiphar's wife. Escaping from temptation. Does not seem to be the case here.

2> Amos 2:16, describes the failure of the mighty men (14-15) to defend Israel in

TEXT: Mark 14:53-72

TITLE: UNJUST TREATMENT OF THE SON OF GOD -- PART 1

**BIG IDEA:**

**JESUS SUFFERED UNJUST TREATMENT BY BOTH HIS HARSHTEST ENEMIES AND HIS CLOSEST DISCIPLES WHILE MAINTAINING HIS COMPOSURE AND COMPASSION**

**INTRODUCTION:**

How do you respond when you are wrongly accused? We all have the identical natural response. We become extremely defensive; we seek to justify ourselves; we might lash back and attack our attackers; we marshal all the evidence that could possibly support our claims. But Jesus responded differently. He endured more intense injustice than we could ever imagine. But He never lost His poise. And He never lost His compassion.

**(:53-54) STAGING FOR THE TWO SCENES OF THIS INTENSE DRAMA**

**A. (:53) Jesus Before the High Priest and the Sanhedrin**

*“And they led Jesus away to the high priest;  
and all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes gathered together.”*

*Καὶ ἀπήγαγον τὸν Ἰησοῦν πρὸς τὸν ἀρχιερέα,  
καὶ συνέρχονται πάντες οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς.*

Being *led away* as a common criminal; not with presumption of innocence; not innocent until proven guilty; but under a predetermined, prejudicial verdict of judgment that was just going to be proclaimed as a matter of rote procedure

**MacArthur:** Matthew and Mark say Jesus was taken to Caiaphas, but John adds in **John 18**, that He was first taken to Annas. Well that doesn't pose any difficulty because they would have lived in the same estate, the same place.

**Sproul:** His trial was a travesty.

**Hiebert:** All the gospels make it clear that the trial of Jesus fell into two general parts. He was first tried by the **ecclesiastical authorities** and then by the **political authorities**. A comparison of the different accounts indicates that both parts comprised three stages. None of the gospels record all the different stages. . . He was subjected to a preliminary questioning by Annas (Jn 18:12-14, 19-24), was arraigned before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin at a night session (Mt 26:57-68; Mk 14:53-65), and was formally condemned by the Sanhedrin in a brief meeting after dawn (Mt 27:1; Mk 15:1; Lk 22:66-71).

Mark focuses on just the trial before Caiaphas and then combines the two trials before Pilate into one.

How were they all able to suddenly come together in the dead of the night?

71 members of the Sanhedrin – no small gathering; shows how urgently they regarded the situation

## B. (:54) Peter Warming Himself in the Courtyard

*“And Peter had followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest; and he was sitting with the officers, and warming himself at the fire.”*

καὶ ὁ Πέτρος ἀπὸ μακρόθεν ἠκολούθησεν αὐτῷ ἕως ἔσω εἰς τὴν αὐλὴν τοῦ ἀρχιερέως  
καὶ ἦν συγκαθήμενος μετὰ τῶν ὑπηρετῶν καὶ θερμαινόμενος πρὸς τὸ φῶς.

Commendable that Peter followed him at all – after putting himself in jeopardy by cutting off the ear of Malchus, the servant of the high priest

But noteworthy that he only followed Jesus at a distance – not exactly the commitment that Jesus had called for when he commanded His disciples to forsake all and follow after Him; to deny themselves and take up their cross daily

**Hiebert:** Peter drawn by **love** but holds back due to **fear**.

**James Edwards:** Peter has forsaken a discipleship of costly following (**8:34**) for one of safe observation.

The Greek word here for fire is *the light* – that which could illuminate his face and expose him as a follower of Jesus of Nazareth

## JESUS SUFFERED UNJUST TREATMENT BY BOTH HIS HARSHTEST ENEMIES AND HIS CLOSEST DISCIPLES WHILE MAINTAINING HIS COMPOSURE AND HIS COMPASSION

### TWO INCIDENTS OF UNJUST TREATMENT OF THE SON OF GOD –

### TWO CONTRASTING RESPONSES TO BEARING TESTIMONY UNDER PERSECUTION --

## I. (:55-65) UNJUST TREATMENT AT THE HANDS OF HIS HARSHTEST ENEMIES -- KANGAROO COURT OF THE SANHEDRIN INTERROGATES AND INDICTS JESUS

### A. (:55-59) Inconsistent False Testimony Before the Sanhedrin

#### 1. (:55a) Predetermined Objective of the Inquiry

*“Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain testimony against Jesus to put Him to death;”*

Οἱ δὲ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ ὅλον τὸ συνέδριον ἐζήτουν κατὰ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ μαρτυρίαν  
εἰς τὸ θανατῶσαι αὐτόν,

**Deut. 16:18** – God gave instructions to the nation on how to pursue a legal process that would be just and objective

**Parunak:** According to the law the HP served for 3 life, but from the time of Antiochus Epiphanes on, secular rulers appointed it as a political prize. There were 28 HP's in the 107 years before the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, less than 4 years each. Thus at any moment there might be

several who had held the position or could hold it. . .

Their motive: they are trying to find witnesses to justify executing him. Instead of investigating his claims seriously, they have already dismissed them. The verdict has been decided in advance; now they must whitewash it with a semblance of legal proceeding.

**Hendriksen:** As **Matt. 26:3** informs us, the high priest was Caiaphas. He occupied that office from A.D. 18-36, and was son-in-law of Annas (John 18:13). He was a rude and sly manipulator, and opportunist, who did not know the meaning of fairness or justice and who was bent on having his own way “by hook or by crook.”

## 2. (:55b-56) Presentation of Conflicting False Testimony

*“and they were not finding any. For many were giving false testimony against Him, and yet their testimony was not consistent.”*

καὶ οὐχ ἠύρισκον· πολλοὶ γὰρ ἐψευδομαρτύρουν κατ’ αὐτοῦ,  
καὶ ἴσαι αἱ μαρτυρίαι οὐκ ἦσαν.

## 3. (:57-59) Preeminent Example of the Problem of Inconsistent False Testimony

*“And some stood up and began to give false testimony against Him, saying, ‘We heard Him say, I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.’ And not even in this respect was their testimony consistent.”*

καὶ τινες ἀναστάντες ἐψευδομαρτύρουν κατ’ αὐτοῦ λέγοντες ὅτι ἡμεῖς ἠκούσαμεν αὐτοῦ λέγοντος ὅτι ἐγὼ καταλύσω τὸν ναὸν τοῦτον τὸν χειροποίητον καὶ διὰ τριῶν ἡμερῶν ἄλλον ἀχειροποίητον οἰκοδομήσω. καὶ οὐδὲ οὕτως ἴση ἦν ἡ μαρτυρία αὐτῶν.

**John 2:19ff** – actual words of Jesus different than how he was quoted; but even this claim was insufficient and found no consistent support

**MacArthur:** They had no time to get together. They had not time for collusion. They had no time to meet with people and get the same story. They had no time to plot everything out.

**Edwards:** It is a serious charge. As the center of Jewish worship and the seat of the Sanhedrin’s power, the temple symbolized the essence and hopes of Judaism. In the Messianic Age to come, the temple, along with the city of Jerusalem, would rival the splendor of the Messiah himself.

## **B. (:60-62) Interrogation of Jesus by the High Priest**

### 1. (:60-61a) Round 1 of Interrogation

#### a. Question by the High Priest – Why Won’t You Defend Yourself?

*“And the high priest stood up and came forward and questioned Jesus, saying, ‘Do You make no answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?’”*

Καὶ ἀναστὰς ὁ ἀρχιερεὺς εἰς μέσον ἐπηρώτησεν τὸν Ἰησοῦν λέγων·  
οὐκ ἀποκρίνη οὐδὲν τί οὗτοί σου καταμαρτυροῦσιν;



**Hiebert:** The belligerent high priest sought to goad Jesus into saying something that could be used against Him.

b. No Response by Jesus

*“But He kept silent, and made no answer.”*

ὁ δὲ ἐσιώπα καὶ οὐκ ἀπεκρίνατο οὐδέν.

**Isa 53:7-8** He did not open His mouth

Speaks to the **Composure and Poise of Christ** – submitted to His heavenly Father; was trusting in Him; understood that His day of vindication was coming

2. (:61b-62) Round 2 of Interrogation

a. Question by the High Priest – Are You the Christ?

*“Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, ‘Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?’”*

πάλιν ὁ ἀρχιερεὺς ἐπηρώτα αὐτὸν καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ·  
σὺ εἶ ὁ χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ εὐλογητοῦ;

Matthew’s account adds the verbiage that Caiaphas invokes a binding oath: *“I adjure you by the living God”* – so that now Jesus must answer the question

b Response by Jesus

*“And Jesus said, ‘I am; and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.’”*

ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν· **ἐγὼ εἰμι**, καὶ ὄψεσθε τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐκ δεξιῶν  
καθήμενον τῆς δυνάμεως καὶ ἐρχόμενον μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ.

**Daniel 7:13; Ps. 110:1** – Jesus takes parts from these two famous Messianic prophecies and combines them in powerful fashion

**MacArthur:** What He is saying is, “Yes I AM and My death is not the end, I will be exalted to the throne of God. I will return in glory to judge and reign over the earth.”

**Hiebert:** His own position and that of his judges would one day be reversed

**C. (:63-65) Indictment and Abuse**

1. (:63-64) Indictment

*“And tearing his clothes, the high priest said, ‘What further need do we have of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy; how does it seem to you?’  
And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death.”*

ὁ δὲ ἀρχιερεὺς διαρρήξας τοὺς χιτῶνας αὐτοῦ λέγει· τί ἔτι χρεῖαν ἔχομεν μαρτύρων;  
ἠκούσατε τῆς βλασφημίας· τί ὑμῖν φαίνεται; οἱ δὲ πάντες κατέκριναν αὐτὸν ἔνοχον εἶναι

θανάτου.

“tearing his clothes” – usually associated with extreme grief and sorrow; Overcome here with rage; Jesus claimed the position and power of deity

**Edwards:** The testimony that the Sanhedrin seeks against Jesus is in the end not provided by the false witnesses but by Jesus himself in the claim to be God’s Son.

**Hendriksen:** This unanimous *verdict* was not as yet a formal *sentence*. Declaring a person guilty and sentencing him are two different matters. In order to create at least a semblance of legality, a short period of time must elapse between these two actions. As was pointed out earlier, according to existing regulations that interval should have been a day. But as the Sanhedrists see it, such a prolonged delay would have been too dangerous. It could have given the friends of Jesus enough time to organize a revolt in his behalf. *Now* is the time to act. Early in the morning the Sanhedrin will have to be convened once more. That will be for the purpose of sentencing. And even that action will not be final. It must still be approved by Pilate, the governor.

**Hendriksen:** It has been emphasized by various authors that the trial of Jesus was illegal on several technical grounds, such as the following:

- a. No trial for life was allowed during the night. Yet, Jesus was tried and condemned during the hours of 1-3 A.M. Friday, and executed on the Feast, which was forbidden. According to Pharisaic law, no hearings in a case involving capital punishment could even be initiated on the eve of a major festival like Passover. No conviction was allowed at night. To execute a sentence on the day of one of the great feasts was contrary to the established regulations.
- b. The arrest of Jesus was effected as a result of a bribe, namely, the blood-money which Judas received.
- c. Jesus was asked to incriminate himself.
- d. In cases of capital punishment, Jewish law did not permit the sentence to be pronounced until the day after the accused had been convicted.

“deserving of death” – **key phrase** --

2. (:65) Abuse

a. Filthy Humiliation

“And some began to spit at Him,”

Καὶ ἤρξαντό τινες ἐμπτύειν αὐτῷ

**Is. 50:6**

b. Mockery

“and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him with their fists,  
and to say to Him, ‘Prophesy!’”

καὶ περικαλύπτει αὐτοῦ τὸ πρόσωπον καὶ κολαφίζει αὐτὸν  
καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ· προφήτευσον,

tradition that Messiah could judge by smell without needed sight

- c. Continued Abuse – following the pattern of their leaders  
“*And the officers received Him with slaps in the face.*”

καὶ οἱ ὑπηρέται ῥαπίσμασιν αὐτὸν ἔλαβον.

Servants of the Sanhedrin

**Parunak:** Note that the "servants," last mentioned with Peter in v.54, take part in this torment; it may be that the Lord has been taken from the room in which the Sanhedrin met down to the courtyard, and that Peter actually witnesses this abuse.

## **II. (:66-72) UNJUST TREATMENT AT THE HANDS OF HIS CLOSEST DISCIPLE -- PETER DENIES THE LORD THREE TIMES**

### **A. (:66-71) 3 Accusations and Denials**

#### 1. (:66-68) First Accusation and Denial

##### a. (:66-67) Accusation

“*And as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came, and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him, and said, ‘You, too, were with Jesus the Nazarene.’*”

Καὶ ὄντος τοῦ Πέτρου κάτω ἐν τῇ αὐλῇ ἔρχεται μία τῶν παιδισκῶν τοῦ ἀρχιερέως καὶ ἰδοῦσα τὸν Πέτρον θερμαινόμενον ἐμβλέψασα αὐτῷ λέγει· καὶ σὺ μετὰ τοῦ Ναζαρηνοῦ ἦσθα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ.

**MacArthur:** Jesus is in a large room, Peter outside in the dark courtyard near a fire with Roman guards, temple police and other servants. He’s caught between curiosity and cowardice

##### b. (:68) Denial

“*But he denied it, saying, ‘I neither know nor understand what you are talking about.’ And he went out onto the porch.*”

ὁ δὲ ἠρνήσατο λέγων· οὔτε οἶδα οὔτε ἐπίσταμαι σὺ τί λέγεις· καὶ ἐξῆλθεν ἔξω εἰς τὸ προαύλιον [καὶ ἀλέκτωρ ἐφώνησεν].

**Edwards:** Mark’s two Greek verbs for “know” are only an apparent redundancy. The first (*oida*) tends to denote theoretical knowledge, and the second (*epistamai*) practical knowledge; Peter’s denial is thus a total denial – in theory and practice!

#### 2. (:69-70a) Second Accusation and Denial

##### a. Accusation

“*And the maid saw him, and began once more to say to the bystanders, ‘This is one of them!’*”

καὶ ἡ παιδίσκη ἰδοῦσα αὐτὸν ἤρξατο πάλιν λέγειν τοῖς παρεστῶσιν ὅτι οὗτος ἐξ αὐτῶν ἐστίν.

b. Denial

*“But again he was denying it.”*

ὁ δὲ πάλιν ἠρνεῖτο.

**Hiebert:** Luke remarked that “*about one hour*” passed between the second and third denials

3. (:70b-71) Third Accusation and Denial

a. (:70b) Accusation

*“And after a little while the bystanders were again saying to Peter, ‘Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean too.’”*

Καὶ μετὰ μικρὸν πάλιν οἱ παρεστῶτες ἔλεγον τῷ Πέτρῳ· ἀληθῶς ἐξ αὐτῶν εἶ, καὶ γὰρ Γαλιλαῖος εἶ.

If we don’t know you by your face, at least we recognize you by your accent

b. (:71) Denial

*“But he began to curse and swear, ‘I do not know this man you are talking about!’”*

ὁ δὲ ἤρξατο ἀναθεματίζειν καὶ ὀμνύειν ὅτι οὐκ οἶδα τὸν ἄνθρωπον τοῦτον ὃν λέγετε.

Calling on something higher and greater than himself to bolster his claims –  
Remember what Christ had taught about oaths

**B. (:72) Remembrance and Remorse**

1. Remembrance

*“And immediately a cock crowed a second time.”*

καὶ εὐθὺς ἐκ δευτέρου ἀλέκτωρ ἐφώνησεν.

**William Barclay:** The Roman night was divided into four watches from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. At the end of the third watch, at three o'clock in the morning, the guard was changed. When the guard was changed there was a bugle call which was called the gallicinium, which is the Latin for the cockcrow. Most likely what happened was that as Peter spoke his third denial, the clear note of the bugle call rang out over the silent city and smote on Peter's ear. He remembered and his heart broke.

**MacArthur:** **Luke 22:61** says, “*and the Lord turned and looked at Peter.*” The Lord turned and looked at Peter. Straight into Peter’s eyes went the gaze of the Lord Jesus. Perhaps his trial had just ended and He was coming back across the courtyard, headed to prison where he’d be kept for a few hours until the dawn, fake trial, scourging, crucifixion in the morning. His face covered with spit, black and blue puffy from being punched in the face and slapped. His garments

covered with sweaty blood that had oozed out of His sweat glands in the agonies in the garden. And as He's bound, is taken through the courtyard. He looks right into the eyes of Peter. I'm pretty sure that's a look that Peter never, ever, ever forgot.

Speaks to the **Love and Compassion of Christ** – did not forsake Peter; in fact this failure served to break his arrogance and self-confidence in a way that equipped him to a greater extent to be a strong spiritual leader in the early church

## 2. Remorse

*“And Peter remembered how Jesus had made the remark to him,  
‘Before a cock crows twice, you will deny Me three times.’  
And he began to weep.”*

Καὶ ἀνεμνήσθη ὁ Πέτρος τὸ ῥῆμα ὡς εἶπεν αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὅτι πρὶν ἀλέκτορα φωνῆσαι δις τρίς με ἀπαρνήσῃ· καὶ ἐπιβαλὼν ἔκλαιεν.

