**Mark**

**“The Servant Ruler”**

1. **Chapters: 1:1 - 8:30 The Ministry of the Servant**
2. **1:1-1:13 His credentials**
3. **1:14-2:12 His miracles**
4. **2:13-3:35 His opposition**
5. **4:1-5:43 His words and works**
6. **6:1-8:30 His challenges**
7. **Chapters: 8:31 - 16:20 The Completed Work of the Servant**
8. **8:31-9:13 His identity**
9. **9:14-50 His selflessness**
10. **10:1-52 His kingdom**
11. **11:1-16:20 His final week**
12. **11:1-13:37 From the temple to the Mount of Olives**
13. **14:1-14:52 From the upper room to the garden of Gethsemane**
14. **14:53-15:20 From His arrest to His sentence**
15. **15:21-16:20 From the cross to the great commission**

**Mark**

**“God’s Bulldozer”**

**1:1-8**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 1-3 Road work for God**
3. **Vs. 4-5 A radical work**
4. **Vs. 6-8 A stranger in the wilderness**
5. **Introduction**

The gospel is not a discussion or a debate, it’s not good VIEWS; its GOOD NEWS. Each of the gospels present a different picture of Jesus:

* Matthew presents Jesus to the Jews as their long waited King.
* Luke presents Jesus as the Son of Man to the Greek mind, the Philosophical mind.
* John presents Jesus the Son of God and is for the believer and follower of Jesus as it reveals the relational aspect of our faith.

Matthew and John were both disciples of Jesus whereas Luke and Mark were both disciples of disciples, (Luke of Paul and Mark of Peter).

Mark was written for the Roman mind, it contains the most Latin words, it’s a gospel of haste and action which are characteristics of the Roman spirit. It is the briefest of the Gospels as it only has 16 chapters and for that reason is the most translated book of the Bible according to Wycliffe translators. Though not identified, the author is a young man named John Mark (*John being his Jewish name, Mark being his Roman name*). He accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey but as far as Paul was concerned proved to be less than dependable. It seems at first he didn’t take to the life of a missionary and went with Barnabas. But in the end according to 2 Timothy 4:11 he and Paull serve together. Here is a man who early on in God’s work is thought of as unreliable but over time God use him to record the truths about Jesus. We know that Mark was close to Peter and as you read this gospel we see that Mark writes a lot about Peter’s experiences and thoughts. In fact in 1 Peter 5:13 Peter calls Mark his son in the faith. It is believed that Mark was the son of a well to do woman named Mary who lived in Jerusalem in a home that was often used by Christians. Many believe that it was in the “Upper Room” of this house that the last supper took place and where they were all gathered after the ascension waiting for the promised Holy Spirit. Later on we learn that he was the cousin or nephew of Barnabas. He traveled a lot as he joined the missionary team of Paul and Barnabas in Antioch, went to Perga in Pamphilia, then with Barnabas to Cyprus, served with Peter in Babylon modern Iraq and finally was with Paul in Rome. Tradition also links him with Peter in Rome as well as Egypt where he founded the church in Alexandria and was killed in 68 A.D.

The dating of any ancient literature isn’t an exact science and the way in which you come up with dates is based upon the other accounts and work by a process of elimination. It’s believed that Mark wrote before Luke’s account and we that in Luke’s two volume work in Acts Paul’s first trial in Rome isn’t completed which places the writing of Acts at 63 A.D. Luke wrote his gospel first which places it at around A.D. 58. This date would place Mark’s gospel between 40 A.D. and 56 A.D. with most evidence placing the writing at 50 A.D. That would make this and James the earliest New Testament writings and would mean that it served as the main source for both Matthew and Luke a fact that is further bolstered when you realize that all but about 50 verses of Mark are found in their entirety in Matthew and Luke. The location where it was written is equally as difficult to determine as some say, Alexandria Egypt, others say Antioch in Syria, others Caesarea or Rome.

The evidence that Mark wrote for the Roman reader is seen eternally by the lack of Old Testament quotations, explanations of Jewish customs, absence of Jewish law and descriptions of the geography Jewish land such as the Mount of Olives. Both Luke and John tell us why they wrote their account of Jesus but with Mark we must look for it in what he wrote. Mark’s favorite word in this gospel is “immediately” which occurs 40 times as we see Jesus as a very busy servant. Mark’s emphasis is more upon the “works” of Jesus than upon the “words” of Christ. No genealogy in Mark’s account because no one cares about the pedigree of a servant. As we examine Mark we can see that Mark arranged the gospel both in events as well as geographically:

* Chapter 1:1-3 His preparation
* Chapter 1:14-9:50 His ministry in Galilee
* Chapter 10:1-52 His Journey to Jerusalem
* Chapter 11:1-15:47 His final week
* Chapter 16:1-20 His consummation
1. **Vs. 1-3 Road work for God**

Vs. 1-3 Church tradition says that Mark was Peter’s interpreter and that is believable as this gospel reflects Peter’s personal experiences. He boldly proclaims Jesus Christ is the Son of God to Roman readers, how radical was this statement. The word “*gospel*” would have meant more to the Romans as it meant “*joyful news about the emperor*”. In biblical times before a king visited any part of his realm, *a messenger was sent before him to prepare the way this included* ***repairing roads*** *and* ***preparing the people*** *for the visit*. That is how Mark sees John the Baptist as he highlights John’s work of preparation for Jesus. John’s work was not unexpected, it was written about by the prophets of Malachi in 3:1 and by Isaiah in 40:3. These two prophets both spoke similarly about John’s work describing it as “*preparing*” Jesus’ way before Him and “*making His paths strait*”. My father and grandfather were both employed in this occupation as they operated “*heavy equipment*” operators and worked making roads. That’s what John the Baptists work was, he was a “*road builder*” a “*bulldozer*” for Jesus. He removed the debris and straitened the path for Jesus. These two prophets describe the Baptists “*road work*” for Jesus to come to people and not for people to come to Him. The Baptist worked on the roads of human hearts removing the “junk” and striating the crookedness so that Jesus could come to their hearts. The stuff that John needed to bulldoze was religion that had clogged the entrance of human hearts.

1. **Vs. 4-5 A radical work**

Vs. 4-5 Mark says that John’s primary message was “*baptism of repentance*”. This was totally radical in nature, no one else had done or even suggested it. The only thing close to this was Gentile converts to Judaism. John’s baptism was far different from the Jewish ritual washing from the defilement of the past. The Jews that came out to John were doing something that was never asked of them before by a person unlike they had ever seen before. And they did so in an odd location, the wilderness, this would have summoned in their mind their ancestor’s pilgrimage from Egypt and baptism would have seemed as a preparation for a new covenant with God. When we were in Israel we traveled right to the wilderness spot where John was preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Today it is right on the boarder of Jordan and Israel where ½ the river is in Jordan the other ½ in Israel. It’s still very much wilderness today and very barren even though Jericho is only 10 miles away. That John’s “road work” was done in the wilderness in a forsaken isolated place where people needed to needed to leave their cities, comfort and pleasures to come to this place and travel some 30 miles to hear John tell them they need to change and to symbolize this change by washing. Mark tells us that “*all the land of Judea, and those in Jerusalem went out to him*”. This describe a steady stream of people who were not indiscriminate curiosity seekers but rather their migration was a deliberate act of people who knew what John proclaimed and what they would need to do to get right with God. The good news that John preached was that religion was no longer a barrier to right living and that message brought such hope that people came in droves to receive this truth. John offered them the opportunity not to go through religious leaders but to go direct to God. Their sin, guilt and fear was bottlenecked by the hands of self-righteous religious leaders who for pride and financial reasons wouldn’t release people.

1. **Vs. 6-8 A stranger in the wilderness**

Vs. 6-8 John assumed the style and lifestyle of the prophet Elijah described in 2 Kings 1:8, in life and actions bore out what he was. He was simple, balanced and fearless in his words as his clothing and diet portrayed. ***Preaching is not the art of making a sermon and delivering it, it is the art of making a preacher and delivering him***. Filled with the Holy Spirit while still in his mother’s womb, a Nazirite from birth, totally committed to God, he embodied the message. Without the “Bulldozer” Jesus wouldn’t have had a clear path to hearts as Isaiah in chapter 40 verse 4 tells us that John would need to lift up valleys, make low mountains and hills, level uneven and rough ground. That’s what repentance does as it knocks down our pride, it fills in our excuses, it straightens out the lies we have believed and it smooth’s out the rough places of our lives.

 Mark describe John’s character by giving a description of what he wore and his diet, “*camel hair with a leather belt and locusts and wild honey*”. John was a simple man a basic man both in clothing and diet and as such those things reflect his message. His diet was simple but balanced grasshoppers for protein and honey for carb’s thus he was healthy.

The menial task of a slave was to take off the sandals of the guest and wash their feet as they entered the home. And John the Baptist didn’t want people to get the wrong impression of him as he saw himself below the lowest of slaves. John came only to smooth out lives so that the “ANSWER” people are looking for can come and make His home in our hearts. John would take them TO GOD but Jesus would take them to be WITH GOD. This would require life to be lived in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. There is too much from the pulpits today that is like John’s ministry “*designed only to bring people to God*” but friends we need more than this we need the power to live. There is a greater baptism and cleansing than water and it is one of fire of the Holy Spirit. Water was the instrument in which John baptized with but the Holy Spirit is NOT the instrument Jesus baptizes with. Jesus’ baptism is the act of the Holy Spirit Himself baptizing or placing the believing sinner into Christ and His body then empowering them for the work He has called them too. That is what we need today!

**Mark**

**“The Emperors Credentials part 1”**

**1:9-11**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 9-11 Baptism**
3. **Introduction**

Any student of scripture faces the greatest challenges from the Bible not when looking at something that you have never seen but rather when examining something that you are far too familiar with. That is where we find ourselves this morning when we look at the first of two very familiar accounts:

* Jesus’ baptism, mentions in all 4 accounts
* Jesus’ temptation mentioned in all but John’s gospel

Having looked at the road worker (John the Baptist) who prepared the roads into the hearts of people Mark immediately moves to the King of Kings, Jesus, in a sudden simple statement, “***in those days…Jesus came***..” Those few words mark the only way any life can become better, they are words of radical change and they appear twice is 6 verses as we see them again in verse 14. The picture is clear from Mark to the Roman reader of this joyous news of the Emperor, after the Baptist cleared the debris from the roads to the human hearts “***Jesus came***” it didn’t matter where He came there were always results when He came. Specifically Mark tells us His initial entrance down the road to human hearts were down two very difficult roads and he does so in the “*passive voice*” in the Greek which means that these two things were “***done to Jesus***”. His ***baptism*** and ***temptation*** were both necessary ***preparatio***n for His earthly ministry.

1. **Vs. 9-11 Baptism**

Vs. 9-11 It is not into the world Jesus comes, He has been in the world 30 years, it is from Nazareth. These words don’t speak of His beginning on this earth but the beginning of His earthly ministry. Nazareth, to Jesus was an ordinary human experience, filled with all the same responsibilities others experienced but in a place of seclusion, Luke records those years as being ones in which “*Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men*.”

All four of the gospels record the baptism of Jesus which suggests to us that the gospel considered this incident is very significant and important in Jesus life. From a Jewish perspective John’s baptism marked a radical spiritual awakening for many in the nation. Thousands of people were leaving their cities, homes and jobs, going down to a secluded wilderness to listen to this Bulldozer of a man who brought them to a place that they needed to make a change as they acknowledged their failures. Those that made the trek to the wilderness went under the water as their forefathers had done a 1,000 years earlier at this same spot when they entered the promise land. Yet in Matthew 3:13-17 when Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee to John, John objected saying, “*I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me*?” This is **a remarkable statement for two reasons**:

1. First from a human perspective: ***John had known Jesus all his life, they were cousins, and we all know that it is easiest to find fault in folks that we are most familiar with***. Yet John says to his younger cousin, “*You don’t need to confess any sin, there is nothing in all your life that requires confession and repentance*.” Spend any amount of time with any individual and you will very quickly discover that there is no such thing as a “***Holy Man***” from any descendants of Adam and Eve. Yet, John make this clear distinction in the form of an objection of Jesus request to be baptized by John.
2. Second, we need to understand this statement in terms of its chronological placement in the text: ***This statement of John In Matthew 3:14 comes PRIOR to his understanding that Jesus is the Messiah*** which according to the apostle John’s account in 1:31-34 would happen only after the Baptist saw the “*Spirt of God descending like a dove and alighting on Him.*” The Baptists own testimony with regards to Jesus being the Messiah is that, “***I did not know Him****; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water.* ***I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit****. I have seen and testified that this is the son of God*.” ***Prior to the sign that God had shown John with full knowledge of Jesus’ life as his cousin John acknowledges Jesus sinless-ness***!

Back in Matthew’s gospel he records Jesus’ response to John’s objection in chapter 3 verse 15 saying, “*Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill righteousness.*” Clearly Jesus baptism wasn’t the same as the throngs that were coming out from Jerusalem and Judea. So **why was Jesus baptized by John the Baptist**? Mark speaks of **three reasons for Jesus coming to John to be baptized**:

1. **INTENT** Vs. 9 “*Jesus came…and was baptized by John in the Jordan*”: Mark first shows that Jesus’ intent in the words, “Jesus came” saying that He did so for a specific purpose. The purpose was not the purpose of the multitudes who had come His purpose was for “***INDENTIFICATION***” with fallen humanity. In the Greek word for “***baptized***” was not only used as a **symbol of death** but it was also used as a word to **dye cloth** as the fabric was put under the dye thus the cloth would retain the stain that was in the water. That’s what Jesus was doing here as He was put under the water of the Jordan where multitudes had gone under washing away their sin He was put under in a sinless condition and took upon Himself the stain of our sin. He was choosing to be placed under the same water where humanity was confessing sins, having the water that washed over the sin of humanity come upon Him. Simple put “***He who knew no sin became sin for us***”! This would culminate 3 ½ years later at the cross. This is why Jesus said in Matthew 3:15 “*it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness*”. At His baptism Jesus declared His intent to meet the righteous demands of God by undertaking to pay off all of our debt caused by sin.
2. **POWER** Vs. 10 “*Immediately, coming up from the water, he saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove*”: It is interesting to note that Mark records the immediate parting of the heavens and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. The results were instantaneous happening simultaneously with Jesus coming up out of the water, no wait and see. **Not only does the baptism of Jesus reveal His intent it also reveals that His identification would unleash upon mankind the powerful cure to overcome sin, guilt, fear and death**. We can be certain of this as the moment Jesus showed His intent to take our place the Holy Spirits power was visible. It is the Holy Spirit that enables us to live as God has intended! The Spirits descending and remaining upon Jesus is very reminiscent of the anointing oil that would be poured out upon the heads of kings and priests committing them to function in the office. Jesus is being anointed by the Father through the Spirit for the purpose He was called to. In only a few weeks from this time Jesus would quote from Isaiah chapter 61 as recorded for us in Luke 4:18-19 about this anointing saying the “*Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.*” This power wasn’t just for performing power acts but rather so we can live a beautiful peace filled life. That’s why this POWER is symbolized by a dove which is never associated with fierceness, you don’t hear of sports teams being called the “fighting doves”. That’s the kind of power on display LOVE which is the most powerful force there has ever been.
3. **ACCEPTANCE** Vs. 11 “*Then a voice came from heaven, You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*”: This acceptance came with the voice of assurance from the Father. The word “***beloved***” in the Greek ***not only declares affection***, it also carries the meaning of uniqueness as in “***only one***”. Those standing around heard the Father say, “***This is*** *My beloved Son*” as Matthew and Luke record but Jesus heard “***You are*** *My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*”. Humanity needed to know that those previous years of Jesus life on this earth was accepted by the Father and just like the Baptist in his protest of Jesus request to be baptized, **they need to hear that there had been not one thing in those 30 years of sin and self-serving**. But when Jesus heard the voice of the Father He heard the assurance that what He had just done in identifying with sinful man would be accepted 3 ½ years later on the cross and remove the curse. This is what the author of Hebrews describes in Hebrews 10:5-7 saying that when Jesus came into the world quoting out of Psalm 40:6-8 Jesus said, “*Sacrifice and offering You did not desire,* ***but a body You have prepared for Me****. In burnt offerings for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said, Behold I have come—****in the volume of the book it is written of Me---to do Your will, O God***.” And because Jesus had that assurance we who have trusted in Him can as well. Each day we need to hear from the Father “*You are my beloved child, in whom I am well pleased*.” That’s not because we are perfect as Jesus is, no it’s because we have placed are trust in Jesus’ perfection not our own!

Jesus began His ministry with this assurance and saints we must as well, as we will be hearing a 1000 lies and hour telling us otherwise, just as Jesus moved from the voice of the Fathers assurance to the shouts of satan’s lies.

**Mark**

**“The Emperors Credentials part 2”**

**1:12-13**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 12-13 Temptation**
3. **Introduction**

The 2nd part of Jesus’ preparation was his temptation as both Matthew and Luke record this as well, only John leaves this section out. What a comfort it is to realize as the author of Hebrews wrote in chapter 4 verse 15 saying, “*We do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin*.” There is nothing that I face in the flesh or on the world that Jesus didn’t and He did so with complete victory. There is a sense that we can read this section and realize that we need not face temptation alone as Jesus is with us and has defeated what we are facing. Recently Donna and I took the grandchildren to “*Jurassic Quest*” a full size animatronic dinosaur exhibit. Four year old Nate, was excited, talking about how he wanted to ride one. That was until we got their and saw they were as big as houses, looked real, made horrible sounds and looked as if they had just killed something. The poor little guy was terrified. He wouldn’t turn his back on any of them, afraid he was going to be their next victim. That was until Grandpe took his hand walked over to the fiercest, loudest dino in the bunch and started petting its nose and grabbing its fake blood stained tooth. I then asked Nate if he wanted me to take that dino home and place him on the BBQ for dinner. To Nate I was the dino slayer able to overcome the meanest dino’s that ever existed and because he walked with me he could too. Saint’s what a great section of scripture this is as we walk with our champion through every monster that roars and threatens us knowing that He conquered every one of them and as we walk with Him we can too.

1. **Vs. 12-13 Temptation**

Vs. 12 Jesus was identified with sinful humanity at His baptism now He is also identified with us sinners in our temptations. Mark’s account use the least amount of words but the most suggestive words, “the ***Spirit DROVE Him*** into the wilderness….tempted by satan, ***and was there with the wild beasts***”. There are **three things here about this preparation that Mark implies**:

1. Vs. 12 ***Eager willingness***: Mark (for the 2nd time) use his favorite word “***immediately***” but does so in conjunction with something most of us would get excited over a TEST! And not just any test, **a test administered by a lying, murder who has designed the test not to see what you have learned but to ensure that you fail**! The devil had given other tests to other people like Job but this test was even more sever as again we go to the author of Hebrews in chapter 4 verse 15 where we read that Jesus was “*in* ***ALL POINTS TEMPTED AS WE ARE****, yet without sin.*” “*All points tempted as we are*” and when examined all of humanity failed at some point but not Jesus. The word “***drove***” in the Greek implies something very different than what we think it means in the English as we see the word “*drove*” **implying reluctance on Jesus’ part**. When we compare the accounts of Matthew and Luke we see that those two writers used very different words to describe Jesus journey into the wilderness to be tested as their word means was “***led up***” and “***was led***” which is the emphasis upon the Holy Spirit guiding. Only Mark uses the word that implies **Jesus perspective in going** which **speaks not of reluctance** but rather of ***preoccupation of mind in going***. Mark will use the word again in chapter 1:34, 39 speaking casting out or driving out demons. I believe we get the picture of Jesus’ intent as he couldn’t wait to drive out the evil influence. This isn’t a picture of reluctance on Jesus part it is a picture of **complete and absolute CONFIDENCE**. That is what happens when light comes into darkness it drives out the night. We don’t need to stomp or swing our arms in the dark we just need to turn on the LIGHT!
2. Vs. 13a ***Complete examination***: The 2nd thing that Mark points out is the thoroughness of satan’s examination. The word “*tempted*” is in the “*present tense*” which speaks of a continuous action. The three temptations that Luke and Matthew record at the end of the 40 days indicate the intensity of the temptations as the end of the 40 days as satan knew his time was short. Mark mentions **three things about the tests**.
3. **Wildernes**s: First its ***location***, which one Greek scholar said that the word “*wildernes*s” describes **unknown isolation**. What is magnified in isolation is that nothing is available in the environment to take a person’s mind off of their circumstances and this intensifies the testing.
4. **Forty days**: Second we note the ***longevity*** of the test being 40 days and nights. When you look at the number 40 in the Bible you discover something very interesting as the number is almost always associated with testing or judgment.
* Noah’s flood: It rained 40 days and 40 nights
* Israel in the desert: They wondered 40 years
* Moses kept his father in laws sheep 40 years after slaying the Egyptian in Egypt
* Jesus: Tested 40 days

Adam lost dominion over nature in Genesis 1:28 here we see the 2nd Adam Jesus with the wild beasts that will regain their position they lost in our fall. What Adam lost in the garden Jesus won back in the desert. The other accounts of this informs us without food as our Lord was fasting. Though I’m certain that the Spirit sustain Jesus with the food of fellowship satan used that as a temptation, to which Jesus responded that what sustained him was fellowship. Yet still we are told at the end He was hungry!

1. **Tempted by satan**: Third, we have ***the examiner*** the devil, a word in the Greek that means “*adversary*”. The word “*tempted*” in the Greek is a word that means to “pierce in search of”. The word came to mean to, “***try intentionally with the purpose to discover weakness, to purposefully solicit a person to do evil***.”
2. Vs. 13b ***Achieved a 100% on the test***: The final note on the preparation of Jesus is that the wild beasts and the angels are mentioned as being present with Jesus.
3. **Wild beast were with Him**: Neither, Matthew or Luke record the wild beasts but Mark does as he places the Greek emphasis on the word “**WITH**” which changes the meaning of the phrase to the fact that Jesus was at peace with the wild beasts. This fact reveals **two very important truths**:
4. **Jesus enjoyed a relationship with His creation that hadn’t been experienced since before the fall**. We are told in Genesis 1:28 that Adam and Eve were to “*have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth*.” This indicates that during those 40 days of temptation Jesus remained sinless and always had authority over His creation.
5. **Furthermore we are told that during the 100 year reign of Christ upon the earth.** According to Isaiah 11:6 “*The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.*” This also indicates the future fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy as he describes Jesus in chapter 11 as having “*The spirit of the Lord resting upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.*” Jesus went out into that time of temptation with what Isaiah describes as “*righteousness as His belt and faithfulness around His waist*”. These “wild beasts” saw Jesus as God the Son their creator and therefor worshipped His as such as He will be their liberator as well. Paul wrote in Romans 8:21-22 that “*the creation itself also will be delivered from bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of god. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now*.”
6. **Angels Ministered to Him**: In the Greek means to serve and is in the imperfect tense meaning that their care was continuous. The angelic creation ministered to Him at the end of His temptation which shows that Jesus not only was Creator and Master of that which was created on the earth, He is both Lord and creator of the heavens as well. They executed the commands of the Father for the Son continually all during the 40 days and nights and Matthew adds that when satan left Jesus they ministered to Him and by this it is referring to Jesus physical needs as they had been attending to eternal needs. This was a test that offered satan’s worst but the there was never a doubt that Jesus would pass the test with 100%.

For forty days Jesus was tempted:

* By His hunger to wonder whether the Father cared
* By the scope of work, how far He could go apart from the Fathers guidance
* By the offer of the kingdoms of the world what He may gain apart from His sacrifice

Where every other person that has ever been failed at every one of these tests, Jesus never once:

* **DOUBTED LOVE**
* **TRADED TRUST**
* **QUESTIONED HOPE**

**Mark**

**“The Greatest Preacher”**

**1:14-20**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 14-15 Three elements of Jesus’ preaching**
3. **Vs. 16-20 Three effects of Jesus’ preaching**
4. **Introduction**

The rest of this first chapter will stress the **WORK** of Jesus as we see His miracles but Mark records that the focus of the work of Jesus was the **WORDS** of Jesus. Jesus was essentially a preacher who did wonderful miracles that gave credence to His words, not a miracle worker who sometimes had something to say. There are few things that cause more terror then public speaking. Standing in front of people, for 45 minutes with no other conversation, giving a clear easy to fellow presentation of truth. The truth is the best all other pastor teachers can do is teach His teaching. The best teachers are those that don’t try to dazzle their listeners with stories and cleaver opinions but just let Jesus speak. Mark passes over a full year of Jesus’ ministry which is given in more detail in John’s account who is the only one that does. There you will find Jesus famous encounter with Nicodemus and the most quoted verse in all the Bible John 3:16. You will also read of Jesus’ encounter with the woman at the well, His first recorded miracle at the wedding at Cana and more. Mark knew of these events but to his Roman readers there were two more important things than the events of that year:

1. Vs. 14-15 **The message of the Son of God**
2. Vs. 16-20 **The effect of the message on His subjects**
3. **Vs. 14-15 Three elements of Jesus’ preaching**

Vs. 14 Galilee was no small area according to the Jewish historian Josephus, it was an area 60 miles by 30 miles that had over 204 villages with the smallest having 15,000 people; which means that there were over 3 million folks leaving in this area. It must be noted that Jesus moving from Judea to Galilee was not as some seem to imply, *the moving away from danger*. Galilee was Herod’s district, Jesus was not moving away from danger but closer to it as it was Herod who had arrested John the Baptist. Jesus actions were saying to all, “***You may if you can try to silence the voice of a prophet but you can never silence the Word of God***!” It needs to be noted that the summation of Jesus preaching is GOOD NEWS and it would be throughout His life, His words were never about accusation or denunciation as God did not send His Son into the world to judge it but to save it because it was already reeling from the effects of its own judgment.

Vs. 15 When you place this story before us in chronological order Jesus’ coming to Galilee to preach the gospel of the kingdom happened on the same trip that had taken Jesus through Samaria too talk with the woman at the well. Jesus’ message had to do with not with His reign over a land but rather His reign in people’s lives who invite Him in. Mark tells us; (*no doubt from Peter’s memory*), that ***Jesus’ preaching had three essential elements to it***:

1. **The kingdom of God**: Jesus wanted to tell people about a different kingdom then the one that humanity was presently experiencing. He came to set up the “*real truth about life*”, the good news was that the Kingdom of God was at hand. In human history no matter what earthly kingdom, government or political party, before long the subjects will discover that the “*New Regime*” offers the same old platitudes and the only New Truth they have is “*New rhetoric*” with the same old lies! But Jesus’ words were not mere empty promises but a revelation that there was a Kingdom above an earthly one, a spiritual kingdom that supersedes and controls the failed human kingdoms. Jesus’ kingdom controls human history, all of the daily events of our life will bow down to His plan and purposes.
2. **Repentance**: Second, Jesus invited people after hearing of a better Kingdom to realize that the kingdom they were currently in was not worth staying in and that they must leave at once. Since the fall of mankind people had risen up, kings and kingdoms had come and gone and everyone revealed to the subjects of humanity that they had fallen into condition that rendered all people hopeless and helpless to correct their condition, life had become IMPOSSIBLE. But Jesus came to proclaim and end this impossible human condition. The subjects of the old failed life must want to leave the human kingdom for the divine! It all really boils down to, do you want “*life to master you*” or do “*you want to master life through the Master*”? This is why Jesus declared in Matthews account that “*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*”
3. **Belief**: Finally, Jesus spoke of the need to trust Him at His word and work as it wasn’t enough to merely acknowledge that you were living in the wrong kingdom and want to leave you would have to trust Jesus and LEAVE! Jesus didn’t preach repentance as that is not enough to save, repentance without faith is nothing more than remorse which in the end can destroy a life as much as the sin as it waits a person down with the burden of guilt. That is why Jesus preached repentance and faith in Him.

Great evangelical preaching must contain those three elements of our Master and if they don’t it doesn’t matter how great a person’s voice, how cleaver their stories or how popular they are as a person, they most certainly are proclaiming something or someone but it is not the gospel that Jesus preached!

1. **Vs. 16-20 Three effects of Jesus’ preaching**

Vs. 16 As you read from the 16th verse to the end of the chapter you notice that each section or vignette is started with words that either continue the narrative or offer a time in which the new event took place. Words like “*then, when, now, at evening, in the morning, as soon as*…” all indicate that the progression of events chronologically happen on the same day! Thus this section can be called a “**Day in the life of Jesus**”! That adds to our understanding of the words of the Apostle John in 20:30 that, “*truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written*… ” and 21:25 “*there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if written one by one, I suppose the even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.*”

 Again the Jewish historian, Josephus who was once governor of Galilee wrote that there were 330 fishing boats that sailed upon the lake. People seldom ate any meat but fish and most of it salted fish as there was no means to keep it apart from salting it, eating fresh fish was a delicacy. Even the names of the cities that doted the shores of Galilee demonstrate the importance of commercial fishing, Bethsaida means “*House of fish*” and Tarichaea means “*Place of salt fish*”. Abraham Lincoln once said, “***God must love the common people, He made so many of them.***” These fishermen didn’t represent the cream of the crop, **they would have been an example of those voted least likely to be effective for the work of reaching the world**. This fact was further illustrated in the words found in Acts chapter 4 “*when the religious leaders saw the boldness of Peter and John and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And realized that they had been with Jesus*.” ***A person should never think much of themselves beyond what Jesus can make of them and never so little of others than what Jesus thinks of them***! It is a wonderful reality to realize that ***whenever God calls a person to a task He alone assumes the responsibility to fit us for the work by the Spirit of God***. That is what impressed Mark when Jesus walked spoke to them saying, “*Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men*”. Jesus words announced two things that moment:

* **He assumed the entire responsibility to their training**
* **He guaranteed success in their lives in an area they had no experience in**

Of the 12 men Jesus called as many as 7 were fishermen, which bids the question: What about fishing makes a person a good fit for Christian service, perhaps Patience and Perseverance. Mark records, ***three effects of Jesus’ preaching***:

1. **Made people want to be with Jesus**: This is an observation that is made generally over examining Jesus’ three year preaching ministry. ***When Jesus spoke people not only wanted to HEAR Him, they wanted to be NEAR Him***. I believe that ought to be an essential goal in teaching, it ought to cause people who are listening to the message to want to be NEARER Jesus. At its basics the Bible is a ***navigation system*** and its essential destination is always first to draw a person closer to Jesus than they were before they heard the message.
2. **Made people want to follow Jesus**: The second thing of note is that when Jesus taught people followed. Mark records two such examples in Peter and Andrew as well as James and John. Four fellows who were employed catching fish using a method of nets and they were caught in the net of Jesus words as he hauled them in and they had no choice but to follow. ***Jesus teaches us that we must first come before we can become! You’ve got to follow the Master before you can become fishers of men. These men were called to the same task only in a different Sea!*** Jesus’ preaching ministry always made people to want to follow Him, some for the wrong reasons; some at a distance but there was something about His words that made people follow.
3. **Made people want to obey Jesus**: Finally we see in these 4 men there was a call to action that went beyond a desire to be near Jesus and even following Him to leaving nets or employment and family. If there is ever a failure in the work He has called us it is always easy to find as it will always be that the person called has failed to “FOLLOW JESUS” in yielding to the work of the Holy Spirit. It needs to be mentioned that these three effects don’t always happen all at once. These four are again an example of this as they wanted to be near Him, and they followed Him but they didn’t obey Him until here in these verses a year later.

The work guaranteed by Jesus with what can only be called “*inferior material*” is **accomplish without taking away the personality of the people**. Jesus didn’t change who they were; *they started out fishermen and they remained fishermen! What changed is what they now valued as worthy of catching*! James and John the brothers were mending nets and so they continued mending nets again what changed is what they were mended for. Jesus never molded the worker into a certain mold, what He does is cause the worker to become fully who He has created them to be in the first place and utilizes the talents, gifts experiences and education into a one of a kind master piece!

**Mark**

**“Powerful Preaching”**

**1:21-34**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 21-28 Authority and the comfortable**
3. **Vs. 29-31 Authority and compassion**
4. **Vs. 32-34 Authority and control**
5. **Introduction**

Mark records that when Jesus began His earthly ministry He did so by identifying with humanity at His baptism. Then He showed His supremacy over all that defeats humanity during His temptation. But here Mark shows that Jesus comes to humanity as the Great Teacher demonstrating the authority of His words over the things that hold and enslave humanity, physically and mentally. Mark gives this is a “*day in the life of Jesus*” as we read that on:

* Saturday morning Jesus was in the Synagogue
* In the afternoon He was at Peter’s house
* By evening He was in the Streets outside of that home

The general observation of this one day section is what Mark will record as others observations in chapter 7:37 that Jesus, “*does all things well*.” Though these events fall into the category of miracles they were nonetheless manifestations of the authority of Jesus’ Word. The geographical region that these took place is also significant, as ten miles from Capernaum was Tiberius famous for its mineral hot springs where people believed they had curative properties. People came from all over to this famous spa to bathe hoping to be healed from various ailments and to this very area came the Great Physician to heal those with various diseases with the Living Water of the Word!

1. **Vs. 21-28 Authority and the comfortable**

Vs. 21-22 Jesus was on the Sabbath in Capernaum and today if you visit Capernaum you find only ruins, there is the pillars of the synagogue that was built in the 2nd century over the floor of the original and a Catholic Church that hovers over like a space craft of what they believe was Peter’s house. But at the time this was written Capernaum was the largest and most prosperous of all the cities in the Galilee in which the smallest city had 15,000.

Synagogues come into existence during the Babylonian captivity because the Jews were unable to worship at the temple. They doted the countryside where ever ten Jewish males lived so they could study, worship and pray. They were not staffed by the priesthood but by rulers in the community and whenever a rabbi came into the area he would be invited to speak on the Sabbath.

The word “*taught*” in the Greek is one that indicates both His purpose and length as soon as He entered this Synagogue He began to teach for an extended time. The word “*astonished*” could be translated “*blown away*” as it expresses shock and amazement during the entire time they heard Jesus Speak. What “*blew them away*” was the authority Jesus spoke with. The word in the Greek is a legal term that describes “*delegated authority*” a person who is acting or speaking with authority out of someone else’s authority. Jesus made no reference to any other authority, instead His words were insightful, practical and applicable. ***The contrast was not between what the scribes said and what Jesus said but rather between the EFFECTS produced by what the scribes said and what Jesus said. This authority was visible not in mere emotions of those who heard His teaching but in its command over those things that possess humanity for their ruin. The authority of His words were seen it the command His words had in renewing natural order over the physical and mental.*** They were true to the experiences and convictions of the people who heard Him speak. What they heard from Jesus was self-authenticated and created an inner conviction as if Jesus was speaking directly into the life secrets of their hearts that no one could have known save God.

Vs. 23-28 Mark offers an illustration of Jesus authority from an unusual source as it comes from someone who had a natural inclination of opposition to it, an unclean spirit. Here was this man who had been Sabbath after Sabbath without so much as a peep, apparently hearing nothing of conviction that demanded his departure. Yet it is clear ***Jesus’ teaching tortured the demon with truth***, as he broke out in an angry interruption. To which Jesus responds with a rebuke to be silent and a command to come out. Reading this account causes me to wonder about churches today and the messages that are taught. *Does the popularity of some teachers include those possessed with unclean spirits as they hear nothing convicting that demands their silence or exodus*? ***Perhaps the church should redefine success in not how many attend but rather in who is no longer comfortable to attend***? It is clear that this demon recognized not only the authority of Jesus but three other things:

1. That they are on the opposite side of truth
2. Their ultimate end, destruction
3. Jesus’ true identity, God

Mark indicates that though the people were familiar with truth they had moved so far from it as to be astonished and amazed when confronted by it. ***Oh where is preaching that demons fear, truth that demands that they depart? Yes it is true that the church wouldn’t be as large or as popular but it would be holy and powerful***!

1. **Vs. 29-31 Authority and compassion**

Vs. 29-31 The second example Mark offers of the authority of Jesus’ words happened soon after the first at Peter’s house. Here the example of authority is an illustration of what moved His authority, **compassion** and how quickly what disabled a person from being whole took flight at His words as we are informed that, “***immediately*** *the fever left her and she served them*”. The English makes it sound as if they told Jesus to heal her but the Greek tells us that it was Jesus idea to do so, it was His initiative and compassion that moved Him to touch her. The Talmud called this ‘***a burning fever***’ and it was, very common in this part of Galilee. The Talmud actually lays down the methods of dealing with it. “*A knife made wholly of iron was tied by a braid of hair to a thorn bush. On successive days there was repeated, first, Exodus 3:2, 3; then Exodus 3:4; and finally Exodus 3:5*. *A certain magical formula was pronounced, and thus the cure was supposed to be achieved*.” Jesus completely disregarded all this superstition with a touch of His hand and His word she was healed.

Her fever would have left her in a day or so, but Jesus respond to her condition even though it was nothing more than mere inconvenience. ***The authority of Jesus is not reserved for only the big cases, the ones that have come up to such a level as to have no other hope. No, His compassion ministers His words and touch at the small insignificant cases that are only an annoyance***. How often have we suffered during our “*insignificant conditions*” needlessly when our Lord at His word and touch would have had compassion and made us whole? Saints, we have not because we ask not! I would hope this little three verse revelation would cause people to immediately right after this service to come forward to receive a touch from Jesus at His word!

1. **Vs. 32-34 Authority and control**

Vs. 32-34 Jesus ministering after sundown at the end of the Sabbath day freed people from the Sabbath restrictions on travel and activity so they came to Him to be healed. And Mark tells us that the whole city gathered at their door bringing with them all who were sick and demon-possessed. Now that’s what I want at my door at sunset don’t you? Mark’s point on the authority of Jesus’ words is upon the VOLUME and CONTROL of His authority. There are several observations about these three verses:

1. **His authority could not be exhausted**: *Neither by volume nor by variety* as we see both illustrated in these three verses.
2. **His authority was selective and controlled**: **Mark tells us not that ALL who were sick with various diseases and ALL who were demon-possessed were healed but rather that MANY were**. Why some and not others? Only that such deliverance wasn’t in the persons or the Kingdoms best interest at that time.
3. **His authority didn’t need promotion**: What Mark does say was that all demons were silenced from speaking because they knew His authority. ***The quarantine was laid upon their advertisement of Jesus’ power and authority which He obviously didn’t want their PR***. When you read the multiple other accounts of Jesus’ healings He seems to always be squelching people wanting to promote Him by telling them too not tell anyone. Jesus didn’t want the crowds or the notoriety that the authority of His words generated. The crowds didn’t help His ministry they hindered it. Absent in Jesus’ healing ministry is ALL advertisement as you see no campaigns to bring in huge crowds, there is no record of the use of personal testimonials to increase attendance. Not one single thread of similarity between what we see today and what Jesus did, brings me to the conclusion that what we see today is unbiblical and unnecessary. If God has called you and gifted you to heal than go heal, the streets are full of sick and needy people, so are our hospitals. Do so in such a way that no one knows you or will find out about you so that God will get all the glory and not you. I believe Jesus still heals but let’s put it into perspective any and all physical healing as blessed as they are, are still temporary. Oh you many never suffer from what ails you again in this life but chances are you will suffer from something again. But there is a healing that Jesus longs for every person to encounter and that is the healing of your spirit from dead to alive. The healing of your spirit is a permanent healing that will affect all the ugliness that comes out of us.

**Mark**

**“Disobedient Praise”**

**1:35-45**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 35-39 Intimate exposure**
3. **Vs. 40-45 Lessons from the leper**
4. **Introduction**

After a full day of ministry Mark records two more things about the teaching ministry of Jesus the Son of God, having written of Jesus authority.

1. Vs. 35-39 The source of its authority, communion with the Father
2. Vs. 40-45 Its chief opposition, success
3. **Vs. 35-39 Intimate exposure**

Vs. 35 Someone well said that, “*Prayer is time exposure to God, the more we spend with Him the more we bear His image*!” Spurgeon was found of admonishing his students, “*Look no man in the face till thou hast seen the face of God. Speak thou with none till thou hast had speech with the Most High*”. The one thing that refueled Jesus was talking with the Father. Some might be tempted to call ***prayer the secret of Jesus earthly ministry*** but if so it is a secret hidden in plain sight, it is only a secret to us because we do so little of it. I believe that Mark’s point in including this is to show that Jesus’ authority came from His intimate relationship with the Father. The apostle John would elaborate on this much more in his gospel writing about that abiding relationship with the Father in John 14:10. Jesus would say to Phillip who had asked “*Show us the Father*”, to which Jesus responded, “*Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in my does the works*.”

Vs. 36-37 The word “*searched*” in the Greek is a word that means “*tracked him down*”. Peter’s assumption was that Jesus was missing precious opportunities and needed to be brought back at once. Instead of helping facilitate the time that Jesus would take to be near the Father he and the others became part of the problem. If you want **the biblical approach to a hectic life** we only need to reverse the order of these verses: “*Everyone is looking for you*”…… “*a long while before daylight go out to a solitary place and pray*.” I’m sure that many of you can relate to those five words, “*Everyone is looking for you*”! It is what almost drove Moses to ruin until his father-in-law suggested that many hands make light work. As true as that statement is Jesus found someone better than “*many hands*”, the hand of the Father!

Vs. 38-39 There are two opinions as too the meaning of Jesus statement “*for this purpose I have come forth*”:

1. That Jesus was speaking geographical and local as if He meant that He came forth from Capernaum. The problem is that He hadn’t been at Capernaum as he was on the hill side giving a rather long teaching session we call His Sermon on the Mount.
2. The 2nd interpretation (*and I believe the correct one*) is that Jesus is speaking essential and eternal and was speaking of His essential fellowship with the Father as He was dependent upon the Father and the Father had spoken and filled His Son for the work that lay ahead.

There will always be someone or something demanding that we drop everything at once but when we come into prayer the Lord directs us to the next towns. Jesus ministry could have only been in one city but through prayer it compassed all of Galilee which meant more people who were held captive were liberated as Jesus went to them instead of them having to come to Him.

1. **Vs. 40-45 Lessons from the leper**

Vs. 40 Luke the physician / historian’s account is that the Leper was “*full or covered with leprosy*”. The disease had run its course. Josephus wrote that lepers were treated as “dead men”. A professor of ancient biblical diseases commented that “*No other disease reduced a human for so many years to so hideous a wreck. No other disease was regarded with more terror and pity than leprosy*.” Today there are more than 15 million people across the world with leprosy mostly in 3rd world nations. Matthew also records the healing of the leper but gives the timing of the event as being right after Jesus delivered His long sermon that we call the “*Sermon on the Mount*”, which makes this the first healing of the day prior to Jesus teaching in the synagogue. There are ***four things that make this incident to the Roman reader a clear distinction of the superiority of Jesus over earthly Caesars***:

1. **Vs. 40 Appeal to Jesus’ will**: What is unique in the healings of Jesus is that this is the only recorded healing where the persons request was appealed to Jesus willingness to do so. It seems as though the leper had come to the conclusion of divine purpose as it related to his circumstance. There are two words in the Greek that describe a person’s “*willingness*”, the 1st speaks of a desire that comes from a person’s emotions the 2nd from a person’s reason and the leper used the 1st word as ***he appealed not to Jesus’ reason by tugged upon His heart.*** It is apparent that the leper has no doubt of Jesus’ Power to heal him as he had heard of this ability, what he doubts is his willingness to do so and both the power and the will are necessary. What the leper meant was, “*If my healing is not out of line with the purpose of God, then you can make me clean.*” A great amount of believers inflected with illness far less than this would not care if it was out of line with the purpose or plan of God, just heal me.
2. **Vs. 41-42 Response motivated from compassion**: The 2nd thing that would capture the Roman reader is that the Son of God was moved with compassion and only Mark adds that Jesus then stretched out His hand and touched him saying, “*I am willing, be cleansed*”. Very few of us have any familiarity with a person overcome with leprosy but it is a very disfiguring disease. A person’s physical appearance is changed till they no longer resemble themselves. The worse part of the illness is that the patient suffers alone, away from family and friends alienated from society and human contact. There is a rule in Greek grammar that says that: The action of the present tense goes on simultaneously with the action of the leading word, which in this case would be Jesus saying “*I am willing, be cleansed*” indicating that they happen at the same time *He was touching the leper*. But here **the construction of this sentence points out that Jesus didn’t touch the leper in order to cleanse him, but rather to show him and everyone around that he was cleansed at Jesus spoken word “*I am willing; be cleansed*”**. Levitical law forbid a Jew to touch a leper and Jesus obeyed it and at His word the leper was cleansed and the touch was an act of kindness and revelation of what Jesus had done with the authority of His word. There are 8 such recorded touches in Mark’s gospel alone.
3. **Vs. 43-44 Complete knowledge**: The purpose of the healing was that the leper was to be a testimony or witness to the priests. The entire 14th chapter of Leviticus, all 32 verses, are dedicated to probably the least read and used section in the Torah. An elaborate ceremony involving 8 days of examination, 2 turtle doves, 2 male lambs, oil and flour the twice shaving off of all hair, the washing of clothes and the body all while the healed person stays in a tent outside of the camp of people. Had this man done so the priests would have been astonished and would have had to research what to do? “*A man healed of leprosy? Why we haven’t had a case of this since… Elisha healed Naaman! And he wasn’t a Jew but a Syrian and commander of their army.*” The priests would have known two things about leprosy and its healing:
* That it was a symbol of sin as God had used it as judgment.
* Prophesies with regard to the healing of a leper being linked to the coming of the Messiah.

Jesus spoke of this when he answered John the Baptists concern with regards to him being the Messiah when Jesus answered in Matthew 11:5 “*Tell John the things you hear and see: The blind see and the lame walk; the* **lepers are cleansed** *and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them*.” Yet, as Mark points out this was with the full knowledge of Jesus that this leper’s disobedience would lead to a change in Jesus ministry forcing Him outside of the cities. This fact is made clearer when we place it next to the Apostle John’s statement in 2:23-25 “**Jesus did not commit Himself to *those at the feast of Passover* because He knew all men.**” Jesus was not ignorant nor naive of humanity! This causes us to realize that such complete knowledge didn’t over ride Jesus’ compassion as one would naturally think. ***The only conclusion I can make is that the healing of the man with leprosy was of greater importance than the stated purpose to testify to the religious leaders as to His identity***.

1. **Vs. 45 Something better than praise**: All of the ministry opportunity lost because of this man’s “***disobedient praise***”. I could easily come to his defense by excusing his disobedient praise by saying, “*This fellow was encased in a loathsome foul disease for a long period of time and we are going to quibble about a little thing like timing of praising the One who healed him*?” Obedience is not only better than sacrifice it is better than praise! The greatest form of praise this healed leper could have given Christ was not to run around blabbing what God had done for him after he was told not to do so but rather to have done exactly what the Lord who touched Him told him immediately after his leprosy had left him. His lack of obedient praise had exactly the opposite results as it hindered others from receiving what he had, healing. Unwittingly and unintentionally the healed leper’s praise violated the word whose power had liberated him. Oh what a valuable lesson this is for us as I want no part of disobedient praise.

**Mark**

**“The Healing of Forgiveness”**

**2:1-12**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 1-5 Unorthodox faith**
3. **Vs. 6-12 Right logic, wrong answer**
4. **Introduction**

In chapter 2 Mark records for us another day in Capernaum with the Son of God and the authority of His word. The story breaks apart into two sections:

1. Vs. 1-5 The healing of the paralytic
2. Vs. 6-12 The opposition from the scribes to the healing
3. **Vs. 1-5 Unorthodox faith**

Vs. 1-2 Mark tells the reader that this story again has a familiar place as Jesus was in THE HOUSE in Capernaum. The only house that we have been introduced to so far in Mark is Peter’s home. So many had come that they spilled out into the street, clearly as chapter 1 verse 28 had indicated Jesus’ fame had spread throughout the region. Yet with that said notice that Jesus’ method had not changed in spite of His fame and popularity as we see Him employed at “*preaching the word to them*”. The word “*preached*” in the Greek is different word then a public proclamation, instead it is a word that means a conversation and it is in the imperfect tense which emphasizes a continuous action. So Jesus taught conversationally for an extended period of time. Mark’s point is again is to show the focus of our Lord upon preaching the word.

* No adapting His method to fit His popularity
* No change of direction to accommodate the pressing demand of the needy people

***Many come to Jesus for varying reasons, they may be lame in this area of their life, or blind in that area, some may like the leper by rotting away but still their greatest need hasn’t changed which is to be transformed by the word of God***. ***Jesus is never interested in just restoration, He want’s recreation through our transformation and that can only happen though our receiving His word***.

Vs. 3-4 Into this determination by Jesus to “***preach the word***” come five men one of them the paralytic equally determined to reach Jesus with their pressing need despite the program. I say **THEIR** “*pressing need*” deliberately as it is never the afflicted that suffer alone they have family and friends who “***carry***” and “***bare***” the burden of ther friend and loved one. That doesn’t make the friend of family less of a person or less loving to say that, carrying a burden for another is difficult. Oh I’m sure they wanted to see their friend healed and mobile but it doesn’t make them any less of a friend to say that that his healing would liberate them as well. Anyone who has cared for another knows that the friend or loved ones disability becomes yours as well to a degree.

 I have no doubt that these five had faith as Jesus tells us in verse 5 and that Jesus is the object of that faith. What I want us to look at is ***three unorthodox traits of faith*** as some times we don’t think we have faith or enough of it. I suggest to you that you may have more faith than you realize and just haven’t recognized it as it was manifesting it’s self in a different way:

1. ***Dares the difficult***: The first thing I notice about these men is the degree of difficulty they were willing to go through for just the opportunity for their friend to meet Jesus. We are not told how far they have travelled carrying their friend but if it was any length greater than a few 100 feet the degree of difficulty would increase with each passing ¼ mile. It is safe to think that this man weighed 150 pounds or better and carrying him on a homemade stretcher even with four men would have been quite a difficult challenge. Yet their faith is visible in the fact that they were willing to undergo such a journey without any real guarantee. I can only imagine what they must have gone through their minds as they drew nearer to Capernaum and witnessed an increased amount of people, perhaps they didn’t even know where Jesus was at and asked directions only to find out that everybody they asked was going there as well for the same kind of reasons. They struggle through the crowds to see a glimpse of the house and in front of it as chapter 1 verse 33 said the “whole city gathered at the door”. Through all those difficulties they didn’t quit but continued to press forward where others would have said, “*There are way too many people here, we are never going to be able to even get a glimpse of Jesus let alone get in front of Him*”! Then whose idea was it to climb up to the 2nd story of the house and start tearing off the roof? The point I’m making is that when we in spite of the challenges and difficulty continue pressing forward to get to the place and possibility of change we are demonstrating that we have faith!
2. ***Does what is demanded***: The 2nd on orthodox sign of their faith is that they did what was demanded for the situation. They didn’t limit their actions by what was normal or customary, like waiting and go through the front door! The construction of the ancient roofs reveals quite an amount of work to accomplish the task. The Greek word for uncover is a word that means to dig out and in Luke’s account of this same story he informs us that they let the paralytic down through the removed tiles. Typically these were flat roofs made up of a composition of mortar, tar, ashes and sand spread out on the roof with stone tiles placed on top. They instead did what was necessary to accomplish the task of getting in front of Jesus in spite of what I can only imagine would have been disapproval by Peter as it was his house that was losing a roof. Amazingly we see that Jesus never rebuked them, He doesn’t even seem to be disturbed at the interruption. Clearly these men did what was unorthodox, risked criticism and weren’t afraid to do so. ***Faith is evident when we are doing what is demanded, risking rejection and overcoming obstacles to get to Jesus***!
3. ***Carless about the cost***: The final unorthodox sign of faith is that they must have realized that tearing apart a large whole in a roof and lowering their friend in front of Jesus was going to cost them something. There was no “home owner’s policy” for paralytic roof damage. Neither do I believe that this was going to be a larger scale of the children’s game of “doorbell ditch” where they tar a whole in the roof lower their friend in front of Jesus and everybody then run like mad. These 5 were carless in the face of the cost and that is another example that you have faith, they had excepted that and realized that even if unsuccessful they were still going to have to pay for the damage.

Saint’s I think the church could all use more people that exhibit this kind of unorthodox faith where they will”

* **Dare to do what is difficult**
* **Willing to overcome obstacles**
* **Castaway counting the cost**

Vs. 5 That brings us to Jesus’ response to their three examples of unorthodox faith as Jesus said, “*Son, your sins are forgiven you*”. There are those that suggest that Jesus’ pronouncement was based upon His knowledge that this man’s paralysis was based upon some moral failure. Other’s go so far as to say that this man’s paralysis was psychosomatic, or all in his head, and that Jesus removed the moral failing which lifted the paralysis. Though indirectly all disease and the things that cause for human suffering are “sin related” the context of the passage is in verse 2 where we are told that Jesus was “*preaching the word to them*” and in fact these 5 interrupted that message. “***Forgiveness is the greatest miracle that Jesus ever performs. It meets the greatest need; it costs the greatest price; and it brings the greatest blessing and the most lasting results*.”** What good was it if the man had two whole legs, and walked right into hell with them? One wonders if the four friends were not initially disappointed in Jesus’ words and thought, “*He’s not here for forgiveness! He’s here for healing, that’s why we tore apart the roof and he is on a bed!*”

1. **Vs. 6-12 Right logic, wrong answer**

Vs. 6-7 The scribes logic was correct the flaw in it was the fact that Jesus held claim to the logic as He was God the Son and could alone forgive sins. The scribes observed a rabbi teaching but what they were unable to see was the Son of God standing before them, they were blind as to His identity and Jesus was going to reveal that to them twice:

1. Vs. 8 The first revelation Jesus offers as to His identity is that “*Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves*”. They were correct in their internal reasoning “***Only God can forgive sins***” and His knowing of this though they said nothing should have revealed to them that God the Son was in front of them. God spoke to the prophet Jeremiah in chapter 17:9-10 saying, “*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind…*” In psalm 139:4 we read that “*There is not a word on my tongue but behold, O LORD, You know it altogether*.”
2. Vs.9-11 In the 2nd revelation Jesus offers a more practical reasoning as He proposes a question that He then demonstrates the answer to so that they could not come to the wrong conclusion by evidence, only by hardness of heart. Notice how carefully Jesus words the question: “*Which is easier*,” “**TO SAY** *to the paralytic, your sins are forgiven you*” “**OR TO SAY**, *Arise, take up your bed and walk*?” Jesus did not phrase the question in terms of action, “*which is easier* **TO DO**?” They had already concluded that though both would be difficult but **ONLY GOD** can **DO** the act by forgiving sins. Any charlatan could **SAY** “*your sins are forgiven you*”. The only true proof of forgiveness of sins lies with God as there is no immediate outward sign or indication that it has happened. Jesus is saying to the scribes, “*You question my identity to forgive sin? Let me demonstrate to you My identity and as such My power to forgive sins as it comes from the same source to heal*.” It is then the Paralytic became part of the sermon as Jesus turned to him said, “**I SAY** *to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house*.”

Vs. 12 The outcome of this was that all except the scribes were amazed and rejoiced praising God saying, “*We never saw anything like this!*” They stood amazed at the authority of the Word even though they didn’t fully comprehend His identity which was the lesson.

**Mark**

**“The company He keeps”**

**2:13-17**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 13-14 From judged to joined**
3. **Vs. 15-17 The retirement party**
4. **Introduction**

Mark records four great controversies of Jesus time and location marked by the religious leader’s verbal complaints and Jesus’ response to them. In the first two complaints they are leveled at the disciples about Jesus, the last two are spoken to the Lord about the disciples. We will only take a look at the first one today but here they are in their entirety:

1. Vs. 13-17: “***How is it that Jesus eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners***”? What to do with the traitorous collaborators of the occupying Romans known as the Tax Collectors? Religious leaders had decided to be *exclusionary* and treated their treason by having no contact with them.
2. Vs. 18-22: “***Why do the disciples of John and the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast***?” What place does joyous daily living have in religious life, religion is serious and solemn business? Here they had decided to be *inclusionary* as these opposing groups saw religion the same way.
3. Vs. 23-28: “***Why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath***?” What is the ultimate goal of religion, to liberate humanity or to control humanity? The religious leaders had taken the position as *separatists* but such action made them arrogant as they pick and choose history that supported elitism.
4. Vs. 1-6: “***They watched Him closely, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath***..” What is the true test of religion? The religious leaders had forgotten the standard that is at the heart of God, to do-good to His creation, to save and make whole humanity. This made the religious leaders *legalists* and used religion to be heartless towards humanity.

When it comes to Jesus, generally speaking, we see that He was not a fan of religion, even the one that prophesied about His coming that His Father in heaven placed Him in. And by religion I mean to say the manmade expression that sought to displace ***intimacy with an institution*** and ***grace with the grunts of human activity***.

1. **Vs. 13-14 From judged to joined**

Vs. 13 Israel is the land bridge between Europe and Africa and in the ancient world all traffic must go through her. It was said that Galilee was the road to somewhere!

Preaching with Jesus was a passion not a profession and it appears that He was the founder of seaside services.

Vs. 14 Of the first 5 men that took up Jesus command to follow Him, (*four fishermen and one tax collector*) two of them directly wrote a gospel and a third (*Peter*) influenced Mark. ***Jesus didn’t choose PHD’s to accompany Him, to write His story to the world but common men who most of academia would consider unqualified***. The great truth is that Jesus and His call upon a life is the “***great ordination***”. In the last section we read of a man who was sick with paralysis that had hindered his progress in life. Here in this story we read of a different type of paralysis that was equally debilitating, this paralysis came from a life style that manifested in an occupational choice! It too had hindered this man’s progress in life and he too is given a choice to “*take up his bed and go out in the presence of all*.” ***Jesus wanted the people no one else wanted, He offered Himself and friendship to people no one else would ever call a friend***. Matthew must have been a man with an ache in his heart, he had to have heard Jesus message from a distance, an outcast on the outskirts and something must have caused him to have hated what he had chosen in life. Jesus was looking for opportunities, He was never off duty, if there was only one man Jesus would find him. What a lesson for us “*soul gathers*” if we would look for people as we walk through life as Jesus did.

The Romans collected their taxes through a system known as ***Tax Farming***, they assessed a district a fixed tax figure and then sold the right to collect to the highest bidder. The buyer had to hand over the assessed sum at the end of the year and was allowed to keep whatever they had gathered above that. The potential exploitation and extortion was compounded because the people had no idea what they actually owed except from the tax collector’s statements. It was a four tiered system:

1. **Poll tax**: All men 14-65 and women 12-65 had to pay because they were alive
2. **Ground tax**: 1/10th of all grain and 1/5th of all wine, olive oil and fish produced
3. **Income tax**: One percent of a person’s annual income
4. **Taxes and tolls**: Separate taxes or tolls for using roads or harbors, sales tax on certain items for import or export duties. There was even a transportation tax on carts as each wheel was taxed

Most tax collectors made their wealth from the fourth category as they had the largest room to extort people. The Tax Collector under the full authority of Rome could stop anyone at any time and make them unpack their carts and force them to pay a tax on the spot. If the person was unable to pay they would sometime offer them a loan at a high rate of interest gaining them even more money. ***They were so hated that they were not only excommunicated from the synagogues they were not allowed to serve as a judge or witness in court***.

The Greek word for “*follow*” means to “*walk the same road*”. The verb tense is in the imperative mode present tense which means that it ***more than an invitation*** it was a ***command***. Jesus was saying, “*Start going on the same road as Me and continue on this road*”. Matthew understood this command and that the road he was on was a far different road then the one Jesus was walking on, of all the disciples Matthew truly left all he had to follow Jesus. The others could go back to their boats and fish but Matthew burned his boat having left his tax collectors job he could not go back to it, there would be no turning back for Matthew. For his decision Matthew gained three things:

1. ***A chance to look people in the eye***: He would not have to look down when asked what he did for a living. He may be poor fiscally but he was wealthy relationally. Because his hands were clean, his heart was now at rest.
2. ***A better job***: His tools were still the same, *pin and parchment*, but now what his ledger recorded wasn’t what was owed him but what he owed others because his debt had been paid.
3. ***A different reputation***: Locally everyone knew Levi the “***hated***” tax collector but what the world knows now is far different because of his decision that day to follow Jesus; they now know Matthew the “***gift of God***” gospel writer.
4. **Vs. 15-17 The retirement party**

Vs. 15 Luke’s account makes it clear that the party was at Matthew’s home and the crowd that gathered were those that were not allowed at the synagogue nor near a rabbi but on this occasion Mathew’s home became the synagogue as the Rabbi made a house call. What happened after Matthew’s call most likely came about after some time but Matthew filled his home with people who were just as paralyzed in sin as he had been that they might have the opportunity to be set free. Jesus was not invited to make toasts, He had been invited to make the same offer He had to Levi, “Follow Me”. But the place was not just filled up with quests as there were close by critics who would diagnose the illness but offer no cure! The name “*Pharisee*” means “*separated ones*” as they separated themselves form anything and anyone they considered unholy.

Vs. 16 Their observation was correct Jesus did sit among tax collectors and sinners and He still does! ***Jesus never views people as rejects or outcasts He sees them as patients***! C.T. Studd who gave up his fortune to serve in the jungles of Africa once said: “*Some like to dwell within the sound of church bells, but I want to run a rescue shop within a yard of Hell*!”

Vs. 17 In Jesus’ reply as to why He ate and drank with tax collectors and sinners he says ***He was there not to partake, He was there to liberate***! Jesus’ answer is in two parts:

1. **First a proverb**: “*Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick*”. Jesus was not implying that the Pharisees were spiritually healthy or were righteous only that they thought of themselves as such. Their problem was twofold: Their blindness to their own condition was seen first in that weren’t engaged in the spiritual healing of others. Second since they saw themselves as spiritual healthy and righteous they remained outside of Jesus as their cure!
2. **Second the application**: “*I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance*.” They had questioned His ethics and Jesus said that they had ***misdiagnosed His physical presence as condoning sin instead liberating people*** from sin. ***None are more sick than the diseased who think themselves as well and none are more manifesting sin as those who think themselves as holy***!

Jesus said, “*You’re right on with your diagnosis, these are sick and hurting people, but your remedy of exclusion and isolation isn’t the answer. A doctor needs to be among the sick if I they are going to administer the remedy.*” That’s the marvelous truth about Jesus, “***You would always find Him amongst the hurting***.” Jesus spoke as the cure for moral failing and ***His reply makes two things abundantly clear***:

1. **The self-sufficient are the sickest**: Jesus indicates that those that see themselves as without a need are in actuality the social outcasts and have the greatest need. There is never a treatment, not even from Jesus, for the person who fails to recognize that they are ill. It is a terrible tragedy for most of humanity that we have to hit bottom before we will look up to Jesus to be healed. Most people have to have the bottom drop out of their dreams of importance and self-reliance before they will even consider Jesus.
2. **People are more important than religious prejudices**: We all have prejudices, notions formed either before we have sufficient information or because we have adopted mistaken ideas. Many of these are passed down from our ancestors. Placing people before prejudices doesn’t mean that we except sinful destructive behavior any more than we except cancer! No it means that we don’t allow our preconceived views to get in the way of introducing the person to the Great Physician.

**Jesus is the perfect doctor to heal us of our sin**.

* ***He is always available.***
* ***He always makes a perfect diagnosis.***
* ***He provides a complete cure.***
* ***He even pays the bill!***

**Mark**

**“From sobbing to song”**

**2:18-22**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 18-20 To joyful**
3. **Vs. 21 To new**
4. **Vs. 22 To expansive**
5. **Introduction**

We move into the second of the four questions asked about the purpose of religion that Jesus answered. Reading this section causes me to believe that if most literate people in the world would just carefully read the Gospels we would probably witness the greatest spiritual revival. I say this for two reasons:

1. First it would clear up the distortions and mischaracterizations that have been unfortunately taught and displayed by Christians and the church that bears His name.
2. Secondly, people would discover for themselves how absolutely gracious, loving and irresistible Jesus is in the Bible.

Jesus was ever the master illustrator, for Jesus earth was crammed full of heaven as everything spoke to Him of the Father. In these three illustrations Jesus would have us understand Christianity is not “*patched-up*” Judaism or “*New Look*” religion. You cannot tack Jesus on to rituals or rules; to use the “*New*” to fix the “*Old*” is a sure fire way to ruin booth! What Jesus offers in ***these three illustrations describes three characteristics of Christianity that cannot be placed into old tired warn out religion of rules and rituals, for Christianity according to Jesus is:***

* ***To Joyful***
* ***To New***
* ***To Expansive***
1. **Vs. 18-20 To joyful**

Vs. 18 Pharisees were of the sect of Levi and involved in regulating the service of the temple, this was propped up by added ceremonial and ritualistic observances during the week and with John the Baptist being placed into prison his disciples had not heard their leader when he had called them a “*brood of vipers*” and instead joined with the Pharisees disciples in their criticism of Jesus and His disciples. ***The complaint was that not only did Jesus and His disciples eat with the wrong people (verses 13-17) they did so at entirely the wrong time (verses 18-22)!*** There are special days in which the law spoke concerning a fast such as Yom Kippur also known as the Day of Atonement. But the Pharisees loved to show how religious they were above others and designated more and more days for fasting as a way of getting both God and man’s attention. They fasted two days a week every Monday and Thursday from 6 AM – 6 PM after which they would have a meal. They would put on clothing of sackcloth or burlap, rub ash on their face, suck in their faces to look as if they hadn’t eaten in weeks and make loud prayers to elicit attention. Jesus wasn’t against fasting and neither is the New Testament as there are many reasons for a person to go through a fast, most importantly to draw nearer the Lord as a person would forgo something and replace the time normally spent doing that activity with the Lord. But in the case of the Pharisees it was for self-display that they may present themselves as being spiritual. Religious people likes rules that make them stand out and outwardly appear better than others especially if these rules make them “***nonconformists***” to the world around them. But inevitably their “***conformity***” to the religious rule is designed to be flaunted as a way of demonstrating superiority to the very people they are called to reach. Essentially it is, “*Why don’t you religious people keep* ***OUR*** *self-imposed traditions to appear holier-than-thou, like we do*.” What is at issue is that one group that is attempting to stand out isn’t standing out as much because others who simply love God are standing out by not standing out!

Vs. 19 The word “*friends*” describes guests not the groomsmen as we must not impose our traditions on the biblical text. After the wedding the Jewish couple didn’t go away on a honeymoon they stayed at home for a week with their friends and had a party. In a hard life that they had during biblical times it was easily the best week of the couple’s life. The closest friends of the newlyweds were called the “***children of the bridechamber***” and this is who Jesus likens His disciples too, the chosen friends of the bride and groom. According to the Talmud there was only one time a man was absolved of religious duty and that was at a wedding. The only duty a man had at a wedding was to rejoice! This was such an important time that there was an actual rabbinical ruling that said, “*All in attendance on the bridegroom are relieved of all religious observances which would lessen their joy*.” Jesus was always pushing the spiritual over the ritualistic elements of religion as he like the spontaneity of relationship above the confines of ritualistic religion.

Jesus, doesn’t condemn them for “***fasting instead of feasting***” He **doesn’t even question the sincerity** as these two groups He only questions the timing of fasting. The problem as Jesus put’s it is, “*You are questioning WHY Me and My followers are fasting? I just want to let you know that you are at a wedding not a funeral!*” The problem, as Jesus explained it, was that those two groups didn’t know what kind of gathering they were at and even though they were a part of the majority that was fasting instead of feasting. It was the “***fasters***” and not the “***feasters***” that were acting inappropriate, albeit ignorantly. Ffrom the perspective of these two groups that the situation and circumstances that they were living warranted a “*fast at a funeral*” and I believe that is in part why Jesus uses illustrations to explain what He and His disciples knew that the Pharisees and John’s disciples were apparently unaware, namely that the Bride Groom was at the wedding.

Vs. 20 Jesus went on to explain that as far as His present disciples were concerned there would be a time for their mourning and fasting when He would temporarily be taken from them. Jesus would further explain this time in John’s gospel in chapter 16 verses 16-24. He said in a little while that they wouldn’t see Him as He was going to the Father. He told them that it would be natural for them to weep, lament and be sorrowful even as the world would rejoiced. But He said that their sorrow will be turned into joy. He promised that they would see Him again and they would have joy that “*no one will take from them*.” Jesus had already told them in John chapter 16 verse 7 that it was better that He go away because if He didn’t the Helper would not come and that His departure meant that Jesus would send the Holy Spirit to them. Hey saints, Jesus has died and rose again, the Holy Spirit has come and indwelt us as Christ abides in His disciples, the Holy Spirit is available to fully immerse and empower our lives. **So are you “*feasting at a wedding*” because we have “*Joy, that no one will take from us*” or are we the church acting like we are “*fasting at a funeral*”?** It is clear that the relationship we now enjoy with Christ is what ought to change not just our outlook on life but our entire disposition from fasting to feasting, from sobbing to a song. Saints the life lived in Christ cannot be lived any other way than joy! ***Jesus said something that ought to be understood and repeated each time we gather the truest character of Christianity is that it is a wedding not a funeral, a feast not a fast, a song not a sob***!

1. **Vs. 21 To new**

Vs. 21 It take no imagination to see that Jesus grabbing up first a piece of clothing that had been patched by an unshrunk piece of cloth then a new wine skin both to illustrate what having the bride groom meant relating to fasting turned to feasting. Jesus illustration is common sense and natural! The word “*old*” in the Greek is a word that describes its age NOT in reference to ***time*** but ***usefulness***. The garment wasn’t merely “***out of date or fashion***” rather it had “***used up its purpose***” and patching it up with the new cloth would only make the differences more noticeable. The “*New cloth*” is a reference to Jesus and His ministry **which by definition in this illustration wasn’t meant for the purpose of mending** but a “***new garment***” all together. Jesus hadn’t come to reform Judaism, to “*patch it up*” or “*pour new wine into old wineskins*”. Countless people try to do with the “***Royal Righteous Robes***” of Jesus as they try to sow them onto the rags of either their former life or some belief system that never fully covered them! Listen, you do not add Jesus to your life, you must not try as you will only make your attempt obvious and the holes in your life more visible. To “*Put on Jesus*” you must “*Put off*” your former life! It has become popular to purchase clothes that by design look like they should have been tossed years ago. I can’t find a better illustration of our modern society than people preferring to identify more with what is the worn out rags of self-worship and yet its continual appeal to a society that is so trapped and obsessed by it that they will pay 10 times more for something that has already not only been proven but by designed to: Not last, not cover and be more expensive!

**IV. Vs. 22 To expansive**

Vs. 22 Again the word for old is the same as above “*worn out for its original purpose*” and the Greek word for “New” is a word that means “***in point of use***”. This 2nd illustration takes a little more understanding as the ancient world didn’t use glass it used animal skins or bladders for the fermentation process. New wine would be early in that process and would give off more gas that would require the flexible characteristics of a new wine skin otherwise the old wine skin would have been too brittle for the process. Wine is always used of joy symbolically in the bible and to try to contain joy in the brittle inflexible nature of the religion of the time would have ruined the wine and destroyed the religion. The principal Jesus is using is that: “***Religious tradition must never trump relational triumph***”! These stories speak of what the Son of God came to initiate an entirely new order of spiritual life and experience which of necessity make necessary new expressions which was best understood in fasting instead of fasting. Our attitudes ought to reflect a wedding and a funeral, feasting and not fasting. The presence of Jesus is not at our gatherings if joy isn’t visible. Psalm 144:15 says, “*Happy is the people whose God is the LORD*!”

**Mark**

**“Rest verses rules”**

**2:23 – 3:6**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 2:23-28 The sacred secular**
3. **Vs. 3:1-6 Restored hands and weathered hearts**
4. **Introduction**

The final two questions asked or implied by the Pharisees concerning religious life and its place in society both focus in on the Sabbath. The Sabbath in the hands of religious leaders had 39 different categories and thousands of rules imposed upon it which had caused it to no longer be a ***day of rest,*** instead it had become a ***day of restrictions***. **The Sabbath was God’s idea to restore a person, to give them a time of *rest*, *recuperation*; a day set aside where they would have time to *reflect* upon their *relationship* with Him!** When observed as intended it was **a** **joyous time of family, fellowship and feasting all with God at the center**. By as often happens religious authority had with their 1000’s of interpretation of what constituted “*work*” stolen the day of rest and transformed it into a day of restrictions and burdens to keep. For instance you could spit on a rock but not on the dirt as you would be making mud which was used for mortar and this would constitute work. ***The law on the Sabbath was never meant to be full of burdens but rather blessings, they weren’t given as punishments, but for protection.*** As Jesus will imply in chapter 3 verse 4, **evil and death don’t observe the Sabbath, they take no day of rest**! **So why should that which is good and life giving take a break**? Hosea the prophet said in chapter 6, “*God wants mercy before sacrifice*”.

1. **Vs. 2:23-28 The sacred secular**

Vs. 23-24 ***The 3rd charge against Jesus was aimed at His seeming inability to distinguish between the sacred and the secular***. The plucking of wheat and breaking the hulls from the nut was not sinful but normal on any other day. What they took issue with was that they were engaged in do so on a sacred day, the Sabbath. It was Pharisaical tradition not to pick grain of the Sabbath; Deuteronomy 23:25 which doesn’t offer a prohibition against plucking grain on **any day** so long as you only picked and did not use a sickle. Of the 39 different categories the Pharisees had classified work under, four of centered on food “*reaping, winnowing, threshing* and *preparing a meal*” and as far as the action of the disciples were concerned in the Pharisees eyes they had broken all four. The ancient biblical languages of Greek and Hebrew are exact languages, geared for the reader and when studying texts they offer a completed picture of the scene. For instance Mark choose a Greek word for “***said***” that relates to the Pharisees conversation with Jesus that is a verb in the “*imperfect tense*” which means ***continuing action***. Had Mark under the inspiration wanted to say that the Pharisees had simply asked Jesus, “*Why, do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath*” Mark would have used the verb in an aorist tense but the fact that he doesn’t means that ***his intention is to show that these Pharisees kept on asking and badgering Jesus about the matter until He finally answered***. So in their eyes as they observed the disciples reacting out of their hunger it would have been better for those boys to have ***growling stomachs*** then to have ***working hands***.

Vs. 25-26 Jesus’ response as to why they were doing what was considered secular on a sacred day is very simple, “***they were hungry***”! As a illustration of this Jesus offers another story in their history in 1 Samuel chapter 22 verse 18. The area of Nob was were 85 priests plus women and children lived taking care of the tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant. “*David*”, Jesus said, “*When he was hungry entered the tabernacle and ate the showbread*.” (*Jesus says that it was Abiathar the High Priest but in 1 Samuel chapter 21, Samuel records for us that the High priest was Abimelech. The critics will take this as a clear sign the Bible is full of contradictions as both can’t be right. Ah but according to 1 Samuel 22:20, 2 Samuel 8:17 and 1 Chron. 18:16 we are looking at father and son as Abimelech was the son of Abiathar and apparently both were involved in this decision to give the bread to David*.) We are told that they have no “*common bread*” and only “*holy bread*” which tells us two very important things:

1. “*Common bread*” was bread that was brought into the tabernacle by way of the offerings and the fact that they have no “*common bread*” tells us that this was a spiritually lean time for the nation as well for David and his mighty men.
2. “*Holy Bread*” was the 12 loaves (one for each tribe) that was placed on the table of “showbread” on the right side of the tabernacle opposite the lampstand. It was to be kept fresh and was replaced once a week with hot bread and the old loaves were to be eaten by the priests. The words “*Showbread*” literally comes from the words meaning “*bread of faces*” and spoke of being in the Lord’s presence. The idea behind the showbread was that of being invited over to the Lord’s House for a meal in which He supplied everything necessary for continual fellowship. Upon eating this bread the priest was saying, “*I love you Lord and I’m in your presence fellowshipping with You by that which you have supplied to sustain me*!”

What is sacred according to Jesus is not TIME but PEOPLE! **The Sabbath’s holiness is derived from its purpose and its purpose is the wellbeing of mankind of which ministering to their needs is part of its sacredness**! The Sabbath therefore is to serve humanity, not humanity serving the Sabbath.

Vs. 27-28 **Mankind was created before the Sabbath, he was not to be either a slave or a victim of the laws concerning the Sabbath**. The best way to use sacred things is to use them for the benefit of mankind. The showbread was never more sacred than it was that day when it went to hungry men. The Greek word for Lord is *kurios* which in the Greek means “*He who a person or a thing belongs too, the owner*”. In the Septuagint the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures it was the word chosen by the scribes to be the word used for Jehovah and as such it was meant to imply deity. Thus Jesus is saying that He is the Creator who brought forth the Sabbath for the sake of mankind! They had accused Jesus and His disciples of being Sabbath breakers and Jesus says in essence, “*I am the creator and I created the Sabbath for man, not man for the Sabbath and we aren’t breaking the Sabbath you are by altering its intent*!”

1. **Vs. 3:1-6 Restored hands and weathered hearts**

Vs. 1-2 Here we note a departure in the questioning of the religious leaders about the purpose of religion in society, they no longer use words to express their dissatisfaction at Jesus and His disciple’s departure from their rules and rituals. The word “***watched***” is in a tense that means a continuous action as they “*kept watching Jesus, bent of finding fault with Him concerning the Sabbath*”. They are not curious as to His opinions, they are not questioning to see what He thinks. No they are looking to entrap and condemn as they have come to the conclusion that Jesus is their enemy. Indirectly by their entrapment they pay Jesus a great compliment as a man came into a synagogue with a withered hand and they were certain that Jesus would heal this man on the Sabbath. Luke the doctor turned historian tells us it was the man’s right hand and the Greek word for “*withered*” indicated that his condition was not a birth defect but an affliction do to either and accident or disease. The law was very detailed as to what medical attention could only be given and it was only if the life was in danger. A bandage could be put on but no ointment, a broken bone couldn’t be set, a sprain attended to by even placing in cold water. ***You could only keep things from getting worse but could do nothing to make them get better***. Clearly this man’s life was not in danger, he would have been no worse if left until another day and they saw him as a perfect case to entrap Jesus. Amazingly these keepers of rules had no doubt of either Jesus’ ability to heal or that would He chose to do so. Their prideful blindness could not see what they readily admitted by their entrapment, that before them was the “Sabbath” and their only concern was that He would violate ther rules and upsert their authority!

Vs. 3-4 Jesus called the man with the withered hand forward so as all wouldn’t miss the priority of the day of rest. Jesus then asks two parts of the same probing question:

1. Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil..
2. To save life of to kill

In effect Jesus contrasted the intentions of His heart towards others compared to the intentions of their heart towards others, (the others being himself) all on the Sabbath. The question paraphrased was, “*You are concerned about the* “day of rest”, *whose heart is nearer the purpose of the Sabbath yours or mine? I want to do good to this man while you want to do evil to me, I want to save this man’s life you want to take my life*. *Which best represents the intentions of the Sabbath*?”

Vs. 5-6 In the Pharisees zeal to maintain the Sabbath they had not only altered it, it had killed its benefits! Their silence angered out Lord the hardness of their heart towards truth, grieved that though they were clearly in the wrong with regards to the Sabbath and yet they still wouldn’t repent. ***These men were more motivated to maintain the practice of a lie that they could clearly see was evil and life taking then they were to embrace the truth that was good and life giving.*** Jesus always drove out evil, He would drive it out of a person or at very least He would drive it out in the open as he did with the Pharisees.

By words and action Jesus answered His own question: He had come to facilitate the CURE for whatever ails humanity and through that He created the reason for abiding and abounding joy. His presence enlarged the area of sacredness and it encompassed the secular including all the self-imposed sanctions of religious leaders. He had come to save them; not to harm or kill them!

**Mark**

**“The Penalty of Popularity”**

**3:7-12**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 7-8 Jesus Christ “Superstar”**
3. **Vs. 9-10 Unwanted sales**
4. **Vs. 11-12 Unwanted advertisement**
5. **Introduction**

So far in Mark’s record of Jesus we have seen Mark gather stories that illustrate two truths, today we will start the third, all of which distinguish Jesus as superior to what the Roman reader would have known as a world leader and son of god.

* **Authority of His Word**: At His command and over the physical and spiritual realms (the seen and unseen) things happened according to that word. All had to obey and come into compliance at His word. There was no physical force or coercive threats, just objects surrendering to His Word!
* **Jesus’ insight over His realm**: He had great knowledge over all of His creation especially humanity. He didn’t behave like others when dealing with people, He exhibited behavior towards people as His focus was never upon Himself. This alone convinces me that apart from divine inspiration no man relying on human wisdom and knowledge could have written any of the gospels.
* The 3rd division starts here in chapter 3 verse 7 and runs through chapter 6 verse 6. This section deals with **how He handled His increased popularity and notoriety**.

Each of those three areas are enough singularly to convey that Jesus was far above every other person who has ever walked this earth. Combined the portrait is utterly amazing and is evidence alone that Jesus is the Son of God. It is clear that all the gospel writers saw the same person and that He cannot be a creation of their combined imaginations. ***They would have had far greater chances to paint the ocean blue as born blind artists than to have ever captured the likeness of Jesus out of the sea of humanity.***

1. **Vs. 7-8 Jesus Christ “Superstar”**

Vs. 7-8 In response both to His increased popularity and pharasitical notoriety Jesus “*withdrew*”. It is interesting to note that 11 times in Mark’s account he records Jesus “*withdrawing*” from such popularity. Most of the time it was to pray, others it appears just to rest or have time alone with His disciples. Other leaders might have used increasing popularity to promote themselves and their agendas and parlayed that into power over their opposition. To our Lord His time here on earth was never about advancing Himself it was always about advancing the will of the Father. Mark uses the word “great” in front of the word multitude and the Greek word indicates an exceptionally large crowd that didn’t spontaneously gather. Based upon verse 8 this great multitude took some time to assemble.

What had attracted these great multitudes was they “**heard** *how many things He was doing*”. The word “*heard*” in the Greek is in the present tense meaning that they “**kept hearing**” as Jesus “**kept doing** wondrous things”. They came from areas across the Arabian Desert to the west and in the east up the Mediterranean to Lebanon as well as all of Israel. We are not talking in terms of a few thousand but rather in terms of tens of thousands. **People were drawn to Jesus because of “*what He did*” more than “*what He said*”. Generally speaking people are far more interested in their bodies than they are their souls in their health than their holiness!** We live in a time of mass communication when a video often goes “viral”. But Jesus didn’t live in such an age, there was no YouTube or other social media, people walked and talked without technological aid. One can only imagine what the outcome would have been if these events were taking place today? In verse 20 we are told that the multitude changed His diet as they pressed so close that He could not raise His hand to take a bite of bread. Now there is a “popular” diet fad that would cause you to lose weight fast. Most if not all of humanity would have viewed such popularity and fame as ***symbols of success*** and used them to promote themselves into “*super star*” status. Jesus’ popularity has been noted by secular writers and artists as in the musical “***Jesus Christ Superstar***” but they miss the point. They only equate His success of drawing the multitudes from all around while failing to note how He dealt with it, which is the truer evidence of His deity.

Mark’s view is through Jesus’ reaction to popularity which is that: Human fame is fleeting, empty and hollow. It is a danger to His calling and limits His earthly ministry. Jesus knew, what mankind has still failed to grasp that, “***success generated popularity***” even when that success is generated because it is beneficial to others **KNOWS NO BOUNDS**! The trouble with popularity and success is that there are no clear lines drawn among those who make a person or an item popular. ***In any multitude you have mixed together, not only those of curiosity but those with wrong affection and ulterior motives. Though they are all counted as making something or someone popular or successful, their numbers don’t indicate the truth.*** Jesus attracted people irresistibly and among those He attracted a large majority were not there for the right reasons. Some came to hear His words but far more came to experience His works in hopes they would share in the benefits He so lavishly bestowed upon the people. ***Such popularity is like the elements of weather; the right amount of it can be rather pleasant for a time but just a few degrees one way or the other or too little of this or too much of that can be disastrous***.

1. **Vs. 9-10 Unwanted sales**

Vs. 9-10 The two illustrations Mark puts forward in the next four verses all have the focus on the negative impact Jesus’ popularity had upon others. In the end these two illustrations remind us that such popularity is not only **directionless** it also has **no ability to filter who it attracts and why they are attracted.**

1. **Unwanted Sales**: After disclosing Jesus’ demand that a small boat be placed nearby and kept ready because of His’ “***crushing success***”; Mark informs the reader what had caused such success was “*He healed many, so that as many as had afflictions pressed about Him to touch Him*.” There was no politeness or patience with the crowd as the word “*crush*” is used in classic Greek to describe the crushing of grapes to extract the juice. That word combined with the words “*pressed about Him*” indicate a dangerous and desperate situation as the word pressed means to “*fall against violently*”. The scene was not only of **squeezing** Him it was violently **smashing** into Him all to get a touch to be healed. The great multitude saw Jesus as a mere commodity that they had to have and didn’t care if they violently took it or not. The scene no doubt looked more like an out of control crowd that was looting store fronts then people in search of the living God. There with a **misplaced emphases** as they emphasized the temporary at the expense of the permanent. Jesus didn’t come to just heal the body but the soul and spirit of man. The healing of the body was to demonstrate what He could do for the spirit. They all wanted healing and He wanted to preach the word! ***What this reveals is that popularity and success have no directional ability in human hearts. In fact inevitably popularity and success misdirect and distort the message as that which is secondary becomes the priority.*** There are far too many folks with a “*misplaced emphases*” concerning Jesus and they are perfectly happy to have Him be their Savior but have no interest in Him being their Lord. They will press about Him in time of need to touch Him but as soon as they have what they want they go merrily back to their life, without so much as a visit.
2. **Vs. 11-12 Unwanted advertisement**

Vs. 11 In the text we see the 2nd illustration in the unclean spirits *examination* and *proclamation* concerning Jesus identity. The Greek reveals things that are unfortunately lost in the English translations.

1. *Examination*: The word “*saw*” describes an inspection of a commanding officer viewing his troops. Such viewing was critical in nature and through in investigation. These demons exhibited far more interest in Jesus and His true identity than had the thronging multitudes. They recognized Him as the Son of God out of whose presence they had been driven with Lucifer from heaven, falling to earth. The words “*fell down*” are in the imperfect tense which indicates a repeated action. All of this makes for a very vivid picture of long staring demonic eye contact with a throwing down in front of Jesus of the demon possessed person. All of which was being done periodically as one by one each of these demon possessed people had contact with Jesus.
2. *Proclamation*: Again the Greek words for “*cried out*” are in the imperfect tense which indicate a continuous action as they kept on crying out in a horrible demonic voice. The Greek construction of this sentence would render it different than what we read in our English text as literally these demons said, “***As for you***, *you are the Son of God.*” It is clear that these demons recognized the deity of Jesus and the uniqueness of His relationship with the Father but this was not a testimony or an indorsement. The repeated howling acknowledgment, though true, was meant to offer confusion to the multitudes as their leader is the author of confusion.
3. **Unwanted Advertisement**: Mark brings forth the revealing of Jesus true identity from sources known for telling lies. It is a safe bet that these “*unclean spirits*” had no desire to advance and promote the cause of Christ by their witness. They told the truth because they knew that in so doing they would hurt the cause of Jesus, not help it. They were out to mislead people about the person and work of Jesus even though what they said was true. The fact that they were known as “*lying spirits*” would cause people to believe that what they were saying concerning Jesus was a sure proof that what they said wasn’t true. Mark Twain in his book called “*Roughing It*” tells a story of a notorious liar who had reached such a place in his tall tales that no one believed him about anything. One day they found him hanging with a suicide note pinned on him with the reasons why he took his own life. Though it was written in his own hand the authorities concluded the cause of his death was murder saying that if this man said he hung himself it was proof he hadn’t. Furthermore with this acknowledgement by demonic beings and indirectly satan, people would associate Jesus with the devil. Based upon Matthew 12:24 and the words of the Pharisees this lie of affiliation at least worked in part as the Pharisees had concluded that Jesus was casting out demons by allegiance with the devil.

Vs. 12 We finish this section off with Jesus rebuke of the demons testimony as to His true identity. The words “*sternly warn*” do not carry the severity of this rebuke by Jesus as the words in Greek are more of a threat of penalty. Jesus had no interest in the PR concerning His deity from demons, he was not interested in their advertising on His behalf.

When examining Jesus desire to “withdraw” from success and popularity it becomes apparent that such success and popularity in the world is not a good thing anymore than getting behind the wheel of a Lamborghini and racing off only to find out that not only does the steering not work neither do the breaks and the gas pedal.

**Mark**

**“A few good men”**

**3:13-19**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 13-15 Professional verses Relational**
3. **Vs. 16-19 He chose who?**
4. **Introduction**

When examining the text it is important not only to give your attention to what the text says but the broader context as to why the Holy Spirit desired to place the narrative in the location it is found in our Bibles. The answer to that question will go a long way in determining what the Holy Spirit wanted to convey to the original reader. A case in point is before us in verse 13-19. The question that needs to be answered is: ***Why is the choosing of the 12 disciples placed next to how Jesus “withdrew” from the popularity of the multitudes***? There are many who would read these as unrelated incidents, recorded without any fore thought. But Mark full of the Holy Spirit wants his readers to answer that question. These seemingly unrelated stories have been deliberately placed next to each other to show an association more than a chronological sequence. I’m convinced that they are connected to convey something that was critical both to the unveiling of Jesus as well and our spiritual development. Jesus withdrew from **successful testimonies of pretentious crowds** as well as **truthful titles from demonic liars**. And instead the facts are He wanted ordinary men who by their words and works would demonstrate what will happen to a common person who spends time with Him.

1. **Vs. 13-15 Professional verses Relational**

Vs. 13 In the New Testament you will find three other lists of the names of the 12 Matthew, Luke and the book of Acts. Luke tells us that Jesus gave the group the name of apostles. The difference between a disciple and an apostle is:

* A **disciple** is a person who learns by doing, today we might use the word ***apprentice***.
* An **apostle** is a person who is sent out on official service with a commission, and today we might use the word ***ambassado***r.

It is very significant that Christianity began with a group. The pharasitical approach was ***similarity*** and ***separation***. Jesus’ methodology was the exact opposite, ***diversity*** and ***inclusion***. Nothing better demonstrates this than the extremes of the men Jesus called: A revolutionary anti Roman zealot and a pro Roman tax collector both of which are part of the 12 man team. With this extreme diversity all 12 did possess **two common traits**:

1. They all had an **unbreakable attraction to Jesus**, they wanted to make Him their master!
2. They all had **the courage to visibly align themselves with Him**! No band of men ever risked more than these 12 with their allegiance to a radical peasant Galilean who was crashing headlong into religious leader and being labeled as a rule breaking sinner.

***These 12 had faults but one of them wasn’t a lack of love for their Master***. They loved Jesus and weren’t afraid to tell the world that they did. Before giving us the cast of characters in verses 16-19 Mark gives us, **three traits Jesus looked for in those He personally called to service**!

1. Vs. 13 **PERSONAL ENCOUNTER**: ***People who wanted to be with Him for the right reasons***: Jesus **didn’t want** a “***sales force***” or “***advocates***” who had received benefits! What He desired was men who from personal experience had chosen to be with Him. They weren’t trained to talk about Him instead they were tell of their encounter that was not temporary and superficial but everlasting. *There is too much of Christianity today in my humble opinion that has been scrubbed and sanitized from the raw truthful testimonies of transformed lives*. Oh, it is polished and pointed but sounds like an infomercial that gets the stains out without harming the fabric. The outcome of this “*new sales force*” are converts who become “*members*” of a church that caters to their every whim and demand. Yes, we now have “***professional spokesmen***” but it has been at the price of “***unlearned fishermen***” that “**HAD BEEN WITH JESUS**”. And I am reminded that it was those unlearned fisherman that were chosen to change the world!
2. Vs. 14 **PRACTICAL EVANGELISM**: The selection was not based upon giftedness nor education. From beginning to end we have proof that Jesus deliberately chose to build His church with inferior material. That was by design to prove that it is only through and by Jesus that this organism we know as the Church has the power, position and the ability to perform what He has called us too. **Their appointment had a threefold task**:
3. **That they might be WITH Him**. The highest priority was not in making a “***professional***” team but rather a “***relational***” team. This appointment was of men who more than anything else just wanted to be with and near Jesus. The “*job interview*” (***there wasn’t one***) did **not** include a resume’, past job experience, training or education. None of these mattered to the Master, what mattered was would they unequiviently without any direction or promises obey the simplest of tasks, which by His own words was to be with Him. Why is this question never asked? It seems to me that far too often the church ends up with people who either want a position or a career path but not Jesus!
4. **That He would send them out**: Secondly the team needed to have settled who the Master was and who it wasn’t. The sending out was not based upon a catalog of desirable locations or situations in which a person could naturally choose what was the most appealing and beneficial to their life. The applicant must adapt the attitude that Peter would manifest when asked by Jesus to exercise a direction which Peter had far more experience outwardly then did Jesus, commercial fishing. When Peter heard Jesus’ orders to “*cast the net upon the other side*” Peter in his professional understanding explained that they had been out fishing all night but “*never the less at Your word*” he would cast the net as directed. There will be many a time when our “*all night fishing*” has not yielded the results that we thought we would have achieved for our effort, but our obedience is not leveled upon outcome but because our Master told us too!
5. **To preach**: Their primary task is to be **His proclaimers**! *They weren’t called to be His* ***entertainers***! **It was very simple task**: *Speak what you have learned from Him*. It didn’t require any talent or education, why even unlearned fishermen could be considered accomplished. There is a progressive order to this appointment that if not followed as laid out will cause a mess. People can have natural skills in communication, be comfortable in front of others. But if that person eyes the calling to preach and is allowed to do so without noting the above two items the results will be an egotistical entertainer who is far more interested in being worshiped then having the Person they are to proclaim worshipped.
6. Vs. 15 **POWER-FILLED EXPERIENCE**: The final trait Jesus looked for were men who understood that ***they were only receivers or stewards of His blessing and power*** ***in order that they would be distributors of them***. He gave them power, it was not their own and it was not to be used for their benefit or promotion. They were given something to say and something to do, then were sent out for that purpose with power to accomplish it. ***There ought to be an authenticity that manifests its self when a person who has been with Jesus is where they are supposed to be, doing what they are called to do***. They were His ambassadors to make public proclamation with such authority as to make what they said obeyed and given delegated power that people were healed and demons fled.
7. **Vs. 16-19 He chose who?**

Vs. 16-19 Matthew records that prior to this calling of the 12 Jesus was up all night in prayer over who He would select. While some believe that this time in prayer was spent receiving direction and confirmation from the Father on who He would choose, men who would be most impactful and influential upon the world. I could also make the case looking at the cast of characters chosen that perhaps the prayer was to be kept from selecting those that seemed most outwardly a perfect fit. There are two surprises in Jesus selection mentioned in these verses: ***How many*** He selected and ***who He selected***.

1. **How many**: When we factor in the extremely large numbers of people, the political, religious and economic situation that made up this time, 12 men seems like extreme under staffing. Why 12? Yes it’s a biblical number but I doubt seriously that Jesus selected 12 because He thought “*Gee, that’s a biblical number*!” No, Jesus selected 12 because that was about the max that He could pour Himself into and have quality time with each. Jesus’ method in the number of men He called indicates His confidence in the task at reaching the world. **Jesus and any single one of them fully and wholly consecrated to Him was more than enough to change the world, 12 was over kill!!!!** Jesus didn’t launch this enterprise during our era which suggests to me that He didn’t need our technological advancements to reach the world. Don’t get me wrong I’m not saying that He hasn’t used mass media technology, radio T.V., C.D’s etc. What I am saying is that those technological advancements are not essential nor indispensable as far as Jesus is concerned. **What is essential and indispensable is Jesus in the life of those He calls**.
2. **Who He selected**: The first three mentioned Simon (Peter), James and John are all given special names as He “*surnamed*” them, giving them nicknames. This special designation indicates an inner circle of responsibility. They are the ones we see going on special details, called upon to accompany Jesus at specific opportunities as well as the ones Jesus tended to spend the more of His time with. It appears that they were designated the leaders of the 12. ***In both Jesus selection of the 12 and the three within the 12 we see a consistent methodology by Jesus of investing in a select few to reach the many***! Looking at Jesus’ nicknames of these three in the placement of them over the 12 seems to indicate Jesus’ assessment of what this group needed most: “***A rock and two loud voices***”! Personally having pastored for nearly 30 years I think a rock and two loud voices comes in pretty handy when dealing with sheep!
3. **Peter**: Here is a choice of a man that Jesus knew would deny that he ever knew Him. The acknowledged leader was a person who went from shifting sand to the Rock, which describes what he became after the Holy Spirit took control of him.
4. **James**: The surnaming of both James and his brother John in Syrian is “Sons of thunder” but in Hebrew is “Sons of tumult”. The name was laid upon these two for their “tumultuous zeal” which characterized both of them. Here is a choice of two brothers who has such tempers that they wanted to blow away or burn up people who didn’t comply. James would leave his mark not by being a loud voice but by being the first to lay down his life.
5. **John**: Who would remain until the end and was noted more for his actions of prayer and love than a loud voice.
6. **Andrew**: His name comes from a Greek origin and was used to describe a person who was “manly”. He was the first to enquire of the Lord.
7. **Phillip**: Is another Greek name that means found of horses and in ancient Greek was used of a person who was a chariot driver. Elsewhere we are told he was the first that Jesus called.
8. **Bartholomew**: Also known as Nathanael in who we are told had no guile.
9. **Matthew**: Is a name that means a “gift of God” he is the one know as Levi in chapter 2 verse 13 the tax collector slash gospel writer. I know this is bad to say but who wants an IRS agent on staff?
10. **Thomas**: His name means “twin” and we know him as the magnificent sceptic. Again a questionable choice as this fellow will deny you’re alive unlike Peter who denied he knew you.
11. **James the son of Alphaeus**: Also known as James the less, he may be the brother of Matthew as both are said to be the son of Alphaeus.
12. **Thaddaeus**: He is the other Judas mentioned in John 14:22 and Martin Luther called the “good Judas”. Him we shall hear speak in the upper room.
13. **Simon the Cananite**: More properly the “Canaanaean” which is used to differentiate him from Peter by geographical location. Elsewhere he is called “Simon the Zealot”. Here was a choice of a man that had a complete make over from a revolutionary to a missionary, from a terrorist to tender hearted.
14. **Judas Iscariot**: His name is placed at the end of the list. Iscariot means “the man from Kerioth” which is a name of a town given in Joshua chapter 15 verse 25 as one of the last of the cities of Judah along the coast near Edom. What a tragic figure Judas is as here we note that he was given authority to cast out demons but in the end will be the one that satan will enter.