## **CONCLUSION:**

### **1 Pet. 2:18-25**

**Big Idea of Book:** BY THE GRACE OF GOD, THE PERSECUTED CHURCH FINDS VINDICATION AND VICTORY THRU LIVING FOR ETERNITY, MAINTAINING COMMENDABLE CONDUCT, AND ACCEPTING SUFFERING AS THE WILL OF GOD

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## **DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) How do you respond when you are attacked unjustly? What should be our response?
- 2) Are you following Jesus closely whatever the cost ... or trying to follow Him at a distance?
- 3) When have you failed to be bold and courageous in taking a stand of loyalty for Jesus Christ?
- 4) How is brokenness in your life a key to the way God is able to use you?

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## **QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:**

**William Barclay:** The Sanhedrin was the supreme court of the Jews and was composed of seventy-one members. Within its membership there were Sadducees--the priestly classes were all Sadducees--Pharisees and Scribes, who were experts in the law, and respected men who were elders. It appears that any vacancies in the court were filled by co-option. The High Priest presided over the court. The court sat in a semi-circle in such a way that any member could see any other member. Facing it sat the students of the Rabbis. They were allowed to speak on behalf of the person on trial but not against him. The official meeting place of the Sanhedrin was the

TEXT: Mark 15:1-21

TITLE: *UNJUST TREATMENT OF THE SON OF GOD – PART 2*

**BIG IDEA:**

**JESUS SUFFERED UNJUST TREATMENT BY THE ROMAN AUTHORITIES WHILE BEING REJECTED BY THE CROWD IN FAVOR OF BARABBAS**

**INTRODUCTION – PART 1:**

Last night Karen and I enjoyed a Christmas performance by the United States Army Field Band at the ornate Hippodrome Theater in downtown Baltimore. It was a surprising Christian and gospel oriented presentation – one of the highlights being portions from Handel’s Messiah with the ringing lyrics of “*King of Kings and Lord of Lord ... and He must reign forever and ever ... Hallelujah, Hallelujah!*” This was good preparation for our text for this morning – because you cannot fully appreciate the **injustice** suffered by the Lord in His trials before the religious authorities (which we covered 2 weeks ago) and here today His trial before the governmental officials – Pilate and in the other synoptic accounts, Herod until you contrast that treatment with the praise and worship He deserves as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

**Aside regarding the dynamics of sermon delivery:** I had this message prepared to deliver last Sunday, but saved it for today instead. But as noted by my earlier comments, I have revised some of my approach and emphasis because I am not the same person today as I was a week ago. I have been **impacted by the experiences of this past week**. That is why I can never simply pull out a message from my files and deliver it again verbatim -- especially since I don’t have it written out verbatim! But seriously, this points to how the Lord uses the personality of the messenger just as he used the personality and experiences of those who wrote His inspired Word. That is one of the reasons why we are not supposed to just sit at home on Sunday morning and download a message from [Sermonaudio.com](http://Sermonaudio.com) – of which there are many fine ones on this very passage – (almost 2000 on some portion of Mark 15). The Holy Spirit wants to use the dynamics of the personality and experiences of the preacher and his relationship with those listening. This also caused me to reflect on the need for a congregation to hear from multiple speaker – not just the preaching of one man. If you have the gift of teaching or preaching, we need you to be using that gift among us.

**Enough with my digression** ... on to the text for this morning ... we will only cover vv. 1-5 today . . . but the entire section hangs together as outlined on the back of your bulletin.

**Parunak:** The structure of **14:53-15:20** compares the trial before the **Sanhedrin** and that before **Pilate**. The one rejects Christ through deliberate malice, the other through lack of political courage. **Structural similarities:**

- a) In each, the Lord is confronted with two questions, one indirect (via accusers), the other direct (by the judge). In both, he declines to reply to the accusers, but does reply to the judge, and the testimony he bears in both cases is the same: he is the one to whom all dominion belongs.
- b) In each, after the conclusion of the trial, the Lord is cruelly abused by the judge's underlings.
- c) In each, the condemnation by the authorities is echoed by the Lord's denial by the common people, each time marked by three questions.

How often have you heard it said that the “wheels of justice grind slowly?” In the case of the injustice dispensed by both the religious authorities and the political authorities, the wheels were greased to move at lightning speed. No delays in these kangaroo courts.

How long do prisoners sit on Death Row in our American system of justice?

**Apostles Creed** – “*He suffered under Pontius Pilate*” – shows how memorable and significant this chapter of Scripture remains down through history

**Derek Thomas:** His name of course is now infamous from *The Apostles’ Creed*: “He suffered under Pontius Pilate....” Strange, isn’t it, that Pontius Pilate’s name should be mentioned in a creed of the church? It does, I think, two things. It was of course on one level an assertion of the way in which the state condemned Jesus: that the condemnation of Jesus was total. But it was also, of course, a way of saying that there’s a historicity to this man Jesus Christ, this Jesus of Nazareth: that He suffered at a particular point in history, during the reign and rule of this prefect of Judea called Pontius Pilate, dating somewhere between 25 or so and 36 A.D. on the map of history

Here you have the official, governmental judgment against the Lord Jesus along with the abuse and mockery and humiliation that accompanied that experience

**JESUS SUFFERED UNJUST TREATMENT BY THE ROMAN AUTHORITIES WHILE BEING REJECTED BY THE CROWD IN FAVOR OF BARABBAS**

**(:1) AUTHORIZED TRANSITION – RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES DELIVER JESUS OVER TO THE POLITICAL AUTHORITIES**

### **A. Swift Injustice**

#### 1. Transacting Justice Illicitly

“*And early in the morning*”

Around 5-6 AM

They knew that it was wrong to try a capital case in the middle of the night; they knew that they must wait until the following day to deliver the indictment; as soon as morning of the next day broke, they sprang into action; trying to legitimize their nefarious dealings

**Hendriksen:** The main reason for the early morning meeting may well have been to give a semblance of legality to the action against Jesus.

#### 2. Total Complicity by the Entire Sanhedrin

“*the chief priests with the elders and scribes, and the whole Council,*”

This court represented the religious establishment – all the movers and shakers in Judaism in Jerusalem

There was no voice for justice; no voice for truth; no voice for righteousness; no voice for doing the right thing by Jesus; no balance in this group – they were united in their rage against Jesus;

Blinded by envy and jealousy and pride and hypocrisy and ambition and lust for power and popularity and possessions

This was the group that ended up **manipulating the crowd** to demand the release of Barabbas;

That ended up **manipulating Pilate** to deliver Jesus over to be crucified

- mob mentality

- political expediency

Think of the importance of not violating your **conscience** – of course it is important that your conscience be informed by the truth of God as applied by the Holy Spirit – but don't go against your conscience as Pilate did here

Nothing done from **conviction** or **principle** – this is how you end up with **injustice**

### 3. Taking Action Urgently

*“immediately”*

No proper amount of time to consider the wisdom of their actions;

Afraid that additional time would bring additional pressure to bear upon their predetermined indictment of Jesus; felt the necessity to act swiftly

A lot of times wisdom is better served if people would just slow down and consider things more reasonably without being driven by the emotion of the moment ... but there is no pursuit of wisdom or justice here

**Luke 22:66ff** expands upon this third phase of the religious trials – gives us more details

### 4. Travesty of Justice Consummated

*“held a consultation;”*

**Ray Stedman:** The reason they had to consult together was because they knew that the charge on which they had condemned Jesus would never stand before the Roman governor. They condemned Jesus for **blasphemy**. They said that he claimed to be God, so he was worthy of death. But the Romans would pay no attention to that charge, so they had to come up with something else before they sent him to Pilate. Luke tells us that they levied three charges against him: First, he was charged with perverting the nation, that is, arousing troublemakers, creating riots and dissension. Second, he was charged with forbidding the payment of tribute to Rome, teaching people to not pay their taxes. Third, he was charged with **wanting to be king** instead of Caesar. Now it is this last charge that Pilate seized upon as being the only important one of the three.

## **B. Shifting Injustice – from the Religious Realm to the Political**



1. Restraining Jesus as a Dangerous Criminal

*“and binding Jesus,”*

make him appear as a common criminal and a dangerous threat;

eliminate any possibility of escape;

demonstrate their control over the prisoner

look at how **Samson** was bound in the OT – but that was no protection against the Lord giving him supernatural strength to break any type of restraints that man could impose

How puny and impotent are man’s attempts to thwart God’s purposes

2. Transferring Him to a Different Venue

*“they led Him away,”*

wicked hands making the decision about where to take Jesus;

yet He is traveling the road laid out for Him by the eternal decree of His heavenly Father;

throughout this passage you get a strong flavor of the sovereignty of God at work and the fulfillment of OT prophecy

3. Pressuring Pilate to Perform Their Dirty Work

*“and delivered Him up to Pilate.”*

Shows how the trial scene has now escalated from the **ecclesiastical** realm to the **political**

**Mark 10:33** prophecy of Jesus that he would be *“delivered over to the Gentiles”*

Background on Pilate:

**Robert Rayburn:** Pontius Pilate was the fifth Roman prefect of Palestine, appointed by the emperor Tiberius. He ordinarily lived in Caesarea but at the Jewish festivals, when large numbers of Jewish pilgrims streamed into Jerusalem and religious fervor ran high, the governor’s presence was needed in the capital. Pilate was prefect from **A.D. 26 to A.D. 37**, the longest tenure of any of the 14 Roman governors of Judea.

**Hendriksen:** One thing is certain: he exercised little common sense in handling the delicate problem of the strained relations between the Jews and their Roman conquerors. In fact, it would almost seem as if he enjoyed annoying the Jews: using the temple treasure to pay for an aqueduct, bringing Roman standards into Jerusalem, and even defiling the temple with golden shields inscribed with the images and names of Roman deities.

Necessity of involving the Roman authorities:

**J. C. Ryle:** they had no longer the power of putting any one to death, and were under the dominion of the Romans. By this one act and deed they declared that the prophecy of

Jacob was fulfilled. "The scepter had departed from Judah, and the lawgiver from between his feet," and Shiloh the Messiah, whom God had promised to send, must have come. ([Genesis 49:10](#).)

So now we have made the transition away from the high priest and the Sanhedrin and see Jesus standing before the **political authorities**

## **I. (:2-5) ASTONISHING TRIAL BEFORE PILATE – AMAZED AT HIS SILENCE**

### **A. (:2) Interrogation of Jesus by Pilate – Nature of the Kingdom**

#### 1. The Charge

*"And Pilate questioned Him, 'Are You the King of the Jews?'"*

Charge of blasphemy has now been switched over to a charge that would have significance for Pilate and the Roman government = treason against Caesar; a crime worthy of the death penalty

**John 18: 28ff** gives fuller account

Hypocrisy of their actions:

**MacArthur:** "They led Jesus from Caiaphas into the praetorium and it was early. And they themselves did not enter into the praetorium so that they would not be defiled, but might eat the Passover." These hypocrites are something, aren't they? They don't want to be defiled while they're trying to murder the Son of God, because they don't want to step on Gentile land, they don't want to get into Gentile space, Gentile building, a Gentile room, a Gentile praetorium because they would ceremonially defiled by contact with the Gentile.

Are you a rival king to Caesar – looking to take political control here in Jerusalem?

- Physical, national, military kingdom vs spiritual, religious kingdom is the issue

Certainly the disciples understood that Jesus was the long-promised King of the Jews – even though they had misunderstandings about the nature and timing of the implementation of that kingdom

The crowd was conflicted – bouncing back and forth between being wowed by His teaching and His miracles and His character so that they shouted at His Triumphal Entry:

*"Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord; Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David; Hosanna in the highest" (11:9-10)*

The Jewish authorities were united in their rejection of this claim.

#### 2. The Response

*"And answering He said to him, 'It is as you say.'"*

**Parunak:** a strong affirmative: "You yourself know that what you have said is so."

But not a king in the sense that you might expect; thus the more extended interaction in the Gospel of John where Jesus explains the nature of His kingdom; not one that would be a threat to the Roman government

### **B. (:3) Interrogation by the Chief Priests – False Charges**

*“And the chief priests began to accuse Him harshly.”*

Pilate just said: “I found no guilt in Him” – what can we charge Him with now?

**Luke 23:2** details the false charges

Hurling all types of false charges against Jesus – shows how they drove the whole situation; forcing the hand of Pilate

What is striking is the silence of Jesus – causing Pilate to highlight this unique aspect of this trial

### **C. (:4-5) Interrogation by Pilate – Why the Silence**

#### 1. (:4) Appealing for a Verbal Refutation of False Charges

*“And Pilate was questioning Him again, saying,*

*‘Do You make no answer? See how many charges they bring against You!’”*

Surely all of these charges are not true – Pilate could see that many of them were trumped up and embellished; any good defense attorney would have had a field day pointing to contradictions and discrepancies in the testimony; but Jesus offered no defense; didn’t he understand the gravity of the situation – his very life was at stake; how could he remain silent

#### 2. (:5) Amazed at the Silence of Jesus

*“But Jesus made no further answer; so that Pilate was amazed.”*

double negative used here by Mark for emphasis – *Jesus no more answered anything*

**Ray Stedman:** I think that here, before Pilate, it was quite possible for Jesus to save himself from the cross. For it was evident to him that Pilate knew he was innocent and wanted to deliver him and was seeking some way to do so. If he had replied to Pilate in any way, the governor would have used his words to dismiss the charge and free him immediately. It is obvious that Pilate's sympathy at this point is with Jesus, not with the priests. He knows what they are trying to do, that they are trying to railroad Jesus. He knows that the man is innocent, and is no real threat to Rome, and wants to set him free. But he marveled because Jesus would not cooperate. He did not say a word, and gave Pilate no grounds on which to free him.

**Hiebert:** Luke at this point told how the mention of Galilee caused Pilate to transfer the case to Herod Antipas (**23:5-12**). When Jesus refused to entertain this corrupt ruler (cf. **Mark 6:14-29**) with miracles, Antipas returned the prisoner to the court of original jurisdiction.

Pilate has one last resort to bail him out of this predicament of making a judgment that went against his conscience and against the very facts of the case

## **CONCLUSION:**

What will it be like on that final judgment day when the roles are reversed and the false religious leaders and those who have been driven by expediency instead of conviction stand before the holy Judge who himself has done no wrong but has returned victorious to judge the living and the dead?

Does Jesus reign as almighty king right now in your heart and life – or do you reserve some areas of sovereignty where you resist the reign and control of Jesus as king?

As we partake of the Lord's Supper, let's reflect on the injustice that was heaped upon Jesus and how he humbled himself and willingly took upon himself the scorn and mocking and rebuke and false charges and the then that awesome penalty of the wrath of God as He died in our place on the cross.

Throughout the coming week we need to be singing the Hallelujah chorus of Handel's Messiah.

## **INTRODUCTION – PART 2:**

This is truly an amazing historical account. How in the world did Barabbas become more popular and more desirable in the eyes of the Jewish people than Jesus of Nazareth? When given the choice, how could they possibly request of Pilate that he release back into their community Barabbas, a noted rebel and thief and murderer and insurrectionist instead of Jesus, the Son of Man who had traveled through their cities doing good, teaching the wise counsel of God, healing the sick, raising the dead, showing love and compassion to all?

Perhaps there is no clearer picture anywhere else in Scripture of what is involved in the **substitutionary atoning death** of Jesus than in this picture of sinless Jesus taking the place of wicked Barabbas who deserved to die on that cross between the two thieves. One has to wonder whether Barabbas came to the point of saving repentance and faith as he considered the injustice heaped upon Jesus that was rightly deserved to be poured out against himself. Here was one who chose not to defend Himself from trumped up charges that could have been easily refuted; here was one who opened not his mouth but allowed himself to be led as a sheep to the slaughter; here was one who could have called 10,000 angels to destroy the world and set him free ... but chose to die there for you and for me.

Perhaps there is no clearer picture anywhere else in Scripture of what is involved in calling good evil and evil good; in choosing so unwisely; in demonstrating such utter depravity as to pick the release of Barabbas over the release of the sinless Lamb of God. This was depravity magnified. This was foolishness multiplied.

Perhaps there is no clearer picture anywhere else in Scripture of the tragic consequences of pursuing a path of expediency and compromise as exemplified by Pilate rather than that of conviction and conscience. Here was a powerful political leader who clearly understood the right course of action and yet cowered before the pressure of the Jewish religious leaders and the

rabid crowd who were crying out for the crucifixion of an innocent man.

Perhaps there is no clearer example anywhere else in Scripture of the sovereignty of God who took the actions of wicked men and through His predetermined plan and foreknowledge, brought the ultimate good out of the ultimate evil.

## **JESUS SUFFERED UNJUST TREATMENT BY THE ROMAN AUTHORITIES WHILE BEING REJECTED BY THE CROWD IN FAVOR OF BARABBAS**

### **II. (:6-15) ACCOMMODATING TRADITION THAT WOULD ALLOW FOR THE RELEASE OF JESUS**

#### **A. (:6-8) Recognition of the Tradition – Opportunity to Release One Prisoner**

##### 1. (:6) Historical Review

*“Now at the feast he used to release for them any one prisoner whom they requested.”*

Κατὰ δὲ ἑορτὴν ἀπέλυεν αὐτοῖς ἓνα δέσμιον ὃν παρηγοῦντο.

Quite an accommodation on the part of the Roman authorities; helped to keep the crowd orderly and avoid any uprisings and conflicts; a way to appease the Jews to some extent; they would probably ask for one that was imprisoned more on political grounds than a dangerous criminal that would be a threat to society

What is the motivation for the Jews to want a criminal to be released back into society?