**Mark**

**“Love, Lunacy or in league with the devil”**

**3:20-35**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 22-30 No signs in a morgue to the deceased**
3. **Vs. 20, 21-31-35 Unhinged by Love**
4. **Introduction**

Mark offers another liability to Jesus’ increased popularity: **Misunderstanding the purpose and intentions behind His actions**. This came about as a direct observation of His **preoccupation with the needs of others above His own needs**. Mark further reveals that such misunderstanding was not isolated to those who opposed Him, the scribes. It ran the spectrum, seeing that those who loved Him, His own family, also misunderstood the purpose and intentions behind His actions. Though the diagnoses of the cause of this was different between these two groups they both came from the same observations. Furthermore these two groups both saw the cause as being something that had “***taken over***” the mental faculties of Jesus. The difference between these two was that the Scribes saw it as coming from the **outside** and Jesus family saw it as coming from the **inside**. ***The problem with the diagnoses was they both failed to realize His PURPOSE because they failed to identify His PERSON***, ***the Son of God.*** When you consider Jesus true identity His actions are not out of the ordinary they are in every way consistent with His character and nature, God. When has God not considered the needs of His creation above His own? He neither sleeps nor slumbers with regards to us, His meals are to do His purposes. He is by nature quintessentially, “*others centered*”! That simple observation ought to have caused both groups ***NOT TO QUESTION*** or malign His mental stability but rather to fall down before Him to worship:

1. The first account is mentioned in verse 21 but won’t be fully dealt with until verses 31-35.
2. The second account in verses 22-30 comes from the scribes who came from Jerusalem.
3. **Vs. 22-30 No signs in a morgue to the deceased**

Vs.22-27 We shall look at these in order of the priority of the writer Mark, even though he mentions the response of “*His own people*” first he doesn’t address it until the end which indicates priority.

The observation of the Scribes to the cause as to why Jesus was no longer concerned with His needs is that “*He has Beelzebub*”. Beelzebub means “*lord of the flies*” or god of dung and it is believed that the Jews transferred this name from the Philistine god to satan in contempt. Simply put their observation led them to the conclusion that Jesus had joined forces with the “*dark side*”. Here is the first mention of Jesus altering His teaching style to accommodate those that weren’t interested in listening by use of the “*parabolic method*”. This method was to throw an illustration alongside of truth to explain it and to cause the listener to investigate or search out the truth further.

It is not a very well thought out explanation by the educated class of scribes. Jesus just applies basic logic to debunk it. “*How can satan cast out satan*”? What benefit would satan gain by opposing Himself? He would create anarchy in his underworld as they would be fighting themselves. There would be strife and division amongst his cohorts that would severely cripple their success. One of the reasons evil has such success and power over the world is that it is absolutely 100% united in its aim, ***there is no rebellion in rebellion***! Satan rules by fear and terror! He never permits anything that causes division or any revolutionary activity within his realm. “*A kingdom divided against its self, that house cannot stand*.” To this Jesus offers the right analysis saying, “*No one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And he will plunder his house*”. By explanation Jesus is the “*stronger man*” who is doing the plundering!

Vs. 28-30 The word “*blaspheme*” means to “***maliciously misrepresent***”. It is used here specifically of speech that was intentionally designed to show contempt and lack of reverence due to Jesus as God. These scribes knew that Jesus was performing miracles by the power and authority of the word of God but deliberately attributed then to satan, in order to misdirect people’s attention and acceptance of Him.

Jesus says, “*all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; but* ***he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit*** **NEVER HAS FORGIVENESS**, *but is subject to* **ETERNAL CONDEMNATION**”. This has been referred to as the “***unpardonable sin***”. Mark’s comment in verse 30 is that Jesus’ warning came about because they attributed His work as coming from the devil. Questions abound with regard to what Jesus was saying and to whom does this warning and judgment apply. There are **four points that will clarify this**:

1. First, the simple observation is that ***these scribes were being WARNED and not eternally condemned.*** Though they had attributed the work of Christ to the devil and this was very serious, they had not yet crossed the point of no return. Had they already committed the “*unpardonable sin*” Jesus would not have issued such a strong warning. ***There are never any signs in a morgue to the deceased***! You don’t warn a man who has already drown in deep water because of a rip tide! No, you warn him while he is still alive and before he goes in too deep and is swept away!
2. Secondly, Jesus refers to this as “*blasphemes against the Holy Spirit*” yet Mark tells us that this blasphemy occurred because they concluded and attributed Jesus work as being from “*an unclean spirit*”. The question that we need answered is, “***How is attributing incorrectly the work of Christ to satan*** ***blaspheme against the Holy Spirit and not blasphemy against Jesus***? In John 15:26 Jesus says concerning the Holy Spirit that His primary responsibility is to “*Testify of Me*”. Then in chapter 16:13-14 Jesus said, “..*when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and declare it to you*.” ***It is the work of the Holy Spirit to take what is Christ’s words and works and make it known in hearts, to attribute those words and works as coming from satan is rejection of the Holy Spirits work***.
3. Third, Jesus’ warning is issued at the scribes but not after His family wrongly attributed His actions as being mentally unstable. This observation goes to the heart of the matter: ***The scribes had already received and knew Jesus’ true identity according to Jesus stern warning.*** ***The Holy Spirit had testified of Jesus and they had been guided into all truth***. Their problem was **NOT** that they hadn’t received all the facts it is having received them they chose to reject Jesus apart from the evidence and conviction brought upon them by the Holy Spirit. Whereas Jesus’ family hadn’t disregarded the Holy Spirit’s testimony.
4. Finally, the only question left is: “***Why has this not yet reached the level of being “beyond forgiveness” and “eternal condemnation***”?” **The answer is that the scribes were not yet beyond the Holy Spirit’s testimony, as they were still alive**. Oh, to be sure they had waded out into the deep water and were being dragged out deeper but they hadn’t drown yet. To reject Jesus and to die in that state is to be beyond forgiveness. People are forgiven based upon receiving the testimony of the Holy Spirit regarding who Jesus is and what He has done on ther behalf. To die apart from having received this testimony is the “*blaspheme against the Holy Spirit*” and places a person in a place to “*never be forgiven*” and subject to “*eternal condemnation*”.
5. **Vs. 20, 21-31-35 Unhinged by Love**

Vs. 20-21, 31-35 Jesus had hoped that the 10’s of thousands would have disbursed when He went up the mountain with His disciples but they hadn’t as demonstrated that He couldn’t so much as eat bread. The Greek phrase “*His own people*” in verse 21is further identified by verse 31 as “*His brothers and mother*” which indicate that it was his immediate family. The words “*about this*” in verse 21 are italicized which means that they aren’t in the Greek but were added in an attempt to clarify. In this case they misrepresent Jesus’ families concern as “***only***” being the multitudes with regards to Him eating. Instead the “*having heard*” refers to all the incidents and crowds during Jesus’ ministry in this region. The words “*lay hold*” mean to “*get possession, become master over or seize*” and indicate that ***Jesus immediate family came to take Him by force against His will***. The reason for such a forceful action is that they estimated that He had become mentally unstable do to the demands of the multitudes.

When word came to Jesus from the multitude saying, “*Look, Your mother and Your brothers are outside seeking You*.” I’m certain the multitude expected that Jesus would immediately go out and see them. They were concerned enough about His condition to come to where He was at even with thronging multitudes. They had to have let people know loud enough and long enough to garner attention that got word to Him. Jesus didn’t respond to the request but asked the multitude, “*Who is my mother, or brothers*”. Then before they could answer He looked around at those closest to Him and said “*Here are My mother and brothers*!” To clarify what He meant by this revelation as for as closeness Jesus continued, “*For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother*.” His ***answer reveals both His identity and others relationship to Him thought it which is a stronger bond then any human bond or need***. His greatest need that superseded all human needs is to “*do the will of God”*. There is a primacy given in relationships that bind us to our brothers and sisters in Christ and to our Lord Jesus, to God the Father and the Holy Spirit above the demands of even our natural family. When there is a conflict between what our relationship with God demands of our life and the advice, demands from the relationship of our relatives, it is the word of God which is primary. That doesn’t mean that we declare our decision without love and compassion but it does mean that our love for the Lord supersedes our love for all others as it is our love for Him that guides, equips and motivates us too love others.

What I find interesting is that there are many who for leisure or labor have not the time to take care of their basic needs, yet no one thinks they are out of their minds. But when our Lord showed such lack of care exhibited in the needs of others suddenly He’s unhinged. To make matters worse this assessment is from His own immediate family. I’m certain His whole life had exhibited this others centeredness but the difference now was the sheer volume of it, which was no doubt the cause of His personal needs going on met. ***Why wasn’t this ascribed to LOVE instead accredited to LUNACY***? People can get excited as they wish about anything, sport, fashion, politics, entertainment and such excitement is never seen as insanity. But let a soul, touched by the Spirit of God become enthusiastic about the love of God, let them set aside the cares of this world and be engaged in work that transforms the hurting lives of people and that person or persons are out of their minds! And rightly so, as we all ought to be out of our earthly bound mind for the love of Christ! Better to be thought unhinged as it means I have entered in through the door and left it a jar so other can come and knock to enter in as well!

**Mark**

**“Sacred secrets for the asking”**

**4:1-20**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 1-2 What did He say?**
3. **Vs. 10-12 Two kinds of hearers**
4. **Vs. 3-9, 14-20 The parable of the sower**
5. **Introduction**

Because Jesus’ increased popularity and notoriety He was no longer teaching in the local synagogues and instead His pulpit was a small boat set out a safe distance from shore. This was not the only sign of popularity as Jesus had to adopt a new method of teaching as the 10’s of thousands were far more interested in the temporary then they were in the permanent. ***A parable is an earthy story with a heavenly meaning thrown alongside truth for comparison.*** Jesus chose this method to make people pay attention and listen. Depending on how a person views the text, there are between 30 and 46 parables recorded and distributed between the synoptic gospels, John’s gospel doesn’t record any. Luke records the most and Mark the fewest. One is unique to Mark, 10 are only in Matthew and 18 appear only in Luke. The remainder appear in one or both of the other synoptic accounts. Parables must not be linked to:

* **Fables**, as they have a spiritual aim
* **Myths**, as they are truthful
* **Proverbs**, as they are longer
* **Allegories**, as they are complete and not always self-interpreting

They were not unique to Jesus they are found elsewhere in scripture and known to be used by rabbis. What was unique was the exclusivity that Jesus employed this method and how He used it to draw people to Himself for the answers. ***Parables are like shells on a nut or fruit: They keep good fruit for the diligent, and protect it from the uninterested and lazy***!

1. **Vs. 1-2 What did He say?**

In chapter 3 verse 23 I mentioned that Jesus adopted the parabolic method when teaching. In chapter 4 verses 33-34, Mark will offer his commentary on this method employed by Jesus saying that, “*with many such parables He spoke the word to them* ***as they were able to hear it****. But without a parable He did not speak to them. And* ***when they were alone, He explained all things to His disciples***.” That commentary is the key to understanding this method as well as the difficulty of verse 12. As I look at this chapter I notice that three of the four stories deal with some type of seed. The only one that diverts from this in verses 21-25 and it has to do with light under a basket and visibility. The word “*parable*” in verse 10 in the best manuscripts is ***plural*** which would have included all of the parables spoken by Jesus that day. ***This leads me to the belief that the four parables mentioned were done at one time from the boat. The interpretation that Mark includes in verses 10-20 happened sometime after the teaching while Jesus was alone with His disciples. That being said Mark breaks apart the chronological order of events in order to give needed instruction and interpretation on what is commonly referred to as the “Parable of the sower” to his Roman readers***. The reason for this seems to be found in verse 13 where Jesus said to His parable inquirers, “*Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand* ***ALL*** *the parables?*” To place this instruction at the end chronologically as it happened would cause the reader to lose the opportunity in the text to apply the instructions and interpretation with the present and preceding parables. Based upon verse 13 the “*Parable of the Sower*” is the key to all parables. It is for this same reason I think it is best that we first deal with the setting in verses 1-2 then move to the instructions in verses 10-12 before we move to the parable its self, verses 3-9 and with Jesus’ interpretation in verse 14-20.

Vs.1-2 Back in verse 9 of chapter 3 Mark told us about the need to keep a small boat off shore because of the crushing crowds and here we see that Jesus had to get into that boat to keep from getting crushed. Then Jesus adapted a simplistic method of teaching do to the limitations of His hearers. ***The fact is that even our Lord’s words fell upon DULL EARS, HARD HEARTS and UNRESPONSIVE WILLS***! That fact ought to make every pastor and parent feel a lot better!

1. **Vs. 10-12 Two kinds of hearers**

Vs. 10-12 To take these verses out of the context is to create confusion with regards not only to the intent of parables but to the character and nature of Jesus. ***Did Jesus mean, as “simple reading” seems to imply that He spoke these stores in order to hide truth so that people could not understand and in not understanding couldn’t be forgiven***? Our Lord points out that there are **two kinds of hearers**:

1. The first one He describes as “*To* ***you*** *it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God*..” This is a class of hearers who according to verse 10 “*when He was alone,* ***those around Him******with the twelve*** *asked about the parable*.” A group who certainly was the minority among the 10’s of thousands but was not exclusively disciples. **Their chief characteristic, the common denominator in this first group is they are the ones that “came to Him and asked Him” about the parable**. Jesus said it had been given to **THEM** “*to know* ***sacred secrets*** *or mysteries of the kingdom of God*.” Twice in the telling of the parable Jesus makes reference to the key to these sacred secrets as being available to those that He says in verse 3 “*Listen*!” and again in verse 9 who have “*ears to hear, let him hear*!” Notice what this mystery is about; “*the kingdom of God*” that is how God is at work in the world, functioning through humanity now and throughout world history.
2. The second one Jesus describes as, “…*those who are* ***outside****, all things come in parables.*” Jesus isn’t mentioning a geographical location but rather a position of a person’s heart. It is to this second group that Jesus addresses the information of verse 12 as He describes there present condition as: “*Seeing that they may see and not perceive, and hearing that they may hear and not understand; least they should turn, and their sins be forgiven them*.” **This passage presents some difficulties that are cleared up in the context of verses 11 and 33 as clearly Jesus wanted people to be able to hear who were truly interested**. First the word “*that*” at the start of verse 12 in the Greek means, “*in order that*” or because of, which implies that verse 12 was a ***preexisting condition*** in these hearers and **NOT** one caused by Jesus teaching parables. Matthew’s account supports this as these folks were seeing and hearing but what they saw and heard was not leading them to the Lord. This is a quote from the prophet Isaiah in the 6th chapter verse 9-10 who describes the people of his time as being those who saw and heard but were nonetheless blind and deaf because of the hardening of their hearts. Jesus employing parables to loosen the heart and was fulfilling Isaiah’s prophecy. This is more obvious when we read in Matthew 13:14 as Jesus says, “*And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled*”. He quotes Isaiah further in verse 15 saying, “*For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.*” God didn’t close their eyes and ears they closed them for the purpose of not turning from sin and the outcome was that didn’t receive forgiveness.
3. **Vs. 3-9, 14-20 The parable of the sower**

As we look at this parable generally we see that there is one sower and one type of seed but Jesus describes four varieties of soils. In three of these illustrations life is either missed or lost because it is rejected, still born or compromised. ***There are four consequences of the seed in these four soils and each had an agent that caused the consequence***:

1. Soil by the *wayside*, the seed was **stolen** by the foe
2. Soil on *stony ground*, the seed was **starved** by the flesh
3. Soil *among the thorns*, the seed was **strangled** by fear
4. Soil on *good ground*, the seed was **successful** by faith

There also appears to be three levels of fruitfulness that could be due to opportunity or fidelity, ability or loyalty! Jesus says that the crop showed growth by “yielding a crop, sprang up and increased”, verse 8. In 1st Peter 1:23 Peter writes that we are “*born again not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God that which abides forever*.” The soil upon which the seed is sown speaks of the conditions of people’s hearts not only the hearts prior to salvation but at any given time. We must not think that our soil is automatically “Good” and will produce fruit because at one time it has. Any given day this can change, if we don’t remain in the same spot spiritually.

Vs. 3-9, 14-20 The word “*listen*” in the Greek means “*Be listening*” but it is not a word that was issued as a command but one rendered in kindness. Though issued in kindness and gentleness it was nonetheless done to a crowd that was far more interested in coming in contact with Him to be healed than it was to listen to the word. That combined with the word “*behold*” right afterward was saying, “*Pay attention to what I’m about to say*!” Again this parable Jesus describes **four places where the word was sown**:

1. **Wayside**: The word “*wayside*” simply means road and is defined by Jesus in verse 15 as the condition of the heart whereby after a person hears the word, satan comes in and takes away by force the word that was sown in their hearts. That fact that it was sown describes in the Greek that it had begun to germinate but satan came in and snatched it away before it had time to become a plant. The first group described are those that are “***Hard Hearted***” they hear the word and as far as obedience to the word is concerned they say, “*That’s for the birds*.
2. **Stoney ground**: The same seed of the word fell on ground full of rocks and Jesus defines the condition of this soil in verses 16-17 as having a superficial experience with the word and that the condition of their heart as being rocky didn’t permit the roots to go down into the heart. Jesus describes these “rocks” as tribulation and persecution that comes and they quickly stumble. As long as the word is producing the desired results without any negatives they are fine but as soon as such belief cause something other than this they leave. Stony ground speaks of “***Shallow Heart***”. Oh they say Jesus is the way but as soon as things don’t go their way they drop their commitments. They are crises Christians as that is when they turn back to faithfulness.
3. **Among the thorns**: The seed of the word here fell amongst the seeds of thorns and it choked out the word suffocating the plant. Jesus describes this in verse 18-19 and says that they are drawn in a different direction by cares and worries of their course in life. The cravings for the things and life style of this world chokes out the word thus the word isn’t able to bear fruit. This heart speaks of a “***Crowded Heart***”, a person has too many things crowding out the word of God. Worries about finances either because they have to little or they have too much.
4. **Good ground**: Finally Jesus describes in verse 8 “good soil” in which the seed not only yield a crop according to the Greek it keeps on yielding a crop. And in verse 20 did so accordingly. The final soil of the heart is a “***Fruitful Heart***” producing an ever yielding crop. Agriculturist tell us that a great yield is 48 times the amount of seed sown. So 30 times would still be very good, 60 times the amount of seed would be amazing and a 100 times the amount sown would be miraculous.

**Mark**

**“He spoke the word as they were able to hear”**

**4:21-34**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 21-25 Hiding truth in plain sight**
3. **Vs. 26-29 Organic farming**
4. **Vs. 30-32 Mysteries of the mustard seed**
5. **Vs. 33-34 As they were able to hear**
6. **Introduction**

Mark records three more parables of Jesus in this section and the context is that they all followed the parable of the sower prior to His conversation with those that came to Him after the teaching and prior to Marks commentary with regards to this time in verses 33-34. Along the way we will see two more seed parables and first the only parable unique to Marks account in verses 26-29. With regards to those three seed parables of Jesus we see:

1. **The parable of the sower**: Described the condition of the heart in which the seed is sown
2. **The parable of the growing seed**: Tells the story of the natural history of growth and the faithfulness of God to produce the results.
3. **The final parable of the mustard seed**: Speaks of the fortunes of seed when it becomes abnormal to God’s plan

These three parables reveal three truths about God’s kingdom:

1. **God is at work as He has always been**
2. **He hasn’t altered His methods for health and growth**
3. **We must not redefine growth or health to suit our agendas**
4. **Vs. 21-25 Hiding truth in plain sight**

Vs. 21 some see verses 21-25 as a further explanation to the parable of the sower while others see it as a complete new parable. I view it as yet another reason Jesus gives for His repeated use of teaching in the parabolic method. In this brief parable ***Jesus issues three principals about parables as it relates to capturing truth***:

1. Vs. 21-23 **Hiding truth makes it more visible**: Jesus asks in verse 21 “*Is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or under a bed? Is it not to be set on a lampstand*?” The answer Jesus was looking for was, “*No you wouldn’t put a lamp under a basket or a bed! Yes, of course you would put it on a lampstand!*” It would defeat the purpose of lighting up the room. The text in English makes it sound as if Jesus is saying in verse 22 that “*everything hidden will be revealed*” but that is not how the Greek reads. Instead the meaning is that things hidden are done so in order that they may be manifested; ***concealment is a means to revelation***. Most of us now have a dimer on the rear view mirror of our cars because the bright lights of the cars behind us not only blind us they make impossible to see how close the car is. Ah, but switch the mirror and dimming the light and things actually become more visible. Salomon in Proverbs chapter 25 verse 2 where he wrote, “*It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter*.” We all like a mystery, we like to investigate and search into a matter, God designed us that way. The greatest truth God hid in plain sight was His Son. ***Jesus’ incarnation was a parable***! That is how the apostle John describes it in the first five verse of chapter one of his gospel. “*And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it*.” So God took that light and hid it under the basket of human flesh. And in so doing John writes in verse 14 that this light under a basket was, “*the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*.” Having said this Jesus again repeats what He said in verse 9 the need to not only hear but truly listen and go further.
2. Vs. 24 **You gain more than what you seek but only if you look**: The 2nd principal follows on the heels of verse 23’s exhortation to truly be listening Jesus said, “*Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given.*” The meaning is that the more that a person thinks and searches the more they will understand and the opposite is equally as true. Truth requires investigation and you will be rewarded for your effort above what you initially thought but there is no reward for those who do not put in the effort. The bible is dead and dull to those who won’t take the time to dig into it. Ah but those who take a daily time to read it they are rewarded with truth that has transformed not only their life but those around them as well.
3. Vs. 25 **You lose what you do not use**: Finally Jesus issues the third principal about truth, “*For whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him*.” This doesn’t seem fair there ought to be “***truth redistribution***” “***educational equality***” where everybody ill-regardless of the amount of work put in gets the same grade and the same job promotions. The natural law is called the “***law of atrophy***”. We see the natural law of atrophy in the physical realm when we have a prolonged injury and the affected limb is immobilized until it has healed. Once we take off the splint or cast and try to use it we experience firsthand the law’s truth, if you can’t use it you lose it! It’s not just in the area of the body we have all experienced this in the area of our mind and memory as well. Something that we once knew well and memorized because of frequent use is now gone from memory because we no longer used it. Ah but the opposite is also true the more we use something the more functional and powerful what we use becomes. There is no autopilot in our lives, no place where we can stop peddling and start coasting if you want more of the Lord you will need to keep moving forward in your spiritual life!
4. **Vs. 26-29 Organic farming**

Vs. 26-29 Jesus using simple agrarian observations reveals in this parable **the organic principal growth**. Seed is scattered upon the ground and the sower is not doing any more than preparing the soil and scattering the seed. According to verse 27 he, “*sleeps by night and rises by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how*.” The principal that Jesus is communicating is that the sower doesn’t perform a task outside of preparing the soil for the scattering seed and harvesting. There are forces at work which are 100% faithful to do their work whether a sower frets about it or not. ***The farmer doesn’t get up the next morning a dig up the seed to see if there is any progress, He rests secure in the fact that God is at work even though he cannot see it yet***. According to this parable **there are 3 observable stages of growth recorded for us in verse 28**, “*first* ***the blade****, then* ***the head****, after that* ***the full grain*** *in the head*.” It is only as the grain is ripe and time for harvest that the farmer is called back to full time labor. That is what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3:9 when he declared that “*we are laborers together with God*…” There can be in the church today a destructive spirit of impatience that demands instant results measureable in numeric growth. This causes an attitude that leads to no patience for allowing God to work in His timing. Instead there is an insistence that the church help Him out as His methods take too much time. Because of this the church has adopted multiple worldly techniques that have yield numeric success in the corporate world. I personally believe that it is high time that His church starts adopting His methods of “*organic church development*” and become healthy again.

1. **Vs. 30-32 Mysteries of the mustard seed**

Vs. 30-32 This is the last in Jesus’ parables and His own words seem to indicate the puzzling nature of the parable as He asks, “*To what shall we liken the kingdom of God? Or with what parable shall we picture it*?” The context of this parable is on the heels of the principal of **natural organic growth**. The problem is that in Jesus parable mustard seeds don’t “*grow up and become greater than all herbs, and shoots out large branches, so that the birds of the air may nest under its shade*.” Furthermore the “*birds of the air*” of verse 32 have already been given in verse three in the parable of the sower and Jesus identified them as satan in verse 15. In Matthew 17:20 Jesus used the mustard seed as a beautiful illustration of faith saying that if you “*have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will be able to say to this mountain, move and it will move*..” Yet in this parable **this mustard seed does not grow true to life,** it becomes abnormally large and doesn’t represent other plants of the same seed. It is a low growing plant with an unimpressive foliage nothing to support a bird’s nest. The mustard plant is by normal nature a great representation of the church as it is unimpressive in stature but pungent and powerful in effect. Jesus is saying that this secret of the kingdom is that this seed that will look like the simple mustard seed of faith that grows up into unimpressive size and foliage but is powerful will instead be a counterfeit that will be see in false growth that will be characteristic of being impressive and dominate it will have wide influence and attract even satanic forces that will find shelter and a home under its branches. As we look out after all these centuries of Christian history we see that is exactly what has grown up in the name of Christianity. When we cross reverence this parable with Jesus message to the churches in Revelation chapter 2-3 the unhealthy church of Laodicea was the one that said, “*I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing*.” And it was the unimpressive church of Philadelphia that Jesus said, “*I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut; for you have little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.*” Paul describes a healthy church In Ephesians chapter 4:1-3 as walking in a worthy of the calling which described as “*lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*.” That is a far cry from what Jesus reveals here in the abnormal growth and describes what happens when the church gets impatient with how He works and begins to take things into their own hand and genetically alters the seed to produce their own results.

1. **Vs. 33-34 As they were able to hear**

Vs. 33-34 Mark finishes up this section on Jesus’ parables with his own commentary saying that this was just a sampling of the parables Jesus. He also mentions that the parabolic method of teaching was exclusive when addressing the multitudes but His explanation of these parables where for those who would seek explanation. Mark writes his observation that “*He spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it*.” Jesus didn’t teach a doctorate course to 2nd graders, instead He tailored His message to His listeners in order to teach them where they were at. ***The amazing observation about the Bible that I’ve noticed is that the truth that it contains expands with time and we see much more depth and complexities the longer we continue to investigate***! The word of God continues to reveal the details of my life that the longer I’ve been in the Word over the years seems to be under an ever increasing magnification. It’s for this reason that I believe we can visibly see a person’s growth in the Lord as they will become more aware of their faults and not more arrogant of their knowledge! If over time a person who claims they have been if the word has become increasing more prideful it is a sure indication that they haven’t been in God’s word.

**Mark 4:35-41**

**“Finding Rest During Restless Times”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 35-36 As He was**
3. **Vs. 37-38 Confidence or carelessness?**
4. **Vs. 39-41 The only fear**
5. **Introduction**

Mark now moves to two situations where the popularity of Jesus effected people’s perception of Him which led them to fear instead of faith. We will look at the first one this morning in verses 35-41 in chapter fourth and tackle the second next week in the first 20 verses of chapter 5. The cause of the fear was indirectly related to His increasing popularity as the pressing multitudes gave Him no time for rest or to secure the proper provisions. And in the eyes of those around Him this limited their ability to trust Him. I find that this is not uncommon as the immediate problems that we face cause us to believe that our Lord is unable to deal with what we are facing and fear becomes our only option. Before we look at this story we need to realize that we do no service to our own souls if we only take it in the literal sense in which it happened. If we do so we limit this miracle to only an event that happen on that day over 2000 years ago when a storm was stilled at the word of Jesus. I believe the value of the application is that our Lord is the same today as He was yesterday and He will be so tomorrow. ***That ought to still our anxiety and calm our hearts as we realize that the storms of our situations and circumstances today should discipline us but they must not ever be allowed to dominate us***!

1. **Vs. 35-36 As He was**

Vs. 35-36 Mark gives us the background of the story as it directly relates to the choice of fear over faith. We are told that the event took place “***on the same day****, when evening had come*”. What a day it had been, the blasphemous accusations, the visit from His mother and brothers trying to take Him home by force, the teaching from the sea shore and pushing and shoving from the crowds. They were on the Western shore of the lake and at Jesus suggestion though it was evening they would cross over to the Eastern shore. A decision to cross over some 5 miles across the Sea of Galilee. Mark describes Jesus condition in a twofold manor:

1. They “*took*” Jesus in the boat “*as He was*”: The word “*took*” is the same word used to describe what Joseph was told to do in taking Mary and Jesus to Egypt as it expresses the ***idea of protection***. Combined these two phrases describe a condition whereby Jesus needed to be taken as He was in such poor physical condition to be able physically to make it Himself.
2. According to verse 38 Jesus was in short order “*in the stern, asleep on a pillow*”: This further clarifies the point above that Jesus fell fast asleep to such a deep level that not even the turbulent Sea while he was in the stern stirred His slumber.

This meant that they had no time to make provisions for the day as they left in the evening. Mark also offers a detail to assure the reader that **there were other eyewitness to the event** as he informs his readers that “*there were also other little boats with Him.*” The point Mark wants to make is that what took place on that lake that day was not a “*Jedi mind trick*” to a bunch of exhausted fearful disciples. What took place on the lake that evening affected not just Jesus and His disciples but the other little boats that were out on the lake following after Him. There are those that suggest that this event has nothing to do with Jesus calming the Seas and everything to do with Him calming the hearts of over tired men in the boat with Him. While I wouldn’t argue that the ***RESULTS*** of Jesus’ actions calmed the hearts of frightened men, I would argue that the result was caused by the authority of His word over His creation. Those in these little boats who were tagging along are the testimony Mark offers as they experienced the calm Seas and yet they would have never been able to hear Jesus’ calming words.

1. **Vs. 37-38 Confidence or carelessness?**

Vs. 37-38 The phrase a “*great windstorm*” in the Greek describe a hurricane with steady gusts that cause violent crashing waves and a steady rain. The Sea of Galilee is at 682 feet below sea level and is prone to this type of storm due to its geographical location: 20 miles between the Mediterranean Sea and Mount Hermon which is over 9,000 feet high with the Jordan Valley running between these two, channeling the winds onto the lake. They must have been around midpoint in their crossing and waves were beating against the boast so violently that the boat was filling quicker than they could bail. The past careers of ***four of these men being fishermen on this very lake*** causes us to realize that they had firsthand experience with these storms on this lake. That information must be added into the story as they came to Jesus and awoke Him. **This indicates three things**:

1. ***The extreme conditions they were facing was beyond even their experience***.
2. ***They were willing to admit defeat to their Master***.
3. ***They believed in Jesus’ ability to do what they, in all their knowledge and experience, were unable to do***.

There is one other observation we can gain and it is based upon their indictment of Jesus in verse 38 as they said, “*Teacher,* ***DO YOU NOT CARE*** *that we are perishing*?” The charge against Jesus is **indifference.** This indicates that ***the storm began before Jesus went to sleep***. They could not have made this accusation to him ***of not caring*** if He had already been asleep before the storm as He would have been unaware of their condition. ***From their perspective:***

* ***Jesus knew of the situation***
* ***Had the power to change it***
* ***But didn’t care enough to do something about it***

Now before we are too harsh on these disciples I suggest that we evaluate our time in this boat with our Lord. How many times have we made the same indictment? ***We are quick to acknowledge His omniscience and omnipotence while indicting Him for His lack of compassion!*** I believe that what appeared to be indifference to them was a greater storm then the crashing surf pounding their boat to oblivion. ***Their faith was being sunk by fear not of the impromptu storm but what they perceived to be the calculated indifference of the one person that they knew, who was completely aware of the situation, had the power to reverse it but didn’t care to do so***. They had never doubted His love or concern for them before, but had consistently been surprised at what He knew and His power. Their blindness seen in their indictment of indifference indicates that they clearly understood that Jesus himself was facing the same common peril but what bothered them isn’t that He was ***OUTSIDE*** the situation but that He didn’t seem to care for ***THEM***! They fail to realize that He is not separated from the same outcome. His perceived lack of compassion would have doomed Him as well, yet they still make the charge. Our Lord is not outside our circumstances and if our fears were correct He would be far from who we believe Him to be. Saints, our Lord is IN OUR BOAT! ***We must remember that what wouldn’t awaken Jesus in the situation seen in the cold rain, ruckus wind and filling boat was quickly brought to action at the complaining indictment of those who doubted His love***.

1. **Vs. 39-41 The only fear**

Vs. 39 The first thing I notice is that Jesus’ first response isn’t to them, instead it went directly towards the elements of the situation. To the wind, Jesus rebuked it saying, “*Peace*” and to the sea Jesus said, “*Be still*” or be muzzled. And there was an immediate change in the circumstances that based upon verse 41 astonished them. They had just in essence said to Him, “*Don’t just lie there, do something*!” and when he does they fear exceedingly at what He has just done. ***There was a greater fear caused by the CALM then there was by the STORM,*** all be it a fear of awe. **The greater difficulty from our Lord’s perspective was not the calming elements of the wind and seas but the calming of His disciples hearts**!

It needs to be also noted that Jesus was not addressing the natural elements as they passed by. He wasn’t speaking to the wind and water but rather to the supernatural elements that lie behind the disturbance. Paul acknowledged the same in Ephesians 6:12 as he said, “*We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against rulers of darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness I heavenly places*.” Jesus rebuked not the wind and the waves but rather the one who stirred them to destruction.

Vs. 40 On the surface Jesus words seem strange as He says, “*Why is it you are so fearful*”. He was addressing men who were in danger of losing their lives. But the problem of their fear didn’t lie in what they were facing but rather in what they failed to appropriate, namely faith! It had been only a few days since Jesus had taken them up on the hill side and in what we commonly call the “**Sermon on the Mount**” where He said “*Do not worry about your life…..look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow or reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they*?” This is why Jesus said to them, “*How is it you have no faith*?” ***If only we would start with what we know to be true about God and use that to interpret our situations and circumstances***! When Jesus first spoke to them that evening His words were “*Let us* **CROSS OVER** *to the other side*” He didn’t say, “*Let us* **GO DOWN UNDER the sea and be drown**”.

Vs. 41 “*Who can this be*…” are words of discovery and examination as they were saying, “*We must find out more about this Jesus whom resides in our boat*!” There ought to be no fear or panic in the person who has Christ in their heart! ***His confidence is such that He can rest in the hours that cause us anxiety!*** *His slumber is not in uncaring apathy but rather in uncompromising security!* ***We are far safer in the middle of the sea in a storm with Jesus than any port of paradise without Him!*** Saints remember, the one who calmed the storm is the same one that allowed the storm to teach His followers to trust him at His word! Now we know ***WHY*** the Lord lays asleep in the stern of our boat during a storm: ***It is so that we will discover a new precious reality that whatever destructive wind and crashing sea we are facing all we need to do is trust Him***. ***Our greatest test is never whether the elements will obey Him but whether we will***! Oh to be sure we are going to flunk the exams from time to time but that failure is what will lead us to a greater experience and encounter with our Lord.

**Mark 5:1-20**

**“Pigs Parish”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 1-2a From fear to fear**
3. **Vs. 2b-6 Six characteristics of demonic influence**
4. **Vs. 7-13 Even demons believe – and tremble**
5. **Vs. 14-20 Go from Him or go for Him**
6. **Introduction**

This section of scripture from the end of chapter 4 through chapter 5 is Mark’s examination of the authority of Jesus over four things that cause humanity the greatest amount of fear and anxiety. The four that Mark illustrates are:

* 4:35-41 ***Disaster***
* Vs. 1-20 ***Demons***
* Vs. 21-24 ***Death***
* Vs. 25-34 ***Disease***

There is another fear that many today have especially in light of what is currently happening in the stock market and that is a loss of “***Dollars***”. Though Jesus doesn’t directly take this fear up it does appear in the story we are looking at today. The reality Mark presents is that Jesus’ deliverance of the man from the demons increased the fear of the loss of “*dollars*” in the people of the Gadarenes. Their stock in “*pork bellies*” literally plummeted taking a dive into the sea. Looking at this story it is clear that Jesus’ work had opposite effects on two groups of people: To the demoniac it was clearly ***a blessing***, but to the people of the Gadarenes it was seen as an ***economic curse***. If there had been a headline of this incident in the “***Gadarene Gazette***” it most likely would have recorded the incident as “***Pigs Parish***” instead of “***Demoniac Delivered***”.

1. **Vs. 1-2a From fear to fear**

Vs. 1 The Greek speaks of the people of the town of Gersa which was in the district of the Gadarenes located on the South Eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. This area is where the tribe of Gad settled which was on the wrong side of the Jordan. Because of this it was frequently attacked and invaded by the gentiles. This is the reason that it was primarily inhabited by the gentiles and Jews who had adopted the Greek culture above their own and is the reason why swine was a commodity.

Vs. 2a Each of the gospel writers of Matthew and Luke add touches as to this man’s condition. Matthew informs us that there were two demon influenced men that came out of the tombs and were so fierce that no person could pass that way. Mark and Luke only mentions one, this has caused some to attack the validity of the scriptures saying that there is an obvious contradiction. The solution to the difference in these two accounts is that Matthew records the fact that there were numerically two but only one had a dialog with Jesus, which is why Mark’s and Luke’s only identify the one called legion. Mark tells us that he came OUT OF the tombs and the way Mark introduces the demoniac to his readers suggests that the personality of the demons was far more noticeable than the man’s own human personality. The concept that he was demon possessed does not occur in the Bible. The purpose of demonic influence is always “*destruction*”. There is never any hint that a person can be influenced by a spirit for “good purposes” the only Person who can influence a person for good is Christ. If an unclean spirit influences a person though it may at first seem to enlighten or heal a person the ultimate aim is never good only destruction.

We can look out at the sphere of influence that satan and his cohorts have over the world and there are discernable degrees that increase. I can imagine the disciple’s fresh off of the new realization that Jesus was in their boat that caused a greater awareness of just who Jesus was, only to be immediately confronted by these two demon crazed naked men the moment they came ashore. There are more tests to our security they the mere elements of nature, none more frightening then people. ***Here we will note that Mark mentions six of these characteristics of demonic influence in this man***:

1. Vs. 2 **Unclean**: This is the word in verse 2 rendered “unclean spirit” is the effect of this spirits caused in this lost soul. A general observation is that the demon influence causes the oppressed person to prefer death, squalor and moral pollution.
2. Vs. 3a **Isolation**: Another thing that we see associated with the demonic influence is anti-social or isolationist tendencies where the person prefers little or no human contact. Here again we see this man withdrawn from family and friends living separately physically and emotionally from the rest of humanity.
3. Vs. 3b-4 **Supernatural strength or power**: This man exhibited strength outside the bounds of normalcy breaking chains and shackles. It took more than one person to subdue him do to this demonic power. Having multiple law enforcement personal in my life I have heard of many cases of this where the person regardless of their size of phasic possessed a super natural strength that caused the police to have to use extra ordinary means to subdue the person.
4. Vs. 5a **Tormented**: The demonic influence seems to enjoy tormenting its host. A person may at first be lured into giving themselves over to demonic control through the promise of controlling power over others and sometimes a promise of greater sexual immorality or a sense of belonging. But the end result is that they were lured into this and are tormented because of it. This man was restless night and day, crying out in pain and cutting himself with sharp stones in an attempt to drive out his inner torment.
5. Vs. 5b **Self destructive and suicidal tendencies**: There is a self-destructive nature seen in self-mutilation and in some cases destructive suicidal behavior. Not all suicidal behavior is of demonic origin but this one clearly was.
6. Vs. 6 **Recognition of higher authority**: There was an instant recognition of the authority of God as he came running to Jesus calling Him by name as well as recognizing His authority over himself. The Greek describes this demon controlled man aggressively running towards Jesus and His disciples in a hostel nature. Matthew clearly alluded to when he mentioned the fierce nature of these two poor souls and how they keep people away from their location. The word used for worship means to prostrate one’s self as a sign of reverence. It is used to mean a person’s recognition of another’s superiority and rank. James writes in chapter 2 verse 19 saying that “*Even the demons believe – and tremble*!”
7. **Vs. 7-13 Even demons believe – and tremble**

Vs. 7-8 The picture we have is a host of demons unredeemable in nature, destined to be damned, destroying and disrupting everything that has to do with God bending their knees to God the Son. The words of the demons to Jesus inform us that they recognize nothing in common with our Lord and their only concern is to temporarily but time so that they won’t inherit immediately what they deserve for their rebellion. The word “torment” is a word that in the classic Greek meant to test or to assay metals to determine their content. These demons wanted to put Jesus under oath which when you consider those who value a lie greater than the truth it is quite ironic. This response Mark informs us was instigated by Jesus’ words to the demons, “*Come out of this man*”. ***Note the priority of the work of Christ as He didn’t begin with social work or any attempt to reform him to deliver him from his condition. No, for Jesus the quickest way to get him out of his current condition was to get his current condition out of him, thus he didn’t clothe him He saved Him, then he clothed him.***

Vs. 9 The Greek tells us that Jesus kept on asking the demons which tells us that they were still very rebellious and only responded to continual repeated questioning. A careful reading of this story reveals that Jesus was not asking the demons their name but the man his, calling the man to remember his own personality. The word legion is a Roman military designation of soldiers over 6,000. It was a Roman insignia of **irresistible power organized into a single unit**. What amazing tenderness of Jesus who would speak to a man that all of society no longer called by name and instead only referred to him by what had taken over his life! He was so far gone that the only answer Jesus received was from that which had taken over his life. And what had taken over his life wasn’t one thing but many!

Vs. 10-13 The demons who called themselves “***irresistible power organized into a single unit***” kept begging Jesus that they wouldn’t be sent out of this region, requested the pigs. Jesus allowed it as it makes no difference to demons whether they inhabit people or pigs because they soon will make people’s behavior like pigs by their influence. For these demons to exercise ther influence they would need a body and that is what they didn’t want was to be without one so Jesus grants them a herd of swine. And Matthew records with the one word GO, Jesus passes judgement.

1. **Vs. 14-20 Go from Him or go for Him**

Vs. 14-17 The loss of nearly 2000 hogs brought the townsmen out to the scene not to rejoice at the deliverance of infamous demoniacs who had terrorized the community but rather lament over the lost profits of their commodity. It is obvious that the pigs are far less comfortable with demons than many people are! To the people of the Gadarenes the cure caused a catastrophe and they requested Jesus to depart as they viewed Jesus far more dangerous to them do to the loss of their profits then the demons were. They were more afraid of a sane man then they had been of the insane one. The truth is the people of the Gadarenes preferred swine to a savior as they believed the greater value was in material loss than the moral gain.

Vs. 18-20 Here we see desire and duty in conflict as the delivered man would abide with Christ but Jesus would rather abide with Him at his work. That is always the hardest place to share what Jesus has done for us, our homes! It is our lips and our life that must testify on that location, not just lips. Jesus words of Go are not **FROM** Him but rather **FOR** Him and there is a big difference in these two. Every delivered person is a sent person as we are to GO and our mission is no less if it is cross the street or cross the oceans! There were three requests made to Jesus in this passage:

1. Vs. 12 The demons ask “***Send us the swine***”, to which Jesus said GO!
2. Vs. 17 The people of the Gadarenes ask, “***Depart from their region***”, to which Jesus left.
3. Vs. 18 The former demonized man asked, “***That he might be with Jesus***”, to which yes said no, and told him to “*Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you.*”

Of those three requests the most startling reply is obviously Jesus’ answer to the former demonized man to be with Him. In saying yes to the demons and the society Jesus answer was a judgment but in his refusal to the former demonized man it was a blessing as his return to society was an influence them of what God desires to do. Church history records a group of believers that sprung up out of this man’s testimony throughout this region of the 19 cities.

**Mark 5:21-34**

**“Who touched Me?”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 21-24 Whom God enlightens**
3. **Vs. 25-34 Flesh pushes, faith touches**
4. **Introduction**

This is one of the more beautiful of the stories with regards to the healing touch of Jesus and it is intertwined with another story. Though all three of the synoptic gospels carry this story on a worldly front; if we were Jairus and his household, it would have been viewed as an ***unwanted interruption.*** These two come to Jesus from very different paths: Jairus’ approach is public, the women’s is private and when contrasted against the pushing multitudes we observe that:

* **Flesh presses, while faith touches**
* **Crowds push Him, but needs moves Him**

For Jairus’, this incident was a diversion that furthered delayed what is the greatest fear any parent can go through! This story still falls into the category of the limitations of earthly popularity as three times in the story line Mark notes the effects of the crowds upon the ministry of Jesus, one of which was this very lady. We all feel as though Jesus priorities go awry at times, where some ones inconvenience is given a higher priority over our life and death situation. But as we shall see “*His mercy fails not*”! Evaluating suffering as a basis of determining which gets priority is a difficult enterprise. Jesus doesn’t evaluate need based upon ***severity*** or ***duration*** but upon our **connection to His loving abilities**. And what at once must have seemed as an unwanted delay would turn out to be a tremendous encouragement to Jairus.

1. **Vs. 21-24 Whom God enlightens**

Vs. 21 You will recall that Jesus had an incredibly taxing day prior to His command of the disciples to get in the boat to sail to the other side. Once in the boat Jesus fell sound asleep and the disciples got caught up in a storm that shook their trust. After Jesus silencing the wind and the waves they ended up in the area of the Gadarenes with two demon influenced men. They now get into the same boat and cross the same Sea of Galilee going back to where they had sailed from and again waiting for them were the thronging crowds. I have spent some time wondering what it must have felt like being one of Jesus’ early disciples: *Escaping the crushing crowds, believing you are going to drown at sea, arriving on shore with demons running at you and pigs running from you. Back on board the same boat to be faced with more crushing crowds*. How many of us would join this band if we could walk with Jesus for just three days like this?

 The Greek wording here is not that the multitudes were gathered “*to Him*” but were instead “*coming after Him*” not out of devotion but rather a longing to get something from Him. There are a great many today in the church that are like the pressing multitudes that view Jesus from what they can get **FROM** Him instead of being moved out of **DEVOTION** towards Him.

Vs. 22 Jairus is a Hebrew name that means “***whom Jehovah enlightens***”. And as we read he comes begging for his daughter as she is on her last breath. His words to Jesus are not the normal word for heal and instead the word means that she might be saved from certain death. Jairus primary request for his daughter is to be saved and healing is only the means to it. If it were not for the phrase Mark inserts describing that Jairus “*was one of the rulers of the synagogue*” we would not have gotten the full picture of the situation. Jairus’ who not only came to Jesus but fell at his feet was **the chairmen of the board of directors of the synagogue in Capernaum**. It is this very synagogue that had first altered Jesus methodology by no longer allowing Him to preach and heal in their synagogue. They had no doubt made a ruling against Jesus as they didn’t appreciate the crowds and Jesus’ insistence of breaking their rules about healing on the Sabbath. **God has indeed “*enlightened*” Jairus and He has done so through personal experience**. ***This crowd that Jairus wades through was of his and his boards own making.*** Only a short time ago he believed that Jesus was a trouble maker that only made things horribly inconvenient at the synagogue. The trampled gardens, stains on the marble floors, the interruptions by the raucous crowds. I am of the belief that Jairus and his ilk were extremely happy to see the circus side show of Jesus leave their beautiful synagogue. ***But all that changed in an instant when he could no longer afford indifference of human suffering.*** Gone was the ***pride***, ***prejudice*** and ***position*** that had gleefully gave Jesus the boot, instead Jairus is driven through the very crowds he indirectly created. What he had one time he viewed, as the Pharisees had described, ***demonic driven inconvenience*** was now ***his only hope of deliverance for his 12 year old girl***. I’m sure he didn’t care if it was the Sabbath, he didn’t care if he left his theology, pride or position he would gladly trade it all for his little girl. It ***often takes our own life’s heart aches to change our attitudes and actions***. Yes God enlightens, but we need to remember that it often takes ***breaking our hearts*** to overcome our attitudes about ***broken rules***.