##### 2. (:7) Horrific Rebel

*“And the man named Barabbas had been imprisoned with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the insurrection.”*

ἦν δὲ ὁ λεγόμενος Βαραββᾶς μετὰ τῶν στασιαστῶν δεδεμένος  
οἵτινες ἐν τῇ στάσει φόνον πεποιήκεισαν.

What did it mean for Barabbas to be a man without hope; a man condemned to die for his opposition to Roman rule;

Do we understand how we used to be in a state of hopelessness; enemies of God; deserving of His wrath; without hope of any future apart from the eternal fires of hell ...

#### **What does it mean today to choose Barabbas over Jesus Christ?**

World when presented with choices – rejects Jesus whom they hate -- *“We will not have this man to rule over us”* – they do not want the freedom to pursue righteousness; they hate the light because their deeds are evil; they want the freedom to live as they please

Ironic choice Pilate offered the people – as seen in the names:

Jesus Barabbas son of the father or Jesus of Nazareth, true son of the Heavenly Father

##### 3. (:8) Habitual Request

*“And the multitude went up and began asking him to do as he had been accustomed to do for them.”*

καὶ ἀναβὰς ὁ ὄχλος ἤρξατο αἰτεῖσθαι καθὼς ἐποίει αὐτοῖς.

## B. (:9-14) Response of the Multitude – Crucify Jesus

### 1. (:9-11) Preference of Pilate – that the Jews would ask for the release of Jesus

#### a. (:9-10) Offer to Release Jesus

##### 1) (:9) Understood Jesus was no Threat

*“And Pilate answered them, saying,*

*‘Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?’”*

ὁ δὲ Πιλάτος ἀπεκρίθη αὐτοῖς λέγων·

θέλετε ἀπολύσω ὑμῖν τὸν βασιλέα τῶν Ἰουδαίων;

##### 2) (:10) Understood His enemies Were Motivated by Envy

*“For he was aware that the chief priests had delivered Him up because of envy.”*

ἐγίνωσκεν γὰρ ὅτι διὰ φθόνον παραδεδώκεισαν αὐτὸν οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς.

**Hendriksen:** Envy is the displeasure aroused by seeing someone else having what you do not want him to have. So, for example, the leaders envied Jesus because of his fame and following, his ability to perform miracles, etc.

#### b. (:11) Opposition by Religious Leaders

*“But the chief priests stirred up the multitude to ask him to release Barabbas for them instead.”*

οἱ δὲ ἀρχιερεῖς ἀνέσεισαν τὸν ὄχλον ἵνα μᾶλλον τὸν Βαραββᾶν ἀπολύσῃ αὐτοῖς.

This is the key factor in frustrating Pilate’s desire to release Jesus – the chief priests stirred up the crowd into a frenzy of hatred against Jesus;

How were they able to accomplish this?

Talk about a rigged voting process; they controlled the narrative; they blinded the minds of people against the truth about Jesus and spread malicious false charges; they used their power and prestige to create blind followers who lost all sense of discernment

How can people be so deceived and manipulated?

This sin was brought up by Peter in his preaching by the Holy Spirit just 50 days later – speaking to the same group that had cried

*“Crucify Him”;*

*“We have no king but Caesar;”*

*“Let His blood be on us and on our children”*

**Acts 2:22-23; 37-38**

**Acts 3:13-16**

**Acts 4:10-12**

### 2. (:12-13) Plea by Pilate

#### a. (:12) Confusion by Pilate

*“And answering again, Pilate was saying to them,*

*‘Then what shall I do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?’”*

ὁ δὲ Πιλάτος πάλιν ἀποκριθεὶς ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς·

τί οὖν [θέλετε] ποιήσω [ὃν λέγετε] τὸν βασιλέα τῶν Ἰουδαίων;

b. (:13) Frenzied Response

“*And they shouted back, ‘Crucify Him!’*”

οἱ δὲ πάλιν ἔκραξαν· σταύρωσον αὐτόν.

3. (:14) Protestation by Pilate – Jesus not deserving of execution

a. Hesitation by Pilate

“*But Pilate was saying to them, ‘Why, what evil has He done?’*”

ὁ δὲ Πιλάτος ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς· τί γὰρ ἐποίησεν κακόν;

Not recorded here is the warning sent by Pilate’s wife – **Matt. 27:19**

“*Have nothing to do with that righteous Man; for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of Him.*”

Don’t meddle in the affairs of this righteous man

b. Frenzied Response

“*But they shouted all the more, ‘Crucify Him!’*”

οἱ δὲ περισσῶς ἔκραξαν· σταύρωσον αὐτόν.

**C. (:15a) Release of Barabbas Instead of Jesus of Nazareth**

1. Motivation of Pilate

“*And wishing to satisfy the multitude,*”

βουλόμενος τῷ ὄχλῳ τὸ ἱκανὸν ποιῆσαι

2. Mob Mentality

“*Pilate released Barabbas for them,*”

Ὁ δὲ Πιλάτος . . . ἀπέλυσεν αὐτοῖς τὸν Βαραββᾶν,

- **Wringing his hands** – caught between a rock and a hard place; yet can’t bring himself to do the right thing
- **Washing his hands** – yet cannot remove the blood of culpability
- **Waving his hands** – take Jesus away and crucify Him

Pilate ended up committing suicide – in charge of a military operation against the Samaritans - committed such excessive atrocities that he was tried before the Roman govt and convicted; will stand before Jesus in judgment in the last days

**Chuck Smith: PILATE'S TRAGIC DECISION, VERSE 15.**

A. Violation of his own conscience.

1. He had testified, “*I find no fault in Him.*”

B. Violation of his own desire.

1. He really did not want to do it, yet he did.

C. Why would a man violate his own conscience and desire to commit such a heinous crime?

1. “Pilate willing to content the people.”

a. The crowd is not always right.

- b. The crowd is many times stupidly wrong.
  - c. Your crowd may be wrong and to follow its influence may damn your soul.
2. Seeking to be accepted by the crowd led him to be rejected by God.

**J. C. Ryle:** We have in this striking fact a vivid emblem of the manner in which God pardons and justifies the ungodly. He does it, because Christ has suffered in their stead, the just for the unjust. They deserve punishment, but a mighty Substitute has suffered for them. They deserve eternal death, but a glorious Surety has died for them. We are all by nature in the position of Barabbas. We are guilty, wicked, and worthy of condemnation. But "*when we were without hope,*" Christ the innocent died for the ungodly. And now God for Christ's sake can be just, and yet "the justifier of the one who believes in Jesus."

**D. (:15b) Relinquishment of Jesus**

1. Further Beatings

*"and after having Jesus scourged,"*  
 και παρέδωκεν τὸν Ἰησοῦν

**Parunak:** Pilate has already had him scourged. The scourge had bits of lead, glass, and bone embedded in its thongs, so that it tore the flesh from the back of the victim. The Lord is bleeding profusely, his flesh in shreds, his clothing sticking to the clotting blood.

2. Final Sentencing

*"he delivered Him to be crucified."*  
 φραγελλώσας ἵνα σταυρωθῇ.

**CONCLUSION TO PART 2**

**Ryle:** To reject Christ and choose Barabbas was indeed an astounding act! It seems as if blindness, madness, and folly could go no further. But let us take heed, that we do not unwittingly follow their example. Let us beware that we are not found at last to have chosen Barabbas and rejected Christ. The service of sin and the service of God are continually before us. The friendship of the world and the friendship of Christ are continually pressed upon our notice. Are we making the right choice? Are we cleaving to the right Friend? These are solemn questions. Happy is he who can give them a satisfactory answer.

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## PART 3 – INTRODUCTION – vv. 16-21

The Roman Catholic approach to the **season of Lent** has always mystified me. Here you have religious people making their own free choice regarding what comfort or enjoyment or food they are willing to give up to identify with the suffering of Jesus Christ on their behalf.

Lent is defined as a solemn religious observance in the Christian [liturgical calendar](#) that begins on [Ash Wednesday](#) and ends approximately six weeks later, before [Easter Sunday](#). Began this year on [March. 1](#).

In Lent, many Christians commit to [fasting](#), as well as "giving up" certain [luxuries](#) in order to "replicate the sacrifice of Jesus Christ's journey [into the desert](#) for 40 days".

Many Christians also add a Lenten spiritual discipline, such as reading a [daily devotional](#) or praying through a [Lenten calendar](#), to draw themselves near to God. - [Wikipedia](#)

You might have friends that have shared with you what they are giving up this year for Lent – maybe chocolate or going to the movies or having dessert ....

But how can any self-imposed period of abstinence compare to the depths of humiliation and physical suffering which Jesus Christ endured at the hands of sinful Roman soldiers? Here you have the majestic Creator laying aside all of His rights and prerogatives as Sovereign to submit to unimaginable scorn and sadistic abuse from those He had created and had come to rescue from their fallen state of depravity and enmity to God.

The abusive treatment we are going to pause to consider today should remind us of both the **depths of human depravity** and the **depths of our Lord's patience and mercy and forbearance** as He faithfully completes His mission of accomplishing redemption for lost sinners. Consider how much Jesus gave up as He humbled himself to submit to suffering and then death on the cross. Consider what it means for us to be challenged by Jesus *to take up our cross daily and follow after Him*. Certainly we are not talking in the same realm as giving up chocolate or dessert or the movies. Need to pause and linger at this text; look into the face of our Savior; see his patient suffering at the hand of sinners; enduring shame on our behalf

### THE ROAD TO GLORY FOR JESUS CHRIST PASSED ALONG THE VIA DOLOROSA – THE WAY OF INTENSE HUMILIATION AND SUFFERING

The *Via Dolorosa* ([Latin](#): "Way of Grief," "Way of Sorrow," "Way of Suffering" or simply "Painful Way"; is a street within the [Old City of Jerusalem](#), believed to be the path that [Jesus](#) walked on the way to his [crucifixion](#). The winding route from the [Antonia Fortress](#) west to the [Church of the Holy Sepulchre](#)—a distance of about 600 metres (2,000 feet)

**Borgman:** The passage before us is brutal, and bloody and cruel

#### Review –

### **III. (:16-20) ABUSIVE TREATMENT AT THE HANDS OF THE ROMAN SOLDIERS**

#### **A. (:16) The Sadistic Nature of This Abuse**

Definition of Sadistic: deriving pleasure from inflicting pain, suffering, or humiliation on others.

#### **Setting Structured for Unrestrained Abuse**

## 1. The Place

“*And the soldiers took Him away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium),*”  
Οἱ δὲ στρατιῶται ἀπήγαγον αὐτὸν ἔσω τῆς αὐλῆς, ὃ ἐστὶν πραιτώριον,

**Barclay:** It was when the cross was being prepared that Jesus was in the hands of the soldiers. The Praetorium was the residence of the governor, his headquarters, and the soldiers involved would be the headquarters cohort of the guard.

Jesus could not have been more **alone** than He was at this time in this prestigious courtyard.

This is a place without restraint or checks and balances where the soldiers could heap upon Jesus whatever abuse might give them pleasure.

Look at the verbs that speak to the **submission of Jesus** – how He was led around as if He were powerless and at their mercy ... when the reality was that they could not lift a finger against Him without Him allowing it

## 2. The Participants

“*and they called together the whole Roman cohort.*”  
καὶ συγκαλοῦσιν ὅλην τὴν σπεῖραν.

600 soldiers; one tenth of a legion – this is a huge, blood-thirsty troop that probably despised the Jews as an ethnic group

Military elite – charged with keeping the peace in Jerusalem; supposed to be on the side of law and order – cruel, vile, coarse men

Emphasis on “*the whole*” – everybody wanted the opportunity to get in on the fun of heaping indignities on this wild man who claimed to be the King of the Jews

They are **emboldened** now – remember when they came to take Jesus in the Garden – took precautions to bring plenty of soldiers – did not know how Jesus would respond – fell back just at the power and authority of his word – but now Jesus has become more of a pathetic figure to them

**Steven Lawson:** comments on the darkness of these Gentile unbelievers who participated in this sadistic horseplay

**1 Cor. 2:8** – *if they had understood they would not have crucified the Lord of glory*  
Beating and humiliating the Creator of the universe  
They are in spiritual ignorance

**Eph. 4:17-18** *Gentiles walk in the futility of their minds; being darkened in their understanding because of darkness in them due to ignorance*

**2 Cor. 4:3-4**

All of this took place under the **sovereign plan of God** – no surprise to Jesus – He had predicted to his disciples that he would be delivered up to the Gentiles and suffer such scourging and abuse  
**Mark 10:32-34** – this took place over a year earlier

## **B. (:17-18) The Scorn and Satire of Abuse – Mocking Royal Treatment**

### 1. (:17a) The Royal Costume

*“And they dressed Him up in purple,”*

καὶ ἐνδιδύσκουσιν αὐτὸν πορφύραν

put a costume on him like some Halloween party

garments would have stuck to his bleeding skin – created more pain when torn off him at the end Matt. says the color was **scarlet** – different witnesses would describe the same color somewhat differently – or it was two-toned due to perspiration and blood and dirt ...

A cloak that they would have taken from one of the soldiers and cast over his bleeding shoulders; by this time his muscles were exposed from all the severe lacerations; he would have been bleeding profusely; in extreme pain and very weak

Certainly not a kingly figure – Is. 53 over 700 years earlier had prophesied that he would not even be recognizable as a man

### 2. (:17b) The Royal Crown

*“and after weaving a crown of thorns, they put it on Him;”*

καὶ περιτιθέασιν αὐτῷ πλέξαντες ἀκάνθινον στέφανον.

made from a plant with spikey thorns that would cut into his forehead and cause the blood to pour down his face

they rammed it down on his head; just one thorn would have been painful; but here the thorns surround his head; severe bleeding

Brings to mind curse from Gen. 3 on the environment – thorns and thistles would now grow – Jesus becoming a **curse** for us on the cross

### 3. (:18) The Royal Cry

*“and they began to acclaim Him, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’”*

καὶ ἤρξαντο ἀσπάζεσθαι αὐτόν· χαῖρε, βασιλεῦ τῶν Ἰουδαίων.

just as you would address Caesar as King; this is how much they hated the Jews and were happy to act out this scene of mockery and scorn and ridicule  
should have been addressing him with respect and reverence

look at how much has transpired in one short week – remember Jesus entering the city of Jerusalem to the shouts of *“Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord; blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David. Hosanna in the highest.”*

Now that cry has been perverted into one of mockery and derision.

They are ignorant of How Christ will return in judgment:

**Rev. 19:11-16**

## C. (:19) The Suffering of Abuse

### 1. Physically -- The Beating

*“And they kept beating His head with a reed,”*

καὶ ἔτυπτον αὐτοῦ τὴν κεφαλὴν καλὰ μῶ

**Gen. 49:10** *“The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.”*

Don’t see that obedience of the people in evidence yet – that awaits His Second Coming

Here they take that scepter and beat Him over the head with it

Imperfect tense – kept on beating him and beating him and beating him

the reed that symbolized rulership; they took it from his hand and used it to beat him on his head; complete repudiation of his sovereignty and majesty

being passed around and beat like a piñata

### 2. Emotionally -- The Humiliation

*“and spitting at Him,”*

καὶ ἐνέπτυσον αὐτῷ

the same mouths that should have been employed in praise of their Creator and Sovereign are here engaged in spitting on Jesus

**Second Degree Assault** is a misdemeanor under Maryland Law, although it does carry the very significant maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and or a \$2,500 fine. ... Typical second degree assaults involve punching, kicking, shoving, biting or **spitting on another person**.

This is the ultimate form of expressing contempt for someone

We have had famous examples in the sports arena:

- **Roberto Alomar** - Orioles second baseman spits on the face of umpire John Hirschbeck  
On Sept. 27, 1996
- Sept. 2013 (good month for spitting) **Ray Rice** accused of spitting on Cleveland Browns nose tackle Phil Taylor

### 3. Spiritually -- The Mockery

*“and kneeling and bowing before Him.”*

καὶ τιθέντες τὰ γόνατα προσεκύνουν αὐτῷ.

Feigning worship and subservience

There will come a day when Jesus returns and these same wicked men will have to bow the knee in silent submission and accept the verdict that the Judge of all the earth will deliver

## D. (:20) The Satisfaction of Abuse

### 1. Satisfied with Their Mocking

*“And after they had mocked Him,”*

Καὶ ὅτε ἐνέπαιξαν αὐτῷ,

Did Pilate tell them enough was enough ... or had the soldiers just had enough of this wicked drama?

Got tired of the fun ... couldn't think of anything else to throw at Jesus

### 2. Satisfied with Their Satire

*“they took the purple off Him, and put His garments on Him.”*

ἐξέδυσαν αὐτὸν τὴν πορφύραν καὶ ἐνέδυσαν αὐτὸν τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ.

They got bored with their horseplay and mockery; they had had enough

Look at ISIS and their barbaric executions – amazing how cruel and savage men can be

### 3. Satisfied with Their Sentence

*“And they led Him out to crucify Him.”*

Καὶ ἐξάγουσιν αὐτὸν ἵνα σταυρώσωσιν αὐτόν.