Vs. 23-24 I believe that in light of what we have just understood that Jairus that his biggest problem lie **NOT** in the question if Jesus ***COULD*** heal his little girl (*after all he had witnessed that multiple times*). No, Jairus acts as a man who wonders if Jesus ***WOULD*** heal in light of how he had treated Him. ***Jairus had to have come to understand and belief, that in Jesus there is a man whose CHARACTER matches His ABILITY***! Jesus was **NOT** the kind of person who would take the opportunity to take a shot at Jairus, “*What has that got to do with me, remember I only do this by satan’s power,….isn’t it the Sabbath*?” Neither would Jesus respond, “*I’m a little busy now thanks to you, I’ll get to her when I can.*” Instead we have only Mark’s words in verse 24, “***So Jesus went with Him***…” Five little words that describe the **FACT** that Jesus went with Jairus ***promptly without any hesitation***. Those words remind us that even when we’ve been a jerk towards Jesus that if we are willing to just come to Him broken and humble ***He will go with us without hesitation***, oh how I love Jesus!!!

 Mark closes with a glaring reality that walked with Jairus along the way to his house to his dyeing little girl, “*a great multitude followed Him and thronged Him*…” Every step was steeped in difficulty with the pressing crowds that were crushing in on them. What may have taken only minutes was complicated because of the decision that Jairus had been a part of. Though we are not informed of this fact until verse 42 we are told that according to Jewish custom a girl becomes of a woman at 12 and one day and this little girl was at the beginning of this journey, while the primary person in our story had not felt like a women for 12 years.

1. **Vs. 25-34 Flesh pushes, faith touches**

Vs. 25 Jesus rapid response was a wonderful thing for Jairus but the pressing sprawling humanity must have tortured this loving father’s soul. Mark informs his readers about **three things with regards to this woman’s situation**:

1. Vs. 25-26 **Her condition**: We are informed not only of WHAT she had but also HOW long she had it. She was suffering from what doctors would call today *vaginal hemorrhaging.* The word “*suffered*” indicates that her condition caused physical that seemed to be furthered by the so called treatments of the physicians. This continual menstrual flow would not only would weaken her due to low iron it would have given her great distress and pain. According to Leviticus 15:19-27 this would also have great social and religious implications as she would have been seen as a leper being ceremonially unclean which would have left her outside of religious life and thus ostracized from society. She had this condition for 12 long years and her desperation to be cured had drained her financially and the attempted cures by the quacks had been as painful as the illness. The Talmud gives 11 different cures for a person afflicted with this aliment: Some are nothing more than superstition like carrying the ashes of an ostrich egg on a linen rag in summer and a cotton one during winter. Others had the woman carry barley which had been found in dung.
2. Vs. 27-29 **Her cure**: The literal reading of this is “*having heard of the things concerning THE Jesus*” which identifies OUR Jesus as His name was a common name. Jesus fame had spread to a level as He was now known as “**THE JESUS**”. The Greek says that she kept saying to herself “*If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well*”, as she pressed through the crowd. She couldn’t come as Jairus had done, she was ceremonially unclean instead she came lunging through the pushing crowd ignoring the fact that her action was rendering others unclean. Finally she had wormed her way close enough to touch the hem of his tasseled garment and the moment she touched it she experienced the stoppage of the flow of her blood. According to the Greek she viewed her condition as a whip that continually beat her and now instantly she was healed from its scourge. There is a tradition that says that on the hem of a rabbi’s garment is to be woven a blue thread symbolizing the word of God. And she touched this symbol without realizing she was touching the actual Word Himself.
3. Vs. 30-34 **Her confession**: Jesus response caused His disciples to question in light of the crushing multitudes “***who HADN’T touched His clothes***?” ***Of all those pressing multitudes touching Jesus only this lady received anything from Him***. He hadn’t seen her touch Him but He knew instantly that she had. Power went out from Him, it was released without His verbal consent that suggests to me that this healing was done by the Father more than Jesus. How wonderful it is that God can heal me even when I don’t understand the means and manor He employs. This is the only time in the word that we read that Jesus uses the term “***daughter***” to a women who was most likely close to His age. ***Oh how tender this public word was in light of her embarrassing situation and public confession***. She had just confessed to her condition and public uncleanness in front of the crowd that she had violated and Jesus calls her His daughter. And He further tells her that her healing will be a continual one not just temporally relieved due to her condition do to her confession. And observing this all was Jairus whose own embarrassment and confession at the start of this journey must have found that this ***unwanted distraction*** was and ***encouraging blessing***!

**Mark 5:35-43**

**“Hope interrupted”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 35-38 Fear stilled, faith stirred**
3. **Vs. 39-43 O death where is your sting**
4. **Introduction**

We take up the conclusion of the account of Jairus and we left him hearing the words spoken by Jesus to the women who had the issue of blood. He knew this little girl was dead and the delay at the woman’s healing was an encouragement when only a moment later Jairus received the news that she was dead. “*Fear not Jairus, just keep believing, you just saw a glimpse of what I can do if you trust Me*!”

 Both of these stories given by Mark are designed to show Jesus’ ability overcome what can only be described as some of the most stress filled events in human life, chronic illness and the death of a loved one. Jesus delay was only visible from Jairus perspective not Jesus’. Jesus never cease to amaze me as I’m driven to worship Him not just because of His ability but because of His great compassion upon people who are terrorized by sorrow. We must not mistakenly believe that Jesus does this for the benefit of the young girl as He is not touched with compassion for her suffering and sorrow, no His compassion fails not for those still bound in this world to this land of death. It was the agony of Jairus and his wife that drove Jesus to bring this little girl back whole to them.

**II. Vs. 35-38 Fear stilled, faith stirred**

Vs. 35-36 It needs to be mentioned that it had taken his little 12-year-old daughters last breath to bring Jairus to Jesus. Only a few weeks earlier he had MOVED with his board to ban Jesus from the synagogue in Capernaum. Now he had been MOVED to come to Jesus, a broken man ***devoid of his pride, stripped of his theology, emptied of his position*** to the feet of Jesus like those he had kicked out of his synagogue. With the words, “*Your daughter is dead*” the ***panic approach***, the ***intense pressure and hurriedness*** has come to a sudden and painful stop. No need to be impatient now, he was too late, “*Why trouble the Teacher any further*?” There is something far worse than the **frenzied fear filled waiting** as a loved one hangs onto life. In our world when **Death takes over human action and effort ends!** Waiting is not the worst thing that can happen because it still means there is hope! But friend Jesus wants to change your view of life and death as we shall see.

Look carefully at the familiar words of those who came to inform Jairus, “*Why trouble the Teacher any further*?” This may surprise you, but in light of the fact that they are aimed at a man who has come to Jesus, I find these words: ***Ironically Pathetic.*** ***When would there be a better time to trouble the “Teacher”***? Is **FEAR** ever a better choice then **FAITH** especially during the time of great trouble like this? I suggest that in Jairus’ life there had never been a **BETTER** time to trouble the “Teacher” than this very moment when trouble has crashed through the door of his heart? **What a strange notion we fallen humans have that it is some how impolite or inhospitable to come to a gracious God during our greatest time of trouble**. ***We don’t come to Him at the very moment we need Him the most and then spend the rest of our lives blaming Him for not doing something on our behalf.*** Why do we insist of dispensing of our greatest and only resource and comfort when we need Him the most? We say, “*It’s too late, it’s no use*” but the truth is: ***The more desperate our need, the more hopeless our situation the greater our need for Him***! We flee from our only help and hope out of some macabre sense of polite hospitality. Come with me to God’s personal invite in Psalm 50 verse 15 where He personally invites us to “***Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me***.” The invite is to exchange your fear for faith and the only cost is noted in Jesus’ words in verse 36 “*Do not be afraid; only believe.*”

I further submit to you that the delay of Jesus due to the pressing crowds and healing of the woman was a great blessing. Jairus was about to experience two very important truths:

1. With Jesus **hope needs not to depart when delay interrupts**. God is not in a hurry as His delays are not denials!
2. **Faith need not lesson when the situation changes from *little hope* to NO *hope.*** Though the situation may have changed the ***ANSWER*** has ***NOT***! Our time of trouble is not a TEST for Jesus but rather one for us. It is for this reason the trouble has come, His interruptions are important! His delays are not denials but they very well may be discipline. Jairus needed to have his ***fear stilled*** and his ***faith stirred***!

Vs. 37-38 Mark informs his readers that the witnesses to what was about to take place was to be by **invite only** as Jesus permitted only 7 including Himself: Three disciples, Peter, James and his brother John. The parents Mr. and Mrs. Jairus as well as their deceased 12-year-old daughter. Gone and dispensed were to be the professional mourners that were common place according to Jewish customs. There actions were far different than the victorious hope of the Christian faith. Immediately at death loud wailing was set up so that all might know that death had taken a life, it was also present at the grave side. The mourners would hang over the dead begging for a response from the dead’s silent lips. They would beat their own breasts, tear out their hair and rend their garments all done according to specific rules. The garments were to be rent from the heart until the skin was exposed but not beyond the navel. Parents were to rend their clothes on the left over the heart all others over the right side. The garment was worn for 30 days and only after 7 days could they be sown up roughly but the tear still had to be visible. After the 30 days it could be properly repaired. The flute was used to connect with death and even the poor were to have at least two flute players at their wife’s death. The wail of flutes and the screaming cries of mourners were seen as passionate appeals to the dead. When death came those in mourning were forbidden to work for three days and this was extended even for their servants. They were to wear shoes and instead were to sit with their head bound up. They were not to shave or do anything for their own comfort. They weren’t to read the law or the prophets or anything that would aid them in joy, they could only read Job, Jeremiah or lamentations. They must eat only at their own homes and could not leave their villages for 30 days and partake of no wine or meat. They could eat eggs only if they were dipped in ashes and salt and all water was to be removed from their and three houses on either side of theirs as they believed that the angel of death procured death by dipping a sword in water. They were not allowed to go to the synagogue and receive any comfort. This was the scene in which Jesus, Jairus and those three disciples entered.

**III. Vs. 39-43 O death where is your sting**

Vs. 39-40 Jesus says to them in the Greek she has died but that she won’t stay that way, that’s the meaning of the word sleeping in the Greek. Jesus’ words caused two reactions:

1. **To the mourners**: Ridicule, as they laughed at Him to put Him down which must have been very awkward to do so when only a moment ago they were screaming so loudly as mourners. These mourners failed to realize is that ***death is not the separation of the body from the souls but rather it is the separation of the soul from God***! Jesus commanding the room kicked them all out forcefully like He would do when He drove the money changers from the temple.
2. **To Jairus and the disciples**: Astonishment, yet Jesus takes them under His care coming alongside as He guides the grief-stricken parents and fear full disciples who were confronted with death in reassurance of His loving care.

The word “*entered*” in the Greek is a word that is used of a person going on a journey as it conveys the idea of a great distance or a long walk. To these parents though this little girl lies only a few years from where they were it might as well have been on the other side of the world from where they wanted to be and they did not yet view the traveling their filled with glorious possibilities and endless wonder but something to be feared and avoided.

Vs. 41-43 The words “Great amazement” is the word where we get our English word “*ecstasy*” describing someone removed for joy from their senses. The actions of Jesus left an unforgettable impact upon all as recorded by Peter, who no doubt retold this story to Mark. Jesus took hold of this cold lifeless hand to help her up at the same time Jesus said as Peter records in His native tongue “*Talitha cumi*”. Notice that Mark does not translate it into the Greek for his readers. This indicates that these are the very words Peter heard that day. What comfort “Little lamb, arise” and death was dealt a deadly blow. But remember that this was not done for the little girl’s sake. Jesus called her back to pain, heartache, worry, weariness and ultimately death. No, Jesus did this for the father and mother whose heart had been broken. The miracle is accompanied by two requests:

1. **That it would not be published all around**: This would have caused Jesus to receive every invitation to every funeral. Jesus wanted to change the view believers would have with regards to death. He doesn’t always alleviate sickness and death but for those that trust Him He always eliminates the fear it has upon us. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:55, “*Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your sting? O hades where is your victory*?” Such hope keeps us steady in a world gripped by fear. We have not been removed from death but we have been forever removed from deaths fear.
2. **That this little girl be given food to eat**: This no told the parents that not only was she alive, she was back to normal and delivered back to them for her care.

The mourners laughed at Jesus when they believed that hope and faith were pointless at His claim. ***But the great truth of the Christian life is that when life looks it’s worst and the circumstances are impossible things are never more possible with our Lord***. The laughter that was scorn and ridicule was transformed into joy and worship! There is nothing we can’t face and be victorious in when we are facing it in the hand of our Jesus because He alone has conquered death through His love!

**Mark 6:1**

**“A Perfect Person in a sinful world”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 1 Familiarity breads contempt?**
3. **Introduction**

In the first 6 verses of chapter 6 Mark finishes off this section with the limits of human popularity by showing **another hindrance when popularity is coupled with familiarity**. These two collided in Jesus’ home town of Nazareth, as what had been heard about Him crashed head long into what the people from His home town had believed about Him for 30 years. Charles Darwin once said that ***belief*** was “*the most complete of all distinctions between man and the lower animals.*” Though I disagree with Darwinism I would say that his observation, suggests that when a person exhibits a “*lack of faith or unbelief*” it puts them on a lower level then the lower part of creation. I made the statement during the teaching last week that one of the common denominators in that those who DID receive a touch from Jesus is that they approached Him in brokenness and humility. The other side of the coin is in this chapter where we see a community that had grew up with Jesus and had every reason to trust Him, choice to not do so. The author of Hebrews in chapter 3 verse 12 warns his readers saying, **“***Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God*.”

1. **Vs. 1 Familiarity breads contempt?**

Vs. 1 Before we get to far into the text there are some general observations of this section which will take up our entire time this morning. We will take up the text in it’s entirety next week. I’m taking the time in this section because I believe that this text before us goes a long way in clearing up some mysteries with regards to Jesus upbringing is this little village of Nazareth. So we will be looking at all 6 verses as it relates to this before breaking it apart next week. Though Nazareth was not His birth place (Bethlehem was) it was here the vast majority of His earthly life was spent with the exception of the short stay in Egypt. For all practical purposes Nazareth was His “*home town*”. There is only one bible verse that addresses Jesus’ childhood and it is in Luke chapter 2 verses 41-52. There we are told of the incident at Jesus bar mitzvah in the temple where He amazed the scholars with His understanding of scripture. Luke concludes that little portion of Jesus’ transition from childhood to an adult with the only phrase that grants any insight of what His early life was like saying, “*He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. And* ***Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men***.” What that means specifically is left for many a person’s imaginations. There have been fanciful stories of Jesus doing all sorts of miracles, healing birds, and other animals, parting rivers and streams but these are unsubstantiated fairytales. This passage I believe clears up a good portion of the mystery. First off Mark in verse 3 tells us that Jesus was living with His parents and as time went by this family grew as Mark records 4 half brothers and then mentions that He also had half sisters though he doesn’t record a specific number for us. This section indirectly tells us **two things about Jesus upbringing**:

1. **Nothing miraculous**: Looking at the text we are told that those who had grown up with Him in this little village were “*astonished*” both about the “*wisdom that was given Him*” and “*such mighty works…performed by His hands*”. According to Luke chapter 4:16-30, Jesus had come to Nazareth a year earlier right after His temptation by satan in the wilderness but prior to any public miraculous works. At that time; He had gone into the synagogue of His youth on the Sabbath, opened up the scroll of Isaiah and read, *“The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me,* *Because He has anointed Me* *to preach the gospel to the poor;* *He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,* *to proclaim liberty to the captives* *and* ***recovery of sight to the blind****,* *to* ***set at liberty those who are oppressed****.”* He then rolled up the scroll and told his neighbors that in their hearing the words of Isaiah were now fulfilled. And though they marveled at gracious tone of Jesus’ words **they question the validity of His announcement** saying, “*Is this not Joseph’s son*?” Jesus then launched into a prophetic announcement that a “*prophet is without honor in his own country*”. He backed that statement by stating that during the times of two of the greatest ***miracle workers*** in Israel’s history; ***both Elijah and Elisha, their greatest miracles were done not in Israel but in gentile regions because of unbelief***. Jesus’ fellow villager’s response to this was to take Him out of the synagogue to a cliff in an attempt to throw Him off, but He just passed through them and left. My point is that there clearly had been **NO** “*recovery of sight to the blind,* OR *the setting at liberty those who are oppressed*” during Jesus’ 30 years with them. This is further supported by this text in Mark as they again would **NOT** have been **“astonished”** by what they had heard in the year since Jesus had been among them. Instead they would have said, “*Yah, we saw Him do all sorts of miracles and works during the 30 years He lived here*!” Instead these villagers who were well acquainted with Jesus do not deny what they have been hearing about Jesus’ fame, **there are ONLY astonishment is because they had not witnessed or heard of it for the 30 years He lived among them**. This is further backed by their statement found in Luke chapter 4 of, “*Is this not Joseph’s son*?” and here before us in Mark chapter 6 “*Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary*?” These two statements are in essence saying, “***Are you sure you got the right Jesus***?” And apparently their opinion hadn’t changed in a year even with the increased awareness of the miracles that had been accomplished by Him. They would **NOT** have made those statements if Jesus had been performing “*mighty works among them for thirty years*”! Based upon Luke’s words of ***Jesus increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men,*** I’m of the opinion that what they witnessed was a “***perfect person living in a sin-filled world***”! All through Jesus’ youth and on into adult hood **He lived among them PERFECTLY, albeit NOT outwardly miraculously**. In other word’s, ***other than His day to day perfection***, there was nothing that separated Him or distinguished Him from others in His family or those who lived around Him. ***His uniqueness lies in His inward character that manifested its self in a perfect life.*** It was only visible in that He never told even 1lie, always treated people with love and grace, spoke the truth and was never 1 time self-centered. I’m certain that He had a great reputation as far as His work as a carpenter was concerned. **That leads to another question**: “***Why then do these people have such contempt for Jesus*, *if He lived so perfectly among them***?” That question leads me to the 2nd aspect to Jesus’ upbringing in this little village of Nazareth.
2. **People had a hard time with His virgin birth**: I’ve come to this conclusion by piecing together several scriptures along with this last statement of the villagers of Nazareth “*Is this not the carpenter,* ***the son of Mary***?” Mary and Joseph were from Nazareth they had grown up here and their pending marriage would have been common knowledge and like all Jewish weddings a community event. All that changed when Mary a virgin received a visit from the angel Gabriel and was told that she was highly favored among women because she had been chosen to conceive and bring forth a Son whom she calls Jesus. Though Gabriel’s message was amazing as it related to the prophetic truth’s promised Israel it did cause her to question not the promises but the means which they would be fulfilled namely her seeing that, “*she had never known a man*”! Gabriel explained to her that this would be accomplished supernaturally by way of the Holy Spirit and that Jesus will be the Son of God. He finished by saying to her that her much older cousin Elizabeth was 6 months along herself and that “*With God nothing is impossible*”. Mary, this amazing young girl, received this truth, left Nazareth and went to visit Elizabeth for the next 3 months in a city in the area of Judah. Upon here arrival John the Baptist still in Elizabeth’s womb leapt in her womb and the Holy Spirit tells Elizabeth that Mary is pregnant with the Messiah and they praise God. Mary then returns back home to Nazareth three months pregnant with some explaining to do with Joseph. He being a righteous man obviously loved her but couldn’t take her as his wife seeing that she was pregnant with what he initially believed was another man’s child. He too received a visit from an angel that Mary’s pregnancy was of the Holy Spirit. All of this information is relevant as it relates to this small village where everyone would have known everybody. ***This village I believe was far less accepting and believing of Joseph’s Mary’s explanation of her pregnancy.*** This is the reason why every incident that reinforced what Gabriel had told them was as Luke said in chapter 2 verse 51 something that Mary “*kept…. in her heart.*” I think it also explains why Mary responds the way she does at the wedding at Cana which was a neighboring city of Nazareth. Chronologically that event took place at the same time Jesus had been in Nazareth a year earlier. At that time, I believe that Mary was asking Jesus to reveal His true identity which had remained hidden and a source of her personal ridicule in Nazareth for 30 years leaving her with only Joseph and the things she treasured in her heart as a comfort. You will recall that Jesus told His mother on that occasion that “*His hour had not yet come*” for Him to reveal His true identity. Those words indicate that only His death and resurrection would truly reveal this. The final piece of the puzzle is found in the statement from the villagers who knew Jesus and said to Him are you not “*the carpenter, the son of Mary*?” That is never the way Jewish people would refer to a person’s family origins as **it is an indication of being illegitimate** which I believe is how they viewed Him. If you go to John’s gospel in chapter 8 verse 41 you can hear what the religious leaders no doubt had picked up from the villagers of Nazareth as they fired back at Jesus “***We are not born of fornication****; we have one Father-God*”. In their mind Jesus was conceived outside of marriage either by Joseph or some other man. A year earlier they said that Jesus was Joseph son conceived outside of marriage, and now He was Mary’s son conceived outside of marriage; as far as they were concerned He could be Joseph’s or Mary’s **illegitimate son** but He could not be **God the Son**!

When you consider most of the unbelieving world’s view of Jesus, they are fine with Him being a great teacher, they rather like the fact that He turned against the religious establishment and had no interest in politics. They like that He identified with the common person, was compassionate to the poor and down trodden. There are two things that the world will not ever agree with when it comes to Jesus: His virgin birth and His resurrection! Make Him a good man, a moral man, or any other kind of virtue but don’t make Him the Son of God!

**Mark 6:1-6**

**“The majesty of the Master”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 2-3 The mystery of the Master**
3. **Vs. 4-6 The marvel of faith**
4. **Introduction**

While in the 6th chapter of Mark last week we spent the entirety of our time looking at the mystery that was the majesty of the Master in His early earthly life. I for one won’t be the same for the time we spent looking at His perfection. But equally surprising was the reactions of the villagers from His home town. It wasn’t the “*mighty works*” that took them aback it was that these were being attributed to the Jesus they knew. Usually when that is the assessment it is because the person who is being evaluated has such a bad reputation as to warrant the reaction. But that was simply not the case with Jesus; you would have thought that they would have said in light of His perfection, “*Well that makes perfect since, He was always such a polite and caring person while He lived here*.” In the case of Jesus their familiarity with Him bread contempt that was **NOT BECAUSE** of His character but **IN SPITE** of it. Listed in the 2nd verse is four observations that puzzled them about Jesus whom they had known for 30 years:

* **The source of His knowledge**
* **The character of His wisdom**
* **The significance of His power**
* **The majesty of His person**

That these four observation was the source of contempt is an indictment not upon Jesus but upon the villagers of Nazareth who had witnessed of His perfection for 30 years. The only conclusion you can come up with is that these four things will always remain a mystery to those who CHOOSE to believe that Jesus is NOT and cannot ever be the Son of God! People that refuse to believe, will never be able to see:

* How a mere carpenter could be a prophet!
* How a person who grew up in their midst could have such character!

No, they fall into the trap that so many do, that a person’s education or upbringing determines a person’s character. They will continue to believe that some how God must work through their own preconceived acceptable channels of their choosing and if God so chooses to not do so He will be subject to their preconceived prejudices.

**II. Vs. 2-3 The mystery of the Master**

Vs. 2-3 A year later the hearts of those in Nazareth are still hard towards their own native son Jesus. Though they don’t kick Him out of the synagogue and attempt to throw Him off the cliff they nonetheless are offended by Him. He had left the crowds in Galilee to the quite of His small home town. ***What amazing grace Jesus has towards those who reject and mock Him! He still desires to reach those with His love! People who have and continue to have no affection towards Him and aren’t even open to the possibility of honest inquiry***. From the perspective of Jesus disciples who had just witnessed a lifeless girl being brought back to life in Capernaum it must have seemed as a strange strategy to take leave of this highly effective environment and go back to a place where a year ago it had not only been ineffective it had nearly been fatal. They had witnessed this little village where they had treated Him so poorly. They had just seen life where there was once death and now they were in Nazareth a village that was dead where once the author of life was! *What a lesson for all of Jesus’ disciples that seem to think that successful ministry is to be gaged upon* ***record breaking numbers*** *and* ***amazing events*** *instead of faithful obedience in reaching people who may not may not want to be reached*!

As was the custom the ruler for the 2nd time invited Jesus to speak on the Sabbath. But instead of His teaching drawing praise for the ***content***, ***power*** and the fact that He was a ***home town boy made good***, it again brought the same general questioning it had a year earlier. Their astonished was not in the truth He spoke or the way in which He spoke it. NO, they just couldn’t seem to get over their prejudice do to the familiarity with Him. “*Where did this Man get these things? And what wisdom is this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are preformed by His hands*.” They had heard of His fame and popularity but to them He was still a controversial figure do to the reputation of His mother Mary. Her story was well known in this little town how she was pregnant prior to her marriage to Joseph. Jesus had worked with Joseph in the building trade; they knew his brothers and apparently His sisters stilled lived in Nazareth and all of this offended them. To the people of this little “*Bean*” town of Nazareth Jesus was at best an unimportant carpenter whose parents didn’t have a good reputation. In their small mindedness they just couldn’t get beyond this and discounted all of which others were attributing to Him. These folks had been His neighbors, they had sat next to Him at the synagogue, had Him build them something. A carpenter was a respected craftsman in that day, but nobody expected a carpenter to do miracles or teach profound truths in the synagogue. Where did He get all this power and wisdom? And why didn’t the rest of His family possess this same power and wisdom? Even more, why did His brothers and sisters not believe in Him? There is that old maxim that says, “*Familiarity breads contempt*” but the contempt shown by Jesus fellow citizens says nothing about Him and everything about them. They couldn’t get beyond what their own prejudices prescribed. The Greek word “*offended*” is where we get our English word *scandalize* and as hard as it is for us to understand Jesus instead of being a great source of community pride was a source of embarrassment as they viewed Him as a scandal*.* They did what so many still do today, “***They couldn’t explain Him, so they rejected Him*.**” They look with eyes that didn’t see anything special about Jesus. When it comes to Jesus there are only two possibilities:

1. You are **like these villagers who see nothing amazing abut the Son of God**!
2. You see **nothing about Jesus** that ***ISN’T AMAZING***!

**III.Vs. 4-6 The marvel of faith Introduction**

Vs. 4-6 Mark doesn’t say that Jesus “***Should***” do no mighty works but that He “***Could***” do no mighty works because of their unbelief. Jesus pointed out to the villagers that such a prejudicial evaluation is a product of the fallen nature. What a tragedy it is when people are unable and unwilling to recognize worth and honor even when they are most familiar and acquainted with. Such an evaluation never harms Jesus but it does limit His ability to minister to them, to heal and touch them with His love and truth. It is amazing to me that Jesus still responded to the few that could get beyond their faith limiting prejudice but no great work was done in His home town. To this day though the town is recognized as the town where Jesus was raised there is nothing honorable about Nazareth and in fact it remains in the area dominated by Muslims and if you are visiting it you won’t be able to take your Jewish tour guide. With all three of these accounts:

* Jairus
* The woman with the issue of blood
* And Jesus interaction with His home town of Nazareth

Each of these folks had to get beyond their limited view of the person and work of Jesus. We limit the possibilities of our encounter with Him if we fail to come to Him as the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords in broken humble recognition of Who He is. We must also not that we need to recognize not only who He is with regards to His abilities but we also note who He is with regards to His character and willingness! Had Nazareth just came to Him broken, humbled recognizing that even though they had defamed Him and His family, He would do mighty works among them! When you read through the gospels only twice do we read that something happened that caused Jesus to marvel:

1. Here in Mark chapter 6 verse 6 we are told that ***Jesus marveled at the unbelief*** of the Jews from His home town.
2. Then in Luke 7:9 we are told that ***Jesus marveled at the belief*** of the Roman Centurion.

The character and nature of the Lord made it impossible for Him to marvel except when it came to: ***Faith or the lack of it! In both of these incidents faith is the common denominator in the things that caused Jesus to marvel while on earth***. The Jewish people had been blessed with superior revelation from God which should have provided them a greater advantage of trusting God. And there should have been no village with a better opportunity in viewing “***Emanuel***” (God with us) then Nazareth and these villagers. ***If Israel was court side seats, then Nazareth was center court front row***. Yet when you consider a gentile Roman Centurion, who had no direct revelation, he definitely was in the nose bleed section if he was in the stadium at all. What this revels is that the condition of a person’s heart is the greatest determining factor to belief and faith. Because of the hardness of the heart of His neighbors in Nazareth Jesus was unable to bless, heal and teach those that He loved and instead Jesus departed and made another circuit to the towns and villages around the Sea of Galilee and to enable greater efficiency in this He commissioned His disciples so that they would have the power and authority to be effective ministers.

**Mark 6:7-13**

**“Discovering the Master through ministry”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 7-9 No special equipment**
3. **Vs. 10-11 Not going to get but to give**
4. **Vs. 12-13 No Statistics**
5. **Introduction**

The story we are looking at this morning of the first outreach led by the disciples and is found in 3 of the 4 gospels. From their appointment to be His disciples until now they have been with Jesus in training for about 1 year. During that year they knew that they were being prepared to be sent away from Jesus to do His work. They had observed Him; His methods, His words, His authority and power. They had taken note of not only His ability over every human affliction but the compassion in which He handled each and every person as they were the single most important person He had ever met. They had witnessed how he dealt with crowds, and opposition. They where present during the two visit’s to Jesus’ home village of Nazareth where His work was paralyzed by unbelief. The time had now come for them to be His apostle’s sent away, His ambassadors, saying the things He had been saying, doing the things He had been doing. Before we look at the text this morning I want us to skip ahead to verses 30-32 where Mark tells us how the first mission experience went. It is very revealing by what we **DON’T FIND**: ***There is no specifics given in the report, no details of where they had gone, what people had they had encountered or specific victories won in His name***. In fact, none of the gospels including Mark say anything other than what we are told in verse 12 that they “*told Him* ***ALL THINGS****, both what they had done and what they had taught*.” *What seems to have caught the attention of Peter when he communicated this to Mark was* ***NOT******what they had done*** *and said while they were out* ***but rather the care of Christ for them on their return***! This may be the single most important point of their time away from the Master doing ministry: ***As wonderful as it is to fulfill our calling in service it pales in comparison of being in His presence and experiencing His personal love and care for us***! I suggest to you that this may very well be the purpose and goal if our service. Only a few days earlier after their experience on the Sea of Galilee they had asked “*Who can this be*?” The passage before us is driven by the disciple’s continual exploration of that question. This passage gives some very important principals in ministry that still need to be exercised today.

1. **Vs. 7-9 No special equipment**

Vs. 7 The first four principals of ministry as it relates to the question asked by the disciples, “*Who can this be*?” is found in verse 7:

1. Vs. 7a “*He called the twelve to Himself*”: **Ministry is first and foremost about discovering Who Jesus is!** I can’t help but notice that Jesus’ first move in sending them out was to “***calling them to Himself***”. What we learn by Jesus sending the 12 out is that you can **best** find the answer of who Jesus is in **SERVING** rather than in the common method in most churches, **SITTING**. There is a place for observation in discovery but to truly learn you will need to lace up your sandals and get to work. Jesus was a strong proponent of O.T.J.T., “***On the job training***”. **Jesus was communicating that through service they would encounter Him in away that merely sitting and watching with Him would never be able to reveal**! We followers of Christ were never designed to be **spectators** instead we were called to be **participants**. Saints if you are not “***Growing the antidote is you will need to get up and get GOING***!”
2. Vs. 7b “*and began to send them out two by two*”: The word “*send*” here is the same word where we get our English word “*apostle*” from. It means a person sent out on a special commission to represent another, accomplishing His work and purpose on His behalf. Solomon wrote in Ecc.4:9 “*Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor.*” **Ministry is done in unity with others not in isolation**. Our discovery is a group activity as Jesus paired up the 12. Although we are not told who Jesus parried together in Mark’s account you will find it in Matthews account of 10:1-42 there we read that Peter and his brother Andrew were placed together, John and his brother James were together, Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew, James and Thaddaeus and lastly we have the odd pairing of Simon the Zealot with Judas Iscariot. What’s amazing in the last pairing is they also received power and authority in the name of Jesus to do His work. This fact reveals that just because a work is done in the name of Jesus, under His authority and even accomplishes what it is suppose to doesn’t necessarily legitimize the instrument that has been used.
3. Vs. 7c “*gave them power*”: **Ministry primarily is about connection with Jesus and His power**. The words “*gave them power*” in the Greek is in the imperfect tense which means that He “***kept on giving them power***” through out the mission He sent on. The word for “*power*” is a word that means “*delegated authority*”. These 12 possessed the authority to command demons to leave and lives to be restored in God’s power who had commissioned them. I am not saying that these 12 didn’t have given attributes and talents to go along with education and life experiences, what I am saying is that their effectiveness was about connection to Jesus power and all the above traits. The quicker we understand this and the more reliant upon this the more effective we become in what He has called us too.
4. Vs. 7d “*over unclean spirits*”: Based upon verse 13 we know the ministry wasn’t exclusively geared to power and authority over “*unclean spirits*” but Mark specifically mentions this one element in the 7th verse. This was something that caused the disciples particular amazement upon their return in Luke 10:17 as they mention that “*even the demons are subject to us in Your name*”. Another great principal about ministry is: **When we are doing what Jesus has called us to do, in His power NOTHING is difficult**. There is polarity in ministry as it relates to Jesus: John 15:5 “*Apart from Jesus we can do nothing*” and Philippians 4:13 “*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*”. **As long as we are on the Philippians 4:13 side of the equation we have nothing to fear!** They learned that “*This Jesus*” had no equal and there was nothing they could ever encounter outside of His power and authority. This power and authority is ***provisional*** because it is a given as opposed to Jesus ***universal*** power and authority. What confidence we can have over any and every entrenched evil or stronghold when we are acting upon His given authority.

**Now we look at another principal in verse 8-9**

1. Vs. 8-9 “*He commanded them to take nothing for the journey except a staff*..” He told them that they already had everything they needed for the job and they wouldn’t need “***special equipment***”. They didn’t need “***extra baggage***” that would slow them down and cause unwanted delays. **Jesus wanted them to operate in the balance of having what they needed for the task but still having to trust Him for their needs**! It seems to me that **the principal that Jesus is teaching His disciples is that their greatest provision is total dependency upon Him.** Total dependency is not opposed to planning and provisions and in fact they can be a sign that you are totally dependent, what we need the most in ministry is simple, JESUS! Lack of preparation is never a sign of inspiration but it very well may be a sign of in subornation!
2. **Vs. 10-11 Not going to get but to give**

Hospitality was a sacred duty in the Eastern culture. It was never the responsibility of the stranger to seek it out but the duty of the village to offer it. So Jesus told them that if any village should refuse hospitality towards them than they should treat them as if they were a gentile house and not have fellowship with them.

1. Vs. 10-11 “*In whatever place you enter a house, stay there till you depart from that place*….” Any stranger could expect to be taken care of and entertained when they came into a town or village, there were no hotels in those days, so Jesus tells them that they were to utilize cultural hospitality as a means as a place to stay but **the difference was that were going to give more than they were to receive**. Clothed in His power and authority they were to stay and be a blessing for the time they were in the village. They were not to be beggars, or solicitors seeking funds for their mission. They were going out to GIVE, not to GET! **The principal they were to learn is that if they are out in Jesus’ power and authority, ministry is about giving and not getting and only then is it worthy of support**! They were instructed when leaving a village, they didn’t receive them they were to leave in a way that expressed sorrow by shaking the dust off their feet, indicating that this village would not receive the blessings that they had been sent to give. Rabbinical law required that when a man entered the temple courts he must take off staff, sandals and money belt and it appears that Jesus was suggesting that their entrance into the simple homes of villagers should be treated with such reverence as they would approach the temple.
2. **Vs. 12-13 No Statistics**

The meaning of these words in the Greek doesn’t mean that they proclaimed or told people to repent but rather that they preached in such away that it produced repentance.

1. Vs. 12 “*So they went out and preached that people should repent*.” Jesus told them that as them went from village to village they would encounter two different groups: Those that would offer hospitality and those that would offer hostility, those that they would consider friends and those that would consider them as enemies and they were to minister and be a blessing to both! They were to stay at the house that offered them hospitality and be their servants and not expect to be the households pampered guests. **The last principal they learned about Jesus was that His message and method was about truth and transformation**. They had been sent in His power and authority to bless the village and the blessing was that they can only experience the blessings of God by turning away from the things that hindered them receiving the blessings. It is the “Goodness of God that leads to repentance”. People will never let go of the life they have until they become convinced that it is keeping them from enjoying something far better. That was the message Jesus wanted them to convey to the villages they were sent too. That is always the problem with sin, it keeps us from experiencing and enjoying the gifts God so desires to lavish upon us!

Vs. 13 I again notice that *no stats were taken, no numbers were recorded on how many saved, how many delivered from demons or how many healed from various diseases*. **Success was not to be measured by numbers but rather in obedience to which was seen in that Jesus received all glory and honor.**

**Mark 6:14-29**

**“The terror of goodness”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 14-15 Three views of Jesus**
3. **Vs. 16-18 The terror of goodness**
4. **Vs. 19-29 A sinners conscious**
5. **Introduction**

Looking at the gruesome details of this story you would have thought that I planned it to follow the day most in our country celebrate evil, but I didn’t. With all the words and work of Christ going on evil was equally active as depicted in this story. In fact, it sat upon the throne in the same area where the King of kings and the Lord of lords was doing His work. Oh to be sure it trembled and was paranoid in the presence of truth but it was nonetheless active. We face similar questions today when we see the face of evil and wonder where is Jesus, He is here, He hasn’t left or forsaken us and instead even though evil seems as though it is advancing it is only doing so that His presence may be known. Light is most visible when surrounded by darkness. Victory is at hand, His kingdom will come, His will, will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Don’t hide under a basket or a bed come on out and shine and the Herod’s will fear even while they distribute their evil. And the world will know that Jesus has been among them.

1. **Vs. 14-15 Three views of Jesus**

Vs. 14 These first two verses reveal two separate and important truths:

**First** though not immediately apparent in the text is the fact that John the Baptist’s beheading took place right at the same time Jesus sent His disciples out. I believe Mark and the other gospel writers deliberately places it after the sending out of the 12 and prior to their return in verse 30-34 to indicate two things about their time away from Jesus:

1. That the timing of their departure coincided with John the Baptists death and as such indicates the concern Jesus had for His disciples. It seems that He wanted to get them away from Himself and the boldness of the opposition created by the execution of John.
2. Secondly, I believe that it is meant to indicate the successful priority of the disciple’s ministry while they were out. Verse 14 says that King Herod, with a guilty conscience, had “*Heard of* **Jesus** *for His name had become well known*.” Prior to these disciples being sent out Jesus’ ministry had been localized to where ever He was at but when paired up Jesus was suddenly every where. I think this accounts for Herod’s paranoia as he was hearing about Jesus being every where in dozens of places simultaneously. What stands out to me is that Herod had not been hearing about the disciples, no he had been hearing about Jesus! As I said last week these men had not been taking stats or bragging about what they were doing. Instead every place they had been and everyone they met had a singular conclusion to what they had encountered while the pairs of disciples were among them, “*They had been with Jesus*!” This truth cannot be emphasized enough in the Church today…. ***Successful ministry begins and ends with everybody talking about Jesus and nobody talking about the church***!

There is another thing that caught my attention as it relates to to King Herod and that is that he attributed the miracles of Jesus to John and made the assessment that Jesus was John who had risen from the dead. That statement is remarkable for two reasons:

1. Herod was an Edomite (a descendant of Esau) but aligned himself with the Sadducees who we know didn’t believe in the resurrection or any supernatural work for that matter. Yet because of His guilt at being compliant at John’ death his theology has changed.
2. It is also remarkable about this statement is that according to John’s gospel chapter 10:41 “*John preformed* ***no* SIGN**!” Again I believe that it indicates the level of guilt and paranoia that King Herod had.

Vs. 15 The second thing this section points out is that with all the work and words that Jesus had done for over a year people had a hard time equating this work to Jesus and making the distinction of this must be God. Instead they concluded that Jesus was doing this as: “*The risen John the Baptist, Elijah, The prophet, or like one of the prophets*.” Buy this time the news of Jesus year long ministry had penetrated the palace and the ears of Herod Antipas and his Galilean place in Tiberias, one of the few cities that Jesus had never set foot in in that region. ***There were three opinions about Jesus voiced here and each of them reveal the heart of the people that held the view***:

1. **John the Baptist risen from the dead**: This is the verdict of a **guilty conscience** as Herod had allowed an innocent man to be executed and was now haunted by what he had done. No person can avoid the greatest horror we will ever face, living with ourselves!
2. **It is Elijah**: This was the verdict of the **hopeful nationalist** waiting for a man who would have the power and authority to overthrow the Roman occupation. Oddly enough the disciples and even John the Baptist fell into this category at times. It was a common held belief that before the Messiah would come Elijah the greatest of the miracle working prophets would come and pave the way. To this day the Jews leave a chair open with a glass of wine at Passover then they go and open the door that Elijah may come in announcing the Messiah has come to take His place at the table. This nationalist view is of a person who wants the Messiah to come and make things right but a person who they will have to obey and submit too.
3. **It is the prophet, or like one of the prophets**: This is the verdict of **the person longing to hear from God**. For three hundred years there had not been one word from God through the prophets and there were some who thought that Jesus was that voice. The people had grown tired of the vain arguments of the Rabbis, they longed for the “*Thus says the Lord*” of authority and when Jesus spoke they heard it. But Jesus was far more then “**A**” word from God He was “**THE**” word “**OF**” God! And with His words was the power and authority that would cause every knee to bow and every tongue to confess that He is God.

Elijah was good, the prophets were good and John the Baptist was good; but none of them was good enough to account for Jesus. He is not just the best among men but better than all men combined. What a tragedy that people try to explain Jesus away, he can be a good man, a teacher, a prophet and even savior but He must not be Lord God who died for my sins. The best among men are but dim lights powered by His glory when compared to the light of the world.

1. **Vs. 16-18 The terror of goodness**

Here we are introduced to the three primary characters in our story:

1. **Herod was a walking contradiction**: Herod the Great (*who following the birth of Jesus ordered the deaths of all males 2 years old and under in Bethlehem*) had married 5 different wives and had children which each of them, later killing some in fear of losing his power. After his death his children married each other or their cousins. When he died he divided his kingdom among his three surviving sons and Antipas was given the region of Perea and Galilee where the most of Jesus ministry was happening. The Herod in this story (Herod Antipas) married his niece, Herodias, who had been the wife of his ½ brother, Philip who was also had a ½ brother named Philip. As a practicing Jew is was unlawful for him to do so according to the law of Moses in Leviticus 18:16 and 20:21. Herod was a source of national embarrassment. Mark calls Herod Antipas a king as that is what his Roman readers would have recognized him as but in reality he was only a tetrarch which was a ruler of a ¼ part of a nation. ***An odd mixture of a man who at the same time could love sin and desire virtue, could long to hear truth but dread the words he heard and could imprison and condemn a man to die who he longed to set free and listen too. He was a slave to impulse as he acted with out reason and forethought. A reckless man, a danger himself and others***!
2. **Herodias wanted to eliminate the one man who had the courage and care to confront her about her sin**: She wanted to do as she liked with out anyone reminding her that we are all slaves and our only differences lie in who are master is. She concocted a plan to murder John that she may live in peace instead of listen to John and obey that she may truly be at peace. She believed that in killing John she could silence the voice but failed to realize that she still would have to meet the One whom John spoke about! Most of our sins come home to roost and John the Baptist’s death was not the end of his ministry to Herod and Herodias as his voice continued to speak even when they ware served on a gold platter. There is no way Herodias or any one can silence truth because you can never cut us off from our head, Jesus! This story goes to show all of us that those who martyr the witness do far more harm to themselves then they do the saint. All they do to us is send us home to our Lord, they remain ruined on earth. The persecution of Christians is the least productive activity the world can ever be engaged in as it only blesses the believer and causes more to come forward.
3. **John the Baptist was a man of great courage and care**: He was a miracle child, and from the lips of Jesus in Matthew 11:11 “*Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist*”. John had made the cardinal sin as far as Herodias was concerned, publically rebuking such behavior. You can always tell when a society as declined to the point of being reprobate: When they conclude that criticism about abominable behavior is a greater crime then the behavior. To John the imprisonment in a dungeon must have been like a room in the palace as he had lived life in the wild Judean desert with locust as his meat. He lived for truth and died for truth and no man was his master! And while John the Baptist took issue with Herod’s sin publically the religious leaders said nothing.
4. **Vs. 19-29 A sinners conscious**

Vs. 19-29 Chronologically verse 17-29 proceed verses 14-16. This is a fitting story for the ghoulish earthly holiday that past Saturday. The ghastly crime of Herodias’ hate filled murder of a just man is recorded. John the Baptist had exposed her sin and her husband / uncles’ weakness. Mark tells us that Herod didn’t share the same hatred of John and in fact he seems to at least had an interest in what John had to say. The location of this even took place in Herod’s place in Machaerus 15 miles on the eastside of the Dead Sea in modern day Jordan. Herodias had been waiting for an opportunity to exploit her husband’s weakness to execute John the Baptist and the time came at a party. All the dignitaries had come for his birthday bash and Herodias sends out her teenage daughter Salome to do a seductive dance that aroused Herod to the the point where he made an oath to her in front of his invited guests promising her what ever she wanted up to ½ his kingdom. The Jew’s would never have permitted a woman to dance seductively before a group of men and even most gentile mothers would have forbidden a daughter to do this but to Herodias her daughter Salome was part of her wicked plan to seduce her husband to do what she wanted and murder John. Herod was faced with breaking many oath’s as he had apparently repeatedly declared his desire to reward the girl for her seductive dance. Salome went and asked her mother who told her the head of John the Baptist and The ½ of his kingdom was not his to give it belonged to the Roman government who put him in charge and of no value when offered by a drunken depot. But the savage hate of the inbred Herodias knew no bounds as she would sacrifice her husband and her daughter to accomplish her murder. She valued John’s head as ½ the kingdom but it was worth far more than that. The sad truth is Herod respected John, feared his words, recognized the righteousness of God displayed in his life but in the end was a slave to his own vile passions, imprisoned by his own immorality. ***No person can regulate their own sin to fit their convenience; sin is never the servant and always the master***! On the slipper slope of evil and sin there always comes a time when the brakes will no longer work and Herod had hit that time. **How strange is a sinners conscious**: The last of the Hebrew prophets was murdered because He spoke the truth and Herod felt obligated to exercise his morality:

* **Not in obeying the laws with regard to marrying his niece, the wife of his ½ brother**
* **Not in being apart of murdering a righteous man**
* **But in keeping his drunken depraved oath to a teenage girl who danced sexually pleasing his flesh**

Doing what is wrong even when we promise to do so is never morally binding, it was wrong for him to make it and it was far worse when he chose to keep it. ***Actions make kings not crowns, parliaments or subjects and in this case the true king was executed by the prisoner!*** It is better to be true than to be consistent, it was Herod’s consistency that trapped him and enslaved him. In Luke 23:6-12 we will again meet up with Herod Antipas when he tries Jesus with the hope to see a miracle. But Jesus would not even speak to this murder adulterer and in Luke 13:31-35 calls him a fox a description of a swindler. In A.D. 39 Herod Agrippa, his nephew denounced his uncle to the Roman emperor and Antipas was deposed and sent into exile.

**Mark 6:30-44**

**“True Manna”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 30-34 Burn on or burn out?**
3. **Vs. 35-44 Manufacturers or distributors**
4. **Introduction**

I am amazed at the training methods and risks Jesus took when entrusting the greatest message and only hope to unlearned and inexperienced people. The fact that He did astounded experts in the book of Acts as they noted that those who they had just debated, were unlearned and uneducated fishermen with only one qualifying detail, “*They had been with Jesus*”! In the rabbinical schools the pupils from a very young age had to show increased academic aptitude that was designed to eliminate students until you were left the best and brightest. The pupils that didn’t make it would be dropouts that would filter to different trades. It is clear that Jesus didn’t choose His disciples from the rabbinical schools but rather from the cast off trades. His were not the best and the brightest, far from it! His disciples were not trained daily in the class rooms but were with Him observing His methods and manners. It is here that we pick up our story in the 6th chapter of Mark as the 12 have come back having been parried up and sent out with His power and authority. As you look at the whole of this passage you see the ebb and flow of the Christian life: A continuous going into the presence of God from the presence of people, and coming out from the presence of people and back into the presence of God. You can not be effective at our work for God unless you have spent time at rest with God! But you will be restless if you have not been engaged in your work for God, we need both!