No second thoughts; no wavering over his innocence; no regard for his fate;  
Intent on carrying out the sentence of execution by crucifixion

David Thompson: typically would take the longest route to make a theatrical show out of it; let everyone see the condemned prisoner; executions carried out outside the city; near a major road so everyone could see it

## **(:21) TRANSITION – THE VIA DOLOROSA**

*“They pressed into service a passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene (the father of Alexander and Rufus), to bear His cross.”*

καὶ ἀγγαρεύουσιν παράγοντά τινα Σίμωνα Κυρηναῖον ἐρχόμενον ἀπ’ ἀγροῦ, τὸν πατέρα Ἀλεξάνδρου καὶ Ρούφου, ἵνα ἄρῃ τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ. (Mk. 15:21 BGT)

**Gen. 22** – Abraham taking Isaac to offer him as a sacrifice – laid the wood on Isaac – you carry the wood for your own sacrifice – but here it became a physical impossibility for Jesus to continue to carry His cross

Why are the 2 sons mentioned here? Known to the church

**Rom. 16:13** *“Greet Rufus, a choice man in the Lord, also his mother and mine.”*

Transforming experience for Simon of Cyrene and his sons

**MacArthur:** Biblical scholars generally agree that he was one of the sons of Simon of Cyrene, the man enlisted to carry Jesus' cross and was likely saved through that contact with Christ. Mark wrote his gospel in Rome, possibly after the letter to Rome was written, and circulated. Paul would not have mentioned Rufus if that name were not well known to the church in Rome. . . . Rufus' mother, the wife of Simon of Cyrene, at some time had cared for Paul during his ministry travels.

## CONCLUSION:

**Brian Borgman:** Why did Christ have to suffer such abuse?? We know He must pay the penalty for our sins and suffer death ...

1) Christ's suffering at the hands of men reveals the absolute wretchedness of the human heart and its fundamental attitude towards God and His Son and His rule over our lives --

Offended by behavior of these soldiers

We are more like these soldiers in the depravity of our hearts than like Jesus in His sinless perfection

2) Christ's suffering by the will of God at the hands of men was for us – He suffered and died – closely connected – don't ever separate the two – suffering and death are part of the curse; the last Adam needed to experience this for us; suffers for us in our place by us; we see the beauty and the glory and the majesty of Jesus Christ

This scene of the agony of Jesus captured in poetry by **Bernard of Clairvaux** in the famous hymn:

*“O Sacred Head now wounded, with grief and shame weighed down;  
Now scornfully surrounded with thorns, Thine only crown;  
O sacred Head, what glory, what bliss till now was Thine!  
Yet, though despised and gory, I joy to call Thee mine.”*

As we transition to observing the Lord's Supper this morning, it is our distinct privilege to call this suffering and abused Jesus ... our precious and beloved Savior.

\* \* \* \* \*

## DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How could the crowd change so dramatically in one week from singing the praises of Jesus as He entered Jerusalem to demanding His execution?

2) What kept Pilate from releasing Jesus?

3) What aspects of substitutionary atonement can you see in this passage?

4) Why was it necessary for Jesus to suffer to such an extent before His actual death on the cross?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Edwards:** The other three Gospels relate Jesus' trial in greater detail than does Mark. Matthew records the dream of Pilate's wife (27:19) and Pilate's hand washing (27:24); Luke adds the interrogation before Antipas (23:6-12); and John includes a theological discussion between Jesus and Pilate (18:33-38). Mark narrates the trial with greater economy, focusing first on Jesus' silence before Pilate and second on Pilate's unsuccessful attempt to placate the crowd by offering

amnesty to Jesus.

**Derek Thomas:**

### **1) The Silence of the Lamb**

First of all, He's silent because there is no point in answering these trumped up charges. This is a mob. This is a kangaroo court. There is no justice here. There is no resort to logic or reason here in this court. To speak to these charges might have given them credibility and dignity which they did not possess. . .

And then again I think it's the silence of surrender — a surrender to an over-riding providence that, amidst the injustice, amidst the obscenity of what is happening, amidst the sound of gnarling dogs all around Him there's a calm and sweet repose as He contemplates His Father in heaven, and that with His Father in heaven there are no mistakes, and that all that is happening is occurring and falling out according to a plan and purpose in which He Himself as the covenant Mediator had agreed to before the foundation of the world. True enough, in the Garden of Gethsemane He had wrestled with the will of His Father: "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me. Nevertheless, not My will, but Thy will be done." He knows that He is the King of the Jews in the most profound sense imaginable. He's meditating, I think, on how it is now that, as the Servant of the Lord, He resigns, submits Himself in obedience to all that His Father has asked Him to do on behalf of His children.

### **2) The Suffering of the Lamb**

### **3) The Substitution of the Messiah**

**Ray Stedman:** I would like you to be thinking of four questions as we read this account: The first one is, why did Pilate marvel at the silence of Jesus? Second, Why did the crowd choose Barabbas instead of Jesus? Third, Why did Pilate scourge Jesus before his crucifixion? And fourth, Why did the soldiers mock him with such passion and cruelty?

**Ray Pritchard:** if you put the gospel accounts together, it appears that Pilate tried four times to avoid sentencing Jesus to death. First, he told the Jews to try the case themselves. Second, he sent the case to Herod. Third, he tried to placate the Jews by scourging Jesus instead of crucifying him. Fourth, he tried to make a deal but the people chose Barabbas instead. . .

Fundamentally, it came down to this: Pilate wanted to release Jesus but without any cost to him personally. He wanted to let him go, but without having to take a personal stand. He admired Jesus in a way, but not enough to believe in him. He yielded finally to private blackmail and public pressure. And so he sentenced Jesus to die.

**Lawson: The Trial of Jesus – Part 2 (vv.1-5)**

High watermark level of drama; there are so many things that should amaze us about this account; He stands without any advocacy; He stands condemned here so we would never have to stand condemned before God

### **1. (:1) the formal sentence –**

Held somewhere in the palace of Caiaphas; Sanhedrin waiting for the sun to rise to keep their oral tradition = nobody can be put to capital punishment in the middle of the night; **Luke 22:66ff** gives more details; first 2 religious phases took place at night; It is useless for me to answer

because you will not believe in me; your mind is already made up; there is much that Jesus could have asked of them

## **2. (:2) The first interrogation by Pilate –**

Begins phase 2 = the civil trials – also have 3 parts  
No jury; only a judge; has authority of life and death;  
John 18 gives the enlarged account --

## **3. (:3) The false accusations –**

Jesus' kingdom will not be advanced by force but by faith;  
But Jesus is claiming to be a King over a kingdom; Pilate confused over the nature of the kingdom; I have been born to establish a spiritual, eternal kingdom

## **4. (:4-5) The further questioning --**

### **The Great Exchange (vv.6-15)**

Gospel of grace and substitutionary atonement pictured here; cross on which Jesus died was intended for Barabbas; a visual story of the exchange of the cross = the heart of the gospel; my sins were given to Christ and His righteousness given to me; Christ died in my place for my sins; my sins were laid upon Him.

### **Brian Borgman: Crucify Him**

#### **1) (:6) The Passover Amnesty**

Custom restricted to Judea; any Roman governor had the power to release a prisoner not yet condemned or pardon one condemned; Pilate wanted to get rid of this sticky issue that had been put on his plate

#### **2) (:7) Criminal named Barabbas**

Son of a Jewish rabbi; belonging to the insurrectionists who had committed murder; notorious prisoner; a rebel (not robber); a bloodthirsty freedom fighter for the zealot freedom fighters in Judea; 3 crosses had been prepared – for the three rebels;

3) Pilate making a number of attempts to circumvent the charade of the high priests; understood that the charge against Jesus was bogus; Luke 23:13ff – efforts of Pilate to get rid of Jesus; I will punish him and release him – maybe that would satisfy the chief priests; but they demanded the death penalty

#### **4) Ill fated negotiations (:12)**

At this point Jesus was totally unimpressive as a Messianic figure; he had done nothing to overthrow Rome;

#### **5) (:13) Stunning Answer of the crowd –**

Mark of integrity = making the right decision when everyone around you says Do the opposite; Jesus had disappointed all of their expectations ... yet he had revealed to them the grace of God; There is a scourging that takes place that Mark does not tell us about; Anxious to placate the crowd

### **Alistair Begg: Pilate's Dilemma**

Potential for clemency at this feast; a chance for Pilate to release Jesus; similar to presidential pardons;

#### **1) The characters –**

##### **a) Rome – power exemplified in person of Pilate**

- Proud – amazed and annoyed at silence of Jesus – Don't you know who I am?



- Cruel -- Mark 13
  - Shrewd
  - A Man Pleaser
  - Superstitious
  - Prepared to attempt the impossible – adopting a position of neutrality
- b) Rebel – Barabbas – notorious among those opposed to power of Rome; 2 robbers crucified on either side

c) Rabble – The crowd – not the same crowd that welcomed him on Triumphal Entry; not example of fickleness; Galilean crowd welcomed him; Jerusalem crowd ushered him out; stirred up by the chief priests

d) Religious Leaders –

e) Redeemer – there but didn't speak;

## 2) The Questions posed by Pilate

a. - vs. 9 – *Do you want me to release for you the king of the Jews?* Couldn't understand the depth of their animosity towards Jesus; No, we want Barabbas.

b. *Then what should I do with Jesus?* – practical question; the question for the ages – for every single person; neutrality is not an option

c. *What has He done wrong? What evil has He done?* There is great injustice involved here.

## David Thompson – vv. 16-20

Abuse of deadly force that went on for hours; not some split second decision by the law enforcement officials of the day; mocked and beaten and publicly humiliated; willingly allowed himself to go through all of this in order that we could be saved; didn't defend, protect or save himself;

Soldiers can do whatever they want to Jesus until they put him on the cross;

### 14 humiliating things Jesus allowed to happen to him:

1) they took him to the palace, the Praetorium – Jesus created all of them and gave them life; there is grace – some area where soldiers would gather; you would have thought the scourging would have been enough – now it is their turn to do whatever they want to Jesus – brutal military men

2) called together whole Roman cohort; 1/10 of a legion – 500-600 soldiers; let's have some fun with Jesus; a sadistic game

3) dressed him up in a purple robe – a costume – kind worn by royalty

4) twisted a crown of thorns and put it on his head – long spikes tough as barbed wire; rammed it into his scalp; just 1 thorn would be very painful

5) began to mock him –

6) kept beating his head with a reed – a king normally had some type of scepter in his hand; imperfect tense of verb – kept on beating him

7) spitting on him – the lowest of the low;

8) kneeling and bowing down before him – there will come a day when they will bow down again before him

9) took off the robe and put back on his own garments – their game is over; they have had their fun;

10) they led him out to crucify him – theatrical parade – let everyone see the condemned prisoner

11) pressed Simon into service to carry the cross – the guilty victim was supposed to carry

his cross – shows you were in total submission to the Roman authorities; Jesus had been severely beaten – weakened; loss of blood; his appearance was marred more than any human; cf. Gen. 22:6 – Isaac carrying wood for his own sacrifice; had 2 sons (probably known by the church)

12) brought Christ to Golgotha – place of the skull –

13) tried to give Christ wine mixed with myrrh – but he didn't take it

14) Crucifixion

TEXT: Mark 15:22-41

TITLE: THE CRUCIFIXION

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE VOLUNTARY SUBMISSION OF JESUS TO THE HUMILIATION AND AGONY OF THE UNJUST CRUCIFIXION IN FULFILLMENT OF OT PROPHECY TESTIFIES TO HIS DEITY AND MISSION OF REDEMPTION**

**(:22-32) INTRODUCTION—PART 1:**

We have arrived at the **climactic** point in Mark's gospel where Jesus is now fulfilling His ultimate mission of Redemption.

**Mark 10:45** *“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”*

**Mark 2:20** *“But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.”*

**Mark 8:31**

**Mark 9:12** *“And yet how is it written of the Son of Man that He will suffer many things and be treated with contempt?”*

**Mark 9:31**

**Mark 10:33-34, 38**

**Mark 12** – Parable of the Vineyard Owner

**Mark 14:8** *“she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial.”*

**Mark 14:41** *“the hour has come”*

Focused in on the key events of **the Gospel:**

**Mark 1:1** *“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God”*

**1 Cor. 15:1-4** *“Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures”*

So on the **importance scale** we are off the charts when we come to this historical record of the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Second Adam.

## Alan Carr: The Message of the Cross

**The cross is offensive to some people.** In 1 Cor. 1:23, Paul calls it a “**stumblingblock**”. This word comes from the Greek word “**skandalon**” which meant **a trap** or **a snare**. It came to mean **something that trips a person up and causes them to fall**. We get the English word “**scandal**” from this word. To the Jews, the cross was a scandal! They could not conceive of the Messiah being nailed to a cross! They literally stumbled over the cross!

**The cross is foolishness to some people.** In 1 Cor. 1:23, Paul uses tells us that the Greeks considered the cross to be “**foolishness**”. This word comes from the Greek word “**moria**”, which gives us the English word “**moron**”. The sophisticated Greeks looked at a Savior dying on a cross and they declared it to be “**moronic foolishness**”.

**But, for a few, the cross is an object of power and wisdom.** In 1 Cor. 1:24, Paul says that those who have grasped the true message of the cross understand that it is not weak or foolish. It is instead, the power of God and the wisdom of God. It is the power of God because through the cross God forever destroyed the kingdom of Satan and broke the grip of sin. It is the wisdom of God because in the cross, God used a tool that neither man nor devil could have ever foreseen to accomplish salvation for His people. Had Satan known what Jesus would accomplish through the cross, he never would have pushed Jesus to the cross, 2 Cor. 2:8.

Notice the level of detail the writer provides for the mocking and the scorn and the humiliation vs the lack of detail for the physical aspects of His suffering

## THE VOLUNTARY SUBMISSION OF JESUS TO THE HUMILIATION AND AGONY OF THE UNJUST CRUCIFIXION IN FULFILLMENT OF OT PROPHECY TESTIFIES TO HIS DEITY AND MISSION OF REDEMPTION

### I. (:22-28) THE STAGING OF THE CRUCIFIXION – NAILING DOWN THE HISTORICAL REALITY OF THE EVENT

#### A. (:22) The Place – Historical and Geographical Identification as the Place of a Skull

“Then they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull.”

Καὶ φέρουσιν αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τὸν Γολγοθᾶν τόπον, ὃ ἐστὶν μεθερμηνεύμενον Κρανίου Τόπος.

This event occurred at a specific geographic location that was known to Mark’s readers; could be visibly identified by anyone who wanted to check it out

Associated with death

#### B. (:23) The Pain – Refusing Anesthesia – not some mythical suffering

“And they tried to give Him wine mixed with myrrh; but He did not take it.”

καὶ ἐδίδουν αὐτῷ ἐσμυρνισμένον οἶνον· ὃς δὲ οὐκ ἔλαβεν.

Myrrh was connected with the birth of Jesus – one of the gifts brought by the wise men

**Parunak:** His suffering is deliberate, purposeful. He must sense the forsaking by the Father to relieve us of that agony.

#### C. (:24) The Perspective – Viewed from Different Vantage Points

*“And they crucified Him, and divided up His garments among themselves, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take.”*

*Καὶ σταυροῦσιν αὐτὸν καὶ διαμερίζονται τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ βάλλοντες κλῆρον ἐπ’ αὐτὰ τίς τί ἄρη.*

- Such a simple statement of what went down – such profound significance

1. Viewed from Perspective of **God the Father** – Fulfillment of OT Prophecy –

**Ps. 22:18**

Part of the eternal plan of salvation

:This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased” – at the same time how it must have hurt the Father to see His son suffer such humiliation and agony

What forbearance .... What restraint .... What mercy ... what love

2. Viewed from **God the Son** – Jesus who was experiencing the humiliation and agony

- Personal bankruptcy – Jesus left with nothing

Humbled Himself and submitted to this death on the cross – Phil. 2

3. Viewed from the **Soldiers** – they are the subject of this sentence

- Executing the proscribed sentence – serving as the executioners – here of an innocent man but they did not care

- Indifference of the soldiers – dividing up the trophies = his clothes – could not have been of much value aside from memorabilia

Headgear, sandals, belt, outer tunic – seamless tunic

4. Viewed from **our perspective** – should impact us deeply and touch our hearts

- Substitutionary death – He who was rich became poor for our sakes

**2 Cor. 8:9** *“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.”*

**William Barclay:** When they reached the place of crucifixion, the cross was laid flat on the ground. The prisoner was stretched upon it and his hands nailed to it. The feet were not nailed but only loosely bound. Between the prisoner's legs projected a ledge of wood called the saddle, to take his weight when the cross was raised upright--otherwise the nails would have torn through the flesh of the hands. The cross was then lifted upright and set in its socket--and the criminal was left to die. The cross was not tall. It was shaped like the letter T, and had no top piece at all. Sometimes prisoners hung for as long as a week, slowly dying of hunger and of thirst, suffering sometimes to the point of actual madness.

**Jim Bomkamp:** After being nailed to a cross for crucifixion, the person would be suspended in the air exposed to all of the elements, and be in excruciating pain. As the person continued to bleed, his heart would begin to pump harder and harder to try to keep his blood pressure up and keep him conscious, and water would fill the sack around his heart. The person's organs would one at a time begin to fail because of lack of oxygen. Breathing would become more and more difficult with each breath, and every breath required the person to push himself upwards to allow his lungs to fill with air. Finally, when the person had not the strength or ability to lift himself up for another breath, or when his heart could take it no longer, the person would die of heart failure or suffocation. But, death for most did not come for a day or two or longer, and during that entire time the person would be in excruciating pain.

**Thomas Constable:** Simon is ordered to place the patibulum [crosspiece] on the ground and Jesus is quickly thrown backwards with His shoulders against the wood. The legionnaire feels for the depression at the front of the wrist. He drives a heavy, square, wrought-iron nail through the wrist and deep into the wood. Quickly, he moves to the other side and repeats the action, being careful not to pull the arms too tightly, but to allow some flexion and movement. The patibulum is then lifted in place at the top of the stipes [the vertical beam]....

"The left foot is pressed backward against the right foot, and with both feet extended, toes down, a nail is driven through the arch of each, leaving the knees moderately flexed. The Victim is now crucified. As He slowly sags down with more weight on the nails in the wrists, excruciating, fiery pain shoots along the fingers and up the arms to explode in the brain-the nails in the wrists are putting pressure on the median nerves. As He pushes Himself upward to avoid this stretching torment, He places His full weight on the nail through His feet. Again there is the searing agony of the nail tearing through the nerves between the metatarsal bones of the feet.

"At this point, another phenomenon occurs. As the arms fatigue, great waves of cramps sweep over the muscles, knotting them in deep, relentless, throbbing pain. With these cramps comes the inability to push Himself upward.... Air can be drawn into the lungs, but cannot be exhaled. Jesus fights to raise Himself in order to get even one small breath. Finally carbon dioxide builds up in the lungs and in the blood stream and the cramps partially subside. Spasmodically He is able to push himself upward to exhale and bring in the life-giving oxygen....

"Hours of this limitless pain, cycles of twisting, joint-rending cramps, intermittent partial asphyxiation, searing pain as tissue is torn from His lacerated back as He moves up and down against the rough timber. Then another agony begins. A deep crushing pain deep in the chest as the pericardium slowly fills with serum and begins to compress the heart....

"It is now almost over-the loss of tissue fluids has reached a critical level-the compressed heart is struggling to pump heavy, thick, sluggish blood into the tissues-the tortured lungs are making a frantic effort to gasp in small gulps of air....

"The body of Jesus is now in extremis, and He can feel the chill of death creeping through His tissues...

**MacArthur:** "took His outer garments and made four parts, a part to every soldier and also the tunic. Now the tunic was seamless, woven in one place. There would have been a headpiece, shoes, an undergarment, a tunic and then on top of that, a seamless robe." And that's the next verse. They said to one another, "Let's not tear that seamless robe, woven in one piece, but cast lots for it, to decide whose it shall be. This was to fulfill the Scripture, they divided My outer garments among them and for My clothing, they cast lots." That's directly quoted from Psalm 22:18, that they would cast lots for His garments. That's what they did. It was customary for executioners to get those pieces of clothing from their victim.

#### **D. (:25) The Point in History -- Timestamp**

*"And it was the third hour when they crucified Him."*

ἦν δὲ ὥρα τρίτη καὶ ἐσταύρωσαν αὐτόν.

Jewish reckoning – beginning of day at 6 AM ... so this would be 9 AM  
[gospel of John used Roman time reckoning -- ]

### **E. (:26) The Placard Containing the Charge**

*“And the inscription of the charge against Him read, ‘THE KING OF THE JEWS.’”*  
και ἦν ἡ ἐπιγραφὴ τῆς αἰτίας αὐτοῦ ἐπιγεγραμμένη· ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων.

### **Cf. Ps. 2:1-6**

We learn from the 19th chapter of John also that Pilate had this inscription written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek so that everyone would be able to understand it.

**Hendriksen:** Pilate’s motivation for making sure this placard of the charge hung on the cross:

- to tell the Jews, “I do not at all believe the charge you brought against him”
- to mock the Jews – look at the pitiful king that represents such a pitiful people

## **II. (:27-28) THE STIGMA OF THE CRUCIFIXION**

### **A. (:27) Flanked by Common Criminals**

*“And they crucified two robbers with Him, one on His right and one on His left.”*  
Καὶ σὺν αὐτῷ σταυροῦσιν δύο ληστές, ἓνα ἐκ δεξιῶν καὶ ἓνα ἐξ εὐωνύμων αὐτοῦ.

Fulfills **Isa. 53:12**

Remember that James and John had asked to sit at Jesus’ right and left hands in glory (Mark 10:37) – but they could not drink the cup Jesus was to drink or be baptized with His baptism

### **B. (:28) Fulfilling OT Prophecy**

*“And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, ‘And He was numbered with transgressors.’”*  
Καὶ ἐπληρώθη ἡ γραφὴ ἣ λέγουσα, Καὶ μετὰ ἀνόμων ἐλογίσθη. [BYZ]

Not in some of the older manuscripts

## **III. (:29-32) THE SCOFFING OF THE CRUCIFIXION**

### **A. (:29-30) By the Crowd**

*“And those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads, and saying, ‘Ha! You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself, and come down from the cross!’”*

Καὶ οἱ παραπορευόμενοι ἐβλασφήμουν αὐτὸν κινοῦντες τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτῶν . . .  
οὐὰ ὁ καταλύων τὸν ναὸν καὶ οἰκοδομῶν ἐν τρισὶν ἡμέραις,  
σῶσον σεαυτὸν καταβάς ἀπὸ τοῦ σταυροῦ.

**Parunak:** What they did: The verb means "defiant irreverence." It emphasizes their impiety, their disregard for the things of God. Shows the shallowness of the multitudes, who swarmed after Jesus out of curiosity and herd instinct, not because they truly feared God.

**Hiebert:** “wagging their heads” – a familiar Old Testament gesture of scorn and derision (2 Ki 19:21; Ps 109:25; Lam 2:15)

*“I also have become a reproach to them;  
When they see me, they wag their head.”*

**James Edwards:** Since the arrest of Jesus Mark has narrated the passion as an antiphony between the witness of Jesus and human responses to it.

- The first antiphony was Jesus’ confession before the Sanhedrin (14:61-62), followed by the mockery and maltreatment of the Sanhedrin (14:63-65) and Peter’s denial (14:66-72).
- The second was Jesus’ appearance before Pilate (15:2-5), followed by shouts from the crowd for his death (15:16-20).
- The third antiphony was the crucifixion of Jesus (15:21-26), followed by mockery from the bystanders (15:27-32).

### **B. (:31-32a) By the Chief Priests and Scribes**

*“In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes, were mocking Him among themselves and saying, ‘He saved others; He cannot save Himself. Let this Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe!’”*

ὁμοίως καὶ οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς ἐμπαίζοντες πρὸς ἀλλήλους μετὰ τῶν γραμματέων ἔλεγον· ἄλλους ἔσωσεν, ἑαυτὸν οὐ δύναται σῶσαι·  
ὁ χριστὸς ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἰσραὴλ καταβάτω νῦν ἀπὸ τοῦ σταυροῦ, ἵνα ἴδωμεν καὶ πιστεύσωμεν.

### **C. (:32b) By the Common Criminals**

*“And those who were crucified with Him were casting the same insult at Him.”  
καὶ οἱ συνεσταυρωμένοι σὺν αὐτῷ ὠνειδίζον αὐτόν.*

## **CONCLUSION:**

**James Edwards:** In this haunting picture of Jesus, fastened to a cross and assailed in mockery, we see “proof of the amazing difference between God’s way and everything which men consider their goal or conceive of as being God’s way.” There is no self-defense from Jesus, no effort to get even or get in the final word, no attempt to preserve at least a modicum of dignity and pride. Jesus surrenders in total vulnerability to the malevolence and violence of the world.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:**

**Steven Lawson: Survey of the Cross**

### **1) The Painful Execution**

Procedure for fastening Jesus to the cross

Pain was excruciating

Full weight of his body pulling at torn flesh around his wrists

Dizziness, cramp, thirst, hunger, shame, sleeplessness ....



Soldiers remain indifferent and unchanged

## 2) The Mocking Inscription

A political football being kicked about between the political leaders of Rome and the religious Jewish leaders

Backed Pilate into a corner so that he condemned him to crucifixion

Inscription written on a placard, a board – mockery against the Jewish leaders – you pathetic and pitiful people – this man hanging on a cross is your king

God is making the wrath of men to praise Him – giving the testimony of the identification of Jesus Christ – the Sovereign king over all

## 3) The Guilty Association

2 notorious criminals – adds to the public shame

Could not have been a more demeaning association

Not petty thieves or cat thieves or common robbers; they were revolutionaries trying to overturn the society and the govt.; more like terrorists trying to disrupt the public order

## 4) The Defiant Aggression

Jewish pilgrims passing by – had come to celebrate Passover – major highway went by Calvary; maybe this was at an intersection of several main arteries

Taunting and mocking Jesus with all kinds of verbal abuse

Wagging the head = Gesture of hatred and derision and raw contempt

“Ha” – arrogance and superiority – putting Jesus down with glee and scorn

Acted for the joy that was set before Him despite the shame of the cross – Heb. 12

## (:33-41) INTRODUCTION – Part 2:

## IV. (:33-37) THE SUFFERING OF THE CRUCIFIXION

### A. (:33) Suffering Associated with the Darkness of Divine Judgment

*“And when the sixth hour had come, darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour.”*

Καὶ γενομένης ὥρας ἕκτης σκότος ἐγένετο ἐφ’ ὅλην τὴν γῆν ἕως ὥρας ἐνάτης.

Not caused by any storm or natural cause

Not an eclipse – since this is Passover (full moon) and darkness lasted for 3 hours, not just a matter of minutes

God turned out the lights in the middle of the day

Very eerie ; very scary  
OT precedent

*“Well might the sun in darkness hide and shut its glories in  
when God the mighty maker died for man the creature’s sin”*

– **Isaac Watts** hymn – it makes sense that the sun would be hidden and darkness would be pervasive

**Amos 8:4-9**

**Ex. 10: 21-22**

**MacArthur:** The Lord by this time had already spoken three times. He had already said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,” which informed thief on the cross that forgiveness was available if he asked for it, which he did and received it. And then He said to John, the Apostle, “Behold your mother,” indicating that John was going to have to care for Mary since He no longer could do that and since His brothers were unbelievers in Him. John was given the responsibility to care for Mary and then from the cross He said to His mother, “Behold your son,” meaning John. He put them in the care of each other. The third thing He said was to the penitent thief when He said, “Today you will be with Me in paradise.” And then it was midday. . .

any reader of the Old Testament also knows that there were times when God is spoken of as darkness...as darkness. And it goes all the way back to Genesis 15 verses 12 to 15, and Exodus 10, verses 21 and 22, and Exodus 19 at Mount Sinai, verses 16 to 18 when God appears in darkness and Exodus 20 verses 18 to 21, and Isaiah 5, and Isaiah 8, and other places, God also was associated with darkness. The presence of God could be manifest light and the presence of God could be manifest darkness. [in conjunction with divine wrath associated with the day of the Lord]

Darkness symbolizes divine fury. Darkness symbolizes righteous wrath, final fury being unleashed. Darkness then is the ultimate form of God’s presence in judgment. That is why hell, which is everlasting subjection to divine judgment, is a place that Jesus said in Matthew three times, is outer darkness, where there’s weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth in eternal unrelieved blackness. And it is the darkness of God’s presence. He is the one who is present in judgment in hell from noon to three o’clock.

**Constable:** sign of God’s judgment on Jesus (cf. Isaiah 5:25-30; Isaiah 59:9-10; Joel 2:31; Joel 3:14-15; Amos 8:9-10; Micah 3:5-7; Zephaniah 1:14-15).

**Jim Bomkamp:** This supernatural darkness reminds me of the three days of darkness that preceded the final Egyptian plague in the book of Exodus when the Lord was delivering the Israelites from bondage and slavery. The firstborn of all of the Egyptians was killed at the end of this time by the Angel of Death who passed over the land. It was also at this time that the original Passover was enacted when the Passover Lamb was slain and its blood placed on the lintels of the homes of the Israelite’s, and protected their firstborn from being slain by the Angel of Death. It is only appropriate that darkness should likewise precede the death of the Jesus, the Lamb of God sacrificed for the sins of mankind, the One whose blood is the atonement for our sins, if we trust in Jesus alone for salvation.

## **B. (:34) Suffering Associated with Abandonment (Alienation) by the Holy God**

*“And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?’ which is translated, ‘My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?’”*

καὶ τῇ ἐνάτῃ ὥρᾳ ἐβόησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς φωνῇ μεγάλῃ· ἐλωὶ ἐλωὶ λεμα σαβαχθανι; ὃ ἐστὶν μεθερμηνευόμενον· ὁ θεός μου ὁ θεός μου, εἰς τί ἐγκατέλιπές με;

**Borgman - 14:32** – Cry of Golgotha only makes sense against backdrop of prayer of Gethsemane  
Had prayed that the hour might pass Him by  
His hour was the climax of His earthly ministry that would end in suffering on Calvary;  
Had prayed for removal of the cup;

**MacArthur:** When Jesus said, “*My God, My God,*” this is the only time in the New Testament that He ever referred to God in any other way than Father. Every other time He spoke to God, He called Him Father.

**Constable:** an acknowledgment that the Father had abandoned Him. God abandoned Jesus in the judicial sense that He focused His wrath on the Son (cf. Mark 14:36). Jesus bore God’s curse and His judgment for sin (cf. Deuteronomy 21:22-23; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13). God, who cannot look on sin (Habakkuk 1:13), turned His back, so to speak, on Jesus who bore that sin in His own body on the cross. Jesus experienced separation from God when He took the place of sinners ( Mark 10:45; Romans 5:8; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 Peter 3:18).

**William Barclay:** Jesus had taken this life of ours upon him. He had done our work and faced our temptations and borne our trials. He had suffered all that life could bring. He had known the failure of friends, the hatred of foes, the malice of enemies. He had known the most searing pain that life could offer. Up to this moment Jesus had gone through every experience of life except one--he had never known the consequence of sin. Now if there is one thing sin does, it separates us from God. It puts between us and God a barrier like an unscalable wall. That was the one human experience through which Jesus had never passed, because he was without sin.

## **C. (:35-36) Suffering Associated with Misunderstanding on the Part of the Bystanders**

[others think this is continuation of the mocking on more of a malevolent motivation ... but I see misunderstanding with a hint of compassion]

### 1. (:35) Superstition Over Faith

*“And when some of the bystanders heard it, they began saying, ‘Behold, He is calling for Elijah.’”*

καὶ τινες τῶν παρεστηκότων ἀκούσαντες ἔλεγον· ἴδε Ἡλίαν φωνεῖ.

### 2. (:36) Religious Expectations Over Spiritual Discernment

*“And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink, saying, ‘Let us see whether Elijah will come to take Him down.’”*

δραμῶν δέ τις [καὶ] γεμίσας σπόγγον ὄξους περιθεις καλάμῳ ἐπότιζεν αὐτὸν λέγων· ἄφετε ἴδωμεν εἰ ἔρχεται Ἡλίας καθελεῖν αὐτόν.

Fulfills **Ps. 69:21** “*They also gave me gall for my food and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.*”

## **D. (:37) Suffering Transcended by Victorious Accomplishment of His Mission of Redemption**

ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἀφείσ φωνὴν μεγάλην ἐξέπνευσεν.

### 1. Cry of Triumph

“*And Jesus uttered a loud cry,*”

Not a cry of anguish and suffering and torment

**1 Cor. 15:55-57**

## **WHAT DID DEATH OF CHRIST ACCOMPLISH?**

### 1. Expiation

Expiation means the removal of our sin and guilt. Christ’s death removes — expiates — our sin and guilt. The guilt of our sin was taken away from us and placed on Christ, who discharged it by his death.

Thus, in **John 1:29**, John the Baptist calls Jesus “*the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*” Jesus takes away, that is, expiates, our sins. Likewise, **Isaiah 53:6** says, “*The Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on him,*” and **Hebrews 9:26** says “*He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.*”

[so that we can experience **the forgiveness of sins**]

### 2. Propitiation

Whereas expiation refers to the removal of our sins, propitiation refers to the removal of God’s wrath.

By dying in our place for our sins, Christ removed the wrath of God that we justly deserved. In fact, it goes even further: a propitiation is not simply a sacrifice that removes wrath, but a sacrifice that removes wrath and turns it into favor. (Note: a propitiation does not turn wrath into love — God already loved us fully, which is the reason he sent Christ to die; it turns his wrath into favor so that his love may realize its purpose of doing good to us every day, in all things, forever, without sacrificing his justice and holiness.)

Several passages speak of Christ’s death as a propitiation for our sins. **Romans 3:25-26** says that God “*displayed [Christ] publicly as a propitiation in his blood through faith. This was to demonstrate his righteousness, because in the forbearance of God he passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration of his righteousness at the present time, that he might be just and the justifier of him who has faith in Jesus.*”

Likewise, **Hebrews 2:17** says that Christ made “*propitiation for the sins of the people*” and **1 John 4:10** says “*in this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*”

[so that God **justified sinners** so that we will **never suffer the wrath of God**]

### 3. Reconciliation

Whereas **expiation refers to the removal of our sins, and propitiation refers to the removal of God's wrath, reconciliation refers to the removal of our alienation from God.**

Because of our sins, we were alienated — separated — from God. Christ's death removed this alienation and thus reconciled us to God. We see this, for example, in **Romans 5:10-11**: "*For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.*"

[so that we have **peace with God**]

### 4. Redemption

Our sins had put us in captivity from which we need to be delivered. The price that is paid to deliver someone from captivity is called a "ransom." To say that Christ's death accomplished redemption for us means that it accomplished deliverance from our captivity through the payment of a price.

There are three things we had to be released from: **the curse of the law, the guilt of sin, and the power of sin.** Christ redeemed us from each of these.

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law: "*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us*" (**Galatians 3:13-14**).

Christ redeemed us from the guilt of our sin. We are "*justified as a gift by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus*" (**Romans 3:24**).