1. **Vs. 30-34 Burn on or burn out?**

Vs. 30-31 Know doubt Jesus knew that these men needed some debriefing but his story is far more than a story of personal time interrupted. It has been said that, “***If you don’t come apart to a deserted place and rest you will just end up coming apart***!” Saints, it is always wiser decision to make preparation to ***burn on*** so that you won’t just end up ***burning out***! Mark places the beheading of John the Baptist between the sending out of the 12 disciples of verses 7-13 and their return and report of verses 30-31 to give context of the time and situation in which the disciples were sent out. Jesus recognized that these disciples were in danger on three fronts and He had accounted for this and made provision for it.

* First there was the danger from the increased boldness of the opposition
* Second, there was the danger from exhaustion and fatigue as we are told that “*many were coming and going, and they din not even have time to eat*.”
* Finally, though not in this text we are informed in the other gospel accounts that by far their greatest danger was from pride and an over estimate of their accomplishments. The disciples were very excited during their debriefing so much so that Jesus had to warn them in Luke 10:20 not to “*rejoice that the demons are subject to them in His name but rather that their names are written in heaven*.”

Vs. 32-34 The feeding of the 5,000 must not be confused with the feeding of the 4,000. Though they happened the same year the feeding of the 5,000 took place close to Bethsaida in the Spring just before Passover whereas the feeding of the 4,000 took place later in the same year near Decapolis at the other end of the Sea of Galilee. In the feeding of the 4000 we are told by Jesus that their feed was necessitated because they were “***very hungry for they had been with Him for three days and hadn’t eaten***.” But here we know that they had followed Jesus on foot as He and his disciples were crossing the lake. And even though Jesus had taught all day the request of the disciples to “***send them away***” was perfectly reasonable as they had time to get back and get food. This suggests to us three things:

1. **That this feeding was not a necessity**: Though a deliberate action by Jesus it was not one born out of the necessity of the physical needs of the multitudes. To be sure some of the folks were no doubt tired having ran around the lake but they were not in danger of starving. It is impressive that the multitudes had taken the effort to run after Jesus and stay there through out the day to hear Him teach and to have their inflictions ministered too, but in John’s account we are told that “*Jesus knew what He was going to do*” which is an assessment that this was not a spontaneous event but more of a calculated one.
2. **That this feeding was not about food for the body**: This feeding was not about just the multitudes it was also about the disciples who had just returned from their being sent out doing His work in the villages. The timing was very near Passover, the location being out in the wilderness all of which no doubt would have given them time to reflect upon the nation’s wondering in the wilderness. John records Jesus’ words a day later in chapter 6 and reminds us that it took place in the same spot as the feeding of the 5000. The lesson Jesus was trying to convey is found in His words a day later, “*I am the bread of life. He who comes after Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst*.” “*I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die.*” These disciples were to learn that it was far more exciting to be with “THE BREAD OF LIFE”. They were given the privilege to give the multitudes the true “Manna” which in partaking of Him will leave the person not only satisfied in this life but full forever.
3. **This feeding was about finding your true fulfillment**: I come to this conclusion based upon the number of baskets filled with the crumbs, 12. The number 12 is a very biblical number as it not only represented the number of Jewish tribes it also represented the number of disciples. The point of this seems to suggest that our deliverance of Jesus as the bread of life is the surest way to never hunger ourselves. That which Israel was longing for in manna was only temporary and was pointing to Him who will forever satisfy what we hunger for. Ministry is a basket, nothing more! Its usefulness is not in the straw or branches that are woven together but it what it is designed to gather “*The bread of life*”!
4. **Vs. 35-44 Manufacturers or distributors**

Vs. 35-44 All four gospel accounts record this event with differing details: Matthew tells us that the decision to depart was timed with the hearing that John had been beheaded. Three of the accounts tell us that Jesus was “*moved with compassion and healed the sick because they were like sheep without a shepherd*” and only Mark tells us that He “*began teaching them many things*”. Mark also tells us that the feeding of the 5,000 came after the day was “*far spent*”. And three gospel accounts tell us then that “*the disciples told Jesus to send them away, that they may go into surrounding villages and buy themselves bread; for they have nothing to eat.*” Only John tells us that Jesus seeing the large multitude coming forward asked Philip “*Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat*?” And that Jesus said that testing him, for “*He Himself knew what He would do*.” Matthew, Mark and Luke all record that Jesus then challenged them saying, “*You give them something to eat*” it is then that Philip answered that “*200 day’s wages were not enough to purchase the bread necessary to feed the multitude even if everyone had only a little*.” To which Jesus replied, “*How many loaves do you have? Go and see*.” John tells us that the disciples came back from this scavenger hunt with the answer from Andrew, Peter’s brother, that they had found a “*lad who had five barley loafs and two small fish*” and the disciples added “*but what are these among so many*” to which Luke’s account adds that the disciples said “*unless we go and buy food for all these people*.” From here each account describes the picturesque grouping of the multitude in 100’2 and 50’s upon the green spring time grass and how Jesus took up the five barley loaves and two fish and blessed it and broke it giving it to the disciples who in turn passed it out them went back and took up twelve baskets full of fragments.

Vs. 35 According to Matthew chapter 10:36-38 Jesus had sent out the 12 because He had compassion on the multitudes but this time the multitudes came to Jesus and His disciples wanted to send them away. There is a difference between Jesus view of the 5000 and the disciples view of them:

* The disciples saw them through the eyes of their needs and said, “*Send them away, were weary*!”
* Jesus saw them through the eyes of their need and said, “*Come unto me all you who are weary*!”

The disciples had two suggestions for solving the problem:

1. **Send them away**: Give these people ample time to go and find their own provisions. I’m of the opinion that this is the one that the disciples preferred as it would mean less work for them and more down time with Jesus.
2. **Raise enough money and go and buy enough bread so that all could have something to eat**: A denarion was a silver coin worth about $35 today and 200 would be $7,700 or an average year’s wage. This didn’t seem feasible as they didn’t have enough resources for such a large crowd, so that everyone would be able to get even a little. Not to mention that they would have to go to several villages to find enough bread to purchase for 5000 men plus women and children.

What an effective committee of problem solvers these 12 were! Someone has well described ***a committee as a group of people who as individuals aren’t willing to do anything so they come together with the collative purpose to decide that nothing can be done***! Saints, ***Jesus isn’t interested in what we lack His only interest is in what we have***! They adopted a “***corporate business plan***” to assess the situation which was to “***measure their available resources***”. But Jesus offered them the “***Biblical Plan***” which was to “***Determine God’s will and then trust Him to meet the need***.” Jesus had the disciples sit the people down in groups of hundreds and fifties in the spring time green grass. The Greek word for “*sit down*” is one used for a person to recline at banquet and suggests that Jesus meant it to illustrate to the disciples that theses 5000 were attendants at His banquet and were waiting to be served. These loaves were barley loaves the food of the poorest of the poor and the size would have been not like our loaf of bread but like our dinner roll. The two fish would have been salted and small in size. Then Jesus took the little lad’s lunch that Andrew had found and did three things that we must remember:

* **BLESSED IT**
* **BROKE IT**
* **GAVE IT**

The Greek has the word “***broke***” *the loaves* and “***gave***” *them* are in **different verb tenses**. The verb tense for “***broke***” is in the **aorist tense** which means that the action was “***instantaneous***” where as the verb tense for “***gave***” is in the **imperfect tense** which means that the action was “***continuous***”. Jesus broke the five loafs and two fish and the disciples kept on giving it out. Jesus illustrates for us is that, “***Blessings and breakings always proceed feedings.***” We must allow the Lord to bless our lives and break our lives if our lives are going to be a nourishment for others! What a lesson for these corporate disciples that they were not “***manufacturers***” they were only “***distributors***”! They were to get what ever He had given them into the hands of Jesus so that He could “**BLESS IT**” “**BREAK IT**” it is then that we “**DISTRIBUTE IT**” so that He can “**MULTIPLY IT**”! In the hands of Jesus our little becomes much more than a meal, if we put ourselves and what He has given us into the hands of Jesus where He can bless us, break us and give us away there is no telling what He can do!

**Mark 6:45-56**

**“The unfavorable winds of obedience”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 45-48 Trouble with a capital T**
3. **Vs. 49-52 Be of good cheer it is I**
4. **Vs. 53-56 A touch of Him**
5. **Introduction**

This would be a night of miracles when we take into account the other gospel records. Matthew records for us that not only did Jesus walk on water but Peter witnessing this asked Jesus to “*command me to come to You on the water*”. Jesus’ response was “*Come*” and Peter was doing well until he noticed that the wind picked up and he became afraid and was forced to cry out, “*Lord, save me!*” The other miracle associated with this is found in John’s account in 6:21 where we read that not only did the wind cease immediately when Jesus got into their boat they also immediately arrived at their destination.

The difficulty in these stories is not only the event but what the event was intended to communicate to those at hand. It is one thing to attempt to examine a miracle from the distance of better that 2000 years and quite another to do so through the eyes and words of those who witnessed at that time. All we have been given us in our attempt at this feat is two essential tools: **The word of God and the Spirit of God**. First, we need to place the story in its context as it took place immediately following the miracle of the feeding of the 5000 which we noted was not based upon Jesus meeting a physical necessity of the multitudes.

1. **Vs. 45-48 Trouble with a capital T**

Vs. 45-46 There appears to be two primary reasons for the immediacy of Jesus’ actions in getting the disciples into the boat to depart from the feeding of the 5000.

1. First, what predicated Jesus response is not found in Mark’s account but it is in John’s where we are told that there was a popular uprising underfoot to force Jesus to become king and the disciples were not ready for such a test as their ideas concerning the Messiah and His kingdom were still too political and national.
2. Second, they needed to learn a lesson with regards to success that they still had not grasped, (***We are told this in verse 52***). They had come from a very successful mission, where they taught and many had been healed and demons had been dislodged. They had very little time to enjoy that when the 5000 had come and in their very hands bread kept on coming forth feeding the close to 10,000 people. To say they were on a spiritual high is an understatement but as wonderful as it is to walk on mountain peaks we are only one step away from a cliff.

Only a few weeks earlier Jesus had a mid term exam for the disciples on this very lake. The parallels of these two stories are very similar: **In the first exam** Jesus had informed them that they were “***going over***” to the the other side of the lake. While he was asleep in the boat the wind and the waves overcame them to the point that they were forced to awake Jesus and then they proceeded to accuse Him of not caring about them. His response was to calm the wind and the waves and cause them to wonder as to who He was. The primary difference in this 2nd exam is that Jesus was not in the boat with them at all. The point of decision of faith or fear for them is essentially the same questions as prior: “***Has Jesus placed us in this situation and are we convinced that He loves us and will never leave us or forsake us***?” I submit to you that those are always the questions that we need to answer if we are to choose faith instead of fear!

Vs. 47-48 The Jews had adopted the Roman time keeping methods and night time ran from 6 pm – 6 am and was divided into four watches: 6 pm – 9 pm, 9 pm – midnight, midnight – 3 am, and 3 am – 6 am. So it was around 3 am that Jesus looked out from the shore seeing the disciples straining at the oars. I must admit I’m very impressed at these disciples as by my estimation they had been rowing against the wind for close to 9 hours and had only been able to make it ½ way across the lake but nonetheless were still committed to the task. You wonder if there had been any debates as to turning around and going to shore as clearly they were getting no where. I could hear some of them shouting back at the suggestion saying, “*Hey fellows remember the last time when we wanted to give up on His word? You all can drop your oars if you want to but Peter and I are going to keep paddling.*” As impressed as I am at their determination to fulfill their Masters command I’m even more impressed at Jesus who had been over looking the trial He had placed them in, praying over them for the entire 9 hours. As such **we gain an invaluable perspective that ought to change us when ever we are in similar situations. Jesus was never unaware:**

* ***Of their effort while straining at the task***
* ***He was never ignorant of the impossible situation as they were contrary to the wind***
* ***He was not uncaring about how long they had been at it***

All of that information was clearly at His constant disposal but it is what we “*boat rowers*” often accuse Him of being ignorant of. Looking at this situation in this light causes us to realize that this was clearly part of Jesus plan so that they could learn what was in them and could again see that they lack faith in Him. Mark tells us that at “*the 4th watch of the night Jesus came to them, walking of the sea, and would have passed them by*.” Here they witnessed the very person who had placed them in the boat facing the:

* ***Same wind and waves that caused them to go nowhere***
* ***With less time, they had 9 hours and Jesus was passing them by in an hour***
* ***And less equipment as they were in a boat with oars and He was walking on water***

***This story presents of very perplexing situation theologically as we are faced with the facts that these disciples were tormented on the very path of obedience***. We often think mistakenly that we will only experience calm seas and favorable winds if we take sail in obedience to our Lord but we find here that such is not the case. ***Instead what we find is that obedience is not the path of least resistance, NO it is the path of the certainty of His presence and power!***

1. **Vs. 49-52 Be of good cheer it is I**

Vs. 49-52 The Greek word for “***on***” here signifies that Jesus’ sandals made contact with the water like a person would on solid ground. Saints remember, ***the waves that made it impossible for the disciples to arrive at their destination were but steps that guaranteed Jesus arrival to them***. The Greek phrase “*would have passed them by*” is not as it appears as the phrase means to come near as His point was not to leave them in their situation but to come close to them to help them. Jesus had to wait till their situation had become impossible before he began His journey. Oh much like you and I that they found it easier to believe in a superstition than a Savior and cried out in terror instead of rejoicing in Jesus. All of this changed when He spoke to them as a friend to encourage them. He said to them “*It is I and nobody else! So stop being afraid*!”

It is here that Matthew includes the story about Peter walking on water until the wind arose and he began to sink. It is easy to criticize Peter for getting his eyes off Jesus but least we forget there were 11 others in the boat that never were willing to take the chance in the first place.

Vs. 50-52 The Greek has it that it was the wind that grew “*tired and week*” where they had been the very circumstances that had caused the disciples the same effect. Ah but with Jesus walking upon upon them it was the elements that grew week and tired.

The miracle that they had just witnessed in their own hands hadn’t sunk in. If Jesus could take a little and feed a lot than He could surely take care of them in their time of need. Jesus had the power to take five dinner rolls and two fish and feed over 5000 with 12 basketful of fragments left over; then surly Jesus could take care of wind and waves walking upon them.

By way of application you will often find that blessings and burdens usually follow each other. The storm that the disciples had experienced only a short time earlier followed an exciting day of teaching and healing, now here again we see the same thing. In the book of Acts, the adding of the 5000 to the church was followed by the storm of persecution. ***It appears that the disciples needed learn not to become to excited at blessings and not to distraught during burdens as neither is an indication of a greater or lessoning presence of the Lord***. Oh that we could learn from our brothers in the boat, that the same One that has placed us in the storms of our situation is the same One that walks of water and has been up all night fully aware of our situation and is interceding on our behalf. Jesus is on our side, He wants us to succeed, He longs to calm our fears: “*Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid*.” I find it interesting that the wind ceased when He came into the boat which suggests to me that they hadn’t realized that He had always been there with them! The calm is found not in the ceasing of wind but rather in the realization of Jesus in our boat!

1. **Vs. 53-56 A touch of Him**

Vs. 53-56 These verses best fit into the context of the seventh chapter as they appear to be part of the reason for the continual examination and harassment from the religious leadership. The contrast Mark presents is the wonderful scene of Jesus passing through the Gennesaret region of Galilee and people in human desperation carried by loved ones on their beds, longing to touch as the women who had the issue of blood had, the hem of His garment and Jesus consenting to this practice. In stark contrast is the Pharisees who allow traditional religion to harden their compassion for human suffering. How horrible it is that many a person so called “faith” is the catalyst for the atrocities and indifferences towards others.

Saints our situation is never the determining factor to gage the presence of Christ! Jesus is not more present in the breaking and blessing of His provisions then He is when we are in the midst of terrible storms thrust at us in this world. He is praying for us even when we think He is absent and in the dark over our circumstances. And we can be certain that He will come to us in that hour and we will reach the shore as planed.

**Mark 7:1-7**

**“Tradition verses relation”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 1-2 Finding fault**
3. **Vs. 3-5 The fence of the Pharisees**
4. **Vs. 6-7 The problem with traditions**
5. **Introduction**

The only link between the first 23 verse of chapter 7 and what we just read about the feeding of the 5000 in chapter 6 is one that is not apparent on the English but is in the Greek. We are told that in verse 2 of chapter 7 that the delegation that had come from Jerusalem to find some thing to accuse Jesus of did so by observing His disciples. It appears that his had happened while watching the disciples eat some of the left over bread that had come from the 12 baskets of leftovers at the feeding of the 5000. It never ceases to amaze me how there are those Parasitical types that can look at a blessing and only see a rules violation. At issue is two opposing views of what constitutes true worship. The religious leader’s views centered around observance of traditions that enabled them to be God’s special people. Jesus views was that of simple loving obedience to the Father who so loved them. There are four stages to this drama that unfolded in the first 23 verses:

1. Vs. 1-5 **Accusation**: The religious delegation was following Jesus around in hopes of finding something they could publically accuse Him of that would discredit Him and cause His popularity to diminish.
2. Vs. 6-13 **Condemnation**: Jesus defended His disciples while exposing the hypocrisy of the religious leaders. In defending their tradition, the Pharisees eroded their own characters and also the character of the Word of God.
3. Vs. 14-16 **Declaration**: Jesus announces to the multitude that living right with God is a matter of the heart and not about merely keeping outward rules.
4. Vs. 17-23 **Explanation**: Finally, Jesus explains what He had just said to the multitudes.
5. **Vs. 1-2 Finding fault**

Vs. 1-2 The first thing we notice is that the religious establishment decided to send a delegation to intimidate and antagonize Jesus and His disciples. The washing of hands had nothing to do with personal hygiene, nor were they command by God through the scriptures. Instead they were a part of the traditions added by religious leaders as their way of worshipping. No doubt the primary motivation for this was jealousy at the increasing popularity of the movement. To understand this continual conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees we need to look at their origins. The Pharisaic movement was born during a time of Jewish history in the 4th and 5th centuries before Jesus which we have no biblical record of. It was a time when the religious leaders felt they needed to further protect the people from the encroachment of the world upon their way of life. They were the Puritans of their age against the Babylonian and Greek influences were threating their way of life that had separated them from other cultures. So these men banded together to establish oral laws that would maintain by all means the Jewish distinction and people from the surrounding nations. These new precepts over time increased and slowly became the authority and interpretation of God’s Word. The traditions and interpretations over time need further clarification and more traditions and interpretations were added until they became a barrier between what God said in His word and the people He communicated to. The Pharisees saw themselves of maintaining the religion to the people and in their own writings referred to themselves as those that put a “*fence around the law*”. It wasn’t until three hundred years after Jesus that these oral laws were written down in a collection called the Mishnah. There are over 65 pages devoted in the Mishnah to the proper way to ceremonially wash your hands. God had given His people principals of hygiene that averted the spreading of germs and infections. The conflict was not only between God's truth and man's tradition, but also between two divergent views of sin and holiness. Jesus had already made it apparent on the Sermon on the Mount that true holiness is a matter of inward affection and attitude and not just outward actions and associations.

1. **Vs. 3-5 The fence of the Pharisees**

Vs. 3-5 What bothered the pharisaical delegation was not that the disciples didn’t wash their hands before eating but rather that they didn’t do so according to the prescribed religious tradition. Their religious practice looked more like a surgeon preparing for and operation than a person preparing to sit down for some supper. The hands had to be held palm up and slightly cupped and water poured over them. Then one hand was used to scrub the other hand, then the fist of the clean hand would be used to wash the other hand. The hands then would have placed out palms down and fresh water poured over them to cleanse the dirty water, then the hands would be lifted up so that the water could drain down the forearms exiting off the elbows. If anything touched the cleansed hands after the process the whole ceremony would have to be repeated. The problem was that the religious establishment took these requirements and began to make them a way to appear religiously superior to everyone around them. It was no longer enough to do the “*right thing*” the people now had to do the “*right thing*” the “right way”. This kind of self righteousness is not isolated to the Judaism as Paul had to address the same things in the early church in 2 Corinthians 3:17 when he wrote “*where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty*.” Mankind has a propensity towards making rules and religious regulations our sole standard and declaration of being religious and better than others. One of the marvelous aspects of the book of Acts is the indifference the Lord had to these barriers as believers indwelt with the Holy Spirit moved freely in expression and experience as He dictated. ***There was spontaneity and variety in the way the church was formed that allowed people to experience more of the presence of the Lord.*** But soon these very expressions become regulated, orchestrated and calculated into a liturgy of acceptable forms of worship that claimed authority to be sole basis of how a person was to experience God that stiffened the very work of the Holy Spirit. Looking out over church History is to discover that every renewal where the Holy Spirit has broken free of the stagnant religious tradition has over time become a stagnant tradition that will need to be broken free from!

**IV. Vs. 6-7 The problem with traditions**

Vs. 6-7 Here we see Jesus’ initial response which He will go onto further illustrate in verse 8-23. And we see that He wastes no time in addressing the reason why, “*His disciples didn’t walk according to the tradition of the elders…*” ***The problem***, Jesus said, ***was not*** ***in the observance of the traditions of the elders but rather in what their observance produced in those who adhered to them***, “***hypocritical arrogance***”! According to Matthews account in chapter 15:12 such blunt speech by Jesus caused the disciples to come to Him afterward to inform Jesus that the religious delegation had been offended by His comments. But Jesus was fully aware of offending them and in fact did so deliberately. In quoting Isaiah 29:13 Jesus points out two things about “*walking in the traditions of elders*” that produces “***hypocritical arrogance***” does in destroying true worship:

1. Vs. 6 “*This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me*”: The first thing Jesus says that it does in destroying true worship is that places ***right words with wrong attitudes***. All of the emphasis in this is upon the outward action but it doesn’t consider the inward heart or attitude. Such action Jesus says is hypocrisy as it only looks worshipful and devotional while inside the attitude is completely different. This is often the observation of folks who look at the church as they say, “*You use all the right words but you don’t really mean them. You talk about love, but you don’t love. You talk about forgiveness but you don’t forgive*.” When everything becomes “externalized” and outward and as long as we are fulfilling our acceptable tradition we are right with God. Someone has well said that: **The most dangerous situation facing the church today is thinking that because we use the right words and believe right doctrines we are pleasing to God**. It can be difficult to determine if have become a church or an individual that places “***right words with wrong attitudes***” but one of the ways you can determine this is to ask yourself this question: “*If you became tangled up in some sin, overcome by some horrible failure in your life, embarrassed by some gross behavior; where would you feel you would receive the greatest amount of love and help to overcome your situation in the church among people like you or in a bar*?” The truth is everyone of us at some time are going to need to run some where to receive help for what we have done to ourselves, my prayer is that we will run to God and His people our brothers and sisters and not the local bar! It is at the church amongst God’s people that I will find folks who have done dumb things just like me and will help me recover by pointing me to Jesus just as someone had done for them!
2. Vs. 7 “*And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men*”: The second thing that the traditions of elders do is ***clothe the worlds wrong words in right sounding attitudes and traditions***. Here according to Isaiah this was another hypocrisy as the religious leaders as they took the concepts of the old nature and made people self righteous and self centered attitudes. Jesus had addressed this very issue a year earlier John chapter 4 verse 24 with the woman at the well. There Jesus told here that “*God is spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth*.” There to that woman by the well Jesus outlined **three essential elements** **of what true worship** of God entails:
3. ***First worship must be genuine***: It can not be superficial or shallow, it can not be something that you go through the motions on or repeat actions without the emotion behind it. There is no such thing as auto pilot when it comes to true worship. Worship in its purest form is spontaneous, an expression full of wonder and amazement that bursts forth in enthusiastic praise. Far too much of what passes of genuine worship is nothing more than a repeated liturgy or a contrived response to a structure of practice. What Isaiah was referring to was that people had added traditions and worldly attitudes to be expressions of devotion and in essence killed any possibility of there being any true worship.
4. ***Second worship is individualistic***: That is not to say that we can’t have or experience true worship of God corporately but that or corporate worship is made up of individual expressions. Again Isaiah was writing against the establishment of rules that sought to regulate all into the same list of worship and expression. There may very well be similarity in our expression but there will always be individuals doing so. The posture or activity in which we are participating in must never supplant the individual’s expression of their devotion and love of God.
5. ***Third worship is growing:*** To worship God in spirit in truth requires and demands continual growth other wise it will become stagnate and hinder that what at one time it enhanced. No church creates worship by our traditions and structure all we can do is offer the opportunity for people to enter into their expression of devotion publically.

That was the problem with the teaching as doctrine the commandments of men as it removed true worshipful expression from the people. This is a difficult subject to talk about, “*the power religious tradition has over us*”. How we perceive what is acceptable before God and what we deem as outside the realm of acceptance. All sorts of things that we now conclude as being ok at one time in a previous generation was considered taboo. Everything from the day we worship, to the way we worship has been debated and new groups forming that took it outside the realm of what previously accepted.

**Mark 7:8-23**

**“The Heart of the Matter”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 8-9 A poor substitute**
3. **Vs. 10-13 Side stepping**
4. **Vs. 14-16 Defied or defiled**
5. **Vs. 17-23 A difference in what is clean**
6. **Introduction**

As we noted this section deals with the religious delegation sent from Jerusalem seeking a charge that they might accuse Jesus of. They found it in the observation of His disciples not ceremonially washing their hands while they ate from the 12 basket of fragments at the feeding of the 5000. The indictment, from my point of view, is far greater towards these religious “*do gooders*” as they were more concerned with religious observances than miracles. Mark presents this section in four-parts as we have noted:

1. Vs. 1-5 The Accusation
2. Vs. 6-13 The Condemnation
3. Vs. 14-16 The Declaration
4. Vs. 17-23 The Explanation

We have already commented on the accusation from the religious delegation and the first part of the condemnation from Jesus where He quoted Isaiah 29 in verses 6-7 answering the religious delegations question of “*Why His disciples didn’t walk according to the tradition of the elders*” with regards to ceremonial washing of hands. The simple answer is that such practices leveled upon the disciples may have according to their traditions been religiously acceptable but it also contributed to their being inwardly arrogant and self righteous. At the heart of the disagreement is the traditions of elders verses the word of God. Some of the religious leaders claimed that the traditions of elders had come from Moses, others said that they came from the elders around Moses but the truth of the matter is neither of these positions was true.

1. **Vs. 8-9 A poor substitute**

Vs. 8-9 The word “*laying aside*” in the Greek means to abandon and done so in order to go on to something else. And the word “*hold*” means to powerfully, carefully and faithfully hang on to something. ***The religious leaders were zealots when it came to observing their own rules but had done so at the cost of abandoning the Word of God***. And the word “*reject*” means to set aside the affect of something in order to nullify its effect. In this case what they had set aside was the word of God in order to keep their own made up words.

Even the word used here in the Greek for “*tradition*” can mean “***substitution***” as what God want most is us not what we give Him or do for Him. Jesus points out that another danger of traditions is that they tended to replace the Word of God with regards to what is to direct the actions and hearts of people. They become ***substitutions*** for the word of God and what God really wants. But when we substitute things for the heart we can fall into wrong impression that what we are giving God or doing for God is what is most important and our relationship becomes nothing more than works to obtain what we want. ***At the heart of God’s law was never performance it was relationship***! Tradition begins with offering God a substitute, holding the traditions of men, something declared as “good” but the problem is that what we have declared as “good” is not what God wants us to offer, offer. “Good” can never be the substitute for the “Best”! Jesus points out that the elevation of the traditions of men to that of the Word of God erodes the character of God as well as the character of man. The outward establishment of signs and standards as determining the heart of a person towards God is not based upon man’s ideas but rather upon God’s word. ***The fact that religious people attempt to regulate the truth is the surest sign that they are worshipping themselves not God***. And in so doing they were destroying the right influence of the word of God upon human hearts and substituting man’s opinion.

History reveals that the Jewish religious leaders came to honor their traditions far above the Word of God. One ancient Rabbi named Eleazer said, "*He who expounds the Scriptures in opposition to the tradition has no share in the world to come.*" The *Mishna,* (the written collection of Jewish traditions) records, "*It is a greater offense to teach anything contrary to the voice of the Rabbis than to contradict Scripture itself*."

1. **Vs. 10-13 Side stepping**

Vs. 10-13 The word “*honor*” in the Greek carries the idea of valuing where by a price is fixed upon the evaluation. Thus when you honor your father and mother there is a price fixed upon this that goes beyond merely respecting a person to deeming them worthy of your financial support. The word “*curses*” here means more than to just speak ill of but to abuse and revile. Jesus is indicting those that have placed traditions above the word with regards to the 5th commandment with elder abuse. “*Corban*” is a Hebrew word which Mark transliterates and explains it as meaning a gift or offering to God. The rabbinical tradition allowed the adult children to to keep whatever money should have been given by the son for the support of the parents if he declared it a gift to God, just by saying so. This enabled then to justify not to honor his parents by providing their necessities. Such action invalidated the 5th commandment of God.

In using this illustration Jesus demonstrates another problem when traditions are offered as a ***substitute*** to God’s word. Not only do the traditions of man become a ***substitute*** they enable a person to ***side step obedience*** to the word of God and by so doing they hurt people. Jesus offers up the illustration of the 5th commandment in Exodus 21:17, “*Honor your father and mother, and He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death*.” ***These men claimed to love God, but demonstrated it by showing that they had no love for their parents***! The commandment meant far more than just being polite and respectful to your parents it meant that there was an obligation to take care of them as they grew older, just as parents had an obligation to take care of their children when they were young. But the traditions of elders had work out a neat way of side stepping this commandment from God as the adult children could take the finances that were to be spent on care for parents and say that it was dedicated to God and by doing so they were now free to spend it as they wished. This commandment had to do with responsibility of distributing benevolence to older parents who without retirement and unable to work need to be cared for by their offspring and not a burden upon society. The tradition of elders in this case enabled the children to create a religious “*tax shelter*” and set aside the responsibility that God had clearly given them to care for their elder parents.

1. **Vs. 14-16 Defied or defiled**

Vs. 14-16 Jesus now address the crowd to reveal the hypocrisy of the traditions of elders. The Greek word for “*defile*” is the same as verse 2 and means that which is profane and secular compared to that which is sacred. Having spoken to the religious delegation, Jesus turns His words upon the multitude as He explains the problem with holding the traditions of elders as equal or above the word of God; they don’t address the real problem with man. They portray a false view that what is wrong with humanity can be regulated as it is from the outside. But the truth is that what defiles us is not from the outside it is a problem of the heart and thus inside. We are separated from God based upon a heart ailment that not amount of proper diet can correct and instead we need a heart transplant! All the traditions of elders do for humanity is keep us in a state by which we won’t turn to the great physician and receive the one thing that will cure us.

1. **Vs. 17-23 A difference in what is clean**

Vs. 17-23 Jesus seems to be disappointed that His own disciples were as caught up in the religious tradionalism as were the multitudes. This understanding wouldn’t take its full understanding in Peter until his vision on the roof top in the town of Joppa, where he heard “*What God has cleansed, you must not call common*”. Jesus had no illusions about human nature, as do some humanistic teachers do today. He realized that man is a sinner, unable to control or change his own nature.

**Mark 7:24-30**

**“Mercy to ministry”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 24-30 He could not be hidden**
3. **Introduction**

By placing the first 23 verses of chapter 7 next to verses 24-37 Mark wants to show the benefits of Jesus’ administration when compared to the traditions of the religious establishment. Paul the apostle who had once in his own words described himself as a Pharisee of Pharisees commented to the Corinthian church in 2 Corinth 3:17 “*Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty*.” The needs of the people both gentile and Jew would have remained un-transformed if Jesus operated within the traditions of the elders. But because He acted in line with the word of God and rejected the traditions of the elders He was free to move in the needs and hurts of those that were open to His touch. Mark offers up two examples of this: First in verses 24-30 as he shows that Jesus and His disciples moved to Tyre and Sidon and next week we will look at in verses 31-37 as Jesus heal the deaf in the gentile area of Decapolis.

1. **Vs. 24-30 He could not be hidden**

Vs. 24-25 Matthew informs us that the woman who addressed Jesus was a gentile both of which would have disqualified her from ministry had Jesus up held the traditions of the elders. Jesus left the region of Galilee and crossed the border some 60 miles to Tyre and Sidon, gentile country. They inhabited the area of the Canaanite’s but were Phoenician by nationality and Greek by religion and speech. They had started out as trades people builders and artisans. And from this they acquired great wealth and that had further led them into idolatry. They were the hated enemies of the Jews and the feeling was mutual. They worship Asherah the god of nature and other Greek gods. The contrast couldn’t be more obvious as Mark points out from Jesus teaching against the traditions of elders he left the Jewish area and went directly to a gentile area and into a home there. There seems to be a theme in terms of the use of analogies as Jesus had just spoken in terms of food not being a defilement agent and here we see that Jesus illustrated this by going into an unclean person’s region and home to minister to the need. The analogy is clear, we all have folks, that we just can’t “*stomach*”. Oh we may say we do have any prejudices but we can like the Pharisees declare someone off limits, untouchable. They are “unclean” something we just don’t have a taste for but not so with Jesus He came to seek and save that which was lost. What He couldn’t stomach was the hearts of those who refused to reach out to people. Marks gospel tells us that upon arriving into this region “**He entered a house and wanted no one to know it, but He could not be hidden**.” He could not be hidden for this woman’s need drew Him forth.

I wonder if Jesus seeking solitude from the continual interrogation from the religious delegation sought places like Tyre and Sidon knowing that their traditions would keep them from coming? It also would provide a teaching moment in His disciples as they would be witnesses that such action on His part in correlation with His teaching was not just religious platitudes and theory as clearly He put it into practice. This woman came to Jesus in her desperation because she had “*heard about Him*”. Jesus knew that there was a gentile woman, with false ideas about God. She had grown up raised on a host of false deities, perhaps she was faithful to those ideals and now a crisis has come into her life her daughter has been severally possessed by a demon. Her concepts of god, her religious works avail nothing. Yet, she has heard of this Jesus and even though it goes against her religion and all of her prejudice she comes to Him. Folks, He traveled 60 miles to meet this woman and in so doing He broke religious barrier with the gospel. Do you realize that this is the first recorded gentile convert? She is not coming for herself she is coming for her daughter. Jesus came not to destroy her faith, but to develop it.

 Note: ***The contrast between the Pharisees and scribes and this woman***: They had come to him traveling 60 miles to argue tradition above relationship. Jesus had traveled 60 miles because there was a woman wanting relationship above her traditions. I believe that all people are religious and they all have to over come those religious traditions of their lives to come to Christ.

Vs. 26 Yet with that said these comments by Jesus towards this woman seem to be derogatory, why did Jesus treat her so harshly. Matthew tells us that she first came to Jesus asking Him to do something about her severely demon-possessed daughter. According to Matthew’s account this woman keeps on crying out to the Lord so much so that the disciple’s say; “*Hey, Lord do something that she may go away*!” To be honest I’m not so sure that I would not have said the same thing. This is the second time they have asked the Lord to send needy people away.

A.) “***Have mercy***.” Nothing wrong with this it ought to be the cry of every soul in distress. It speaks from the human side of being unworthy and from Gods side as being greater then any other thing.

B.) “***Son of David***.” Of the 16 times you find this phrase in the gospels this is the only time in which it is uttered by a gentile. This term was used to exclusively by Jews as a messianic term and when applied towards Jesus is was an acknowledgement that He is the long awaited for Messiah. This phrase is something that no gentile would have used or known anything about. It is obvious that she had heard this term used by Jews of Him and wanted to address him religiously in hopes that the correct terminology would grant her what she requested. But as Mark in forms us with such a religious traditional response, Jesus has not a word to say.

At first glance this seems to be a bit harsh, a desperate woman trying to save her child, trying to say the right things to get Him to respond in mercy to her need. “*And He has nothing to say?*” Do you ever feel like this? Do you ever have a pressing need and you do all the right things to get God to respond and nothing? May I suggest to you that Jesus will never respond to traditional religious formulas no matter how correct and truthful they are. **Jesus is not a theological conviction, He is not a creed you recite, He is a person**!

 Think of it in human terms: You go to the person you want to marry and you propose, pulling out a piece of paper you recite a standard traditional phrase…. “*Roses are red, violates are blue, will you marry me and I’ll love you too*.” No, that’s not how you communicate to the person you love instead you poor out your heart to them, you become vulnerable.

Vs.27 Jesus response to her is based upon her initial approach as He in essence tells her that; “*If you are approaching me based upon religion and tradition then I will answer you only upon religion and tradition*.” There were according to religious tradition three things against this mother:

 1.) She was a woman

 2.) She was a Canaanite

 3.) She had not made a good impression upon the disciple’s

But she had two things that set her apart: ***She was determined and she had come to the right person, albeit the wrong way***! Matthew then tells us that upon Jesus rejection of her initial approach that ***she did three things that came natural for her and it is this that moved her past the religious barriers***:

A.) **She worshipped Him**: The word worship means to turn and kiss, like your dog does on your hand. It is a spontaneous sign of great affection. Where religious formulas failed spontaneous affection worked.

B.) **She changed her words**: She didn’t call Him by what those Jewish people would have she called to Him based upon her heart felt need; “Lord”.

C.) **She shortened her need**: There was no shopping list, no do this my way. No, just “help me.” This is one of the three shortest prayer recorded in the Bible. Peter had just cried out “*Lord save me.*” Now we see this woman cry out, “*Lord, help me*.”. Then finally you will here the thief on the cross cry out, “*Lord, remember me*.”

**1.) “Lord save me.”**

**2.) “Lord, help me.”**

**3.) “Lord, remember me.”**

All of these got an immediate response. We don’t need to impress the Lord, He want’s us to cut to the heart of our need.

At first glance Jesus calling her a little dog seems quite harsh especially when we note that the Jews had a word for dogs as they called them “*goy*”. They were kind of like wolfs or coyotes; vicious animals that traveled around in packs attacking farm animals and little children. In the Hebrew language there are no swear words. Instead they would use words that spoke of things that they didn’t like and apply them other things they didn’t care for. And this is the case with the word “***goy***” as they called gentiles “***goyim***”. **It was a racial slur a dirty word calling them vicious dogs**. But that is not what Jesus calls her, as our English translation renders it “*little dogs*”. I have no doubt that this mother was familiar with the term and had been called it many a time and Jesus changes the word to another word for dog as it described a little puppy that was part of the family.

Vs. 28-30 She understood Jesus choice of words and what they were trying to convey and doesn’t argue her unworthiness to receive mercy, she only asks for the crumbs that would fall from the table. In those days there were no eating utensils neither were there any napkins, eating was a messy proposition. They would save a piece of bread or two for after the meal and would use it to clean their face and hands, then they would just throw that piece of bread to the little four legged family member under the table. That is what her view of herself and the gentiles as she asks the Lord to deal with her on her low estate, right where she is at.

I can just picture a smile breaking out on His face as Matthew tells us He spays to her: “*Woman*” which is a Hebrew word “goo-nay” and it is used as a term of endearment, the same word Jesus used to address His mother. It is also the word used when a person would speak to their wife, today we would say, “Dear”. Jesus marveled at her trust in Him as her faith had over come religion and prejudice, silence and disappointment. She had come through all of that and received what she had longed for.

**Mark 7:31-37**

**“Can you hear me now?”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 31-32 The most difficult person to reach**
3. **Vs. 33-34 A strange cure**
4. **Vs. 35-37 The actions of God verse’s the God who acts**
5. **Introduction**

It’s been a few weeks since we were in Mark and so I’ll review briefly by saying that the Holy Spirit guided Mark into placing these two miracles as an illustration of what Jesus was conveying to His disciples at the time that the two miracles took place as well as there importance in what Mark wanted to demonstrate to his Roman readers. At issue to the Roman readers was the superior benefits of Jesus’ administration when compared to the traditions of the religious establishment as well as the Roman Emperor. Such demonstrations continually emphasize the radical difference of Jesus compared to all others in power and authority where He is always about others especially those that would for any other human inspire our personal prejudices. In verses 24-30 we saw this demonstrated when Jesus and His disciples moved to Tyre and Sidon and now we will look at in verses 31-37 as Jesus heals the deaf and mute man in the gentile area of Decapolis. Though this miracle is only recorded by Mark it’s appeal is far more reaching than just this one gospel as not only for the fact that it was again across racial barriers but also because of the difficulty of reaching this man as seen by Jesus’ application of a strange methodology to implement his cure. The far reaching success of this healing is fully appreciated unless we turn to Matthew 15 where we are told that Jesus actions in this gentile region garnered praise to the God of Israel. The area of Decapolis or “ten cities” was so influenced by Roman culture that it was known as “*Rome away from Rome*”. This man not only had the barriers of racial ramifications he also presented a case that had limits do to the extreme difficulty of natural communication. He was deaf, and as such could not hear Jesus words. The evidence of the severity of his affliction is seen in the extreme methods Jesus employed through sight and touch. Even Jesus prayer is changed to communicate as we see in verse 34 that the word in the Greek for “*sigh*” is the same word connected to prayer in Roman’s 8:23 and 26. Yet though this man could not hear Jesus speak all of creation could, and at His command obeyed giving this man what he had never had the gift of communication.

1. **Vs. 31-32 The most difficult person to reach**

Vs. 31 The 2nd story begins by describing a journey that apart from knowing the area and continued racial prejudices would not garner any interest. Jesus was in the north in an area of modern day Lebanon and according to the text he was going to go south to the region of Decapolis which at that time was right on the Sea of Galilee and extended into what is now modern day Jordan. But the story tells us that Jesus did so by first going north before He went south. As such we see Jesus deliberately continuing His ministry to the Gentiles as He avoided Jewish territory and instead traveled only through the gentile areas until reaching the Gentile region in the south called Decapolis or ten Greek cities on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee, this would be in modern day Syria and not the normal route taken from Tyre and Sidon. Many scholars believe that this was not a few day journey but rather that Jesus took up to 8 months in this region. In the next chapter we will find that after these many months ministering exclusively to the gentiles that Peter will conclude in verse 29 that Jesus was the the messiah. I believe that it was Jesus

example during these months that spoke a greater truth to Peter than the miracles accomplished in Israel among the Jews. When you examine the amount to recorded time Jesus spent among the gentiles during His 3 ½ years of ministry you realize that 1/3 of it was among them. Yes, Jesus went to the Jews first but He did not neglect the gentiles as He fulfilled the fact that God had uniquely placed Israel to be a light among them. The longevity in this region was a further lesson for His disciples that God is not a respecter of persons.

Vs. 32 I suppose that no handicap is a pleasant circumstance but at this time this condition had far more stigma placed upon it than blindness. Those afflicted with blindness didn’t bare the same social pain as dead the deaf and mute. First they were unaware of the impatient and condescending stairs. Then there was the awareness that people who were deaf and mute were considered stupid because of their disability. The condition of this man was desperate he was deaf but apparently not from birth as he could speak but that speech was further hindered by the fact that he had speech impediment, so in truth he had two disabilities that adversely affected His life. Here was a man shut out from life, he couldn’t hear or communicate. He couldn’t hear the truth or ask questions, living in a silent world of isolation all the while being around people. This by all practical physical situation would be the most difficult person to reach: A gentile, unable to hear or speak!

1. **Vs. 33-34 A strange cure**

Vs. 33-34 Mark records for us five things that Jesus did to minister to this man that were quite unusual for those of us not afflicted with this man’s handicaps.

1. “*He took him aside*”: Though this seems to be a minor thing, I suggest that to this man it may have been the biggest thing he had experienced since becoming deaf. The compassion Jesus exhibited to take this gentile man aside privately, away from the gawking crowds, demonstrates to this man that Jesus well understood his handicaps. Just like today compassion and caring were not in vogue but they were always present in our Lord. We see it often before the healing that Jesus was “***moved with compassion***”. One author put it well when he wrote concerning Jesus that, “***There is no place where earth’s sorrows are more felt than in heaven***!” The only conclusion we can make is that with Jesus, **His compassion was a key ingredient to His healing for the hurting and suffering**. This man couldn’t hear Jesus but this first method spoke more to him than anything he had encountered in years. And the crowds around this man would have known the sensitivity Jesus was using to treat his condition. They didn’t hear Jesus yell at him as some might have tried, instead he took him aside privately. The next three things Jesus did was to awaken this man’s faith as He needed to communicate to him what He was going to do for him.
2. “*Put His fingers in his ears*”: Jesus never recoiled from laying His hands of hurting humanity. ***True compassion is not just what we FEEL, it requires us to reach out and touch!*** But why this method, what was the purpose? I believe that by so doing Jesus was indicating that He knew that he was deaf and that He intended to enable him to hear again. It was this touch that demonstrated this to a deaf man.
3. “*He spat and touched his tongue*”: Spit in that day was thought to hold medicinal value and Jesus wetting his fingers and touched the man’s tongue would have indicated that He was going to lose his tongue so that he could speak and communicate again.
4. “*He looked up up into heaven, He sighed*”: Jesus looked into heave and sighed to indicate where this healing was going to come from and breathed out to indicate that it was from the invisible agency of the power of God.
5. “*And said to him “Ephphatha” that is “be opened*”: And when Jesus looked into his eyes He knew that the man understood spoke the Hebrew word “be opened” to indicate that the invisible power was none other than the Hebrew God!
6. **Vs. 35-37 The actions of God verse’s the God who acts**

Vs. 35-37 And immediately he began to hear and speak perfectly. Jesus then told ***them*** not to speak of it but the more He commanded them the more widely they spoke about it. There is a change in pronouns as Jesus had been dealing with the deaf man until here but now he speaks to the multitudes but the more He told them the more they published it. Jesus didn’t want the moniker of miracle worker as He was and is far more than this. People are far to blind as they can only see **the actions of God** instead of **the God who acts**! Yes, He does all things well, but it is because of who He is.

 Yet I think that some of this methodology may also serve a greater purpose than the healing of a deaf and mute man 3 thousand years ago. Alfred Edersheim wrote many wonderful books and one of my favorites is the “*Life and times of Jesus the Messiah*”. His perspective is that this healing serves as a great blue print on how to reach out to a pagan lost world through 4 methods Jesus employed to heal this deaf and mute gentile.

1. ***Looking up to heaven***: First and fore most if we are to reach a lost world we will need to overcome our sense of “prayerlessness”. We will need a more and greater dependence upon the Father as Jesus always demonstrated. Remember that Jesus look to heaven was in the midst of a very busy hands on ministry. We are far to intent on doing good and being busy that we neglect the most important part to accomplish His purposes for His glory, prayer. If we are to be effective to return sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf we will need to be “looking up to heaven” to do so.
2. ***He took him aside***: As already mentioned this a visible demonstration of compassion. Such compassion is a part of any work of reaching people, we won’t be moved until we are moved with compassion. We need what Jeremiah wrote of with regards to his own heart in 9:1, “*Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people.*”
3. ***His touch***: we are told of this strange remedy but the common denominator is that Jesus touched him. With out a word spoken Jesus in full view of His church, the disciples, reached out and touched a man that they would never have thought to have doe so. It didn’t matter what the person’s ailment they all received a touch from Jesus. That touch said so much as it said, “*I’m with you, I feel your pain, I care about your predicament and I’m going to do something more than just express my sympathies.*” His touch is akin to Isaiah’s words, “*Here I am send me*” as they demonstrate a willingness to be a part of the solution and not just a mere mention of the problem!
4. ***His word***: I love the fact that the first thing this man heard was the words “Be opened”. I also see the proper order of this response to reach a lost world. We often become frustrated in our attempt’s to reach people because we have been speaking to them the word and they are not “OPEN”. But it could be that they are not open because we have skipped lessons 1-3 and it is our lack of openness that has cause theirs!

I pray these lessons have spoken to your heart in reaching a lost world!

**Mark 8:1-9**

**“Food for thought”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 1-3 Loving your enemy**
3. **Vs. 4-9 Show them what they have won**
4. **Introduction**

The 8th chapter is a continuation of Jesus’ ministry among the gentiles as the words “*In those days*” are meant to tell us not a specific date but that they were still in the Decapolis region. But where had such a crowd come from here among the gentiles? There is little doubt that Jesus’ ministry with the deaf and mute man had an immediate impact but I can’t help but wonder if there was a front man in the healed demoniac of chapter five. This man was from this very area and after being delivered from the legion of demons begged Jesus that he might be with Him but instead Jesus told him to “*Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you*.” That day I believe Jesus had 4000 friends of the healed demoniac who had been told the story of what great things Jesus had done for him. There is another interesting reality in the setting of circumstances of this story as the immediate need was set in motion because of Jesus’ priority to teach. Here He was among the gentiles teaching them the things of the kingdom and apparently they stayed with Him hanging on His every word for three days. These gentiles choose not to leave and seek food for their physical need because they were receiving food for their their souls. And after three days of this these folks had a strong physical need to eat and many wouldn’t have made it back home to get food with out fainting and this becomes the reason for the miracle.