Christ redeemed us from the power of sin: "*knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your fathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ*" (**1 Peter 1:18-19**).

Note that we are not simply redeemed from the guilt of sin; to be redeemed from the power of sin means that our slavery to sin is broken. We are now free to live to righteousness. Our redemption from the power of sin is thus the basis of our ability to live holy lives: "*You have been bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your bodies*" (**1 Corinthians 6:20**).

[so that we experience **deliverance from sins**]

### 5. Defeat of the Powers of Darkness

Christ's death was a defeat of the power of Satan. "*He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him*" (**Colossians 3:15**). Satan's only weapon that can ultimately hurt people is unforgiven sin. Christ took this weapon away from him for all who would believe, defeating him and all the powers of darkness in his death by, as the verse right before this says, "*having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross*" (**Colossians 2:13-14**).

[so that we are **victorious in Christ**]

#### And he Did All of This By Dying As Our Substitute

The **reality of substitution** is at the heart of the atonement. Christ accomplished all of the above benefits for us by dying in our place — that is, by dying instead of us. We deserved to die, and he took our sin upon him and paid the penalty himself.

[so that we are **united forever with Christ – pictured in baptism**]

This is what it means that Christ died for us (**Romans 5:8**) and gave himself for us (**Galatians 2:20**). As Isaiah says, “*he was pierced through for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities . . . the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on him*” (**Isaiah 53:5-6**). You see the reality of substitution underlying all of the benefits discussed above, as the means by which Christ accomplished them. For example, substitution is the means by which we were **ransomed**: “*The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many*” (**Matthew 20:28**). Christ’s death was a ransom for us — that is, instead of us. Likewise, Paul writes that “*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us*” (**Galatians 3:13**).

Substitution is the means by which we were **reconciled**: “*For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that he might bring us to God*” (**1 Peter 3:18**). It is the means of **expiation**: “*He made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in him*” (**2 Corinthians 5:21**) and “*He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness*” (**1 Peter 2:24**). And by dying in our place, taking the penalty for our sins upon himself, Christ’s death is also the means of **propitiation**.

<https://www.whatsbestnext.com/2011/04/6-things-christ-accomplished-by-his-death/>

## 2. Commitment of Spirit to God the Father “*and breathed His last.*”

Cessation of breathing

**Constable**: Normally it took as long as two or three days for crucified people to die. [Note: **Grassmick**, p190.] Jesus’ relatively short period of suffering on the cross amazed Pilate (Mark 15:44).

Certainly it amazed the Roman soldier who was presiding over the crucifixion

## **V. (:38-39) THE SUPERNATURAL VINDICATING SIGNS OF THE CRUCIFIXION**

### **A. (:38) The Supernatural Vindicating Sign of the Tearing of the Veil of the Temple – Sign to the Jews**

“*And the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.*”

Καὶ τὸ καταπέτασμα τοῦ ναοῦ ἐσχίσθη εἰς δύο ἀπ’ ἄνωθεν ἕως κάτω.

Not some flimsy curtain; Veil of temple is 4” thick; 60’ tall  
Happens at 3 pm just as the priests are sacrificing the Passover lambs

Hebrews 9:3-12  
Hebrews 10:19-23

**Parunak:** The veil separates the holy place from the holy of holies, the inner sanctum where God's glory dwells and where only one person (the HP) can go, only one day a year (the day of atonement). Represents the inaccessibility of God under the old covenant.

**Jim Bomkamp:** The veil symbolized that access to God was blocked under the old covenant. A person could not come directly before the Lord, directly into His presence. Prayers could be offered but to come directly into the Shekinah glory and presence of God and fellowship with God was blocked.

The veil was very thick and made of twisted blue, purple, and scarlet material. It was very strong and durable. Yet the minute Christ died the veil was miraculously torn completely in two, and this was evidenced because it was torn beginning from the top down to the bottom. The implication was that now direct access and fellowship with God and the Shekinah glory of His presence, is available through Christ.

**MacArthur:** And officially at three o’clock in the afternoon on that Friday in April in the year A.D. 30, the Old Covenant was abolished. The temple was nullified. The priesthood was voided. And all sacrifices became pointless because the only true and saving sacrifice had been offered.

## **B. (:39) The Supernatural Vindicating Sign of the Testimony of the Attending Centurion – Sign to the Gentiles**

*“And when the centurion, who was standing right in front of Him, saw the way He breathed His last, he said, ‘Truly this man was the Son of God!’”*

Ἰδὼν δὲ ὁ κεντυρίων ὁ παρεστηκώς ἐξ ἐναντίας αὐτοῦ ὅτι οὕτως ἐξέπνευσεν εἶπεν· ἀληθῶς οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος υἱὸς θεοῦ ἦν.

First believer in Christ not a religious scholar but a tough, pagan Roman soldier

Death reached out to Gentiles

What happened to that Roman soldier – hooked up with Joseph of Arithmithea – tradition says he travelled and had testimony

**Parunak:** How many men has he seen die, or even himself put to death? Yet the Lord's patience in suffering, the supernatural sign of the darkened sun, his words from the tree, and the rapidity and deliberateness of his death (cf. v.44) persuade even this hardened man that this is God's son.

## **VI. (:40-41) THE SUPPORTING FEMALE SPECTATORS OF THE CRUCIFIXION**

### **A. (:40a) The Interest of the Women Onlookers**

*“And there were also some women looking on from a distance,”*

Ἦσαν δὲ καὶ γυναῖκες ἀπὸ μακρόθεν θεωροῦσαι

**William Barclay:** There were the women in the distance. They were bewildered, heart-broken,

drenched in sorrow--but they were there. They loved so much that they could not leave him. Love clings to Christ even when the intellect cannot understand. It is only love which can give us a hold on Christ that even the most bewildering experiences cannot break.

## **B. (:40b-41a) The Identity of Those Closest to Jesus**

### 1. Familiar Women

*“among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses, and Salome.”*

ἐν αἷς καὶ Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ καὶ Μαρία ἡ Ἰακώβου τοῦ μικροῦ καὶ Ἰωσήτος μήτηρ καὶ Σαλώμη,

Luke 8:2 delivered from severe case of demon possession

### 2. Faithful Women

*“And when He was in Galilee, they used to follow Him and minister to Him;”*

αἱ ὅτε ἦν ἐν τῇ Γαλιλαίᾳ ἠκολούθουν αὐτῷ καὶ διηκόνουν αὐτῷ,

## **C. (:41b) The Inclusion of Many Others**

*“and there were many other women who had come up with Him to Jerusalem.”*

καὶ ἄλλαι πολλαὶ αἱ συναναβᾶσαι αὐτῷ εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα.

Where are the faithful men????

## **CONCLUSION:**

**Parunak:** What does the death of Jesus of Nazareth mean to you? Is it just another execution (as it was for the soldiers)? Is it a subject for mockery and blasphemy (as for the passersby, the priests, and the robbers)? Or do you recognize it as the most important transaction in the history of the world, your only hope for forgiveness of sin and fellowship with your creator?

\* \* \* \* \*

## **QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:**

**MacArthur:** Three features come out of this account, three separate features.

- 1) First, we look at the Savior and the consummation of His sacrifice.
- 2) Then we look at the centurion and the confession of his faith.
- 3) And then we look at the women and the confusion in their minds.

## **Alistair Begg: The Crucifixion**

The pivotal event of human history; Jesus brings nothing but Himself to this sacrifice offering; Do I believe that in Jesus there is the only atoning sacrifice for sins or not?



## **1. The Darkness during the day (:33) – covered the whole land**

Eerie; palpable darkness – connotations of the end of the world;

Deut. 28; Amos 8 – signal indication that God is displeased and is executing judgment

Ex. 10:21 – second to last plague; preparation for Exodus; lasted for 3 days; God's mercy made available – will it be death of first-born or of Passover Lamb for your household?

Convergent lines of sacrificial system now coming together in person of Jesus and his sacrifice on the cross as ultimate Passover Lamb

## **2. Loud Cries of Jesus (:34, 37)**

a. First Cry -- Translates for us the vernacular Aramaic; quoting Ps. 22:1; Jesus knew his bible; doesn't quote it in the original Hebrew but in everyday language of his life;

Entering into a realm He has never experienced; essential union of Trinity not broken but here

we have Son of God forsaken by God the Father

Not merely a felt but a real abandonment by His Father; does not refer here to God as His Father;

Cry of bewilderment; forsakenness

Essential nature of sin in all of its horror is revealed here

Only the Spirit of God brings about the conviction of sin; Not: I may have made a few mistakes

... or not been perfect ... -- viewing sin as absolutely horrendous – takes the death of God's only Son to fix it

b. Second Cry – cried out with a loud shout; triumphs; It is Finished; Jesus did not die the way other people died; might have taken people 2 days to die; in order to hasten their death they would break the legs of the prisoner – preventing the pulmonary collapse from asphyxiation; but Jesus is not getting weaker and weaker – cries with a loud voice and then dies; Pilate cannot believe that Jesus has died so soon; dies in full control of His faculties and His voice

## **3. Curiosity of the Bystanders with Hint of Compassion (:35)**

Superstitious notion that Elijah would fulfil role of patron saint of sufferers; he could show up and help you; is this malevolent?? Thirst quenching drink at foot of cross; prolong life of Jesus to see whether Elijah would come to rescue Him; Jesus doesn't refuse this drink

Cf. little sponge on stick to moisten lips of one dying

So that Jesus might have the power and capacity in His voice to give His final shout

Cf. people standing before the very cross of Christ and they don't get it

## **4. (:38) Incident of Divine Vandalism – Tearing of the Curtain**

would be impossible even for human to tear from bottom; you know that if you have tried to tear open a package of peanuts

God tore His own curtain; wrecked His own temple; chastised His own Son; rendered obsolete sacrificial system; made access available with open arms

### **David Thompson:**

No storm caused this darkness; God just turned the lights off

Something very scary; being cast into outer darkness is not place of partying and fun;

Mark gives cry in Greek; sin will separate you from God; words of despair; the only words that Mark records

Deep mystery in this abandonment; He had endured much before this and had not cried out;

Teaching of Bible: God may not deliver us from the trial but will support us through the trial – will never leave or abandon or forsake His people – but here is one moment when God

abandoned His own Son

He realizes the judicial moment of this hour; this is not some paternal family moment – this is the exact moment He was made a curse for us

Sour wine cheaper than regular wine – the drink of the soldiers

Fully conscious of everything that was happening;

Last words: It is finished; into thy hands I commend my spirit –

### **Brian Borgman: Immanuel's Cry of Abandonment (:33-34)**

Much activity during first 3 hours; but things are subdued once darkness fell on the scene;

Atmosphere of Calvary changed

No more mocking and blaspheming; all is quiet now

Jesus knew His hour had come;

The cosmic dimensions of Jesus' death

Harbinger of day of the Lord and His wrath coming;

Amos

Ex.10:21-22

The Bible is silent about what transpires during this time period; we cannot comprehend;

Something unfathomable and inscrutable about this cry from the cross;

Every word caused considerable pain

Although the Father had abandoned the Son, the Son in no way abandoned the Father but clung to Him in faith

Words reflect a real abandonment by the Father; not merely a felt abandonment

#### 4 reasons why Jesus uttered this cry:

1) the Sinless Son had indeed been abandoned by the Father

Had known perfect fellowship with the Father

**John 16:32** – all you disciples will abandon me but my Father will not abandon me

Nothing happened to the unity of the Godhead

2) the Sinless Son was taking the place of Sinners

**Is. 59** – your sins have separated you from your God

Separation is just punishment for sin

Becoming sin for us; bearing the curse we deserved;

He is covered with all of our sin;

3) the sinless Son was drinking the cup which sinners deserved

Ps. 75 describes that cup

The cup of His wrath; the chalice of His reeling

Unmixed with mercy

Must drink it down to its dregs

4) the sinless Son was absorbing the wrath which sinners deserved

Hell came to Golgotha

**Constable:**

**Some Women Who Observed the Crucifixion**

<b>Matthew 27:56</b>	<b>Mark 15:40</b>	<b>John 19:25</b>
Mary Magdalene	Mary Magdalene	Mary Magdalene
		Jesus' mother (Mary)
Mary the mother of James and Joseph =	Mary the mother of James the less and Joses =	Mary the wife of Clopas
Mother of Zebedee's sons =	Salome =	Jesus' mother's sister

TEXT: Mark 15:42-47

TITLE: *BURIAL OF JESUS – OVERLOOKED BUT VERY SIGNIFICANT*

**BIG IDEA:**

**EVERY DETAIL OF THE BURIAL OF JESUS CHRIST DEMONSTRATES THE SOVEREIGN OUTWORKING OF THE PROVIDENTIAL PLAN OF GOD**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Everybody knows the attention given to the first born ... and of course the baby of the family remains significant forever ... it is the child or two in the middle that can sometimes be lost in the shuffle. That's how it is with significant events as well. 1 Cor. 15 makes it plain that the crucifixion, the burial and the resurrection are all key components of the gospel message. Yet how much prominence is given to the burial?

**MacArthur:** Those are two very, very significant marks in the life and ministry of Christ. There is one, however, in the middle of them, between the cross and the resurrection that is equally monumental, although it is usually overlooked. It is the burial of Jesus. Maybe you've never even thought about that. Maybe you've never even taken time to consider the significance of the burial of Christ. It had human elements, but was no less supernatural than what was happening at the cross, or the Resurrection. This is an amazing, supernatural, divinely orchestrated event. And I mean by that, the burial of Jesus Christ. You might even say that when He was dead in the body, He was alive in the Spirit and He basically coordinated His own funeral. He controlled every detail of His own burial.

**The burial of Jesus is strong affirmation of His deity and His Messiahship, strong affirmation of the veracity of Scripture, the deity of Christ, the sovereignty of God and the purpose of history. All of that from the burial of Jesus.**

Staging for the coming resurrection

All things are accomplished by the Sovereign hand of God in accordance with His providential plan

**EVERY DETAIL OF THE BURIAL OF JESUS CHRIST DEMONSTRATES THE SOVEREIGN OUTWORKING OF THE PROVIDENTIAL PLAN OF GOD**

Same with the details of our lives as well

**I. (:42) CRISIS OF TIMING –  
DEMONSTRATION OF THE PROVIDENTIAL PLAN OF GOD**

*“And when evening had already come, because it was the preparation day, that is, the day before the Sabbath,”*

*Καὶ ἤδη ὀψίας γενομένης, ἐπεὶ ἦν παρασκευὴ ὃ ἐστὶν προσάββατον,*

Jesus died at 3 pm; was buried before sunset; probably around 4 pm when Joseph secured permission for the body

For the Jews ... 2 evenings – first began a 3 pm – that is what is referenced here; the second

began at 6 pm

**Hiebert:** Since no work was to be done on the Sabbath, the preceding day was customarily used to prepare all that would be needed during the Sabbath day. The burial must be completed before the Sabbath began, for no Jew would think of doing it during that day. A further motive was the law in **Deut. 21:23** that the dead bodies should not remain hanging on a tree over night. Only the fourth gospel recorded the steps the Jewish leaders took to assure the removal of the bodies before sundown (**Jn 19:31-37**).

**MacArthur:** He's being moved along by divine power. He's moving at divine speed. It's not just about an honorable burial for Christ. It's about getting Him off the cross, in the grave, on Friday so that He's there Friday, Saturday, and Sunday because He promised that He would be three days in the heart of the earth. Matthew 12 verse 40, "The Son of Man will be three days, three nights and a day and a night is simply a Jewish way to refer to any part of a 24-hour period. He will be there for three days. That meant that Jesus had to be buried before the Sabbath began at sundown.

**Illustration:** cf. timing of Uncle Mark's death – we serve a precise God

## **II. (:43) COURAGE OF JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA – A LESSON ON CHANNELING COURAGE TO BOLDLY IDENTIFY WITH JESUS CHRIST DEMONSTRATION OF THE PROVIDENTIAL PLAN OF GOD**

### **A. Courage Initiates**

*"Joseph of Arimathea came,"*  
ἐλθὼν Ἰωσήφ [ὁ] ἀπὸ Ἀριμαθαίας

from the city of Samuel; distinguishes him from others with that common name; he was now a resident of Jerusalem

did not have to come and ask for the body of Jesus;  
nobody was pushing him to come; he took the initiative on his own  
everyone else was fleeing and protecting themselves  
often courage stands alone –

- look at story of David and Goliath – nobody else was willing to step forward and challenge the pagan champion who was openly mocking God and His people

Some of the lines from the famous Hymn:

*"Who is on the Lord's side, who will serve the king?  
Who will leave the world's side? Who will face the foe?  
Who is on the Lord's side? Who for Him will go?  
Fierce may be the conflict, strong may be the foe,  
Joyfully enlisting, by Thy grace divine,  
We are on the Lord's side—Savior, we are Thine!"*

**Hiebert:** he now stepped forward to prevent the body of Jesus from being profaned by being thrown rudely into a common grave with the two criminals. . . The action of Joseph is a

remarkable instance of God's ability to raise up the needed help from an unexpected source.

### **B. (Luke 23:50) Courage Flows From Godly Character**

*"a good and righteous man"*

ἀνὴρ ἀγαθὸς καὶ δίκαιος

### **C. Courage Leverages Positional Advantages**

*"a prominent member of the Council,"*

εὐσχήμων βουλευτής,

Matthew identifies part of his prominence consisted in him being a wealthy individual; Also a member of the prestigious Sanhedrin

### **D. (Luke 23:51) Courage Resists Peer Pressure**

*"(he had not consented to their plan and action),"*

- οὗτος οὐκ ἦν συγκατατεθειμένος τῇ βουλῇ καὶ τῇ πράξει αὐτῶν-

**Either he was there and didn't consent, or he was absent.**

- Maintains a good conscience
- Takes a stand for what is right even when all others pressure you to cave
- Person of principle and conviction and integrity

Yet Courage does not have to be perfect and complete – note the reference in John's gospel that Joseph was a secret disciple of Jesus because of fear of the Jews – now he is coming out of the closet (**Jn. 19:38**)

### **E. Courage Aligns Itself with God's Kingdom Priorities**

*"who himself was waiting for the kingdom of God,"*

ὃς καὶ αὐτὸς ἦν προσδεχόμενος τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ,

- Requires spiritual discernment
- Requires patience and perseverance – not immediate gratification
- Sees the Big Picture

### **F. Courage Overcomes the Fear of Failure or of Danger or of Opposition**

*"and he gathered up courage and went in before Pilate,"*

τολμήσας εἰσῆλθεν πρὸς τὸν Πιλάτον

not an easy thing for Joseph to attempt – had to gather up courage

Gk word = being bold enough to defy danger or opposition;

**Phil. 1:14** *"have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear"* – as they see how Paul faces imprisonment and their faith grows

*“Courage is not the absence of fear but rather the judgement that something is more important than fear; The brave may not live forever but the cautious do not live at all.”*

— **Meg Cabot**, *The Princess Diaries*

**Mark Twain**: *Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear, not absence of fear.*

**William Shakespeare** in *Julius Caesar*: *“A coward dies a thousand times before his death, but the valiant taste of death but once. It seems to me most strange that men should fear, seeing that death, a necessary end, will come when it will come.”*

### **G. Courage Acts Boldly**

*“and asked for the body of Jesus.”*

καὶ ἤτησατο τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ.

James teaches us that one main reason we don't receive from God is because we fail to ask of God or we ask with wrong, selfish motives (**James 4:2-3**)

## **III. (:44-45) CONFIRMATION OF DEATH DEMONSTRATION OF THE PROVIDENTIAL PLAN OF GOD**

### **A. (:44) Perplexed Pilate – How could Jesus be dead so soon?**

*“And Pilate wondered if He was dead by this time, and summoning the centurion, he questioned him as to whether He was already dead.”*

ὁ δὲ Πιλάτος ἐθαύμασεν εἰ ἤδη τέθνηκεν καὶ προσκαλεσάμενος τὸν κεντυρίωνα ἐπηρώτησεν αὐτὸν εἰ πάλαι ἀπέθανεν·

**Sproul**: It was not unusual for a crucified criminal to live for two or three days as he hung on the cross. Death was ultimately the cumulative effect of blood loss, dehydration, exposure, and hunger. Sometimes, to hasten the process, the Romans would break the legs of one they had crucified. When the victim could no longer push his hanging body up in order to breathe more freely, death came quickly by asphyxiation.

**Psalm 34:20** *“Not a bone of Him shall be broken.”*

**Exodus 12:46** and **Numbers 9:12** say, *“The Passover Lamb cannot have a broken limb.”*

### **B. (:45a) Convinced Centurion – I saw it with my own eyes!**

*“And ascertaining this from the centurion,”*

καὶ γνοὺς ἀπὸ τοῦ κεντυρίωνος

**Wayne Jackson**: Additionally, it has been noted that for Pilate “to release the body of a condemned criminal — especially one condemned of high treason — to someone other than a relative was highly unusual” (**Wessel**, 8.785).

It was essential that the location of the tomb be readily known, in view of the fact that some, likely in their opposition to the doctrine of the resurrection, would protest that Christ had not been raised, but the **location** of his grave simply was unknown, or had been misidentified.

<https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/1340-burial-of-christs-body-the>

### **C. (:45b) Body Bearer = Joseph – the Burial Detail**

*“he granted the body to Joseph.”*

ἔδωρήσατο τὸ πτῶμα τῷ Ἰωσήφ.

Problem with many murder cases – difficult for the prosecution to prove without a body – you have to know the person is dead; you need evidence of the crime

This was no murder ... but this was a confirmed death by crucifixion; the body was delivered over to Joseph

## **IV. (:46) CAREFUL BURIAL – 5 Step Process DEMONSTRATION OF THE PROVIDENTIAL PLAN OF GOD**

### **A. Required Purchases**

*“And Joseph bought a linen cloth,”*

Καὶ ἀγοράσας σινδῶνα

On his way back to Golgotha, stopped to buy the necessary burial cloth  
Spared no expense when it came to the necessary spices, etc.

### **B. Custody of the Body**

*“took Him down,”*

καθελὼν αὐτὸν

helped by Nicodemus – **John 19**

### **C. Preparation for Burial**

*“wrapped Him in the linen cloth,”*

ἐνείλησεν τῇ σινδῶνι

### **D. Entombment**

*“and laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out in the rock;”*

καὶ ἔθηκεν αὐτὸν ἐν μνημείῳ ὃ ἦν λελατομημένον ἐκ πέτρας

**Is. 53:9** fulfillment

*“His grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet He was with a rich man in His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was there any deceit in His mouth.”*

**MacArthur:** So how did that work? You put the body there on a shelf. A tomb hewn out of rock might have a number of shelves. Put the body on the shelf. When it decomposes down to the



bones, you collect the bones, put them in a box called an ossuary, take the box somewhere else. Put that...and put the next person **who dies on the same shelf. That's how they did it.**

### E. Closure

*“and he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb.”*

και προσεκύλισεν λίθον ἐπὶ τὴν θύραν τοῦ μνημείου.

## V. (:47) CONCERNED ONLOOKERS [THE SPICE GIRLS] DEMONSTRATION OF THE PROVIDENTIAL PLAN OF GOD

### A. Faithful Women

#### 1. Mary Magdalene

*“And Mary Magdalene”*

ἡ δὲ Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνή

look at how they persevere in their devotion to Jesus

#### 2. Mary the mother of Joses

*“and Mary the mother of Joses”*

και Μαρία ἡ Ἰωσήτος

### B. Focused Interest

*“were looking on to see where He was laid.”*

ἐθεώρουν ποῦ τέθειται.

There would be no mistake as to which tomb contained the body of Jesus

## CONCLUSION:

Application for Communion: **Romans 6:1-7**

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## DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Where have you seen God's providential timing manifested in your life?
- 2) Are you openly and boldly identifying with Jesus Christ and confessing Him before others?
- 3) Are there any implications from this passage that would help us in the evaluation of the option of cremation as opposed to burial?
- 4) If we have been buried with Christ in His baptism as we learn from Romans 6, how should we then live?

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## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**M F. Sadler:** The burial of the Lord is a part of the gospel. Thus St. Paul (**1 Corinthians 15:4**).

1. His burial was an assurance that His resurrection was a reality: for His Body was taken down by friends in the presence of foes who knew that He was dead, and deposited by them, not in a common tomb, but in a cave, hollowed out of a hillside, with a great stone rolled to block up the entrance, which was guarded by the soldiers of Pilate.

2. His burial also was the last humiliation offered to Him; for, though Joseph and Nicodemus and the women who assisted performed it as a work of piety and love, yet in it He was not the less associated with us, whose bodies must be committed to the ground, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. He was the Incorruptible, and yet was buried, and they prepared to embalm Him as if He had been corruptible. In birth from a womb, and in burial in a tomb, He was one with His sinful brethren.

3. His burial is in a remarkably mysterious way connected with our baptism. The font represents the grave of the Lord, in which, as having died with Him, we are mystically and sacramentally buried, and from which we rise again, endued with new life from Him, as He rose from His grave endured with new life (**Colossians 2:12; Romans 6:1-4**).

[http://biblehub.com/sermons/auth/sadler/significance\\_of\\_christ's\\_burial.htm](http://biblehub.com/sermons/auth/sadler/significance_of_christ's_burial.htm)

### **Creation Research Institute: Thoughts regarding cremation**

From the Christian perspective, burial is the pattern used in Scripture and has been historically followed by the church. Of course, it should be pointed out that cremation is no hindrance to the act, or event, of the resurrection. God, in His omnipotence, is certainly able, if He so chooses, to collect every atom and molecule, no matter where it is found in the universe, and reconstruct our same bodies in a glorified state. It does not follow from this, however, that cremation is an acceptable general practice. Whereas burial is an important practice and symbol in Scripture, cremation is a poor symbol of scriptural truth. While cremation is not an intrinsic evil, it nonetheless symbolically vitiates some important biblical truths. In this sense, cremation is a hindrance to the promotion of resurrection truth and should not be a regular practice of Christians. We thus conclude that all Christians should practice Christian burial unless extraordinary circumstances do not permit it.

<http://www.equip.org/article/christian-burial-a-case-for-burial/>

### **Steven Lawson: Buried with a Rich Man**

Total of 26 verses in the 4 gospel accounts devoted just to the burial of Christ;

#### Significance:

- **1 Cor. 15:3** shows critical importance of the burial – answering “What is the Gospel?” – Stresses the fact that Jesus actually died; not just swooned; not only gave the appearance of dying;
- **Romans 6** – *we have been buried with Christ* – to our old way of life; we really have died to our former manner of life
- Being buried with a rich man is the first step in the exaltation of Christ --

## **1. (:42) The Precise Timing for the Burial**

Sometime after 3 pm ... maybe around 4 pm;  
Documents the day that Jesus died = the day before he sabbath; some have tried to move it up to Thursday; sabbath begins at 6 pm on Friday  
Look at what a precise God we have; His timing is always perfect;  
Precise in His Word; in His providence; in the timing of events and circumstances in our lives;

## **2. (:43) The Prominent Disciple – Joseph of Arimathea**

Central figure in this narrative; a very prominent man – prominent among those who were prominent in the nation

A rich man – part of his prominence; encouragement that some rich ones make it into the kingdom of God (Abraham, Barnabas, Lydia, etc.)

Had a Messianic hope

Both he and Nicodemus at some point had come to a saving knowledge of Christ; secret disciples; that is why Nicodemus came to Jesus at night

**John 12:42** – many of the rulers believed in Jesus ... but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him for fear of being put out of the synagogue ...

Crosses the line and openly identifies himself as a believer in Christ;

I want my life to have maximum impact for Christ; not slinking around like a secret disciple;

Identification begins with public baptism;

The fact that he has access to Pilate shows his prominence;

Burn his bridges behind him; no going back;

Those who are close to the deceased ask for the body;

Sense of urgency

## **3. (:44-45) The Perplexed Ruler – Pilate**

“wonder” – to be surprised, amazed, astonished, taken back, perplexed

Centurion validated that Jesus is dead

Pilate was never convinced that Jesus was guilty; he caved into the public pressure;

Invisible hand of God orchestrating these events in direct fulfillment of OT prophecies;

Some skeptics claim that the way Jesus fulfilled OT prophecy was to intentionally make it happen -- How are you going to get yourself buried in a rich man's tomb when you are dead?

## **4. (:46) The Proper Burial**

Has servants to help him carry the body along with Nicodemus;

Probably washed the body; then wrapped it tightly in strips of linen cloth in a nearby garden;

spices put in between each layer to suppress the smell of decay;

100 pounds of myrrh and aloes to be included in every wrap – spared no expense;

New tomb; nearby; in a garden; belonged to Joseph; not a cave – but carved out as a small room; shelf on the inside

Joseph rolled the stone in place to shut it up;

Later the Roman soldiers would seal it shut

## **5. (:47) The Persevering Women**

Their undying loyalty toward Jesus – even after His death;

To whom has been forgiven much ... loves much

What is your motivation to serve Christ?

Look at such service to Jesus when He was dead ... how much more should we be motivated to serve the risen Savior?

An active, initiating faith

When tough times come are you running out or running in to the front lines to be a witness for Christ and to serve Christ?

These 2 women should challenge every man here today

**Brian Borgman: Crucified, Dead and Buried**

“He was crucified, died and buried” – creeds of the church

Burial by necessity means that a death has occurred;

Often left body on cross to rot or be eaten by predators;

Up to the mercy of the magistrate whether or not to release the body;

Jews demanded that the body be taken down so as not to defile their sabbath day and break the Mosaic law;

Burial of dead has always been a priority – required by decency; indecent to leave a body out to decay;

Joseph could no longer remain a secret disciple;

Prep required work of many people and they had to work quickly

Pilate was surprised to hear that Jesus had died so quickly

TEXT: Mark 16:1-8

TITLE: THE CHRISTIAN APPROACH TO EASTER

**BIG IDEA:**

**OUR APPROACH TO THE REALITY OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST CANNOT BE ONE OF CASUAL WORSHIP**

**Dealing with the ending** appended to many texts of the Gospel of Mark that I believe was not in the original text – vv. 9-20.

- Deal with it up front since this will be our last message in Gospel of Mark and I do not want to interrupt the impact of today's critical topic
- A lot of complexity dealing with which of the ancient manuscripts to give the most weight to – obviously we do not have in existence any of the **original autographs** (writings) – that would eliminate any controversy; impacts a number of texts – but this is the longest and most significant one in question
- Whatever we conclude, it does not undermine the doctrines of **inspiration** and **sufficiency** of Scripture; must have confidence in the **preservation** of Scripture as well by the providential hand of God – what good is accuracy in the originals if we have no correspondence to them today??
- Both **external** manuscript evidence must be examined and **internal arguments** from the text itself, Context, language used, etc.
- MacArthur Study Bible gives a quick overview of some of these details
  - o **External:** Oldest and most reliable manuscripts (Sinaiticus and Vaticanus ) do not have this ending; majority of manuscripts do have it – were the oldest ones less revered and thus less copied so that they did not wear out as did the others?? Lots of manuscript questions
  - o **Internal:** seems more like a summary from the statements of the other gospels; does not really follow in terms of context; uses some unique language not found in other parts of Mark
- **Why this ending?** People thought that the gospel ended too abruptly – we will address that as we get into the text now – more likely that it would be added rather than removed

**Read vv. 1-8**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Driving through Ellicott City Friday morning, I saw a small group of religious pilgrims following behind a man bearing a wooden cross who was leading them along Main Street. This was the way they had chosen to mark the historic remembrance of Christ's Crucifixion. As I drove by I had no way to tell whether these were genuine believers or simply people caught up in the rites and symbols of religious observance. **Casual Worship**

Too much casual worship taking place today all around the world – worship that is caught up in the externals of rites and symbols rather than in heartfelt repentance of sin and genuine faith in the Lordship of Jesus Christ in our lives. Are people worshipping the True Jesus or an image that they have created to satisfy their religiosity?

## Implications of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ:

Steven Lawson: (great resource for this text – borrowed extensively)

- Validated the perfection of His sacrifice for our sins; completion of mission of redemption; provided just basis for forgiveness of sins
- Father had accepted His payment in full; propitiation
- Authenticated the claims of Jesus
- Guarantees that God is sovereign over all of men's affairs and of all history
- Jesus had triumphed over death and sin and Satan;
- guarantees there will be a final judgment because God has raised the Judge from the dead; greatest message for every believer and should strike terror into every unbeliever;
- dominated message of early apostles

## OUR APPROACH TO THE REALITY OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST CANNOT BE ONE OF CASUAL WORSHIP

### 4 ASPECTS OF THE CHRISTIAN APPROACH TOWARDS EASTER:

#### **I. (:1-2) EXPRESSING EASTER DEVOTION – Who is on the Lord's side; Who will serve the King?**

Easter remains one of the top days of the year for people to express their devotion to Jesus Christ. Look at how churches are filled on Easter Sunday. But what is the nature of that devotion?

For many people it is shallow and superficial. There is no sacrifice or cost or commitment involved.

But for those who are born-again, genuine disciples there is a devotion that is both costly and committed.

##### **A. (:1) Costly Devotion (Extraordinary Love)**

*“And when the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him.”*

Καὶ διαγενομένου τοῦ σαββάτου Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ καὶ Μαρία ἡ [τοῦ] Ἰακώβου καὶ Σαλώμη ἠγόρασαν ἀρώματα ἵνα ἐλθοῦσαι ἀλείψωσιν αὐτόν.

Same 3 faithful women are present; they are going to be able to testify that Jesus died; that he was placed in this specific grave and that the tomb was empty and the linen cloth was left in a wrapped state – but with no body

Remember Joseph had used spices – wrapping the body of Jesus in layers of linen cloth

Here the purpose of spices was not so much for embalming but for expressing devotion;

They purchased the spices Sat. after the sabbath was over and then brought them in the early hours on Sunday morning to the tomb; their expectation was not to find a risen Lord Jesus

##### **B. (:2) Committed Devotion**

*“And very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen.”*

καὶ λίαν πρῶτ' τῆ μιᾶ τῶν σαββάτων ἔρχονται ἐπὶ τὸ μνημεῖον ἀνατεῖλαντος τοῦ ἡλίου.

Reflects the priority that Christ is first in their lives

2 different time references:

- Started out very early before the sun was up
- Got to tomb just after 6 am when sun was just appearing

Heroic Act:

- Jesus put to death by Roman authorities as a political rebel
- Hated by the Jewish nation

Love – not just tender feelings – but must be expressed in sacrificial giving

What is your motivation for serving the Lord?

To what extreme lengths do you go to express your love?

Otherwise we have left our first love ...