1. **Vs. 1-3 Loving your enemy**

Vs. 1 As we mentioned in chapter 6, though similar the feeding of the 5000 and the feeding of the 4000 are different not only in when the events took place but where they took place. The feeding of the 5000 took place months earlier in the Jewish area of the Sea of Galilee while the feeding of the 4000 took place in the gentile area of the Sea of Galilee.

Though two separate accounts they do have things in common: In both cases the food divided was the same bread and fish, and in both cases Jesus multiplied that which was brought to Him. The repetition of this miracle so close to the time and area of the first has caused people to wonder; why Jesus did this miracle twice? The answer is found in both Matthew and Mark’s accounts as we are told that Jesus was “*moved with compassion as they had been with Him 3 days without food*”. No doubt this was a further illustration aimed at His disciples with regards to the heart of God towards lost humanity. God possesses no prejudices when it comes to showering his love and compassion upon humanity. Here were 4000 gentiles as there had been 5000 Jew’s. Yet neither situation hindered Jesus heart to meet their needs.

Vs. 2-3 The Greek phrase “*I have compassion on the multitudes*” is a phrase that today we would say “*we have a heart for them*” and in reference to the gentiles must have been a remarkable statement coming from Jesus in the ears of the disciples. Jesus elaborates by saying that the 4000 have “*continues with me three days*.” The phrase means more than merely being in the same general proximity as Jesus as in the Greek it means that they ***continued to abide with Him in fellowship***.

Jesus engaged His disciples as he had previously months earlier at the feeding of the 5000. There the reluctance of the disciples had been due to a different kind of prejudice, one that was predicated not upon differences in culture but rather in a difference in need as they saw their need for rest of greater need than that of missing a meal. Now some 8 months later these same fellows after having spent 8 months among their enemy see a similar situation occur. Though the numbers were less, those facing the hunger were in far greater peril as these 4000 have been with Jesus 3 days without food and the there is a real possibility that some may faint on the way back to their homes. But with the greater need there was also a greater prejudice as they were gentiles. Notice that Jesus eliminates the option of sending them back home which suggest to me that Jesus was anticipating multiple excuses from His disciples. When I factor in that Jesus had been directly dealing with the prejudices of His disciples for around 8 months it reveals that within our fallen flesh such prejudices are very difficult to overcome. Peter who gave this information to Mark will face this same issue for much of his life as he will deal with it again when he deals with Cornelius the Roman centurion than many years later Peter is still struggling as he tries to keep up appearances by not eating with gentile believers when his Jewish friends were in town and is called on it by Paul.

1. **Vs. 4-9 Show them what they have won**

Vs. 4 We get a better understanding of the disciple’s disdain for the hungry gentile multitudes when in the Greek they say, “*How can one* **SATISFY*****these people*** *with bread here in the wilderness.*” The word “*satisfy*” is a word used for feeding animals and when used in classical Greek, people like Plato do so as a way of showing contempt making it a derogatory statement. It tells us that the primary problem with the disciples was not that they had forgotten the feeding of the 5000 8 months ago, but they had questioned why feed these animals at all. While in the Decapolis reign the disciples regard the 4000 as “***THESE PEOPLE***”. After all they were gentiles who had their own form of government, had adopted the Greek culture and Roman style of living. ***In essence the question the disciples asked of Jesus with regards to the need of these gentiles is that you can never satisfy this kind of people, they have no interest in truth, they are complete reprobates***. **Yet they had been with Jesus 3 full days devouring the word of God as He spoke it too them**.

Vs. 5-9 After reading these verses I wonder if these fellows had a case of déjà vu. There is little doubt that Jesus was trying to teach them basic principals of ministry things such as:

* **Begin with what you have**: The very first words out of the mouths of the disciples were “HOW” which then were followed by their estimation of what needed to be provided that would “SATISFY these people”. Jesus said to feed the people they asked HOW and Jesus asks them HOW much has he provided? They reply seven loaves and Jesus responded with actions that said, “*That will do*”! Much of our excuses and procrastination in ministry is because we have grandiose ideas and expectations and we won’t start until our preconceived ideals are met. It is clear to me that **human need, must not suffer delay do to my expectation**! God does not ask us to give what He has not provided but He does call us to give what He has given us and we can trust Him for the rest. It is right that we ask God to work but He works with what He has given us, so take the bread that He has supplied and give it back to Him to bless it and multiply it so that you can distribute it.
* **Supply will always equal the demand**: The 2nd principal in ministry is that the Lord wanted to show us that God will never quit giving as long as the need remains. In the Greek the words in verse 6 in English says, “*He took the seven loaves and gave thanks,* **BROKE THEM** *gave them to His disciples*.” But in the Greek it is “*kept on* **BREAKING THEM**” and the disciples “**KEPT ON GIVING**” the seven loaves until the need was gone. Jesus did not gather store houses of bread before he distributed it, no He took what he had and kept on breaking it with nothing visible as a resource from which to continue the distribution. This is always true; we are the supply that Jesus breaks to distribute to others need. We always seem to come back to Him and say, “*I don’t have enough*” to which He responds “*Given them all of you and I will keep on breaking you until the need is met*!” In Paul’s 2nd letter to the Corinthians he describes the marks of authentic Christianity and follows these ideals up with a question “*Who is sufficient for these things*?” Paul doesn’t immediately answer that question until a few verses later when He writes, “*Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God*.”
* **Sustenance comes from what you give of your supply**: In both of these miracles of feeding the multitudes the disciples found a surplus that more than met their own personal needs. Here in the feeding of the 4000 we see that the fragments were seven baskets and the word for basket here is different as it is not a lunch pail but a hamper in size. Seven is a number in scripture that always symbolizes completion and the fullness of God. So these disciples gathered up a larger amount of left overs to a people who were in far greater need of the bread of life. The principal is this the greater the need, the greater our own revelation of the person and work of God. As we give out to reach those that are starving for the Him we will always find that we will gain far more of Him ourselves.

There are two things that I believe that Jesus continues to challenge His Church with today:

1. **Compassion**: Jesus never looked at a person or a crowd that He hasn’t cared about. His first reaction to any person friend or foe is always the same, compassion. He was never to tired or fed up with a person to not desire to reach them with His love. He was never unaware of their need or heart ache. It flies in the face of humanity even the church whose often first response is how we can not get involved or help. I for one need to be continually reminded of this lesson from Jesus to be “*moved with compassion*”.
2. **Action**: I believe the 2nd challenge is to move beyond sympathy and empathy to taking what He has given us and give it back to Him to bless and break that we can distribute it to others. So often my lack becomes my excuse, “*Oh I like to help but I don’t have….*” God never asks us to give what we don’t have; He only asks us to give what He has given us. It was a principal that God tried to imprint upon the Jews as well. At the Feast of Purim in March is a feast that was to commemorate the deliverance of the Jews by the Lord through Esther. It is during this season that every Jew no matter how poor they are and in need themselves they are to seek out someone with worse circumstances than themselves and give that person a gift. There is far too much of our time devoted to us waiting until the betterment of our circumstances to help others instead of taking what we have at that moment and looking to give it away.

**Mark 8:10-21**

**“Earth crammed with heaven”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 10-12 Every bush afire with God**
3. **Vs. 13-21 Plucking blackberries**
4. **Introduction**

I’m fascinated at the work of the Holy Spirit as He came upon the writers of the Bible. He always places a thread from one section to another and it is up to the student to find the thread so they can determine the garment the Lord wants us to ware. Here in this section the disciples were fresh off of the feeding of the 4000 in the gentile region of the Sea of Galilee. They take sail back too a Jewish area to be met by Pharisees seeking a sign. The oddity of this request of another sign is best understood when considering that they had arrived on the seen 8 months earlier when Jesus had fed the 5000. And instead of realizing that Jesus was the long awaited Messiah they choose to see a violation in the ceremonial washing by the disciples. They wanted a grandiose sign; fire at night or bread from heaven and didn’t realize that Jesus had given them “*bread from heaven*”. In the next sentence Mark tells us that Jesus again sets sail with His disciples who had forgotten bread and are clueless as to what all of this meant. This leads to Jesus words illustrating the dangers of hard heartedness as it relates to not seeing God. The true seeker of God is not the person looking for God to break into his world in some supernatural event. Instead the true seeker of God recognizes that God is already here and has left evidence of this fact every where the seeker looks. ***God is not to be found in just what man calls the sacred places, He is to be found in making the common places sacred***! Poet Elizabeth Barret Browning wrote, “***Earth’s crammed with heaven, and every common bush afire with God; but only he who sees, takes off his shoes, the rest sit round it and pluck blackberries*.**”

1. **Vs. 10-12 Every bush afire with God**

Vs. 10-12 Dalmanutha is on the Western side of the sea of Galilee near Tiberias which means that when they got into the boat and left the Decapolis region they sailed over to the Jewish region of the Sea of Galilee. The Pharisees would not have gone to the gentile areas but waited some 8 months in the Jewish area for the opportunity to harass Jesus again. In chapter 3 verse 22 they had seen great signs that they attributed to Beelzebub. And here they began to question Jesus repeatedly as if He were on a witness stand causing a dispute with Him. They were asking for a sign as a way to establish His credentials to prove that He was a spokesman for God. They want a sign in heaven, something specific and spectacular. But in truth they were determined to not believe no matter how much evidence to the contrary. In Deuteronomy 18 the Lord established standards through Moses to determine if what the person spoke was from the Lord and the supreme test was if what they said didn’t happen then the Lord hadn’t spoken. ***It is not always wrong to seek a sign; it’s the motive which determines its correctness.***

**There is always enough evidence to convince us of Jesus’ claims and God has no interest in entertaining His doubters in any theater that displays His marvelous works. There are far too many already living by their fleeces instead of their faith**. It is never signs that we need but rather an awakening to act on what we already know to be true! ***Jesus’ mission was not to convince His critics, but to give salvation to the brokenhearted***!

Jesus response was grief and disappointment at the hardness of their hearts. It is a sad sate when those who have been given authority over others are spiritually blind. There was a tendency in that age to to look for God in the abnormal the super natural. The false Messiah’s of that time would promise huge earth shattering events as signs of who they claimed to be. **This was what the Pharisees were demanding in order to believe, something that defied the laws of nature and astonished humanity**. And even though Jesus had done many of these events they still attributed them to satan. ***Their problem was not that they wanted to see the hand of God it was that they were blind to the hand of God***. This wasn’t the first time they had asked Jesus for a sign as we are told in Matthew chapter 12 that they did so. Since Mark is writing to Roman readers he doesn’t include the words Jesus went on to say in Matthew chapter 16. There Jesus told them that a “*wicked and adulterous generation*” seeks a sign and that no sign will be given them except the “*sign of the prophet Jonah*.” But in chapter 12 Jesus explains that the sign of the prophet Jonah was that “*as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*.” The sign of the prophet Jonah was a sign given him for being rebellious, a sign that personally illustrated that it was futile to try to divert God’s plans and will. These religious leaders were wanting to see a sign in the sky that would show them who the Messiah was but there were signs all around them and the biggest one that they didn’t see was the hardening of their own heart do to rebellion. The only sign that Jesus would show them was His resurrection to which Jesus said in Luke 16:31 that “*If they do not hear Moses and the prophets* ***neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead*.**” Jesus wasn’t interested in fueling their unbelief and in Matthew chapter 16 Jesus tells them that they can clearly distinguish the signs of foul weather from looking to the sky but they couldn’t discern the signs of the times around them. The only comfort these Pharisees could obtain is that they weren’t any more blind at this moment than Jesus own handpicked disciples.

1. **Vs. 13-21 Plucking blackberries**

Vs. 13-16 Thirteen hungry men and one loaf what ever are they to do? God’s people have a tendency to miss God’s blessings as twice in less than a year they had witnessed Jesus feeding well over 12,000 people on nothing more than 12 loaves of bread and a few fish. Yet they are still perplexed at what to do when they had mistaken forgot to purchase more supplies. Their problem was forgetfulness but not at purchasing supplies but of forgetting God’s blessings! They felt that Jesus warnings against the “*leaven*” of the Pharisees and Herod had something to do with their failure to bring adequate supplies.

Matthew records in chapter 16 a warning of a threefold leaven:

* **The formalism of Pharasitical externalism**
* **The rationalism of Sadduceen Skepticism**
* **The materialism of Herodian relativism**

All three of these influences can misdirect and blind a person from seeing the truth even when it’s right in front of them. Nothing was easier to think than acquainting the Messiah with wonders and conquests, miraculous happenings nationalistic triumphs. It is the way with humans, to believe emphatically that God is on our side. But the truth is God is on our side only to the degree that we are on His side!

Vs. 17-21 Jesus makes it clear that there is a direct correlation between and forgetful memory and a hardening heart. When forget the words and works of Christ we begin to doubt His words and works! Because of the lack of comprehension of His disciples, Jesus asks a series of questions that were aimed at awakening from their lack of understanding:

1. **Use your mind**: Jesus said, “*Do you not perceive nor understand*?” I believe that is always the first place to start, think about where you are and what God’s word has to say about it. I find when ever my heart is stuck it’s usually do to me not using my head and the quickest way to get back on tract is get into the word. In Isaiah the Lord knew that the nation of Israel was stuck in their rituals while their heart was far from Him so He spoke through the prophet Isaiah saying, “*Come now let’s reason together*” then He began to ask them some thought provoking questions about where they were truly at spiritually.
2. **Determine where you heart is at**: Jesus asks, “*Is your heart still hardened*?” That leads to the next question one in where we will need to do some personal analysis to determine why our heart hasn’t responded to what our mind has understood. We can mentally recognize something is true but if it’s true and haven’t acted on it than we have a problem not with the head but with the heart. ***Truth is designed to move us not entertain us***, if we are only excited in the mind but not moved in the heart than we need to pray that what we know to be true in our mind will extend beyond our intellect to our actions!
3. **Look beyond the immediate**: Jesus asks them, “*Having eyes, do you not see, and having ears, do you not hear*?” Often there is a disconnect in what we think we know and what we really know. We see and hear things but are unable to look at what connection they have to our own lives and situations. Twice in the same year these 12 fellows were being fed by loaves and fish and all they seemed to see was they got a quick meal instead of what the lesson was for. Oh how true this is in our own lives isn’t it?
4. **Remember past lessons**: Finally, Jesus asked, “*Do you not remember*?” Every day we are in the class room with Christ and the lessons are not just what we see of the black board. Every situation and circumstance is designed to teach us more about who He is and who we are. The past way in getting todays lesson is to look back and see that He has been trying to teach in the past. That’s how you can lay ahold of the truth He want’s you to have today!

The amazing part of this story to me is how the Lord uses it as an illustration of a greater problem as clearly they had not learned the lesson of multiplication when what He has provided us is given back to Him that He make continue to break it to bless people. If 5 loaves were enough to feed 5000 men, and seven loaves were enough to feed 4000 men, would not 1 loaf be more than enough to feed 13 hungry disciples if they would but give it to Him to be blessed and broken? Clearly the problem is not in the lack of provisions but in the forgetfulness in giving what He has supplied to Him.

**Mark 8:22-30**

**“The Hinge”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 22-23 Bread crumbs**
3. **Vs. 24-25, 27-29 Two stage process**
4. **Vs. 26, 30 Prohibition**
5. **Introduction**

Having left the section on Jesus warnings against seeking a sign and how such things can dull our comprehension towards seeing our Lord, we come to a perfect illustration of this in the strange miracle of the healing of the blind man at Bethsaida. **Again there is a link in this illustration as it relates to the three events that follow it it**:

* ***Peter’s confession***
* Jesus’ words on ***His death and resurrection***
* And finally as we move into the 9th chapter, ***Jesus’ transfiguration***

Mark sets this link in place with simple geographical tags when he writes: “*Then He came to* ***Bethsaida***” and follows that with verse 27, “*Now Jesus and His disciples went out to the towns of* ***Caesarea Philippi***”. Then finally in chapter 9 verse 2 we read, “*..Jesus took Peter, James and John, and led them up on* ***a high mountain*** *apart by themselves; and was transfigured before them*”. These geographical tags are like bread crumbs on a trail, if we follow the locations on a map we see clearly that from the first bread crumb to the last Jesus was leading His disciples to mount Hermon where He was transfigured. ***Mark wants his readers to understand that this was an orchestrated march and that the events along the way were meant to prepare them to see Jesus as He truly is.*** This section fits right next to the warning of not looking for validating Jesus in supernatural signs but rather looking to the continual signs that He places along our roads in life. Eight months earlier in chapter 4 verse 41 Jesus was with his frightened disciples as they were astonished at Jesus calming the wind and the waves. There they questioned, “*Who can this be, that even the wind and sea obey Him*!” I suggest to you that the last 8 months of their lives had been about answering that very question. This fact can be seen as we note the similarities to the disciples question of, “*Who can this be”* with Jesus’ question in chapter 8 verse 29 of “*But who do you say that I am*?” This unveiling is what John would say in his gospel in the first chapter verse 14 was the event in which “*we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*” We are going to take these two stories found in verse 22-30 of the 8th chapter of Mark together as that is how I believe Jesus meant them to viewed and why Mark writes them the way he does.

1. **Vs. 22-23 Bread crumbs**

Vs. 22 We are now prepared for this strange miracle that happened at our first location on the map, Bethsaida. First, we have the timing of this event is in the 8th chapter which just so happens to be the mid point of this gospel and the turning point in Mark’s narrative as Mark’s view of Jesus begins to take a new direction. That would make this section of the healing of the blind man at Bethsaida for all practical purposes the “***hinge***” of the gospel. And as we begin to examine this “***hinge***” we have **the most peculiar of all of Jesus’ recorded miracles**. I suppose to call any miracle which by nature is peculiar the “***most peculiar***” is odd. By way of explanation I offer three points as to why I find that it stands out among all the miracles.

1. First, it is unique as it is **only recorded by Mark**. As already noted Mark was not an eyewitness of this event but as Peter’s disciple received most of the contents of this gospel directly from him. Thus as the Holy Spirit directed Peter and Mark recorded it for his Roman readers it only found print in this gospel. That ought to cause us to ask the question, why? ***What is it about this miracle as it relates to the gentile Roman reader that makes it essential for their comprehension of who Jesus is***?
2. Second, it is unique in that it is the only recorded miracle that is a ***process*** and *not an instantaneous completion*. There is a sense in which no two miracles were alike and the fact that this one is not like the others is not what causes it to be unique. Jesus did miracles in accordance to what the situation demanded and this one stands out not because of that but rather that ***it took a process to complete it*** and no other miracle has that element in it. Again this ought to cause us to ask the question of “*Why is this miracle a* ***PROCESS****, and what does that have to do with the events of this journey to the mount of transfiguration*?”
3. The third and final reason that this miracle is unique is in the prohibition that Jesus tells the now healed blind man from Bethsaida. Prohibitions from Jesus are not entirely unique as we see them a few times but with the other two things it adds to making this miracle stand out among all others. This also ought to cause us to ask the question as to, “*Why did Jesus prohibit this man from not only telling anyone but from even going into the town*?” Again this relates to the journey Jesus has His disciples on.

Vs. 23 We have seen the method of spit being used in the healing of the deaf and mute gentile man at the end of chapter 7 and though it seems to be unhygienic as a treatment remedy it is interesting to note that most people if they cut or burn their finger immediately put it into their mouth to soothe it. The healing of the blind man in the 9th chapter of John’s gospel also records the use of Jesus’ spit this time it was mixed with dirt making mud in which Jesus anointed the mans eyes before telling him to go wash in the pool of Siloam. Although the method of using spit isn’t unique in light of this miracle I can’t help but wonder if it wasn’t meant as a sort of parable in action. I suggest to you that, **spit is like words as both come from the mouth** (*and in my case sometimes comes out as words are spoken*). As such this action was meant to convey that ***the work was being accomplished through the agency of the Word of God***. I believe that this view is supported in the text by what follows this healing as Jesus asks His disciples after they had moved on to Caesarea Philippi “*Who do you say that I am*?” And although neither Mark’s or Luke’s account records this statement Matthew’s does as Jesus follows up on Peter’s confession of “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*” with, “*Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah,* ***for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven***.” In other words, Jesus was telling Peter and the other’s that this revelation as to the true identity of “***Who Jesus is***” was ***not*** something that was ***attainable*** through ***natural observations*** and ***detailed analysis***. Instead they could have only come to this conclusion as a direct revelation through the teaching of the Word of God, which Jesus had been actively working into their lives. It is my opinion that the method of spiting in the eyes of the blind man from Bethsaida had more to do with Jesus’ disciples than as a necessity in the healing of the blind man.

 This takes us into the vital question as to, “***Why was this miracle done in a two stage process***?” There have been some commentators who in light of the fact that in every other miracle the healing was instantaneous, suggests that this two-stage process was either:

* ***A weakening in Jesus’ powers***
* ***Or that by this stage in His ministry the opposition had become so intense as to limit His ability***
* ***Or perhaps this case of blindness so difficult that it required two stages***

I personally find ***none of these explanations satisfactory*** as they are not consistent to who Jesus is. Having eliminated those explanations, I can only come to the reason for this two stage process being employed by Jesus as ***a deliberate act done not for the benefit of the blind man from Bethsaida but rather for His disciples***. Healing this man in this manner offered nothing that I can determine for the blind man but it did serve as a personal illustration for His disciples. They were like this blind man in their development as to the comprehension of the true identity of Jesus. Their blindness would be healed in a two stage process: The first part of which enabled them to view Jesus partially, seen in the man from Bethsaida seeing only “*Men like trees walking*” which indicates that **their vision was true but not clear** which is why we have the 2nd touch by Jesus on his eyes and their vision of Him would be completely restored as they would see “*everyone clearly*”.

1. **Vs. 24-25, 27-29 Two stage process**

Vs. 24-25, 27-29 I can’t help but notice that as Jesus employed a two stage process in healing the blind man from Bethsaida so two did He ask two questions of His disciples at Caesarea Philippi:

1. The first question was “*Who do men say that I am*?”: The disciples answer reveals that the view of the people was that they held Him in very high regard. They came up with three possibilities that demonstrated this:
* **John the Baptist**: *This reveals that the people saw Jesus as* ***pure in character***
* **Elijah**: *This reveals that the people recognized Jesus as having the* ***power of God***
* **One of the Prophets**: *This reveals that the people saw Jesus was* ***proclaiming the truth***

Through out Jesus’ ministry amongst the people they could see “*men like trees, walking*”. They weren’t completely blind they thought perhaps that He was John the Baptist come back to life, maybe Elijah or one of the other prophets. The people weren’t speaking of “***reincarnation***” they had no such superstition. No they saw the similarities in His ministry to those that had gone before Him and thought of Him as a “***reappearance***” in type of ministry. In the people’s estimation Jesus was not the messiah He was speaking about the messiah paving the way. These people knew their bibles and they knew that the Old Testament was full of men who spoke of the coming One and they purposed that Jesus was another man “*like trees, walking around doing just as those had before Him.*”

1. The 2nd question was “*But who do you say that I am*”: This is a 2nd touch question as this was the disciples own view of Jesus. The populace held Jesus in very high regard but there was not one time that they had the slightest inkling that He was indeed the Messiah. So when Peter answered “*You are the Christ*” he became the first to utter the truth. He words were immediate and definite albeit based upon Jesus’ response in Matthew’s account he didn’t fully comprehending just what he had said. Christ is the Greek form of the Hebrew word, Messiah and it means the same. It’s not a name, it is a title speaking of the office Jesus holds as it means the “*anointed one*”. In the Old Testament there were only two offices where a person would be anointed “*King and High Priest*” and Jesus is the only one that was both. The Holy Spirit had clearly spoken to them that Jesus was far more than John the Baptist, Elijah or one of the prophets. ***He was the One who all others had been looking for and all the scriptures had been point too***.
2. **Vs. 26, 30 Prohibition**

Vs. 26, 30 This leaves only the two prohibitions both to this man and the disciples after they had given the correct answer. First note that Jesus told this man to go back to his house and to neither go to Bethsaida nor tell anyone there about his healing. Jesus had done many miracles in Bethsaida none of which do we have this injunction. I believe as Jesus didn’t want the man to even go into the city suggests a greater concern that just asking the man to not say anything. There are multiple times in the Bible where the healed person was told to not say anything and went ahead and did so anyways. This tells me that Jesus didn’t want even the possibility of this happening so he sends him back to his house and orders him not to go into the city. Jesus didn’t want this particular miracle to be a distraction and get in way of the larger illustration to the disciples to which it was intended to be a demonstration of. Notice that after Peter’s confession Jesus “*strictly warns*” them that they should tell no one. You would think that Jesus would have them shout it from the roof tops. Instead He tells them to remain silent which again goes back to the two stage process in healing the blind man.

1. The first touch opened their eyes to a part of the truth, they saw Him enough to make a confession of the truth, seeing Him as a tree walking, but they had not yet seen Him clearly in His glory which will be.
2. The 2nd touch which Jesus will speak of in detail in verse 31-38 before they see Him in His glorified state on the mount of transfiguration. So when will the 2nd stage be completed for these disciples? Well at the cross and resurrection that is when their eyes will be completely open. That is why speaking of this confession now though true wasn’t one they could clearly see.

I conclude with the realization that there are many today, that are wondering around that are either blind or are able to communicate a true vision just not a clear one. In either case what is needed is a touch from Jesus. It is my sincere earnest prayer that they will be opened to just such a touch. I also notice that the key to clear spiritual vision of Christ has to do with comprehending His sacrifice. Simply put we will neither appreciate or comprehend Jesus’ glory if we can not come to personal terms with the reason for His sacrifice!

**Mark 8:31-33**

**“From rock to stumbling block”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 31-32 The message of the cross**
3. **Vs. 33 Three truths about the cross**
4. **Introduction**

Nothing could illustrate the point I made last week with regards to; ***having a true vision as to who Jesus is but not a clear vision***, then the section we are looking at this morning. The last sentence Jesus issued a strict prohibition to the disciples after Peter’s confession of “*You are the Christ*”. This causes me to ask two questions:

1. ***Why “prohibit” the disciple’s public profession as to Jesus’ true identity when 8 months earlier in chapter 6 verse 7-13 He told them to preach and heal the people?***
2. ***What was it about the disciple’s public confession of Jesus true identity after Peter’s profession that Jesus saw as a hindrance of His greater work in human hearts?***
3. The answer to the **first question**: Is found in the difference between the messages. The first message of the 12 in chapter 6 verse 12 when they were sent out was that they “*preached that people should* ***repent***”. Where as based upon Peter’s confession had Jesus not strictly prohibited it, their message would have been that ***Jesus is the long awaited Messiah, the fulfillment of all that the prophets and scriptures had pointed towards***. These are two very different messages:
* The ***first message*** was a diagnostic question, that should cause a person hearing this message to recognize their own need for change. Clearly Jesus encouraged this message and had instructed His disciples to preach it.
* But the ***2nd message*** would have been as to His true identity which although correct; there was something about it’s proclamation by these disciples at this time that clearly Jesus didn’t want them to preach it publically as it would have been a hindrance to His work in human hearts.
1. This leads us to the **2nd question**: “***How can that which is true be a hindrance to the work of Jesus in human hearts***? The only answer to that is “***When that which is true is communicated improperly, either in time or method or both***.” Had these disciples been allowed to preach that Jesus was the Messiah the impending result would have been ***numerically positive*** but ***superficial and emotionally driven***. I suggest to you that Jesus had been dealing with this very thing with the masses in John chapter 6 verse 15 when “*they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king*”. ***He didn’t want nor did He allow*** ***shallow commitments based upon popular notions***. He wasn’t interested stirring the masses to such a fervor that all through out Israel you would have seen stickers of the backs of donkeys that said “*He-haw if you love Jesus*!”

That’s the focus from verses 31 to the end of this chapter verse 38 as Jesus talks about two things:

1. Vs. 31-33 ***The truth about the true revelation as to Jesus identity***. This goes to the **timing** of the truth concerning Jesus.
2. Vs. 34-38 ***The true cost with regards to personally accepting that revelation***: This goes to the **method** with regard to both preaching and receiving this message.
3. **Vs. 31-32 The message of the cross**

Vs. 31-32 After Peter’s confession and Jesus strict prohibition; Mark starts the very next sentence with the word “***and***”. This indicates that Jesus’ words on His death and resurrection followed right after Peter’s confession and His strict prohibition. According to Matthew’s account there was a quick blessing with regards to the recognition of Peter’s confession but in it Jesus gave credit of that confessional revelation to the Father and not Peter. I’m sure Jesus’ commendation of Peter’s confession caused an immediate sense of pride and perhaps this aided Peter’s bold rebuke after Jesus.

 The theology of the cross was not something that any of these disciples associated with the confession as to Jesus being the Messiah. ***The worst “must” in verse 31 points to the inevitableness and rational of the cross.*** The word “*rejected*” describes a person who has been tested for the purpose of being approved and having past the test is rejected anyway. Jesus didn’t pass the test of the religious leaders in a Messiah because He was not what they wanted.

Jesus had hinted at the cross from the beginning of His ministry:

* In John 2:19 Jesus after He cleansed the temple for the first time and the Jew’s demanded a sign to show that He had the authority to do so said, “*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up*”. They mocked Him with regards to the length of time it took to build the temple and that Jesus would be able to do so in three days but John looking back 70 years upon those words said, “***But He was speaking of the temple of His body***.”
* 3:14 He told Nicodemus, “*As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up*.”
* Jesus had defended His disciples lack of fasting to the Pharisees by saying, “*the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days.*”
* Only days before Jesus had told them that the only sign that would be given this generation was the sign of Jonah, which Jesus had already described in Matthew 12 “*For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*”

Yet with that said all of those statements are in the nature of parables and clearly the disciples didn’t grasp them and after Peter’s confession. The Greek verb tense in the phrase of verse 32 saying, “*He spoke this word openly*…” speaks of a continuous action of doing so over and over. This suggests that this discourse to His disciples was ***not a brief conversation but one that went on for several days*** on their way to the “*Mount of Transfiguration*.” Jesus in details mentions two specific things with regards to the cross:

* **The events of the cross**: Suffering, rejection and death
* **The enemies at the cross**: By whose hands these would perpetrated saying, the elders, chief priests and the scribes

This causes me to believe two things with regard to Peter’s response in verse 32:

1. It wasn’t immediate, when these truths about the cross were first presented. I believe it took several days of this before Peter couldn’t take the affront upon his theology rebuked Jesus.
2. This confrontation by Peter was done in alliance with the other disciples. Peter wasn’t taken aside privately; instead Jesus turned around and ***looked at all His disciples*** when He rebuked Peter.

Peter's protest was born out of his ignorance of God's will and his deep love for his Lord; he didn’t yet understand the relationship between suffering and glory. **One-minute Peter was the “*rock*” and the next minute he was a “*stumbling block*”!** Dr. G. Campbell Morgan said, “*The person who loves Jesus, but shuns God's method, is a stumbling block*.” We have very little on the specific’s of Peter’s rebuke except for what Matthew records which is, “*Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You*!” Peter along with the others said, “*This can’t be the way, this won’t happen to you, cast any thought of this from your mind*!” These words of Jesus seemed impossible and unbelievable, so much so that Peter and the others said “***No way Lord***! ***I was with you right up to the point where you said suffer, reject, die and rise again***!”

1. **Vs. 33 Three truths about the cross**

Vs. 33 When Peter said these words Jesus’ recognized the voice behind them as it was the voice of the world system influenced by satan. That’s why Jesus responded “*Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but of the things of men.*” In the world influenced by satan nothing is more important than ME, my interests, MY plans, MY way. It’s all about ME and that was what Peter was suggesting the world system, make it all about you Jesus. We all live in a world that is dominated by this prevailing thought of “*thinking of our own self first and foremost*.” The world is full of these slogans: Take care of your self, look out after number 1, I did it my way, you deserve the best etc. Jesus recognized the slogans because they come from the father of lies, and living by such a philosophy is the surest way to live an empty despairing life. Seeking personal fulfillment as the chief aim in this life is the easiest way to be unsatisfied. “*There is another way to achieve what you want, think of yourself*”, satan demands!

 ***The world system is fine with a church and Christianity without a cross it is the cross that the world rejects when it come to our faith.*** The message of the cross has three elements to it the first two are what people reject and it is because of this that people can’t come to see the third element:

1. **The cross means the end to “*self-sufficiency*” and “*self-reliance***”: These have been the philosophies of the world sense the fall of man and in fact were part of the fall. The world hates anything to do with not being able to say that it isn’t “***self-sufficient***”. Not only does the world not understand the message that apart from Christ we can do nothing it hates that message because the cross of Christ means the end of “***self-reliance***”. Within all humanity lies a desire to be able to claim that we had a little something to do with our own salvation. And because of that He becomes our debtor, He owes us what we want when we want it. But the cross of Christ wipes all of that out, nothing I have done or ever will do will be worth while and acceptable before God apart from what He has done on the cross. ***The cross of Christ doesn’t improve a person; it doesn’t make a person better. No it cuts a person off from themselves completely, the cross wipes me out to where there is nothing left of me***!
2. **The cross destroys our “*status*” our old personal value system**: The cross causes us to realize that we aren’t “*basically good*” or that God winks at our sin and makes excuses for it. The cross speaks of “*judgment*” and “*accountability*” and we hate those things when they are aimed at us. We don’t even like to sing the words of amazing grace because the writer went on to describe amazing grace as “*saving a* ***WRETCH*** *like me*”. “*Why I’m not a wretch, I’ve known wretch’s and I’m not one*!” The cross places all of us in the same hopeless and helpless category of “sinner” and that just doesn’t make us feel good about ourselves. The cross forces us to confront, our own disappointments and disasters in away that we can’t excuses them or justify them. Our whole value system is destroyed by the cross as everything that we would value as putting ourselves above others, success, popularity, prosperity, power doesn’t matter one iota to God. ***The cross is the most radical idea ever put for humanity and we will never understand Christ or Christianity.***
3. **The cross always leads to the resurrection**: Without the cross their can be no resurrection! But it is interesting to note that the disciples never seem to hear Jesus when He spoke about the resurrection but the truth is every time He spoke about the cross He spoke about the resurrection but they never could get to it. They would just come to a halt when Jesus spoke of the cross and just never got to the resurrection. The resurrection speaks of freedom, victory, new life, peace, and joy but we can not get there until we come to the cross. Saint’s there is a great truth in this we will never get to the resurrection with all that it holds until we come to accept the cross.

**Mark 8:34**

**“What do you want from life”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 34 The threefold process of discipleship**
3. **Introduction**

Before I start I wish to offer a sincere apology with regards to this message only having one verse in the study. I had every intention to finish this chapter and worked diligently to accomplish this task but in the end the amount of truth God gave my heart far exceeded the amount of time I have to communicate it. There are two things that most church growth experts will tell you in seminars to stay away from if you want to “*grow* ***your*** *church*” and reach unchurched people:

* **The cross of Christ**: As it singlehandedly destroys humanity’s two primary “***felt needs***”: ***“Self-sufficiency***” and “***Self-esteem***”.
1. ***“Self-sufficiency***”: The cross says that we can never be good enough or do enough to save our self. Further more the cross of Christ destroys the notion that I can ever improve on this condition enough or do better next time.
2. “***Self-esteem***”: The cross says that we along with all of humanity are **NOT** “*basically good*”. At the same time the cross tells us that there will be “*personal accountability*” and “*judgment*” for our actions. Our entire personal value system is destroyed by the cross of Christ. It is the most radical truth ever put forth to humanity and it destroys every other philosophy held by mankind.
* **The denial of self**: The concept and notion that this life is **NOT** primarily about me! That I’ve been created for a purpose that can only find it’s fulfillment in living life diametrically opposed to how most in this world live it.

Apparently Jesus didn’t attend church growth seminars directed at staying away from these two topics as He in back to back messages tackle’s them both. As noted this chapter is the mid point of the gospel, the first half of which has been Mark revealing to his Roman readers Jesus true identity, “*The Son of God*”. The 2nd half of this book will be the further unveiling of this with the focus upon the primary way in which this revelation becomes known, namely His death, burial and resurrection.

1. **Vs. 34 The threefold process of discipleship**

Vs. 34 There are several things I notice as we start this section:

1. First is an overall observation that Jesus’ words in this section are dealing with discipleship. He says as much in His opening to those that were there, “*Whoever desires to come after me…*”, and what follows is:
* Vs. 34 ***The threefold process*** of discipleship
* Vs. 35 ***The motive*** of the undertaking, namely ***LIFE***
* Vs. 36-38 ***The fact that there is no way to escape the outcome*** of the decision made by the individual at His invitation.
1. Secondly, I notice that Mark informs his readers that Jesus called two groups of people to hear what He had to say with regards to discipleship as we read, “*When He had called* “**THE PEOPLE**” *to Himself* “**WITH HIS DISCIPLES**”, *He said to them.*.” This leads me to wonder if this message was meant *evangelistically;* as those followers other than His disciples were invited to listen. Or was this message only telling His disciples in contrast to theses followers the true meaning of what it means to be His disciples? At issue in these questions is a greater issue: ***Is discipleship a further step than being a follower of Christ or put another way can you be a Christian and not be a disciple***? To answer that question will require us to examine in great detail these words to these two groups of people hearing them.
2. Third we will need to look carefully at the threefold process of discipleship that Jesus put forth to these two groups and in so doing two things stand out:
* All three of these things are in the “*present tense continuous action*” in the Greek! Which simply means that Jesus is saying that the true disciple will be one that “*keeps on continually denying himself, keeps on continually taking up his cross and keeps on continually following Jesus.*” This tells us that discipleship tough being a one-time decision is demonstrated by continuous actions that are implemented through out everyday.
* Next I notice that this threefold process of continual application is seen in implementing two negative actions (*denying self and taking up his cross*) and one positive action of (*following Jesus*). Jesus starts by saying “*whoever desires to* ***COME*** *after Me*” and the word “***COME***” is the same word He used in John 5:40 where He used it in conjunction with having ***LIFE***, the inference is if a person doesn’t do so they have no life. This is further clarified in the motive in implementing this threefold process with two negative actions and one positive as ***LIFE***. This informs us that ***such actions are not hating oneself but rather the path to fulfilment and enjoying life as God designed us to***.

We are now ready to examine this ***threefold process of discipleship*** in detail:

1. “***Let him deny himself***”: The word “***deny***” in the Greek as Jesus used it is a “***reflexive pronoun***” and means to “***forget one’s self***” or “***to lose sight of one’s self and interests***”. When combined with the verb tense it speaks of doing so as entering into a “***new condition***”. What is further revealing to me is that it is the same word used later of Peter when he denied the Lord. When we use the definition supplied in the Greek it goes against what we normally interpret the word deny to mean. Jesus is **NOT** telling these two groups to “***give up***” on their self, instead He is saying the opposite. Jesus is saying to these two groups that their present concerns about their self, their rights to run our own life, feel the way they do, act the way they do, is in reality ruining their opportunity to experience life! “*Denying self*” strikes at the very heart of our existence as it is what we humans value and protect above everything else: “***The right to make ultimate decisions for ourselves***”. All of humanity rebels against anyone who tries to take away our right to make the final decisions in our lives. Jesus’ words about discipleship is not aimed at “*giving up*” **this or that**, it is aimed at “*giving up*” **our perceived belief to the right to ourselves**! Paul spoke of this eloquently in 1 Corinthians saying, “*you are not your own…for you were bought at a price*”. Discipleship seen as following Jesus has a core trait that says that we “*no longer own ourselves*”. Jesus, has purchased the right to make all final decisions on the great issues of our life. “***Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny self trust, self-sufficiency, the feeling that we are able to handle life by our self and do what we want when we want***.” **The ultimate self-delusion is that we can live life independent of God** and Jesus is breaking through that self-delusion. Such a concept to live life independent from God is the religion of hell, the worship of self! That is why the first step of the process of discipleship is to relinquish our “*believed rights*” run our own life and submit ourselves and our leadership of self-governing to Jesus’ Lordship! There is no possible way of discipleship apart from this first step.
2. “***And take up his cross***”: The cross was an instrument of death reserved for the worst criminals. I’m certain that this phrase falling on these two groups was a difficult concept to understand. There are those who want to interpret this statement by Jesus in a manner that He was not intending. We have invented the phrase “*my cross to bear*” as a way explaining what we believe He meant: **A kind of trial, handicap, difficult situation or circumstance becomes our “*cross to bear*”**. But Jesus wasn’t speaking in terms of ***difficulties***, the cross was **NOT** the “*trial*” it was the “***execution***”! The person who “*bore the cross*” didn’t come away from the experience and say, “*Wow that was tough*”, NO they were dead in a humiliating, shame ridden and painful death! The cross was designed to be demeaning and degrading as it placed a naked man above the ground in full view on onlookers in a slow painful death. The cross that Jesus tells these two groups to take up is a symbol of those events that lead to the death of our pride and fallen flesh. Any event that leads us to the end of our foolishness and sinful addictions is good. Paul spoke of such a cross in his 2nd letter to the Corinthians where he speaks of a “*thorn in the flesh*” that was given him to buffet him, lest he be exalted above measure. Paul learned that such a ***cross was a great thing as it caused him to understand that God’s grace was sufficient for him, and that God’s strength was perfected in the things that caused Paul to recognize his weakness***! It’s for this reason that Paul exclaimed in 1 Corinthians 15:31 that He “**died daily**”! That I believe is what Jesus is saying is the 2nd step in discipleship where we recognize that anything in our life that leads us to die to our pride is a good thing as it is then that we will see that Gods grace is all we need. The problem is that we humans have a tendency to avoid anything and everything that comes at us that humbles us. We attempt to escape by getting angry, getting even or running away from such “crosses”. But Jesus say’s such things as these are essential in discipleship as they lead us to more of Him! These first two steps “***coming after and taking up***”, are not only put in the negative they are also in the Greek to be obeyed at once and are once for all acts. That is, ***they are to be looked upon as permanent attitudes and practices in life***. Our whole life is to be characterized by by a habit denying self and not owning our own life or avoiding the things that humble us and make us more dependent upon Jesus.
3. “***And follow Me***”: The word “*follow*” means to take the same road as another but the idea is **NOT** to do so **AFTER** another but **ALONG WITH** or accompanying another! We are walking with another in fellowship on the same road as them. The Greek here has it as a moment by moment habitual action living out that which the first two steps were permanent practices. Jesus 3rd step in this discipleship process is obedience that is done so in a moment by moment communication as we walk the same road in life as Jesus! Jesus is not speaking about perfection ***He is speaking about intimate relationship where two are going the same direction***! Our Christian life is living life as He lives life, “*loving your enemies, praying for those who hurt you, forgiving those who offend you*”. It is a decision in a moment lived out daily for a life time as we make these three choices each and every moment of every day.

***Discipleship is denying our rights to self governing our lives, seeing the events that cause us to die to self and be more dependent on Jesus as GOOD THING instead of something to be avoided and enjoying a daily walk with Him where ever He takes us***! As wonderful as these sound in truth they don’t always present themselves in appealing packages do they? In fact, John wrote that when this confronted the 70 that were also walking with them that many turned and went back and chose to follow Him no more. I personally like the fact that Jesus has never invited anyone to join Him that He didn’t let them know what was involved. Jesus is not into tricking anyone to become His disciple on false terms, He wants us to know that if we are going to follow Him we are going to become a different person then we are. Physically no one I know joins a gym or starts a diet with the hope that with all the dying to self that in a year they are going to look and feel just like they do right now! Yet there are many who want to spiritually “join” Jesus as long as in the end they can spiritually stay the same as they are when they started the journey. Next week we shall take up the motive behind this threefold process of discipleship as well as the fact that there is no way to escape the outcome of your decision!

**Mark 8:35-38**

**“Living by losing”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 35 Getting the most out of life**
3. **Vs. 36-37 The cost of compromise**
4. **Vs. 38 No “Closet Christians”**
5. **Introduction**

Having examined in detail the threefold process of discipleship we move on to the ***motivation*** and ***expectation*** behind making such a decision. As I said last week I for one am very thankful that Jesus is up front with His invitation as He never wanted people to follow Him under false pretenses. There was never any hidden fine print with regards to what was involved. No person who has made this decision will ever be able to say to Him, “*Hey, wait a darn minute here Jesus you never told me I wouldn’t be in control of my life, you didn’t tell me that I would be placed into daily situations where I will be reminded that I can’t trust myself and can only trust you and you never told me that we would be on this journey together going places that you want me to go even if I don’t*.” Yet with that said there are untold millions who daily complain about these clear terms of being a Christian. As I illustrated last week these same folks don’t have the same expectations when it comes to the sacrifices they make to become physically healthier as they do with their spiritual health. This morning we shall finish with this convicting section.

1. **Vs. 35 Getting the most out of life**

Vs. 35 This verse requires us to do some in depth research in the Greek to uncover it’s meaning which can be clouded in the English translations. Up first is the phrase “*whoever desires*”; in verse 34 though the same English words are used in verse 35 they are different in the Greek. In verse 34 this phrase is in the *indicative mode* with the use of the conditional particle *ei*. What that means is that in verse 34 the expression assumes that SOME DO desire to come after Jesus. But the same phrase a sentence later is in the *future tense* making the “*whoever desires*” an ***as yet unfulfilled hypothetical condition***.

One of the great challenges in our English Bibles is the multiplicity of meanings with the use of the same word. Here is a clear example of this in verse 35 as Jesus says to these two groups “*For whoever desires to save his* ***life*** *will lose it, but whoever loses his* ***life*** *for My sake and the gospel’s will save it*.” At issue is what specifically does Jesus mean when He used the word LIFE? In the English we use only one word for “life”:

* It can mean the physical life
* It can refer to the inner life of man which is often called the soul. This refers too the part of a person that thinks, wills, feels and reasons. It is this LIFE that our visible personality resides and interacts in our activities, hopes and aspirations
* It can refer to eternal life, life beyond what we know as our physical life

In the Greek there are different words used for each distinction and the word Jesus used is “*psuche*” which refers to the “*soul*”. Jesus is saying that the motive behind the threefold process of discipleship is that the person who so takes up this invitation will live life as God attended man to. But the opposite is also true, if a person desires to live life seeking self-gratification they will lose that which can alone make the activity of life worthwhile and satisfying. ***God has designed man is that we can only find life satisfying and peace filled when our entire life is swallowed up in the pursuit of God’s will for us***! Jesus is not speaking in terms of our salvation for our self-denial can never change a sinning soul only trusting in Jesus blood can do that. Jesus is offering up the motivation for the threefold process of discipleship which **is not aimed at eternal life but rather getting most out of life!** Jesus’ desire is that His disciples get the most out of life and He says that ***there are two attitudes towards life that are possible and each of them has their own result***:

1. *For whoever desires to save his* ***life*** *will lose it*: The first is described as “*saving your life*” and by this Jesus is saying that if you continue to live life by insisting to make yourself the center of your universe, holding on to being self centered as a means to achieve happiness you will only achieve the opposite. You will end up miserable and discontented if you make life about “*What’s in this for me*?” The world is full of examples of people who have lived narcissistic lives all about their own happiness and despite their protests they are the unhappiest people you have ever been around. The truth is all of us have first hand experience with this don’t we, as we have all at times lived self consumed lives where everything is about us and thing is no matter how much of us we have we are never content
2. *but whoever loses his* ***life*** *for My sake and the gospel’s will save it*: The second attitude towards life is the exact opposite. Disregard any part of life that places you as the most important person and move out into total dependence upon God, live careless of what may happen to you. It is the attitude found in Paul as he said in Acts 20:24 “*But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy..*” Jesus says when you lose your life in Him for the pursuit of enriching others life for Him you will discover the greatest life. Martyred missionary Jim Elliot was found of saying, “***He is no fool who gives up what he can not keep to gain what he can never lose***!”

These are the only two possible results but there are still folks attempting to save their currant way of living and expect to achieve different results. I’ve heard it said that this is the definition of insanity, “*To continue the same practice expecting different results*! ***If we continue to live life in pursuit of making life all about us we will discover that we may end up with everything we want but the problem will be that we won’t anything we have***! Jesus didn’t call us to a discipleship that is boring and barren, No He called us to LIFE, the riches of His continual presence and joy that all of His creation can never contain. Saint’s discipleship may begin in death but it ends in LIFE! This is the great paradox of discipleship and we are living by one of these two attitudes at any given moment but we can not live by both of them at the same time.

The world is full of examples of these two philosophies is action:

* French philosopher Voltaire said to his Dr. near his death, “*I will give you ½ of what I’m worth if you will give me six months of life.*” The Dr. replied that he couldn’t do so to which Voltaire moaned, “*Then I shall die and go to hell*!”
* Famed film producer Louis B. Mayer last words were, “*Nothing matters! Nothing matters*!”
* The suicide note of comedian Freddie Prinze written at the height of his success was “*I must end it, There’s no hope left*!”

But when you compare them with the words of Christians you see something completely different:

* George Washington said, “*I die hard but am not afraid to go*.”
* D.L. Moody’s final words were, “*Earth is receding, heaven is opening, and this is my coronation day.*”
1. **Vs. 36-37 The cost of compromise**

Vs. 36-37 These questions of Jesus are designed to cause the applicant to search their heart and question the way they have been living. The word Jesus uses for “*world*” here is the word *kosmos* and it refers to the world system which satan controls and unsaved humanity is enslaved by. The word “*loses*” in verse 36 is a word that means to “*sustain damage, to receive injury or to suffer loss*”. It is this world system promises you everything to satisfy your longing but never delivers and the only thing that it doesn’t allow is God. The prudent investor will always ask this question, “*If I’m going to invest my resources, time and energy into this venture will I be able to enjoy the fruit of this investment*?” Jesus’ point is that there are the majority of people in the world who have invested poorly having spent everything upon pleasure and possessions and once their life is gone they have nothing left. If asked many folks will tell you that they wouldn’t be willing to sell their soul for all the money in the world but in reality they are giving it away for far less than that, some cheep momentary pleasure, earthly relationship or worldly pursuit! You never see Hurst’s pulling U-Haul’s! Charlemagne was the emperor of France from 742-814. During his life time his goal had been to evangelize Europe. When his tomb was opened they found something very interesting, though the tomb was filled with treasures in the center of the vault seated on a throne was the skeletal remains and on his lap was an open Bible with his bonnie finger pointing at the words of Mark chapter 8 verse 36-37.

**Vs. 38 No “Closet Christians”**

Vs. 38 Jesus says, “*for whoever is ashamed of Me.*.” this is not a statement about the future conduct of a person but rather their present attitude towards Jesus. Jesus final words point out that the conduct of the individual presently determines Jesus future action towards that person. The matter of discipleship has to do with the expectation of making or in some cases not making the decision to become His disciple. There is no such things as “***Closet Christians***”, “***Secret Saints***” or “***Disguised Disciples***” every person Jesus has called He has done so publically and the way we live out our life’s shows that our answer is equally as public! The very first thing He wants us to know is that it is a persons **WORKS** and not their **WORDS** alone that will tell their story of commitment. Jesus is talking about a person who expresses conformity to Christianity but in reality adopts and follows to the values of this world. To this Jesus says that this will be revealed in that day. Jesus said something very similar in Matthew chapter 7 verses 21-23 when He announced that, “*Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but those who do the will of My Father in heaven*.” And here in we have the answer to the original question that this section brought up “*Can you be a Christian without being a disciple*?” A person can come to Jesus and all who do so will be given life if they really meant it when they came. But in coming to Jesus it is clear that we are coming to take up the work of discipleship as described in this passage! Now in saying this I realize that none of us are “good disciples” all of the time, there is much failure that surrounds our lives at times but Jesus is talking about our hearts and aim in life. Do we want to live for our self’s our do we want to live for Him?

**Mark 9:1-8**

**“Glory through the veil of humanity”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 1 A preview**
3. **Vs. 2-8 Fourfold impact of the transfiguration**
4. **Introduction**

One Greek scholar listed the first rule of scripture interpretation as: “*Ignoring all chapter divisions*”. All chapters and verse numbering were added at a much later date: (*Chapter’s were added in the 13th century and verse numbers were added in the 16th century*) and in both cases they were added for ease of referencing. **The problem is that though they have aided in finding a specific verse, they have been guilty of adding confusion to what they referenced**. Such is the case in this chapter division as verse 1 of chapter 9 should have been the last verse of chapter 8. Look at this section we note that over the course of a few days Jesus had spoken to His disciples about the cross and now He will speak them about the crown!

1. **Vs. 1 A preview**

Vs. 1 In verse 38 Jesus was speaking to the people and His disciples concerning the process of discipleship which led to the motivation and expectation for making such a decision. In finishing this Jesus gave reference to the fact that He will be the person who alone will weigh the actions of people who have claimed they have accepted His invitation. In fact, Jesus even tells them “***WHEN***” this will take place as He says, “*when* ***I come*** *in the glory of* ***the*** *Father with the holy angels*.” The fact that Jesus says that His coming will be “*with the holy angels*” tells us that the timing of this event is **NOT the rapture** of the church but rather **His second coming** which ushers in His Millennial region. We know this because according to scripture at the rapture He is not accompanied by angels. This aids us in our interpretation of verse 1 with regards to the meaning of the phrase, “*Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power*.” Jesus was saying that some standing with Him wouldn’t die until they saw the millennial reign of Christ. Though this answers the question as to timing it leaves us with yet another question because Peter, James and John are all dead. The answer to what this phrase means can only be speaking of transfiguration which was a picture or typology of the millennial reign of Christ. Jesus clearly knew that this event was approaching as He announced its arrival according to verse 2 six days prior to it happening, and in so doing He explained the reason for it before it ever took place. Further more He had done so after He had announced the cross and the threefold way of discipleship.

 You can see the confusion this chapter division has caused some as they suggest that Jesus was some how predicting the time of His 2nd coming to occur within the life time of those who were present with Him and since they died Jesus was wrong. But when you remove this awful chapter division you see clearly that Jesus was referencing His transfiguration which was meant as a “**preview**” of His coming millennial reign in glory. We know this is the correct interpretation of this verse when we cross reference it to 2 Peter 1:16-17. There Peter along with James and John were at this very event and Peter writes, “*For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*.” This is also referenced in John’s gospel chapter 1 verse 14 where John says that “*we beheld His glory*”.

Now what’s exciting to me is what this verse also implies as it relates to the 2nd coming of Christ in His glory and the kingdom of God being present with power. Jesus implies in the phrase “*some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power*” that at DEATH the believer WILL “*see the kingdom of God present with power*”! This of course is what other verses in the bible tells us as well, that when the believer dies we are instantly in the presence of the Lord. What is of further interest to me is that it appears that this has always been the case even prior to the the incarnation of Christ as Jude verse 14 references “*Enoch, the 7th from Adam*”, who prophesied about: “*The Lord coming with thousands upon thousands of His holy ones*”. Amazingly this is a reference to the 2nd coming of Christ but done prior to Jesus 1st coming. It seems as though as far as “*seeing the glory of the Son and the kingdom of God coming in power*” everything is pointing to the 2nd coming to experience that and there are two ways this can happen for the believer:

* Death
* Rapture
1. **Vs. 2-8 Fourfold impact of the transfiguration**

Vs. 2-8 Through out these remaining verses Peter told Mark of four things that he never forgot about the event of Jesus’ “*transformation*”.

1. Vs. 2-3 **What Jesus looked like**: Mark doesn’t tell us specifically which mountain Jesus, Peter, James and John ascended but most believe it to be Mount Hermon in Northern Israel. The Greek word Mark uses to describe Jesus transformation is “*metamorphoomai*” and it is where we get our English word “*Metamorphosis*”. The word refers to the “***act of giving outward expression of one’s inner character***.” A full translation of this would be “***Jesus’ outward expression was changed before them and it did so because it was a true representation of His inner nature***.” The usual outward expression of Jesus was the “*Man of Sorrows, the one acquainted with our grief*”. But suddenly He was transformed into the Glory of Son of God the essence of Deity, which He had always possessed and it shone through the clay walls of His humanity and even through the garments He wore. It was the same dazzling radiance the angels saw in Jesus’ preincarnate state that Paul describes in Philippians chapter 2 verse 6 where he wrote concerning Jesus that He was, “*in the form of God, and did not consider it robbery to be equal with God.*” Mark says in verse 3 “*His clothes became shinning, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them*.” Matthew adds that “*His face shone like the sun*” and the point is that in this transfiguration Jesus’ radiant glory was not borrowed like our moon from the suns reflection instead His radiant glory came from within, from who He truly was. In fact, the word “*shining*” in Greek indicates that it was **ACTIVE** and as such a picture of what He will be like to all who see Him during His millennial reign. This was a momentary glimpse of His eternal glory that shone through the veil of His humanity. It is what Jesus would pray to the Father a year later in John chapter 17:5 that all of us Christians would experience when He said, “*And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was*.” ***One of the implications of the transfiguration is that Jesus clearly didn’t need to die or pass through death to receive this glory***. He clearly always possessed it and was able to pass back across the boundary of time into eternity with out passing through death. That reminds us about two things with regards to His death on the cross: It wasn’t ever about Jesus regaining that which He lost because clearly He never lost it. Second, it reminds us that Jesus was clearly not afraid to loss His earthly life because it would never change or alter who He essentially was.
2. Vs. 4 **Who was with Jesus**: Mark records for us that Elijah and Moses appeared and were talking with Jesus. The Greek has it that they were actively engaged in a conversation with Him. I would have very much wished that Peter would have had the for thought to write that one down for us but for now we will just have to wait until we see Him face to face. There are several interesting details in this story that indirectly lead us to some interesting conclusions about eternity with Jesus.
* Jesus makes no introductions as to whom these two men are and there were no photographs of them and yet they seemingly know exactly who they are. *That tells me that in glory there will be no need for introductions; we will just know each other instantly*!
* Why are the two Elijah and Moses? Why not David and Abraham? Well I believe that they represent several things:
1. They represent the make up the two great sections of the Old Testament scriptures, Moses = the law and Elijah = the prophets. The law according to Paul’s words in Galatians “*drove people to Jesus*” and the prophets “*provided the map and directions as to where to find Him*”.
2. They also represent the two ways which believers can enter into heaven: Moses = death and Elijah = caught up into heaven or the rapture. It is interesting that both ways are represented in the transfiguration of Jesus. It is interesting to speculate on Moses first arrival into the promise land. Moses had been left up on a mountain over looking the land of promise and was never allowed to enter in for his miss representation the character of God. But here in glory Moses gets to come into the land he could only see at a distance. That tells me that there are experiences here in this life that we may never get to fully understand that the prohibition will be forever lifted in heaven. Moses finally made it past his failures and so will we!
3. Finally, though Mark doesn’t record the conversation Luke 9:31 tells us that the general theme of the conversation was of “*Jesus decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.*” Simply put the conversation centered upon Jesus soon exit from his earthly tabernacle back to His heavenly one by means of His death upon a cross for our sins. This causes me to wonder if the conversation wasn’t specific with reference to each man: Moses conversation would have centered upon how Jesus soon sacrifice as the Lamb of God would be the fulfillment of what the animal sacrifices pointed to in the law. Elijah’s conversation would have centered in upon how His death and resurrection was to fulfill all those prophecies in the scriptures.
4. Vs. 5-6 **The proposal of Peter**: The third interesting detail that Mark records is Peter’s reaction to Jesus, Elijah and Moses discussing what Luke has told us was Jesus upcoming death in Jerusalem. What is interesting is that the Greek doesn’t indicate that Peter had been a part of the discussion at all. In fact, the word “*answered*” is a compound word that means “*to give off one’s judgment without being asked*”. Peter than goes on to say, that it was “*good*” for the three of them to be there and uses a word for good that means, “*beautiful*” or excellent and then suggests that the three of them get started in making three tents for shelter. I’m certain that Peter wanted Mark to include the reason for this outburst was extreme fear. But nonetheless Peter had not been called to say anything and silence would have been a far better course of action that what he said. The assessment in all accounts where this story is recorded is that Peter spoke foolishly. I wonder if the point of Peter’s words in fear was to suggest headquarters that would set in motion a worldwide movement? There are always two kinds of people in these kinds of situations: ***Those who have something to say and those who have to say something***! And Peter like many of us at times falls into the later category.
5. Vs. 7-8 **The voice of God from the cloud**: Immediately after this foolish proposal we have the fourth and final recorded detail of the transfiguration. Mark writes of the suddenness of the appearance of the cloud and gives us a better understanding of the cloud as being a specific shape and size and not a vapor thus it speaks of the Shekinah Glory which guided Israel out of Egypt and then resided above the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies. Matthew tells us that it was “*bright cloud*” that a voice spoke saying, “*This is My beloved son. Hear Him*!” The emphasis is upon two things: That Jesus is the Messiah God’s Son and that He is the beloved One. They are told to be constantly hearing Him and the word means more than just listening to be actively obeying what you heard. It appears that this came as a rebuke from the Father to Peter’s fear based response saying in essence, “*Peter, don’t put My Son on the same level as Moses and Elijah. Listen to Him*!” Jesus was the only One to fulfill all the predictions of the prophets and is the fulfilment of the law, He was no mere man like Moses and Elijah. There were three occasions direct from heaven concerning the work of Jesus: At His baptism, which when He began His ministry, where He was addressed “*You are My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*” Here on the Mount of Transfiguration, where the Father speaks to correct Peter’s mistake. And the final is in John 12:28 where the Father responds to Jesus prayer to glorify His name, to which the Father responds, “*I have glorified it, and will glorify it again*.”

Vs. 8 There comes a time when all our searching for answers to the perplexing questions of life end at the feet of Jesus and you look around and He is the only one there.

The transfiguration is a confirmation that Jesus had lived a sinless life, and could have gone directly into heaven. He didn’t need to leave humanity with any explanation of justification for our sin before His departure to the Father. Instead Jesus came down from Mount Hermon, to climb Mount Calvary, the Mount of our redemption!

**Mark 9:9-13**

**“Truth verse theology”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 9-10 The clarification of the cross**
3. **Vs. 11-13 Through a glass dimly**
4. **Introduction**

Mark ends the account of the transfiguration by telling us that after the voice that came out of the clouds ended, “*suddenly they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves*.” This is the only place in the New Testament where the Greek word “*suddenly*” is found and is used to signify a change in situation which they had discovered when they had looked around and saw no one but Jesus. What follows is that Jesus issues a verbal prohibition until He after He has risen from the dead, which set in motion then questioning as to what this had meant followed by a second coming question as to the sequence of events that would lead up to that. This is the 2nd of two verbal prohibitions within a short amount of time. ***What is even more amazing is that what Jesus told them not to tell anyone are the two single most important things His followers could ever tell a lost world***: ***What He has come to do and who He is***! The theology of the Jews and the disciples at this time is what we often see with people today: “*What they wish and desire to be the* ***TRUTH*** *they believe instead of way God has ordered as the truth*!” And as is often the case this blinded them to seeing the truth!

1. **Vs. 9-10 The clarification of the cross**

Vs. 9-10 As these three came down the mountain having witnessed Jesus transfiguration they were naturally thinking of what they had just observed, then Jesus issued His injunction that they must tell no one what they had seen. These men did not come down the mountain the way they came up, such is often the case when Jesus reveals who He truly is to us. Jesus knew that their minds were still polluted by the popular notions of the Messiah and there was only one thing that could change their wrongly held theology, THE CROSS.

 The word used in the Greek for “*tell*” means to “*lead a person through a series of events giving a narrative*”. Used in this sentence it describes the fact that Jesus didn’t just issue a prohibition against communication He lead them through the reason why. What this reveal to us is that the three disciple’s ignorance was not based upon lack of instruction but rather the pollution of WRONG INSTRCTION. Jesus wanted them to keep silent as to such a time after He had risen from the dead so that He could correct their wrong theology.

 They kept the prohibition faithfully while continually question each other as to the meaning the meaning of “*risen from the dead*”. The death of Jesus was something that these three had a difficult time comprehending. What fascinates me is that they locked in upon His dying but not upon His rising from the dead. We see that three things that grab our attention as we look at this section:

1. That they were prohibited from communicating what they had witnessed
2. That they were confused about what Jesus meant by the timing of then prohibition, “*till the Son of Man has risen from the dead*”
3. That they were puzzled about the answer to their question
4. The first answer is an obvious as **Jesus didn’t want then to speak about something they clearly didn’t understand themselves**.
5. The 2nd answer as to the prohibition was that it was “***time sensitive***”! They were free from restriction AFTER He had risen from the dead. The implication is that this would be the time when they would understand what they had witnessed.
6. The final answer with regards to what puzzled them about the phrase has to do with two phrases that are different but often placed as meaning the same things: “*Risen from the dead*” and “*risen* ***FROM AMONG*** *the dead*”. The idea that dead people would one day rise was **not new** but the idea that **a dead person** would rise ***OUT FROM AMONG*** the dead was and it was this that they clearly heard Jesus say about Himself and didn’t understand.
7. **Vs. 11-13 Through a glass dimly**

Vs. 11 The verb tense in the phrase “*they asked*” is imperfect which means that they continually questioned Jesus about “*Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first*?”

The scribes misinterpreted Malachi chapter 4 verse 5 and wrongly predicted that Elijah would come and pave the way for the Messiah’s reign, missing entirely the reason for the first coming. As far as the scribes were concerned they taught about Elijah being caught up in his “*chariot of fire*” in 2 Kings chapter 2 verse 11 as not dying and coming back. The rabbinical tradition was that before the Messiah came Elijah would come and be His herald. And the disciples were very much caught up in this theology that looked for the emergence of Elijah before the coming of the Messiah. To them this signified God interrupting time and instituting the victory of heaven which would signify the victory of Israel over her enemies. According to this tradition based upon Malachi chapter 3 Elijah would come three days before the Messiah:

* On the first day Elijah would stand upon the mountains of Israel lamenting the desolation of the land. Then he would shout in a voice heard from one end of the world to the other, “*Peace comes to the world, peace comes to the world*!”
* On the 2nd day Elijah would again stand upon the mountains of Israel and shout this time saying, “*Good has come to the world, good has come to the world*!”
* On the 3rd day Elijah would stand upon the mountains and shout, “*Yeshuah (Salvation) has come to the world, Yeshuah (Salvation) has come to the world*!”

And with the threefold three-day announcement by Elijah the Messiah would restore all things, mending families, establishing rituals, cleansing the nation by bringing back the exiled patriots. They perceived that with Elijah coming there would be the constant activity of heaven on earth in their interest. **As such they were wondering, “*If Jesus is the Messiah what happened to Elijah*?”** They took this theology of men and attributed it to God’s plan, so Jesus took this faulty teaching and drove them back to the truth that they would not face saying that, “*The people had done what they wanted with Elijah in typology John the Baptist and if they have done that with Elijah what do you suppose they will do with the Messiah*?”

Vs. 12-13 To understand this section, we need to be very careful least we mix up the pronouns, as Jesus is correcting them in the mist of answering them. He changes the subject about Elijah coming first, to that of Himself suffering many things and being treat with contempt. Then in verse 13 He again goes back to Elijah having already come. “*Indeed*” is a word that means “*It is true*” and is use by Jesus to answer their questioning but it also signifies that Jesus wanted them to think further and to realize that they were asking the wrong question. The phrase “*restoring of all things*” in reference to the for runner (Elijah / John the Baptist) was setting in motion the suffering, rejection, death and resurrection of the Messiah. **This was the question they should have asked, “*Why does the Messiah need to be rejected, suffer, die and raise again*?”** **Their focus was of timing and should have been on substance!** Jesus had already identified Elijah and his timing in Matthew chapter 11 verse 14 where Jesus answered the question proposed by John’s followers concerning His identity, where Jesus says, “*And if you are willing to receive it, he* (John the Baptist) *is Elijah who is coming*.” Jesus is ***not*** saying that John is actually Elijah or that John’s appearance was the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy concerning Elijah coming at the conclusion of the tribulation period as one of the two witnesses of described in Revelation chapter 11. What Jesus is describing in reference to John the Baptist and Elijah is that ***John is coming in the spirit and power of Elijah in fulfilling Malachi’s prophecy of chapter 3 preparing the way before the first coming of the Messiah which will be characterized by purifying the son’s of Levi, coming near for judgment***.

 It is interesting to compare Mark’s account with Matthew 17:12-13 as Matthew elaborates further saying that Jesus said “*Elijah has come already,* ***and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished****. Like wise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands.*” Then Matthew includes his commentary saying in verse 13, “***Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist****.*” ***The point of emphasis with regards to Jesus words is that it isn’t recorded any where that Elijah would suffer and be rejected but it was prophesied about this happening to the Messiah***. So Jesus is saying, “*Elijah has come and will come but it is written that the Messiah is going to be rejected, suffer and die and on the 3rd day rise again*.” The real issue wasn’t the timing of the coming of the Elijah but the purpose and coming of the Messiah and the disciples had the wrong focus. Again according to Matthews account Jesus indicated that John the Baptist symbolically fulfilled Elijah’s roll as preparing the way in Malachi’s prophecy. This is further brought in Luke’s account of chapter 1 verse 17 where the angel of the Lord tells John’s father Zacharias that John “*will go before Him* (**Jesus**) *in the spirit and power of Elijah….to make ready a people prepared for the Lord*.”

**Mark 9:14-29**

**“Miss-focused faith”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 14-19 Failure of the followers**
3. **Vs. 20-27 Source of faith or success of faith?**
4. **Vs. 28-29 What or Who are you trusting in?**
5. **Introduction**

When reading the Bible at times, it appears to have been written abstractly, as random events are placed next to each other without the seeming slightest connection. We could understand this when we consider that these human writers were not trained in penning novels but for us Christians this presents a difficulty. We believe the Bible to be authored by God and when seemingly random stories are placed next to each other without any visible connection, doubt as to its divine origins creeps in. Such is the difficulty in the account given by Mark of the demon possessed boy whom the disciples could not deliver. Before we can unravel this difficult story we are confronted with the question of: “*What does this story have to do with Peter, James and John witnessing Jesus’ transfiguration*?” The connection between these two stories seem as far apart as possible. But based upon verse 14 it is clear by Mark’s narrative that they are connected as this event takes place right at the foot of the Mountain as Jesus arrived with the three disciples. The four of them interrupt an on going scene as the remaining disciples were trying to be of service while facing the opposition both from the scribes who were present and the case its self.

 As mentioned the gospel has made a turn as we are now on the road to Calvary and Mark lead by the Spirit of God has begun to answer the question as to, “***Why were those who witnessed Jesus unaware that He was the Son of God***.” Last week we noted the confusion Peter, James and John had with regards to the 1st coming of Christ and His soon death, burial and resurrection. Here we note what happens when His followers fail to make the personal connection to His sacrifice on their behalf; it leads to a ***paralysis of power***. As we shall soon discover in the remaining story it was not because of absences of faith but instead a **miss-focus of faith**. The connection is that miss-focus of faith has practical implications of **paralysis of power**!

1. **Vs. 14-19 Failure of the followers**

Vs. 14-19 One of the rules of biblical interpretation is to always seek your interpretation when given within the passage your studying. Here in looking at the ineffectiveness of the disciples in casting out the demon from the boy we are told in the 19th verse by Jesus that their problem was “***faithlessness***”. But *that is a broad diagnosis* that will require us to dig further into this passage if we are going to understand who it was aimed at as well as what Jesus meant by it. There are several mitigating factors that seemed to make this case unique:

1. Vs. 14 First is the length of time that the disciples had been at this which is suggested in two statements: That as Jesus and the three disciples entered the scene there was a “*great multitude*” around them and that “*scribes were there disputing with the disciples*”. I for one am impressed with the ***consistent*** and ***continual*** effort put forth by the disciples, especially when you factor in a great amount of people observing their failure as well as the direct and constant opposition in the scribes who were disputing with them in the process. What this suggests to me is that the disciples were utterly **convinced of their inevitable success.** This means that **their failure had nothing to do with** a ***lack of effort***, nor did it come from ***a lack of faith in the process***. I make this observation based upon the text as well as observing humanity. Both the continual witness of the multitudes and the continual opposition of the scribes would have: ***Put a halt in anyone who was not committed to the process or had lingering doubts of its eventual success***!
2. Vs. 15-18 It is equally clear that upon recognizing Jesus the people were “*greatly amazed*” at the lack of progress of the disciples and expected to see different results now that He had arrived. It also appears in Jesus’ response to the Scribes that He saw their involvement as a hindrance rather than a help to His disciples. When the spiritual dimension is placed next to the combination of the severity of the physical symptoms mentioned in verse 18 that masked epilepsy; with the self destructive spiritual possessed tendencies in verse 22, we see from a practical stand point that this case was unusual. It would be incorrect to make the leap in suggesting that all epilepsy is caused by demonic possession, instead of realizing that this peculiar case was masking its self with such symptoms. That combined with the father’s answer to Jesus’ inquiry as to the length of time that his boy had suffered being from childhood make this a very difficult case. We get a further understanding of this in Jesus’ own words in verse 29 where He says, “***This kind*** *can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting*.”

Vs. 19 Having made for allowances with regards to the difficulty of the case Jesus goes to answering the fathers statement of verse 18 concerning the inability of the disciples to cast out the demon from his son. His initial statement is that the inability came about do to a “***faithless generation***” that though He had been among them still didn’t understand the necessity of the continual personal connection to Him. We are left to our interpretive skills to determine who was included in the title of “*faithless generation*”. I’m of the belief that this included all present: The **great multitude**, **scribes** and by the response of **the father** in verse 23-24 him as well. But as seen by Jesus response to **His disciple’s** inquiry of verse 28 they were also included in this “*faithless generation*”. It is the disciple’s “*faithlessness*” that is the primary focus of the remainder of the passage. This is what is the great surprise of this section of scripture because ***the disciple’s exhibited qualities that we normally associate with faith not faithlessness***:

* **Uninterrupted trust**: Even in the face of prolonged failure and fierce opposition.
* **Expectation of success**: They maintained this even when the results didn’t match their continual effort. As noted, their surprise was that it had not succeeded as they were convinced that it would and apparently so much so that the process was not something that they doubted instead they wanted to know was missing that would have given them success.
1. **Vs. 20-27 Source of faith or success of faith?**

Vs. 20-27 Before we get to deep into looking at the disciples faithless we are first given Jesus’ addressing the father’s faithlessness. At Jesus’ request the young man is brought to Him where he manifests the physical symptoms already described by the father in verse 18. It is then that as I mentioned earlier Jesus like the “*Great Physician*” that He is asks the length of time that the patient has been manifesting these symptoms. The father replies since childhood then adds in the spiritual dimension to this of self destruction. The father then makes the plea, “***IF*** *You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.*” There are ***three things that stand out in this plea***:

* The father clearly **has doubts that anything can be done, as he uses the word “*IF*”**. There are several reasons for this confessed unbelief: The longevity and severity of his son’s condition. As well as the failed attempts to offer any solution to any of the symptoms both physical as well as spiritual. And lastly, the failed attempt by Jesus own disciples to help his son and I assume that the father was only holding a slight hope that Jesus could do something that others were unable to do.
* Secondly I notice ***the desperation of the father has***: He has given up on a cure and now is only trusting and hoping for a lessoning of the symptoms as he asks, “if you can do ***ANYTHING***.”
* The final thing I notice is that ***the father’s appeal is based upon the severity of the case not upon their worthiness*** as he asks Jesus to have “*compassion on us and help us*.”

Vs. 23-24 In Jesus’ response to the father the focus of Jesus reply is towards his unbelief and put’s the doubt back on him saying, “*If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes*.” The words believe are not in the original text although they are implied, instead Jesus uses a Jewish idiom “*If I can*…?”. There is also a play on words in the Greek as Jesus says, “*If you* ***CAN****…..all things* ***CAN BE***”, then Jesus puts over the contrast of the “*anything*” of the father next to the “*all things*” of the Son of God. The father was willing to settle for “*anything*” and Jesus tells him that he need not settle for “*anything*” when he is willing to trust Him for “*all things possible*”. This allows the father to address his own heart that has slipped into unbelief as he confesses this before Jesus. He asks Jesus to be continually helping his unbelief, a great request for us all. I wonder if the tears were shed not only because of the confession but also the realization that such doubt had caused him to lesson his expectation and hope of health and deliverance for his son?

Vs. 25-27 It seems as though Jesus wanted to avoid the spectacle of the young man’s deliverance and when he noticed the multitude running in curiosity He quickly rebuked the unclean spirit commanding him to come out and enter no more. But even with this command the demon came out kicking and screaming. So violent was the extraction that most on lookers believed the young man was dead, until Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up.

1. **Vs. 28-29 What or Who are you trusting in?**

Vs. 28-29 This takes us back to the question as to the rebuke of the disciple’s faithlessness having noted that they exhibited certain qualities we associate with faith: **Uninterrupted trust** and **Expectation of success**! What this reveals is that the disciple’s faithlessness is in what their faith had been placed in, namely a process and outcome, instead of Jesus! Their faithlessness was misplaced not absent! They had witnessed Jesus healing multiple times and repeated what they had witnessed and expected the same results. ***They had transferred their faith from the Person of Jesus to the process of healing and what was left was powerless religion instead of powerful relationship***! God’s works when we trust Him not the process or the outcome, those are never our concern and are an ineffective substitute for trusting only in Him. The power resides in His presence who alone acts not in a formula we repeat! This is seen in His given explanation to their question of ineffectiveness in this case when Jesus tells them that “This kind can come out by ***NOTHING BUT PRAYER AND FASTING***.” The best manuscripts omit “*and fasting*” and it was added much later in an attempt by some translators to suggest a reason other than prayerlessness to explain the failure of the disciple’s. What was Jesus referring to when He made this statement? ***There is no direct indication that He had engaged in prayer prior to this. Further more in seems inconsistent with the context to suggest that Jesus is correcting the use of formulas by issuing a formula.*** Instead I believe what Jesus is saying that “*this kind*” requires continual lifestyle communication with Jesus as one would with their best friend and not on dependence upon a formula.

**Mark 9:30-50**

**“A desire to be first”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 30-32 Afraid of the answer**
3. **Vs. 33-36 Servant of all verse served by all**
4. **Vs. 37-50 Three qualities of greatness**
5. **Introduction**

As Jesus enters the final 18 months of His life; Mark not only records the events but directed by the Holy Spirit demonstrates the lengths to which Jesus as Son of God would go for those in His kingdom: Namely His death burial and resurrection. Along the way Mark will also answer the question that John stated in his gospel 1:11 but only implied in Mark: “*Why didn’t His own people receive Him as the Son of God*.” So far we have see two such reasons: ***Bad theology*** and ***the wrong focus of faith***. In the section we will be studying yet another reason why people reject His testimony, ***a faulty view of one’s own importance!***

1. **Vs. 30-32 Afraid of the answer**

Vs. 30-32 We notice that this story takes place after the disciples had left the foot of Mount Hermon and the scene of the delivered demon possessed young man. The journey is around 30 miles as the crow flies but based upon this passage Jesus took His disciples on the back roads to avoid the crowds. It seems as though the purpose of this was to instruct them further on the details of His death and resurrection. *I’m always amazed at the critics as they insist upon saying that Jesus’ death was do to a series events that were beyond His control. Predicting the exact detail of the events 18 months before they happen doesn’t indicate that His death was do to escalating political and religious situations that got out of control.* In Jesus’ previous conversations with His Disciples He had mentioned differing aspects about His death each time adding something new:

* He had said that He would suffer many things
* That He would be rejected be the religious elite and establishment
* That He would be murdered
* That after three days He would rise again

But here Jesus adds yet another aspect of His death: *That all of the above would be set in motion by His* **betrayal**. What this revealed to His Disciples was that not only was His impending **death** **not accidental** it **was premeditated by a close friend**. I have also noticed that each time Jesus mentions His death, He finishes with words on His resurrection. ***It is clear that as far as Jesus was concerned that no matter how ghastly and gruesome His murder was; it would not spell His defeat but instead it would usher in His victory***. Yet even though He continually wanted His Disciples to understand his death, with each new revelation they became more startled by it while ignoring the resurrection. I maintain that every time Jesus gave a little more information instead of clarifying the upcoming event it left them in greater puzzlement. I can only imagine the disciples hearing this new realization that not only was He going to suffer, be rejected and die but that one of them, ***His closest friends***, was ***the instigator*** as they were going to betray Him. Though they didn’t understand this they were afraid to ask Him what it all meant, “*Who among Your closest friends; Jesus, would do such a thing*?” That’s the question they wanted to ask but were afraid to do so. One may assume that the reason behind their fear was that they would be rebuked but in truth there is not one verse where Jesus rebukes them for asking a question. ***So what were they afraid of***? Well I believe that *they were afraid* ***not of Jesus’ response in asking the question*** *but in* ***His answer***. Further more I believe that ***what each of them feared in the answer was that Jesus would say their name***. I say this because eighteen months later Jesus will be at a Passover meal with His disciples and again say that one of His closest friends was about to betray Him. It is there in John 13:25 that after each of them looked at each other John said what all were no doubt thinking, “***Is it I***”? So here 18 months before this they thought it safer to ***just not to ask Him***.

1. **Vs. 33-36 Servant of all verse served by all**

Vs. 33-36 Yet with that said I find a very interesting truth with regards to humanity; ***instead of being confronted by the Lord as to who among them is WORST they found it far better to dispute who among themselves would be the GREATEST***! I suggest to you that statement says a lot about the human condition as ***we tend to avoid the truth so that we can argue a lie***! What we see in the remainder of this chapter all centers around Jesus’ answer to this dispute as to who among them would be the greatest. There are several things that must be addressed generally:

* Vs. 33-34 First is the fact that nothing escapes our Lord’s eye’s and ear’s. It is clear that these 12 knew that such a dispute wasn’t something that they were comfortable having in front of the Jesus but they just couldn’t help themselves and did so quietly among themselves so as to not raise His suspicions and obviously failed. I believe that it is a far better tact on the part of us disciples to have an open communication with Jesus about our heart than to be under the mistaken illusion that we can hide our heart from Him, after all He is all knowing!
* Vs. 35 Second, ***I’m amazed at the response of Jesus*** in dealing with such prideful hearts; especially in light of the fact that clearly these 12 disciples knew that such a dispute was an embarrassment. *Instead of* ***REBUKING*** *them about ever thinking such a thing Jesus* ***INSTRUCTS*** *them on not only “****How to accomplish the feat”*** *but* ***“How they would be able to judge they have done so***.” God has built into every human heart the desire to succeed and be great and such a desire is a good desire not an evil one. Such ambition only becomes evil when it has **CHANGED ITS FOCUS** from “***BEING A SERVANT OF ALL***” to that of “***BEING SERVED BY ALL***”! Being “*served by all*” has become the chief way in which the world gauge’s greatness and such ambition has become approved and applauded by people, but not by God. God, sees greatness upon “*How many I have served today*!” and not in “*How many servants I have today*!”
* Vs. 36 Finally, the dispute centered upon who would be “***the greatest among themselves***”. It was an argument as to *which of them possessed the superior qualities that establish their preeminence above others;* as to make them greater than their fellow man. And as an illustration of what those qualities were Jesus used a prop as “*He took a* ***little child*** *and set him in the midst of them.*” The gauge of qualities; Jesus said by using this child, all centered how they responded to a child. ***There are three qualities mentioned in verses 37-48 and in each of them we need to understand had as an illustration a child sitting on Jesus lap in front of them***. Greatness is to be measured by how we treat the least and most vulnerable among society. ***It is this greatness that Jesus wants His disciples to be in pursuit of with such a hunger as one would have if they were in a contest to which only one can win*!** Why? **Because if we make such greatness our aim all of humanity would become better and all the world a picture of His kingdom.** William Penn knew of this, he was born to wealth and privilege in 1644, he was aimless in his youth, expelled from Oxford. In his 20’s he heard a sermon from a Quaker preacher that transformed his life and plunged his life into radical Christianity. His activities landed him in jail and at the age of 24 he wrote a book called, “*No Cross, No Crown*” which was about self denial as the only way to enter into rest and the Kingdom of God. In 1677 Penn sailed with Quaker leader George Fox to America to found a colony named after his late father “*Pennsylvania*” and a city with a heavenly goal to be a society of Christian love and brotherhood that he named “*Philadelphia*”. This city he prayed would become the seed of a new nation founded upon being a servant of all. This was the idea found in Jesus’ words here about being the greatest. Saint’s the ideal has not failed but we Christians have failed to maintain the ideal!
1. **Vs. 37-50 Three qualities of greatness**

Vs. 37 Here we are given the first of three godly ambitions of greatness: “***BE A SERVANT OF ALL***”! The important phrase of reference is the motive behind this first action, “In My name”. Having the child on His lap as Jesus said these words made the words all the more impactful as the significance of showing kindness to a little child who to most seems insignificant as to a means to personal greatness. A child can not advance a person’s career, their prestige, they have no influence that would benefit us or advance us in the world’s quest for greatness, they are the opposite. It is the child who must have things done for them. Far too many folks are interested in being “*big shots*” instead of having “***BIG HEARTS***” and Jesus say’s “*If you want to be a big shot you will have to have a big heart*”! *When we welcome the poor ordinary person who has no influence, no wealth, no power who can not advance us then we are on the road to greatness*. Greatness is measured upon valuing everyone, even the least, as we lavish them with the gifts God as given us to benefit them not ourselves.

Vs. 38-40 Apparently this first illustration was to much for John as he wanted a clarification on the rules of “*Being a Servant of all*”. At issue with John was, “*Who was included in the competition*?” The disciples had observed someone engaged in helping the least who wasn’t an immediate part of following of Jesus. So they had stopped the fellow from doing so. ***There is nothing more intolerable to us in our competition then a successful rival***! And John wanted to win the competition and the first order of business was to get the person successful disqualified! Jesus response was to not forbid the fellow simply because he wasn’t part of their group as he was clearly casting out the demons in “*Jesus name*”. The fact that it was being done in Jesus name and that it was successful, **authenticated** the man’s work. God doesn’t respond to anything but faith and this man obviously exhibited faith. “***Don’t quench the flame of faith, fan it into a fire***”, Jesus said. The application at hand is to **quit spending all your time on seeking to disqualify folks from the competition and instead get back to the matter at hand** “***BEING A SERVANT OF ALL***”.

Vs. 41-42 Right on the heals of this Jesus delivers the 2nd illustration of greatness again with the child still on His lap as we note in verse 42 Jesus “*whoever causes* ***one of these little ones*** *who believes in Me to stumble*.” The 2nd sign of the godly ambition of greatness is: ***A HEART FOR THE HURTING***! The slightest act of kindness towards those who are hurting is recognized by the Lord but the flip side of a lack of concern for the hurting is also recognized. Notice the severity in the warning as any moral or spiritual damage done to a young believer is seen as serious as murder. Oh the damage that has been done by those who had power over the vulnerable people in our society. Spiritual greatness is measured upon compassion for those who are hurting.

Vs. 43-50 The final illustration of godly ambition of greatness is: ***A REALIZATION THAT WE ARE THE WORSE SINNER WE HAVE EVER MET***! Did you notice that ***Jesus brings them back to the one question that they were afraid to ask and it is here used as a sign of greatness***! Judgment must always begin with self evaluation instead of blame shifting! With a powerful illustration, Jesus illustrates the seriousness we must take with regards to our own personal failures and sins. A willingness to cut it off, cast it away. This of course is figurative as the problem is not is our sinning foot or eye but in our heart. Jesus’ point is that *we are often far more concerned with our neighbor’s feet and eyes than our own.* We would all be far more effective for His kingdom if we had the same seriousness for our sins as we have we have for others!

 Saints we have given by Jesus; **three marks of the godly ambition of greatness that we all ought to strive for**:

* ***BE A SERVANT OF ALL***
* ***HAVE A HEART FOR THE HURTING***!
* ***HAVE A REALIZATION THAT WE ARE THE WORSE SINNER WE HAVE EVER MET***!

**Mark 10:1-5**

**“The need to find the rest person”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 1-2 The timing and the test**
3. **Vs. 3-5 Diagnosing the problem**
4. **Introduction**

We come now to a very difficult teaching that will no doubt cause ½ of the people here some level of discomfort. The teaching we shall hear is from Jesus and the topic is marriage and divorce. Before we get to the teaching I hope you know me well enough that for those of you who have gone through a divorce I have no interest in making you relive a painful part of your life nor do I want to condemn any of you for the ending of your marriage. My sole responsibility is to teach this text by the power of the Holy Spirit in away that is truth and love.

1. **Vs. 1-2 The timing and the test**

Vs. 1 This phrase indicates the end of Jesus stay in Galilee and Capernaum and the beginning of His final destination Jerusalem. That’s the first thing I note is that this section introduces a new direction for Jesus as He is leaving the Galilee region for the last time as comes to Judea. When we line this section up with other accounts we get a fuller picture of the chronological events: Leaving Galilee He and His disciples went to Samaria and then the northern part of Judea. During this time, He sent out the 70 disciples into the surrounding villages as He had done the 12 earlier. Jesus also took a trip in winter to Jerusalem to observe the Feast of Dedication also known as Hanukkah. He spoke at the feast as recorded in John chapter 10, then they left and came to the eastern side of the Jordan river in an area known as Perea and it is in this area that our story this morning take place.

Vs. 2 This verse gives us some very important details as it relates to this topic as we are told that the “*The Pharisees came and asked Him. Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?* ***Testing Him***.” The word “***testing***” means to put to test for the purpose of discovering Good or evil but in this case the word would be better rendered “***tempt***” as they were soliciting Him in order to cause Him to violate the word of God or the interpretation of the word by the religious leaders who were split on this issue. This reveals to us that ***the motive behind the question wasn’t for clarification*** it was for ***entrapment***. Thus the question with regards to divorce was as controversial in that time as it is in this time. These religious leaders were hoping to maneuver Jesus into a position where He would have to choose between to widely popular but differing views held about divorce thus making Him unpopular with at least ½ the people.

1. Rabbi Hillel interpreted Moses words in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 “*When a man takes a wife and marries her,* ***and it happens that* she finds no favor in his eyes *because he has found some uncleanness in her****…..he can write her a certificate of divorce…and send her out of his house.*” In a very liberal manor. The wife’s uncleanness that had caused her finding no favor could be for any reason that displeased him such as burning the toast. Hillel’s interpretation was very popular with some men as it made men the absolute masters of their homes and their wife’s as mere servants at there beckon call.
2. Rabbi Shammai, taught this verse as the exact opposite saying that divorce was strictly limited as he emphasized the phrase ***some uncleanness, as moral failure***. This position was also very popular among many of the Jew’s in Jesus time.

These are roughly the same two positions we see the church today split over. Should divorce be granted easily on the basis of “*incompatibility*” or is marriage sacred and only be dissolved under very strict conditions? This was the question that the Pharisees hoped to entrap Jesus in.

1. **Vs. 3-5 Diagnosing the problem**

Vs. 3 The Pharisees came with a question on divorce and worded it as what Moses “***allowed***” in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 but Jesus corrected it as it was not a suggestion but a command. ***The command was not that they must divorce but a regulation to stop the abuse as it was always a private matter and not a public one***. In Jesus’ answer He not only avoids the trap but develops two important arguments as it relates to the question:

1. Vs. 3-5 This week we will focus on the first part of Jesus’ answer as He takes them back to what Moses wrote in the law to establish the reason for the law that they questioned Him about.
2. Vs. 6-10 Next week we will focus of the second part of Jesus’ answer as He takes them even further back before the law to Genesis where the focus isn’t upon divorce but rather marriage where Jesus will show three things with regards to marriage: What He did = Action of God, Why He did it = the plan of God for marriage and What happens if you don’t follow His plan = the warnings of God.

Vs. 3 In that day divorce was so common that it often clogged the Rabbinical courts because of the liberal interpretation of Moses words in Deuteronomy 24 if a husband simple said three times publically “*I divorce you*” she would be given a bill of divorcement and sent packing.

The first thing I notice is the basis on which Jesus answers their inquiry as they had asked, “*Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife*” and Jesus responded with “*What did Moses command you*?” Jesus **didn’t** answer based upon His opinion but **referred them to the authority of the scripture**. He never superseded the word of God, He viewed the Bible as the final authority on all issues pertaining to life. In Jesus’ sermon on the mount teaching He had said that “*He had come to destroy the law but to fulfill it.*”

Vs. 4-5 The second thing I notice is after the Pharisees responded in verse 4 to Deuteronomy 24:1-4 revealing what Moses had said, Jesus reveals to them something that the passage and the law didn’t tell them namely ***the reason for the law permitting divorce*** which Jesus says was for the sole reason “***hardness of heart***”! But just what was Jesus communicating to the Pharisees when He said it?

1. First the fact that a man had to “*write a certificate of divorce*” meant that what was going on in the marriage that had been **kept private** was now out in the **open and public**. The hardness in the man’s heart (*since women were not allowed to divorce based upon Deuteronomy 24:1-4*) would be written down for all to see what the man thought qualified the disillusionment of the marriage contract. According to Romans 3:20 the law always makes us conscious of sin or the hardening of the heart. At the time that Moses heard from the Lord and wrote this law, men were setting aside their marriage’s for all sorts of reasons and it was private as well as an epidemic in the nation. The Law of Deut. 24:1-4 revealed the hardness of men’s hearts as well as the problem of hardness of the nations heart.
2. Second “*hardness of heart*” by its very words suggests a ***diagnostic deviation*** from the original intent. The Greek word for “***hardness***” is where we get our medical word for “***sclerosis***” a condition of **the hardening of the arteries of the heart**. God created the human heart to be full of love, gentle, kind, honest and open. Essentially all the qualities of the “*fruit of the Spirit*” described in Paul’s letter to the Galatians in chapter 5 verse 22-23 “*love, joy peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, fruitfulness, gentleness and self-control*.” Sin or hardness of heart replaces these God created characteristics with sinful hardness of “*bitterness, selfishness, impatience, indifference, hostility and deceitfulness*.”

What Jesus reveals is that Mosses looked at divorce from the standpoint of the husband since he was the head and leader of his household and said that if the husband saw something displeasing in his wife (*what ever that may be as Moses didn’t specify but we know it wasn’t adultery as that was already mentioned as punishable by stoning*). Then divorce was permitted not to shame the wife but to make the husbands attitude towards his wife public, open and clear for all to see. So if the husband said, “*I’m through with her she burnt my toast for the last time*” all would see his true and clear attitude of being unloving, critical kicking his wife out of the home for not meeting his standards. I noticed something in the Transkei of South Africa as it relates to marriage and that is men have to pay a bride price “laboli” but after they do so they treat their wife’s as property. Now as Christianity as come into their culture, though they still have to pay a bride price they are understanding that this doesn’t make her his property and they have a loving relationship with her. Without it men beat their wife’s and miss treat them but not in the Christian home. So divorce from Moses perspective served two purposes: ***It revealed the sinful heart of the husband and it released the wife from having to further endure the treatment any further***.

 The New Testament elaborates on this further as Peter writes in that “*Husbands were to dwell with their wife’s with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being joint heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered*.” In other word’s husbands were not to react annoyingly or angrily when their wife did something that displeased them. Instead they should react in love, compassion and thoughtfulness. He should seek to understand her and listen to her as to the reasons why she said or did what displeased him. Marriage is to provide a safe and loving environment for both parties where difficulties can be worked out and resolved in an atmosphere of accepting and forgiving love. Hard hearts can only become soft and pliable when they recognize that they are in over their heads and need to hear and rely upon the Lord. Than as they hear from the Lord on what they need to change and repent and begin to walk in obedience the heart becomes soft again. Unfortunately, it often takes the pain of divorce to cause us to learn something about ourselves. But far to often when you talk to folks who have been through a divorce all they seem to learn is that they married the wrong person instead of learning that perhaps in some way they “WERE THE WRONG PERSON” as well. The breakdown of the family should frighten this nation as we see that most of all the ills of our society are caused by this hard heartedness. We need Christian men and women to act as Christian men and women like never before, each of us needs to look within our own hearts for signs of hard heartedness and repent and make a change. All the law can do is diagnose the problem it can’t cure it and permitting divorce just diagnosed the private condition and made it a public predicament so that everyone would be aware of the problem. Next week we will take up the 2nd aspect of this question as it relates to God’s design for men and women, MARRIAGE!