## **II. (:3-4) ENCOUNTERING EASTER DIFFICULTIES**

### **A. (:3) Problem: How Can We Gain Access to Jesus?**

*“And they were saying to one another, ‘Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?’”*

καὶ ἔλεγον πρὸς ἑαυτάς· τίς ἀποκυλίσει ἡμῖν τὸν λίθον ἐκ τῆς θύρας τοῦ μνημείου;

### **B. (:4) Solution: God Must Make a Way**

*“And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away, although it was extremely large.”*

καὶ ἀναβλέψασαι θεωροῦσιν ὅτι ἀποκεκύλισται ὁ λίθος· ἦν γὰρ μέγας σφόδρα.

### **Matt. 28:2-3**

- Significance of earthquake – marking something extraordinary that had happened in spiritual realm
- Angel had come and rolled back the stone

## **III. (:5-7) EMBRACING EASTER DISCOVERIES**

**Important that all of us come to appreciate these same 3 discoveries:**

### **A. (:5) Discovery #1 – Angelic Young Man -- Which Kingdom Reigns?**

*“And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed.”*

Καὶ εἰσελθοῦσαι εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον εἶδον νεανίσκον καθήμενον ἐν τοῖς δεξιοῖς περιβεβλημένον στολὴν λευκὴν, καὶ ἐξεθαμβήθησαν.

Expected to find the Roman soldiers in charge of the tomb – guarding the resting place of the body of Jesus; Instead they find an angelic being –

A couple of the accounts say there were two angels present ... Discrepancy?  
If there were two ... then there certainly was one

**Parunak:** Recall the linen-clad young man who fled in the garden (14:51-52). There, the angelic bodyguard forsook the Lord; here, it returns.

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**Reaction of Amazement and Shock and Awe** – Trace this through the book by way of **review**

**MacArthur: Why does Mark end where he ends?**

Can I help you with that? Let's go back to chapter 1. Chapter 1, Jesus going along by the sea, verse 16, saw Simon and Andrew. You know the story. And He gathers them around Him. They went in to Capernaum, verse 21, "*Immediately on the Sabbath. He entered the synagogue and began to teach.*" What does verse 22 say? They were—what?—amazed, *amazed at His teaching.*

Verse 25, Jesus rebukes a demon. Says, "*Be quiet, come out of him,*" throwing him into convulsions. The unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice, came out of him, verse 27 says—what?—they were all *amazed*. Chapter 2, you know the story, the healing of the paralytic, Jesus forgives his sins, it says in verse 11, "*Pick up your pallet, your bed, and go home. He got up immediately, picked up the pallet and went out in the sight of everyone so that they were all—what?—amazed. They were glorifying God saying, 'We've never seen anything like this before.*

In chapter 4, Jesus is in a storm, verse 37, there's a fierce gale, waves are breaking up over the boat. The boat was filling up with water. Jesus was so weary, He was in the stern asleep. They woke Him and said, "*Teacher, do You not care that we're perishing?*" He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "*Hush, be still,*" the wind died down and it became perfectly calm. "*And He said to them, 'Why are you afraid? How is it that you have faith?'* They became very much afraid. Said to one another, '*Who then is this that even the wind and the sea obey Him?'*"

In chapter 5 verse 14, the story of the demoniac, the people see this amazing healing and in verse 15 they came to Jesus and observed a man who had been demon-possessed sitting down, clothed, you know, he came running out of the tombs naked. Now he's sitting down, clothed, delivered from his demon, or demons that filled up a whole herd of pigs. In his right mind, the man who had the legion, and they became "*frightened,*"...amazement, fear, awe.

Chapter 5 and verse 33, you know this wonderful story of the woman who touched His garment, the woman, verse 33, "*Fearing and trembling, aware of what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth.*" At the end of the chapter, He takes the hand of the little girl, you remember, and says, "*Talitha kum*" which means, "*Little girl, I say to you, get up.*" This was the girl who had died, daughter of an important man. "*Immediately the girl got up, began to walk, she was 12 years old and immediately they were completely astounded.*"

Chapter 6, another time on the water, this time He walks on the water, 6:51, "*He got into the boat with them, the wind stopped and they were utterly astonished.*" Chapter 9 at the transfiguration of Jesus, verse 6 says, "*They became terrified.*"



Chapter 9 and verse 15, the large crowd, scribes arguing with Him and when the entire crowd saw Him, they were amazed and began running to greet Him. Are you starting to get a picture here?

Chapter 9 verse 32, when Jesus was teaching that the Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, they will kill Him and when He's been killed, He will rise three days later. They didn't understand this statement and they were afraid to ask Him. Fear and awe and amazement.

Chapter 10 verse 24, "*The disciples were amazed at His words.*" Chapter 10 verse 32, "*They were on the road going to Jerusalem, Jesus was walking on ahead of them. And they were amazed and those who followed were fearful.*" Chapter 11 verse 18, "*The chief priests and the scribes heard this and began seeking how to destroy Him. They were afraid of Him for the whole crowd was astonished at His teaching.*" And it's mounting, chapter 12 verse 17, when He said, "*Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's, they were amazed at Him.*"

And one of the most amazing things of all was His encounter with Pilate, chapter 15. Pilate, verse 4, questioning Him, Jesus makes no further answer. Pilate was amazed.

And then you come to chapter 16, the women arrive at the tomb. Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Salome, they come and in verse 4, "*Looking up they saw the stone had been rolled away although it was extremely large. Entering the tomb they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe and they were amazed.*"

In ten of those passages the same verb was used, *phobeo*, they were amazed. In five of them, a cognate of that verb was used and elsewhere synonyms were used. And then you come to 16:8 and they went out and fled, *for trembling and astonishment had gripped them and they were silent and they were afraid.*

I can't think of a better ending, can you? **The amazing Jesus.** It ends as it began, with amazement over the Lord Jesus Christ. And when you stop where you should stop in Mark, you step back in awe of the amazing Jesus. Every lesson, every miracle, every stunning answer that He gave, every insight, every righteous word, every righteous act fill you with stunning amazement. **Amazing, you should be speechless, like Mark, like the woman at the amazing Jesus.**

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## **B. (:6) Discovery #2 – Empty Tomb -- Life Has Triumphed Over Death**

*“And he said to them,  
‘Do not be amazed;  
you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified.  
He has risen; He is not here;  
behold, here is the place where they laid Him.’”*

ὁ δὲ λέγει αὐταῖς· μὴ ἐκθαμβεῖσθε· Ἰησοῦν ζητεῖτε τὸν Ναζαρηνὸν τὸν ἐσταυρωμένον· ἠγέρθη, οὐκ ἔστιν ὧδε· ἴδε ὁ τόπος ὅπου ἔθηκαν αὐτόν.

**James Edwards:** the response of the angel can be taken as a mild rebuke. The women, intent on their funereal errand, are preoccupied with death. They endeavor with their spices and anxieties to bring some kind of closure, however inadequate, to a tragic drama. But all their preparations leave them unprepared for the reality the encounter; what they intend to be a terminal visit is but a commencement. The Jesus they are “looking for” enshrined in a safe place cannot be found. The visit to the tomb is vintage Markan irony: the living are consumed with death, but the Crucified One is consumed with life.

**Sproul:** “*He has been raised*” – passive verb

**John 20:3** – records what the women saw in the empty tomb – the linen wrappings were still lying there and the facecloth not lying with the linen wrappings but separate – Jesus took it off and rolled it up and set it on the side

**Lawson:** All other religious leaders have died and their bodies remain in their graves –  
**Uniqueness of Jesus Christ**

### **C. (:7) Discovery #3 – Post Resurrection Appearance of Jesus – the Living Lord Continues to Lead His Disciples**

*“But go, tell His disciples and Peter, ‘He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He said to you.’”*

ἀλλ’ ὑπάγετε εἶπατε τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ καὶ τῷ Πέτρῳ ὅτι προάγει ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν· ἐκεῖ αὐτὸν ὄψεσθε, καθὼς εἶπεν ὑμῖν.

**Lawson:** Significance of going to Galilee – where Jesus had called the disciples; done most of his miracles; his teachings; Matt. Great Commission given here  
We have been given the same message and charge

Claims of Jesus always fulfilled in explicit detail – “*just as He said to you*”

Significance of **eyewitness accounts** throughout the record of the Crucifixion and Burial and Resurrection of Christ

1 Cor. 15 records many post resurrection appearances of Jesus

## **IV. (:8) ECHOING EASTER AWE AND AMAZEMENT AND SHOCK AND BEWILDERMENT**

### **A. Awe and Amazement Should Impact Our Actions --**

*“And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them;”*

Καὶ ἐξελθοῦσαι ἔφυγον ἀπὸ τοῦ μνημείου, εἶχεν γὰρ αὐτὰς τρόμος καὶ ἔκστασις·

"*trembling*," usually linked in OT with "*fear*."

What has taken place here?

**James Edwards:** In one verse Mark includes a battery of seven negative responses on their part. These terms scarcely depict reverential awe at a *mysterium tremendum*. V. 8 clearly implies a response of fear that inhibits faith. The flight of the women is narrated in the same tense of the same verb (GK. *ephygon*) as the flight of the disciples in 14:50. “Trembling” (Gk. *tromos*) and “bewilderment” (Gk. *ekstasis*) occur only once and twice respectively in Mark and are expressions of consternation. The failure of the women to speak contravenes the command of the angel, and the final reference to “*fear*” repeats a word that occurs a dozen times in Mark, in ten of which it is clearly negative. It is clear that Mark does not intend v. 8 to imply reverence or faith on the part of the women, but **fear and flight**.

Tone of faith and gladness and excitement and joy still need to mature;  
We are seeing the reality of our pervading sinfulness – even once we have been reborn and given a new nature. We are not yet glorified in our relationship with Jesus; we have responses that are not fully redeemed; there is some tension so that we do not fully obey the commands of the angel – which are commands of perfection

### **B. Awe and Amazement Should Govern Our Speech – Rendered Speechless**

*“and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.”*

*καὶ οὐδενὶ οὐδὲν εἶπαν· ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ.*

Too much on the side of fear and trembling here ... but still there are the legitimate germs of awe and astonishment and amazement and bewilderment ... but over the next hours and days, their faith will mature

They will not end up paralyzed by fear – but will aggressively carry out the Great Commission; They will not remain speechless but will have their tongues emboldened and unleashed to proclaim the glorious gospel message

**Lawson:** **What about the abrupt ending??** Matches the **abrupt beginning** where there is no buildup; no genealogy given; no record of the birth of Christ; He just appears on the scene very abruptly; this style has **unique impact** – so it is with the ending

Mark wants to close this gospel in a way that is consistent with how He has presented the glory and power of Jesus throughout his account – always triggering a response of **Shock and Awe**.

### **(:9-20) CONCLUSION:**

This is the right ending to the Gospel of Mark – Shock and Awe and Astonishment and some Bewilderment – yet a maturing faith that goes beyond the reaction of the women here to a joy and excitement and settled faith where our worship is impactful – not casual  
Motivated to fulfill the Great Commission of **Matt. 28**

### **What amazes Jesus? Unbelief -- Mark 6:6**

**Lawson:** Come today and gaze on the empty tomb and behold what these women saw – respond in faith.

The Resurrection of Jesus is true and real and unique in history – validates and confirms and authenticates that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the only Savior of Sinners

**Mark Dever:** No one who ever encounters the living Christ will ever respond with **casual worship**.

**Lawson:** If you are involved with **casual worship**, then God is not there. Always a sense of Awe and Amazement and Astonishment and Shock and some Bewilderment ...

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#### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How many implications of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ can you list?
- 2) What details are supplied by the other Gospel accounts that are missing in Mark's account?
- 3) How would Peter have received this message that the Lord has been raised from the dead and will appear to the disciples in Galilee?
- 4) Is this ending some form of rebuke for these three women responding in fear and trembling?

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#### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Parunak:** Should vv.9-20 be treated as Scripture? [He takes the alternative view that we should accept the longer ending]

1. Chiastic Inclusio between **1:1-28** and **16:9-19** Message: They are to carry on for him, as his representatives. His death, resurrection, and ascension is not the end--it is the beginning.
2. This passage is one of the most significant points of deviation between the traditional Greek text of the NT, which is reflected in the vast majority of the mss, and the version used in almost all modern translations, which draws heavily on Sinaiticus and Vaticanus. These latter mss omit the text from this point on, though they both leave space for it!
  - a) But note that without it, there is no resolution to the problem of the failed disciples, and no foundation for the ongoing work of the church.
  - b) It not only dominates the mss evidence, but has also been in liturgical use in the Eastern churches for as far back as we can trace.
  - c) The close correspondence with ch. 1 shows that it is a fitting ending to the gospel.

#### **Brian Borgman: The Uniqueness of the Resurrection**

Our country has become increasingly pluralistic in terms of religious landscape; Pluralism is a suspicion against anything that calls itself "The" Truth; claims that either nothing is true or everything is equally true; both axioms are self refuting; By virtue of the resurrection the Lord Jesus Christ is absolutely Unique and has the exclusive claim to truth

## Steven Lawson: The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

bold and courageous preaching of the apostles – they had seen the risen Christ

**Aside on vv.9-20** – not authentic; not included in the original manuscripts

### 1) The Extraordinary Love (vs. 1) – that these women have for the Lord Jesus

Undying allegiance; even though they suppose Him to be dead;

Descriptive qualifiers of Mary M. would not have been reserved for vs. 9 if Mark had read this section ... that is the first time that this particular extra author has brought up her name;

You would never save the qualifier for the end;

A sacrificial love; costly purchase; grace of God has liberated them from such great sin; he who has been forgiven much loves much; experiencing the joy of salvation;

A week earlier his living body had been anointed;

Expression of undying love; not enough to have tender thoughts about Jesus; they must express their love in sacrificial giving

This was a heroic act as well; visiting the grave of such a one – crucified by Roman authorities; despised by the nation

### 2) Note the Early Arrival on Sunday at daylight (vs. 2)

“very early” -- A time before 6 am

Sun just came up – after 6 am

Started out at their homes while it was still dark; as they arrived at the grave the sun was just coming up; both time designations are true

How eager and ready they are; not dragging their feet; don't have to be prompted

Not doing it at the end of the day if they have some extra time;

### 3) Emboldened Faith (vs. 3)

Knew the tomb had been sealed shut with a large stone; saw Joseph roll the stone in place;

Obstacle did not stop them from coming;

Positive; expectant; outreaching; were not falling back on excuses; there's a lot to be said for just showing up and not just waiting for ideal circumstances

Instead of attitude: “It can't be God's will because there is still that stone in front of the tomb”

It is our tendency to worry about things that never happen;

God has already rolled the stone away; Phil. 4 – no need for anxiety

### [Introduction to Part 2

No book ever had a more dramatic ending than Mark's Gospel;

Astonished faces of these women, in the grip of fear and trembling;

Entire record of Mark has been one of astonishment and amazement at the display of His power and glory of Christ in some way; Shock and Awe; nobody every yawning when they interacted with Jesus]

### 4) Entrance Opened (vs. 4)

They saw a sight they were not prepared to see; they now look up -- they previously were

**looking down** – due to darkness

Sense that God is going before them and preparing the way;

**Matt. 28:2-3** – give the insight here – 2 powerful things happened to remove the stone

- a severe earthquake sent by God; something extraordinary happening in spiritual realm

- (cf. other examples) – punctuates the enormous reality of what had just taken place
- angel of the Lord rolled it away – not so Jesus could get out but so the observers could get in

### 5) Empty Tomb (vs 5)

White robe – heavenly origin

They were dumbfounded; overwhelmed; stunned; very strong compound word; in the grip of wonder and awe

### 6) Emphatic Message (:6-7)

Glorious announcement of the Resurrection of Christ from the dead;

I know why you are here;

**John 20:3ff** – we find out what was found in the inner chamber

Why is Peter singled out? He had denied the Lord 3 times; needed to be restored; needed to retake his position of leadership

### 7) Exciting Ending (vs. 8)

- Women are overwhelmed just as we should be
- Women are energized
- Women are running
- Women are testifying

These women were traumatized; they were thoroughly scared; ecstasy of mind – ecstatic; they were out of their minds; besides themselves

They had seen all of this with their own eyes

They were in shock; could not even process this; much less communicate this to others

**MacArthur:** Why is it here? Well it's here for the obvious reason that this just seems too abrupt—it seems too abrupt. What drove the addition is the very, very brief almost shocking, stunning end of Mark's carefully crafted history of the Lord Jesus Christ. The language is frankly dramatic, very dramatic, trembling, astonishment, speechlessness, fear, or awe. The women are in some kind of a state of terrified bewilderment, gripped by the **wondrous reality** of the resurrection. They know He's alive, they were there, the tomb is empty, the angels declared it. They are speechless and frankly so is Mark. . .

Our translation is based on ancient Greek manuscripts. The originals, the autographs, the original autographs themselves do not exist, the very early copies do. When you get to those early copies, this isn't there...this isn't there. It doesn't appear in the oldest manuscripts, Sinaiticus, and Vaticanus, other of the oldest do not have it. Fourth century, Eusebius and Jerome wrote that almost Greek manuscripts, almost all in the fourth century ended with verse 8. Second century, Justin Martyr and Tatian, however, show knowledge of other endings. And even Irenaeus shows knowledge of other endings starting to float around. Irenaeus quotes 16:19 which is in this spurious section.

So this ending came into existence very early, although there was anything but uniform acceptance of it, it starts to show up. In fact, several such endings start to show up as people try to help Mark a little bit with his abrupt ending. There are medieval manuscripts that included it and such were the manuscripts from the medieval period used by English translators before earlier manuscripts were found and that's why you find it in some of the translations in English and other languages.

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