**Mark 10:6-12**

**“Caution! Marriage Construction Zone!”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 6-12 The purpose, plan and problem of marriage**
3. **Introduction**

Two weeks ago we began the passage looking at the question imposed by the Pharisees to entrap Jesus. In answering the question of “*Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife*?” This week we see that Jesus further answers this question on divorce by examining the original purpose of marriage. The point of emphasis seems to be, “*Why focus of the termination of the marriage instead of examining how to have a healthy marriage*?” Most of us will immediately recognize the words of verses 6-9 as they are most often quoted during their marriage ceremony. ***The real problem*** ***isn’t divorce but marriage***. Divorce just reveals the problem that already exists, which is the difficulties of being motivated and committed to stay together. In quoting Genesis chapter 5 verses and chapter 2 verse 24 Jesus deals with **three aspects with regards to marriage**:

* Vs. 6 ***The PURPOSE of marriage***: “*But from the beginning* *God made them male and female*”
* Vs. 7 ***The PLAN of marriage***: “*for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife*”
* Vs. 8-9 ***The PROBLEM of marriage***: “*and the two shall become one flesh, so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefor what God has joined together, let not man separate*.”
1. **Vs. 6-9 The purpose, plan and problem of marriage**

Vs. 6 ***The PURPOSE of marriage***: “*But from the beginning* *God made them male and female*”. Jesus took them back: Before the state of society in which they were living, before the word of Moses which was born out of the hardness of hearts, before the habits of people in the past, Jesus took them all the way back to the beginning from creation, where the Creator had a purpose in His creation that required a plan then needed to be carried out by obedient hearts. Jesus says that the two distinct sexes was His idea, it was all apart of His design. He made humans biologically and psychologically different from each other not so that they would ***COMPETE*** with each other but so that they would ***COMPLETE*** and ***COMPLEMENT*** each other. **Much of the struggles within the marriage is do to a lack of understanding and appreciating God’s original design in the differences**. Humans are three dimensional beings: Body, soul and spirit! Physically, in the body men and women are visibly and notably different. The difference is NOT to be thought of as better or worse, just different. But men and women are also different in the psyche or soul as their emotional make up is different by design. Many in society, such as the modern feminists, want to dissolve these created differences but nothing they do can change these visible difference. A lot of the feminist’s arguments began as counter attacks to the abusive attitudes of men, that exclude them from equal pay for equal work, the right to not be harassed by men simply because of their physical differences and the right to publically vote in a democratic election. But unfortunately the modern feminist chose to ignore the Created differences between men and women and in so doing created more social injustice. For example, the modern feminist wanted to be sexually promiscuous like men without consequences, so they created the false idea that being in charge over their own bodies gave them the right to be over the offspring in their bodies. Calling this their “Choice” while ignoring the reality that their choice gave them legal rights that men never had, to terminate life! And with this legal right they have committed genocide as well as ***Gender-O-cide*** as over 1/2 of those that they have “*chosen*” to terminate would have been female in gender. Men and women are different and their differences ought to be celebrated not obliterated as God by His design created that way from the beginning. But there is one way in which they are identical in trifold creation and that is in their “spirit”. Paul wrote of this truth in Galatians 3:28 saying, “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave of free, there is neither* **MALE** or **FEMALE**; *for you are all one in Christ*.” Paul speaks of a “***godly feminism***” not one that demands the right to take a life but one that is free to experience LIFE in total equality alongside their brothers in the family of God. In Christ we can truly enjoy the distinctions of the sexes in a harmonious way that doesn’t make demands or lord over each other but respects and enjoys the completeness that the two bring together that compliments each other.

Vs. 7 ***The PLAN of marriage***: “*for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife.*” Jesus says that God had a plan as He quotes Genesis, “***For this reason***”. The reason that humans were made male and female was so that we would be joined to one another and become one. This passage does away with two currently acceptable practices with regards to marriage:

1. **It destroys the false notion of same sex marriage**: It take a man and a woman to have a marriage, He didn’t make them male and male or female and female, simple biology reaffirms this truth. The current legislative practice of same sex marriage goes against the biology of God’s plan as they can not be joined and become one flesh. The courts may attempt to reaffirm their liberal agenda but they will be unable to change the simple biology of the truth. It takes two distinct and very different sexes to make a marriage and no amount of legislation or court cases will ever be able to change this fact.
2. **It destroys plural marriages or polygamy**: The text is very plan as it says, “a **MAN** (*Singular*) shall leave his father and mother (*not fathers and mothers*) and be joined to his **WIFE** (*Singular*). And the **TWO** (*not three, four, five etc*.) shall be **ONE** (*not* ***MANY***) flesh.” Marriage is clearly by plan designed to be one man and one woman joined for life!

Further more God’s design is that the marriage relationship is to be the highest earthly relationship possible in this life. Marriage is to take priority over all other human relationships, business, friendships, familial and even parental. Jesus doesn’t say that they shall be PARTNERS, a TEAM, a CORPERATION, or a UNION. No He says that their relationship is to be the most intense of all relationships as they will no longer be TWO they will become ONE! ***God’s plan for marriage***: Taking two distinct and very different individuals, male and female, with different backgrounds, education, experiences, talents and gifts. And blending their lives together so completely that they are ONE flesh not two any longer. Jesus quotes Genesis and says that *this work isn’t instantaneous* instead **it is a process** as they shall “***BECOME***” one flesh. God’s plan is not that a man and woman would live together as separate individuals like roommates. They aren’t to allow the differences to separate them, instead those differences are to drive them to the Lord so that they will die to self and love their spouse. Apart from this a marriage becomes a place where two opposites compete as rivals, instead of working together, pulling for each other as ONE. Can you imaging if our bodies acted out what many marriages look like? Stub your toe and the mouth barks down to your foot, “*What an idiot you are, can’t even do the simplest of tasks of putting one foot in front of the other*.” A successful marriage isn’t a **PRODUCT** of marrying the “*right person*” it is a **PROCESS** of each person working each and every day at becoming the “*right person*”!

Vs. 8-12 ***The PROBLEM of marriage***: “*and the two shall become one flesh, so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefor what God has joined together, let not man separate*.” Jesus finishes with His third and final point about marriage, that ***marriage is a journey, not a destination***. When the process is ended by one or both of the parties it’s going to be painful as you are pulling apart two that have been joined into one back into two which is always going to injure both. Jesus examines this beyond the scope of present Jewish life as His illustration to His disciples when questioned further included husband’s and wife’s and presently only husbands could divorce. Both would be equally liable to maintain purity and faithfulness in the marriage. The phrase, “*What God has joined together*” isn’t a reference to the wedding ceremony, instead it is a reference to the mystical spiritual union that takes place within a marriage. God does this working through every aspect of a relationship, intimacy, conflicts, trials, victories as well as defeats all shape two souls into one as they tend to reveal hard places of our own hearts that need to be broken down and made soft. It is this softening that causes us to have Christ like characteristics in our marriage. Every newlywed ought to have a sign up in their first home together so all can read it regularly to remind them. The sign should be: “***Caution!!! God at Work, Construction Zone***”.

When Jesus was alone with His disciples they wanted further clarification one the matter of marriage and divorce and Jesus chose a powerful illustration of what the separation is like that each person would understand the sense of destruction when we attempt to pull apart what God has joined. The illustration was adultery. Intimacy is an important part of marriage, it’s a visible picture of what marriage ought to be and why God reserved intimacy for marriage. Intimacy *begins with two separate, different and opposite people coming together in mutual surrender, for the purpose of enjoying each other by giving each other pleasure and by becoming one physically, emotionally and spiritually for a period of time followed by a lingering since of contentment and peace*! It is this very act reserved for marriage that God wanted to create new human life from as a further illustration of two becoming one. ***This passage doesn’t say that the person who remarries after divorce will LIVE in adultery, but that it is like an ACT of adultery***. These words were to cause the person living in a marriage a moment of sobriety, a time of reflection to contemplate the responsibility they may have in a failing relationship. Their focus must not be on what the other person is or isn’t doing but what they are or aren’t doing. Divorce cause this kind of destruction in what God has created but I don’t believe Jesus is suggesting that there is never any reason for it only that what lies behind it is hardness of one or both hearts. Over the years of serving the Lord and witnessing the destruction of hard heartedness in relationships I’ve had a front row seat to events that I wish I didn’t have to witness. I’ve been their when one spouse has committed adultery, I’ve seen what when one spouse’s hard heartedness seen in them physically hurting the other, when addictions to drugs, alcohol and other criminal behavior has destroyed what God has made into one. I don’t tell what people that they have to stay or leave in a marriage where such abuse as happened it isn’t my decision and I’m not the person having to live through what they are living through nor am I the person going to have to live through the tearing away from what God has joined together, they are.

 The teaching is that marriage is unity and not a unit, that marriage requires duality but is not two instead two working as one. He teaches that humanities design is the union of fatherhood and motherhood. That together they make up a typology of the Godhead.

**Mark 10:13-16**

**“God’s workshop, the playground”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 13-14a Becoming child like**
3. **Vs. 14b-16 The religion of a child**
4. **Introduction**

Our last two times together we looked at marriage and divorce and today our initial focus will be on children. It’s not surprising that the family is very important to the Lord after all it was His idea that was implemented at creation. This morning we will begin our teaching looking at two seemingly very different events:

* Vs. 13-16 The first four verses record the annoyance of the disciples as some brought children to Jesus and His corrective response to them.
* Vs. 17-22 The next 6 verses record the very familiar story that we know as “The Rich Young Ruler”.

At face value these two stories seem to have no connection and are just random events that have ended up next to each other on the same page. I believe they are connected not textually but by way of theme. ***Before we get into this section verse by verse allow me to explain how the theme of children being kept away from Jesus is connected to Jesus’ words to a rich young ruler.*** The connection is verse 14 where Jesus says to His disciples, “*Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God*.” The focal point of the connection is this little phrase “**for of such** *is the kingdom of God*”. Jesus told His disciples that there is something in the characteristics of **ALL** children that is absolutely essential for a person if they are going to be in the Kingdom of God. The puzzling thing about this is that Jesus **DOESN’T** tell us what those characteristics are. The very next story is the rich young ruler whose sole interest is to find out *what he must do to enter the kingdom of God*. **There is your connection**! ***These children possessed some untold riches that the rich young ruler, with all he had, recognized he was still lacking.*** He had, no doubt, witnessed the children coming to Jesus, heard what He had told His disciples and then approached Him later wanting to know how he could go about to obtaining it.

1. **Vs. 13-14a Becoming child like**

Vs. 13-14a This is one of the most painted scenes in all the Bible, artists love to depict this story in their art. One can easily see the children crawling all over Jesus, sitting on His lap, pulling on His clothes, grabbing His hands and touching His face. All of them eager for His attention and He eager for theirs even as a young man of 30 years of age who wasn’t married and had no children. I often wonder if His time with children wasn’t His most enjoyable time on earth as children represented in so many ways the ideal of the creation and the hope for the kingdom of God? I also wonder if His amazing way with adults wasn’t enhanced because of His unique ability to see the child in each and every person He met? The story before us has **two major points**:

1. Vs. 13-14a Jesus’ rebuke of His disciples at their protectiveness of Him with regards to people bringing their children to Him.
2. Vs. 14b-16 The Unspoken qualities that children posses that are essential for entrance into the kingdom of God.

The word “*they*” in the Greek is in the masculine gender which suggests that it was the father’s that brought their children to Jesus. Mark indicates for us that the motive behind the disciples was a misguided sense of protection as they were concerned that parents were wasting Jesus’ precious time. We are told that “*they brought little children to Jesus*” but the Greek has it that they kept on do so. The phrase “*that He might touch them*” refers to a custom of laying hands upon someone for the purpose of praying a blessing upon them which finds in origins in Genesis 48:14-15 where Joseph brought his two sons to be blessed by his father Jacob. Usually this blessing was to be bestowed by the ruler of the synagogue but here appears to be instigated do to the enormous popularity of Jesus as the miracle working prophet. What us of further interest is that the Greek also has it that every time they brought children to Jesus to bless the disciples kept on trying to stop or rebuke the effort. Clearly the disciples believed that there were greater needs where His time could be better spent than blessing children. There were lepers to be cleansed, lame that could be given their appendages back, blind that could be given their sight but these little children needed none of those things and His time with them took away His time with others. It all sounds rather reasonable when you put it that way doesn’t it. In fact, it sounds rather familiar as we often sight things far less as reasons we don’t have time to enter act with our own children and grandchildren. I think of that 1974 hit song by Harry Chapin “*Cats in the Cradle*” that was recorded from a poem written by his wife Sandra. It’s about a father who is “to busy” to spend time with a son who longs to be just like his dad and ends up unfortunately becoming just that. I believe that song points out a very real problem that apparently was prevalent in Jesus time as well; ***the rush to not spend time as a family***. We have all become to busy and we wonder why we see a generation not very different than us children of the 60’s who took the lie of Timothy Leary and “*Turned on, tuned in and dropped out*”. The only real difference today is what our youth is turned on to, tuned into too and dropped out of! ***I believe Jesus understood the incredible resource our children are when families are more than just living in the same house***.

 I’m fascinated by how children were naturally drawn to Jesus! What a lesson Jesus is giving His disciples that children don’t need to become more like adults to be respond to things of the kingdom of God but rather that adults need to become more like children in order to become responsive to the kingdom of God. These disciples didn’t need to get in the way keeping the little children from coming to Jesus they needed to get out of the way.

 The Greek word “*greatly displeased*” is a strong word with great emotion visibly indicating indignation. This response reveals the degree of Jesus’ displeasure at His disciple’s misrepresentation the nature of His kingdom. Jesus then went on to command that they stop hindering the children from coming to Him and forbids the practice ever again.

1. **Vs. 14b-16 The religion of a child**

Vs. 14b-16 The 2nd point Jesus made is that ***children are models to emulate*** if you are to enter the kingdom. Jesus isn’t saying that as adults we need to be “*childish*” but rather “*child-like*” to enter the kingdom. Yet as I’ve noted Jesus doesn’t elaborate on what those qualities or characteristics are. Instead He just emphasizes the necessity of emulating those qualities as He says, “*Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.*” It seems to me that after making such an absolute statement concerning the qualities found in children and not telling us what they are assumes three things:

1. **These qualities ought to be pretty self evident as not needing to be said**.
2. **In not saying them, was a way employed by Jesus to draw people into their discovery. This in turn would make adults begin the process of becoming like the qualities He had just said were essential for the kingdom of God**.
3. Finally, as I noted above **I believe that we can test our answers by evaluating the qualities that the rich young ruler possessed and lacked**.

Here then are **the guidelines for our search**: These qualities ***must be universal to all children, in all ages, through out time***. They also ***must be qualities that adults can and should get back too but often lose as adults***. I believe that there are ***three such traits*** and I personally look for these in the men who I disciple as I believe Jesus did as well.

* **Transparent**: The first quality that you see in children is their overall approach on life, is SIMPLE and uncomplicated. Children are what they are, they go right to the heart of things and ask the boldest of questions. They are not Politian’s and don’t worry about things coming out right. They also don’t put on airs, if they hurt or something isn’t right they let you know. They are direct and immediate in their approach to things. Above everything else they are curious which gives them an overall uncomplicated nature. Further more they demand the same direct approach to life and are excited to share it with whoever is closest to them. This vulnerability is what is often exploited by adults but is what makes them children. This kind of **TRANSPARENCY** is what I believe is the first quality Jesus speaks of. All children possess it and all adults must get back to it if they are going to receive the kingdom of God.
* **Teachable**: The 2nd quality in children is there hunger to learn knew things. Everything and everyone is a discovery. Their favorite word is “**WHY**”? It propels them beyond the status quo and normal fears, that overwhelm adults. They are all right in telling you that they don’t know something in order to learn what they don’t know. They are open to instruction, ***they are clay***, ***not cement!*** The key to teaching them is hitting on that discovery in a way that is right on the edge of out of control. Children love new ideas and new ways of doing things and will quickly try to emulate what they have just learned. What is amazing to me is to see what happens to adults, we often lose that teachable heart and it is replaced with a heart that is arrogant and believes that it already knows more than anyone else. If the favorite word for the child is “**WHY**” then the favorite words for the adult is the explanation of “**WHY NOT**”! Jesus says that adults need to get back to discovery and a teachable heart if they want to receive the kingdom of God. I have found that it is possible for us adults to get back to teach-ability but it usually comes at the price of trials and brokenness.
* **Transference**: The final quality is often debated by parents observing their own children but is nonetheless true of children. All children and I do mean ALL, have to put into practice what they have learned. Oh it may not be when we parent’s want them to, or the way in which we want them too but rest assured our children will be applying what they learned and teaching others to do the same. Such “*transference of information*” is a hall mark of being a child as they are by nature responsive and will parrot what they have learned and heard. Often this makes for some embarrassing moments for adults do to what they have unwittingly taught them concerning words and phrases as well as actions. Further more this transference of what they have learned is almost always seen in “*immediate obedience*” that goes unnoticed or unappreciated by adults. What I love to watch in children is that once they have learned some new thing they don’t wait until they have mastered it before they are immediately trying to teach another child how to do it. These little people are natural disciple’s as well as discipler’s, why it’s in their nature. Adult’s have lost the desire to pass on with excitement what they have just learned to others and will leave what they have just learned and found beneficial to the “Professionals”. Jesus tells us that if we want to receive the kingdom of God we will need to get back to a messy life of going for it as we share His love with others!

The Greek has it that Jesus took them up one by one and fervently and passionately kept on blessing each one of them. What an adult need’s, according to Jesus, is not to abandon child-like qualities but go back to them. ***Our home is heaven but according to this the playground is God’s workshop***! ***Christianity is preeminently the religion of a child***! Hey, saints, “little ones” will you join me in a new revolution of these traits? Let’s not settle for being “old Dogs” but instead by like little children: **Transparent, Teachable and Transference!**

**Mark 10:17-22**

**“*Un-complicating the complicated life*”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 17 The rich, young, ruler**
3. **Vs. 18-20 The definition of “Good”**
4. **Vs. 21-22 Possessed by possessions**
5. **Introduction**

Two weeks ago I spent only a brief amount of time demonstrating the correlation between two stories that are side by side in the text but appear to be miles apart. Often the Bible seems to be like that: Random short stories disconnected to each other. But when you examine the text in detail you find something completely different, a masterful tapestry of inner connected fabric that is so connected and so beautifully placed together that I see the Holy Spirit’s inspiration on every thread. There are several clues in these two stories that indicate their connection:

1. First, is Jesus’ words with regards to the essential nature of childlike qualities as He said “***for such*** *is the kingdom of God*”. Then again in verse 15 He said, “*whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it*.” When you examine the text concerning the rich young ruler his initial question to Jesus is, “*Good teacher what must I do that I may inherit eternal life*?” The subject matter is the same both in Jesus’ statement as well as the ruler’s question, **qualities for the entrance into the “*kingdom of God*”**.
2. The 2nd correlation is far subtler, as the initial question of the rich young ruler seems to indicate that he had to have been witnessing the encounter Jesus had with the children and His disciples. I say this as it only makes sense to the context with regards to his question which implies self examination where he apparently felt that he was missing at least some of these qualities, how would he have known this unless he had been present during the conversation?
3. **Vs. 17 The rich, young, ruler**

Vs. 17 Luke and Matthew in their recording of this event both call this man “***the first one***” which **speaks of preeminence**. Else where the word is used for the chief of a synagogue or the head Pharisee. It is used in classic Greek to describe a great man or a prince. His address of Jesus as the “*Good Teacher*” is reversed in the Greek and is “*Teacher, Good One*” and thou a sincere compliment still implies an imperfect standard for it’s evaluation as the comparison was human not divine. I must say that I’m very impressed with this young man for three reasons:

1. First, this young man believed Jesus’ words were true and not just an opinion of a religious leader. How easy it would have been for him to dismiss this conversation, especially if he believed that he was lacking these unspoken characteristics.
2. Second, he did a self evaluation in which by his own comprehension he felt that he was missing the necessary characteristics. He is not of the majority that believe that they are good enough as they are for the kingdom of God, very impressive!
3. Finally, when we compare this passage with Matthew chapter 19 and Luke chapter 18 we are given further insight as we are told that this young man came from a well to do family (verse 22) as well as the fact in Luke that he was a ruler. This is the only place in the gospels where a person comes before Jesus and leaves worse then when they came in. He may have been rich, young, a ruler and religious but he was something else and he knew it, he was empty!

As I noted two weeks ago we ought to be able to test our theory of what the child like qualities that are essential to enter into the kingdom of God by what we see displayed and not displayed in the story we are examining this morning. The first characteristic I mentioned that children every where at all times possess is ***TRANSPARENCY***. I described this characteristic as *an overall approach to life, that is simple and uncomplicated. Children are what you see and they go right to the point, curious and inquisitive*. The question is, did this rich young ruler either have this quality or recognize that he was lacking it when he came to Jesus? He exhibited not only a simple directness in approaching Jesus but also an honest evaluation of himself. He had an inner yearning for spiritual truth that he realized that he was lacking and he wanted it now. Though the rich young ruler possessed the quality of ***TRANSPARENCY*** that in no way suggests that this transparency doesn’t need to receive from Jesus the answers to the question he had just posed.

1. **Vs. 18-20 The definition of “Good”**

Vs. 18-20 Jesus investigation begins with one word and how he had come to this conclusion, “***GOOD***”. This young man had made the measurement of “GOOD” a comparison between flawed humans where one is less damaged than the other. Jesus asks, “*Why do you call Me good*?” Jesus is saying don’t use this term as a means of courtesy. He never wanted people to give Him honor or title till they knew what they were saying! This young man needed to think both on **WHAT good is as well as WHO good is**! As I see it there were two things that need to be answered that the rich young ruler had wrong:

1. **What is the base line of good**?: Jesus wastes no time in addressing his assessment. There are those that want to suggest that Jesus is denying that He is God by saying, “*No one is good but One, that is, God*.” But in reality Jesus’ answer is not self denunciation of deity but the opposite. Jesus in other places that Jesus spoke of His deity such as John 10:30 where He said that “*I and the Father are one.*” In Matthew 26:63-66 in His exchange with the religious leaders just before His crucifixion, He said that in the future they would see Him sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming in the clouds from heaven. The response of the religious leaders tells us that they understood that Jesus was saying that He was God as they tore their robes and accused Him of blasphemy. ***The point of Jesus questioning lies in the young man’s evaluation of what is good***:
* **Is it a comparison between others in humanity, a percentage that we must be above others to be considered “GOOD”**? **Does God grade good on the “curve”**?
* Or as Jesus points out to this young man is the standard God and His goodness. **Does God grade good on the “cross”?** This would lead this young man to realize two very important truths:
1. He isn’t good and never will be good enough!
2. And the person he had asked this question to is non other than God the Son who is the only person who has ever walked upon this earth who is GOOD! That is why Jesus asks him the question, “*Why do you call me good*?”
3. **Is it possible to inherit eternal life if it is based upon our performance**?: Inheritance is based upon relationship not performance and clearly this rich young ruler didn’t grasp that. That is the reason behind Jesus quoting keeping the commandments, which he claimed to have done since he was young but yet still recognized that with regards to “*inheriting eternal life*” he was lacking.

In verses 19-20 Jesus next gives the divine precepts to which God had given man to regulate man’s duty to to their neighbor. To which the young man sad that he had “guarded” those commandments which he meant that not only had he obeyed them, he had honored them his whole life. This brings us to the **second characteristic** I mentioned two weeks ago that every child every where possess, ***TEACHABILITY***! The definition is a hunger for discovery that propels children every where beyond their fears. Children aren’t afraid to tell you that they don’t know something if honesty will enable them to gain what they lack. It is clear to me that he does indeed posses ***TEACHABILITY*** not only was he willing to investigate the commandments as it relates to his own application of doing something to inherit eternal life, his evaluation came back that though he had done all of these things since his youth it still had not enabled him to “INHERIT” eternal life.

1. **Vs. 21-22 Possessed by possessions**

Vs. 21-22 This young man was dominated and controlled by what he possessed and Jesus told him that to be free he had to get rid of what he had because what he had because in truth it had him. This wasn’t a plan for divesting himself of wealth, income redistribution, but for him to recognize that such pursuits were the wrong pursuit. In the bible there are 490 verses that deal with faith, more than 500 that deal with prayer but there are over 2000 verses that deal with money in the gospels alone there are 288 verses, that’s 1 out of every ten. What this shows us is that God is very concerned with how we handle the resources He has given us because if we aren’t careful what He has given us, will imprison us! The third and final quality that all children posses is ***TRANSFERENCE***! The desire to apply what they have learned, another way of saying this is obedience. The question at hand is does the rich young ruler posses this trait or can we see that he came to the understanding that he didn’t? Jesus told the rich young ruler that this one trait of transference was lacking. Jesus also invited him to come, take up his cross and follow him. Notice that Jesus gets to the heart of the matter in two ways:

1. First, Jesus brought him to a place where the rich young ruler would have to evaluate what he wanted more, the temporary comforts of this life or eternal life. Jim Elliot put it best when he said, “*He is no fool who gives up what he can not keep to gain what he can never lose*!” “***What value do we place on that which we can not keep***?” Obedience can only come about when we realize that the things that we value in this world are keeping us from the true riches of His kingdom!
2. Second, Jesus brought him to the understanding that inheritance is relational not performance. Jesus invited him to come, take up the cross, and follow Him. Obedience, is seen not only in a onetime decision but a daily walk where we take up that which requires us to die to self and follow after Jesus.

Upon hearing this the rich young ruler went away profoundly sad as he had great possessions. It became clear to him that he could not serve two masters! The rich young ruler was possessed by what he possessed. This rich young ruler was transparent; he was teachable but when it came down to it he didn’t want to be fully obedient if it cost him what he had because he was wealthy. Did you notice that Jesus told him that in placing the right things on the throne of his heart that he would have treasure in heaven? There will be no poverty in heaven, heaven is not a place of lack it is the place of plenty.

 There is one last thing I want us to realize and that is I don’t believe that this is the end of the story with regards to the rich young ruler. When we look at the gospel according to Mark you quickly realize that there is almost no recorded first hand knowledge of events. The reason for this is that most of the events were told to Mark by the person who disciple him Peter. There are only two exceptions that I can find where the writer seems to have information about the situation that only he could know. In Mark chapter 14 verse 51-52 we are told that at Jesus arrest there was a “*certain young man who followed Jesus having a linen cloth thrown around body. And the young men lay hold of him, and left the linen cloth and fled from them naked*.” This is the only reference of this incident recorded and it is believed that Mark records this event about himself, identifying the fact that he was a late follower of Jesus. The other passage is the one before us where we are told that in verse 21 that Jesus, “*looking at him, loved him*…” That kind of information could have only been known by the person whom Jesus looked at. These two verse indicated that the rich young ruler perhaps was the gospel writer Mark. He is also known as John Mark and was the nephew of a wealthy disciple named Barnabas. Mark’s mother Mary was a wealthy women of influence in Jerusalem who owned a large home there. It seems to me that Mark later reconsidered and followed Jesus whole heartedly.

**Mark 10:23-31**

**“The prison of prosperity”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 23-27 A chainsaw, a blender and a syringe**
3. **Vs. 28-31 The advantage of adversity**
4. **Introduction**

We conclude this section with the aftermath of the temporary decision of the rich young ruler, whom I believe is none other than are very own gospel writer Mark. Jesus’ words on the “***prison of prosperity***” has caused much debate for thousands of years. This has led to many a twisted interpretation of not only Christians and prosperity but the illustration Jesus chose to use of “*a camel going through an eye of a needle*”. I promise that we will give the proper interpretation both of these based upon the context this morning. But before we get to that we will need to set the scene: This passage like the story of the rich young ruler is still connected to the three essentials that all children possess. This passage breaks apart into two sections:

1. First Jesus addresses in verses 23-27 the danger of affluence. He points out the “***trap of treasures***” upon the affluent as such wealth impedes the essential child like qualities for the kingdom of God. Those characteristics of: ***Transparency, teach ability*** and ***transference***.
2. Jesus’ second point is discussed in verses 28-31 where Jesus contrasts the “***prison of prosperity***” with the “***advantage of adversity***” as it relates to producing those essential qualities for the kingdom of God!
3. **Vs. 23-27 A chainsaw, a blender and a syringe**

Vs. 23-24 ***Jesus doesn’t declare the impossibility of a wealthy person getting saved, but the difficulty of him getting saved***. The disciples were astonished at the type of kingdom God had: A place where it is essential to possess the characteristics of a child and a disadvantage to be a person of means. Especially sense the Jews regard affluence as a token of God’s favor and Jesus says the opposite. We would not associate the wealthy as being “***disadvantaged***” yet clearly Jesus did. The Scottish historian Thomas Carlyle once observed that “***For every hundred men who can withstand adversity, only one can withstand prosperity***!”

Vs. 25-27 The astonishment of verse 24 now broke into despair with regards to the salvation of all, “*If the rich couldn’t achieve salvation how could the poor*”? The affluent had advantages that others didn’t have and the disciples believed this gave them a greater advantage not only in this present life but for the kingdom of God. The thought was that they could “buy” their way to a better place. Prosperity has nothing to do with salvation or spiritual health for that matter. There is no more “***righteousness in riches***” than there is “***piety in poverty***”; a mistake that the early church made as they took vows of poverty and took up life in monasteries.

 Because of the disciple’s astonishment Jesus has to repeat His truth and even use an illustration. I have read for years the multiple ways well meaning people have tried to interpret this passage that would allow under difficult circumstance the affluent being able to acquire the essential traits to enter the kingdom of God. The most popular interpretation of this illustration is that there was a gate in the wall that surrounded Jerusalem that allowed unloaded camels to pass through if they got on their knees. In this story this gate was known as the “*eye of the needle*” or the camel’s gate. So **in this interpretation the point is that if you humble yourself, unload the advantages of affluence from your life get on your knees you can make into the kingdom of God.** Those that hold to this interpretation point out Jesus words to the rich young ruler and his reluctance as the reason that their interpretation is correct. While I agree that the interpretation is consistent with the story it is not consistent with the context. First there are **three small matters**:

* The word for needle does not refer to a gate but the tiny eye of a sewing needle.
* They were not at Jerusalem when Jesus said these words, so the illustration didn’t match the geography.
* They have never found any historical or archeological evidence that there was a gate or a situation that required such a gate in Jerusalem or else where.

Simply put the interpretation of this illustration is made up! This interpretation has about as much relevance to the story as the the boy who answered his Sunday school teacher. The teacher was trying to pound the point of the illustration home to his class with the use of props. He held up a sewing needle and a life size picture of a camel and asked if it was possible to get a camel through the needle. Expecting to get the correct answer from the students he was surprised when a boy with a big imagination answered YES! When the teacher asked how? The boy said, “*Why all I need is three things: a chainsaw, a blender and a syringe*”! The reason I reject this interpretation of the “*eye of the needle*” is the context of the passage as it gives us the answer. The disciples clearly understood the illustration as they were again astonished and asked “*Who then can be saved*” to which Jesus responded, “*with men it is* **IMPOSSIBLE**…” That was the point of the illustration to demonstrate the **impossibility** of not only the affluent being saved but all men being saved apart from God. The wealthy have no more advantage than the poor have a disadvantage it is impossible for all apart from God. Now remember that ***this has to do with the three essentials necessary for the entrance into the kingdom of God*** that all children posses that adults and especially the affluent lack.

**Transparency**: Affluence destroys the child like characteristic of ***self evaluation*** as it creates a false sense of security that is dependent upon secondary values. The affluent aren’t concerned where their next meal is coming from; they are only concern is whether or not they will like what they are eating. They are not concerned about whether or not they will have clothing or shelter only if what they are wearing or where they are staying is fashionable. ***The affluent are more concerned about secondary things then they are primary things. So the evaluation of their own heart and lack tends to be on external things not internal things.*** Thus often the concern of the spiritual aspects of their life are in their surroundings not the condition of their own heart. It is for this reason that Jesus said that the affluent were at a disadvantage when it came to being open to change as they were ***less likely to examine their own life*** as to what needed to change and ***more likely to try to change their surroundings***!

**Teach ability**: As a whole the affluent are less teachable as ***their wealth has created in them a sense of success which they attribute to superior knowledge***. Instead of humility and a teachable spirit the affluent are often afflicted with arrogance. ***The affluent would much rather people listen to them, then to listen and learn from others***. ***They would much rather be served then to serve and because of this they are much more inclined to demand their way then seek God’s way***.

**Transference**: Finally, affluence removes people from the realties of life the consequences of disobedience. ***Life on earth becomes the affluent person’s heaven***! It can gradually cause people **to be so dependent upon the “*good life*” that they won’t let go for the “*better life*”**. ***They become owned by what they own, possessed by what they possess, left cling to the very things that entrap them to this temporary life***. This is why Jesus warned against the affluent life as it has an inherent danger of keeping folks from the three essential child like traits necessary for the kingdom of God.

But note this, Jesus says with man it is impossible but not with God, with God all things are possible. That’s grace! We will see this change in the example of our rich young ruler, John Mark, who turned down the offer of Jesus and went away sorrowful only to be found at Jesus’ arrest where he will leave even his clothes behind to follow Him. Yes, riches can remove us and keep us from these traits that are essential for the kingdom but God can remove us from the enslavement to of our treasures and return us to a transparent, teachable and transferent heart. ***It is marvelous to see a wealthy person in the hands of the living God freed from what they posses because they are so thoroughly possessed by Jesus***! They realize that they are only stewards of God’s resources not owners of wealth. They begin to freely invest into the kingdom of God and instead of worrying about their investments. They are more concerned over their own moral bankruptcy and spiritual poverty than their portfolios.

1. **Vs. 28-31 The advantage of adversity**

Vs. 28-31 Jesus now moves of to the contrast between the “***prison of prosperity***” with the “***advantage of adversity***” as it relates to producing those essential qualities for the kingdom of God! The key to this section is Jesus’ closing statement of “*But many who are first will be last, and the last first*.” This phrase of Jesus’ has caused many through church history to interpret this to mean that Christians should do what Jesus said to John Mark, the rich young ruler. That is to sell everything they own and give it to the poor if you are going to be a true follower of Jesus. But again the context of this final phrase eliminates this as the meaning. Jesus had said this in response to Peter’s assertion of what they gave up to follow Jesus. Jesus’ response indicates that Peter was still missing the point that ***poverty didn’t lead to piety any more than riches led to righteousness***. Jesus wasn’t referring to external things but an inward attitude of the heart that recognizes that all we have is a gift from God and gifts from God are meant to be shared, not hoarded or squandered. We do not own our possessions and finances we are stewards over the things God has entrusted to us. We are responsible to take care of our needs and the needs of our family’s. It may come as a surprise to some of you that one of those needs is our enjoyment and pleasure as Paul wrote to Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:17 that “*God, gives us richly all things to enjoy*.” We should enjoy “all things” that God has given us as we are being responsible as good stewards. It is interesting that with this change of attitude concerning what God has given us we become more free and secure than if we believe that everything we have belongs to us. When we see our self’s as stewards and we see a lose in wealth and resources we see it as God limiting His provision instead of us losing money. When our financial situation changes we aren’t devastated as we realize it wasn’t ours it was all His and this change was His doing not ours. We also will recognize that our true wealth is in the “riches we have in Christ” not material things that can be affected by “rust, moth and thief”. As such there is nothing that can ever happen to take away our wealth in Christ instead the only thing that can affect our true wealth is when we fail and see our earthly assets as ours and of greater value than our eternal treasures!

 The truth Jesus told Peter was that ***we never give up anything for God that He hasn’t first given us***! Second Jesus told Peter that ***you never turn over anything that God won’t restore to you a hundredfold***. That words “*hundredfold*” doesn’t mean 100% but 100X as much. In other words, ***we aren’t just receiving back what we gave back to God but 100 times that***! You might have noticed that little two words “***with persecutions***” in verse 30. Jesus offers 100 times the ***persecution*** along with all the blessings of “***houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children and lands***”. Now persecutions don’t seem to be a blessed advantage in the Christian life do they? But according to Jesus they are “*blessed persecutions*” when we have enemies because of our faith as believers they indicate that we are living with the right priorities and essential child like characteristics. They also enable us to stay transparent, teachable and transferent.

**Mark 10:32-40**

**“The price of Christian ambition”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 32-34 Same desire different goal**
3. **Vs. 35-40 The way to the throne**
4. **Introduction**

There is a change in the narrative as Mark draws our attention towards Jesus third prediction of His death, burial and resurrection. This time Jesus makes this prediction while on the way to Jerusalem. You have to wonder how much “*new understanding*” the disciples could handle as they had just been informed that the kingdom of God required the three essential characteristics that children have and then heard that the advantages of affluence was a liability not an asset. Now Jesus goes back and revisits chapter 9:30-37 and the discussion on ambition and greatness as it relates to the kingdom of God. In the world ambition is a prized trait and it may surprise Christians that according to Jesus it is something that every believer ought to desire as well. What is different is:

* ***The practical means to greatness***: The first shall be last and servant of all.
* ***The path of greatness***: Greatness and glory run through the cross, which can not be avoided.

Vs. 32a This account on Jesus death burial and resurrection, as well as the preceding two, reveal that Jesus’ death was not an accident. He clearly foresaw the cross and continually spoke about it as He directed His steps towards it. When you compare Jesus’ words concerning the event of the cross each time He mentions it He increases the details about it. The one consistent element in His unveiling is that He never spoke of the cross without mentioning the resurrection; which was the one thing His disciples never seem to be able to hear. Mark’s words indicate that the atmosphere on this trip was very intense as he writes, “*Now as they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed. And as they followed they were afraid.*” The Greek makes it apparent that there was a procession on the way up from Jericho to Jerusalem: Jesus out ahead of all, followed be the disciples who were amazed and the crowd that were always around behind the disciples and were afraid. What they witnessed was a notable ***determination*** on Jesus in spite of a sense impending doom. I sat through a security briefing at the mission conference aimed at given us “*civilians*” valuable information concerning identifying, awareness and avoidance while serving in a foreign field. The instructor was a man who had a long career in law enforcement who started the briefing by saying that “*He trained people to go into danger where He is now telling us how to not only spot it but avoid it*”. Jesus leading the way into danger and disaster with a fixed determination, where others would have taken every opportunity to run from it.

Vs. 32b-34 Jesus adds three details that He hadn’t included and these had to do with the Roman’s as Jesus said that the Religious authorities were going to turn Him over to the the “Gentiles” “***mock*** *Him,* ***scourge*** *Him, and* ***spit*** *on Him and kill Him.*” One of the interesting realities to these briefings is that ***the knowledge didn’t require supernatural insight on Jesus’ behalf***. According to Jesus’ own words in the parallel passage of Luke 18:31 what was about to happen was that “*written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished.*” Our Lord was not only the author of scripture but a great student of it as well and was well aware of what was predicted about His death burial and resurrection by just knowing Isaiah 53, Psalm 22 and other Old Testament passages.

Vs. 35-37 Jesus words concerning His death burial and resurrection brought about a discussion among the son’s of Zebedee “*James and John*” for two things that had three implications. As Jesus set His face towards the cross He was keenly aware of His upcoming agony, ***but not blinded by it*** as He saw His victory. Where as His disciple’s s seemed:

* ***Overwhelmed by the agony***
* ***Oblivious to the victory***
* ***Preoccupied with their position***

In Matthew’s account of this story we are told that it was James and John’s mother who approached Jesus with this request. This suggests that she was talked into doing so by these two, as His answer is only directed to them. Many commentators who rake these two over their request. But based upon Mark chapter 9 and Matthew chapter 19 verse 28, I believe their request motivated by Jesus’ words encouraging Christian ambition. When we look at Matthew 19:28 right after Peter had spoken of all that they had given up to follow Jesus, He said, “*I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory,* ***YOU*** *who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*.” ***These two brothers were just jockeying for position upon the promised thrones***. When you consider the three things that a throne symbolized there is no wonder Jesus finds no fault in their request. These thrones symbolize: ***Preeminence***, ***Proximity*** and ***Power***!

1. ***Preeminence***: They wanted to sit next to Jesus in a place of honor and exaltation which was nothing more than what He had just promised them according to Matthew. This would be like you and I asking Jesus to grant us the privilege of going to heaven.
* They weren’t demanding it
* They didn’t claim they had earned it by their works or perfection
* No, they humbly asked Him to do what He promised He was going to do

These were **NOT** words of presumption but words of great faith and the reason why we see no rebuke from Jesus at their request. Would to God more of us earth goers were this heavenly minded to not strive for earthly positions but instead humbly ask and desire heavenly one’s!

1. ***Proximity***: Once these disciples knew that 12 thrones were waiting them, it’s quite admirable to desire the ones closest to Jesus. In a world where so many Christians want to be “JUST” saved but not close to Jesus I believe that this is a wonderful thing to see in these two who are again asking Jesus to grant them to be closest to Him. Oh to God each of us in our personal devotion would humble ask our Lord to grant us to be closer to Him. These two knew that they were going to sit with Him but they wanted to go deeper than just sitting with Him they wanted to right next to Him!
2. ***Power***: Finally, these two wanted “*more power*” as that is what a throne next to Jesus represents. They had already experienced some of this as they had been sent out and had seen that even the demons were subject to them in Jesus name. They were simply asking for more power to accomplish His purposes just as He promised. Not only do I not find this objectionable, to God I pray that all believers requested more power to do what He has called us to do.

Vs. 38 There was no rebuke from Jesus for the request! No words of disappointment at how arrogant of them to even think of such a thing. ***Jesus was in favor of their godly ambition to be in heaven seated next to Him in power***. That’s why Jesus says, “*You don’t know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with*?” They were asking for the right things and Jesus implies that they were asking to be on the path that He was currently on. **Our Lord’s concern was that in their ignorance they were wanting the right things but without understanding what the cost of obtaining them meant**. The path of “*Glory*” ran right through the very path that they were perplexed about namely the “**CROSS**”. They desiring the “glory” but hadn’t considered the price tag. To explain the price tag to them Jesus employs two metaphors that would help them understand what He faced at the cross: ***A cup and a baptism***!

1. **The Cup**: The imagery of the cup is all over scripture; there is Psalm 23:5 where we are told that “*My* **CUP** *runs over*…” which in this Psalm is clearly a good thing. But we can also see the imagery in scripture where the “**CUP**” isn’t so pleasant. Many times in Jeremiah the Lord speaks through the prophet about Israel having to drink the “**CUP**” of the discipline of God. And in Luke 22:42 while in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus prays to the Father, “*If it is Your will, take this* ***CUP*** *away from Me; nevertheless, not My will, but Yours, be done*.” Putting it altogether and we see that the imagery behind metaphor of the “**CUP**” is ***having to take the experience of what life hands you, circumstances and situations which you have no choice in***. Yes, they can be filled with joy and peace but they can also be filled with despair and destruction but either way you have no choice but to drink from it. Specifically, Jesus used this in reference to the cross which included the rejection, torture, ridicule, beatings, spitting, nails, thirst, dislocation of bones, slow draining of blood and labor of breath. And worst of all the cup of the cross meant that all of humanities sin was placed upon Him, which brought about the separation from experiencing the presence of the Father.
2. **The Baptism**: The baptism is also an event that Jesus must pass through and by the use of the word it was to engulf Him, physical, emotionally and spiritually. There would be no part of His being that wouldn’t be touched by the baptism of the cross. The cross would saturate every aspect of His being and overwhelm all His senses. There is no ridding out the “wave” of baptism is drowns you in an inescapable fury that toss you and keeps you under only to let you up for a breath to do it all over again and again!

Vs. 39-40 I admire two qualities that these two exhibited (***albeit blindly***) as they replied to Jesus question of Cups and baptisms:

1. ***Their blind optimism***: These two didn’t flinch at the cost, they quickly without hesitation said, “*Sure Lord bring it on, we can’t wait to get started*.” ***They were not afraid of paying the cost***. I would much rather be around folks like these two who are more than willing to go for it than hesitate.
2. ***They saw it as a bargain***: There was not sense of which they said, “*Wow, we had no idea of the expensive of the thrones, we’ll pass*”. This reveals to us that in spite of the cost ***they saw what they were asking for of far greater value***.

That begs the question, did these two fully understand the cost of what they were asking for? Probably not but πGod is so faithful to give us what we don’t fully grasp. Some one has well said that when it comes to the cups and baptisms of the cross most folks would adopt the attitude if I leave them alone they will leave me alone. The truth is that cups and baptisms as we have already seen aren’t something we choose they are chosen for us. Paul said in Colossians 1:24 that he “*rejoiced in his sufferings for them, as it filled up in his flesh what was lacking in the afflictions of Christ*..” Paul recognized that we are called to suffer along with Jesus as we bear His reproach, shame, anguish, suffering and even death. This is what happened to James as we are told in Acts chapter 22 he was beheaded by Herod and John faced his cups and baptisms being boiled in oil and exiled on the Island Patmos. The places of honor as well as the cups and baptisms are chosen by the Lord. God’s focus is people not events as His goal is shaping and molding us into His image to fulfill His purposes.

**Mark 10:41-52**

**“The unasked question”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 41-45 Worldly ambition verses godly ambition**
3. **Vs. 46-52 That I might receive my sight**
4. **Introduction**

This morning we come to the conclusion of chapter 10 and two stories that again seem to be disconnected.

* The first story in verses 41-45 is the aftermath of the request made by the brothers Zebedee (James and John). Their twofold request with it’s three implications became know by their fellow 10 disciples and it “*greatly displeased*” them. So much so that Jesus has to step up and speak on the differences between ***worldly ambition*** and ***godly ambition.***
* The second story that Mark addresses is in verses 46-52 and the healing of “*Blind Bartimaeus*”. We will need to be good biblical detectives this morning to see the connection between these two seemingly unconnected stories but in doing so we will be greatly rewarded for our effort with another life transforming application point.
1. **Vs. 41-45 Worldly ambition verses godly ambition**

Vs. 41 I’m a bit curious as to how the other ten learned of James and John’s request. My theory is that they over heard it because they were in close proximity. *That would make the real reason that they were upset, is these two opportunists beat them to the request*. The word Mark uses for “*greatly displeased*” in the English translation sounds very respectful, but the Greek word means “*indignant*”. Webster’s dictionary defines it as “*feeling or showing anger because of something that is unfair or wrong which leads to a person becoming very angry*.” The scene according to Matthew started out with Peter’s comments about having left everything to follow Jesus. This was followed by Jesus words about the 12 thrones that they would one day occupy. Which led to the amazed observation of the disciples about the fixed determination upon Jesus as He was out in front going to Jerusalem to face the cross. The contrast between their view and Jesus words where obvious: ***The 12 heard about the thrones and two of them beat the others to the request to being closest to Jesus on the thrones. But Jesus knew that before the thrones there awaited a cup and baptism known as the cross that He must go through***. This is the complete context to what transpires.

 The envy and jealousy of the 10 towards the two brothers must have reached a level to where Jesus saw the need to instruct them all “AGAIN” on the differences of worldly ambition verse godly ambition. The ten (*no doubt led by Peter*) viewed the request as a coup that was out maneuvering them for a special position. They clearly saw politics and were upset that these two who were already apart of the inner group were seeking to move up which would have meant that Peter was the odd man out. To correct this Jesus:

* First, in verse 42, acknowledged the methodology of worldly ambition as it relates to the kingdoms of the world which was very much how his disciples were viewing the kingdom of God.
* Then Jesus, in verses 43-44, restated the methodology of godly ambition as it relates to the kingdom of God. The point Jesus wanted to get across was not only the difference between them by why He encouraged godly ambition as a means of changing the world.
* Finally, in verse 45, Jesus uses His own example of godly ambition that they saw put into practice each and every moment of the last 18 months that they had been with Him.

Vs. 42 This phrase “*You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them. And their great one’s exercise authority over them*” would have been completely understood by the “rank and file” of Mark Roman readers. The competition and jealousy that we notice in these disciples is unfortunately all to familiar in the body of Christ but it exists do to the failure of the church to practice godly ambition not because they do. God’s view of the church is **not an organization but a living organism**; one in which each person has a part that is equally important and necessary for the vitality of the whole. The apostle Paul was attempting to get this point across to a competitive Corinthian Church in his 1st letter to them when he wrote in chapter 12 verse 12 “*For as the body is one and has many members, but all members of that one body*…” Then in verse 18 Paul wrote, “*But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased*.” The eye cannot say to the hand, “*I have no need of you*..”. I’m afraid that at times the church as mimicked the world’s organization structure at the cost of God’s organism structure. The outcome of that is we see a corporate hierarchy where those in leadership roles arrogantly wield authority, bossing others around and measure their own power and success by how many people are subject to their orders. This type of leadership looks just like the world where jealousy’s and rivalries are prevalent and back stabbing, kissing up and other forms of manipulation is common place. I believe that there are two reasons why the world’s organization structure is all to common in the church today:

1. **Ignorance**: That was the case here with the disciples, they didn’t yet know of another form of ambition and that is what Jesus was teaching them about godly ambition.
2. **Sin**: There are those who know that the world’s organization structure is not Jesus’s method but choose to ignore it so they can maintain power and lord over people.

Vs. 43-44 Having identified the problem (worldly ambition) Jesus offers the new methodology of godly ambition. The words, “*Yet it shall not be so among you*…” ought to hang over every church board meeting to remind us that we aren’t lords, we are servants entrusted with God’s resources and sheep. In Matthew chapter 23 verse 8 Jesus said, “*But you, do not be called Rabbi; for One is your teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren*.” The church is not to operate as a hierarchy of power, as Paul said in 2 Corinthians 1:24, “*Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are* **FELLOW WORKERS** *for your joy; for by faith you stand*.” No one; not the pastor, the board, the deacons or denomination is ever to be be the boss or bully pushing around their fellow brothers and sisters. ***Jesus is the Head of His church and will always be***! We can look out over the differing forms of church government and see that no matter what form practiced we can see the same failure which is because of worldly ambition instead of godly ambition. There has never been a form of church government that has been immune to it because the problem is not the structure but the heart behind it (*worldly ambition instead of godly ambition*). The church has simply failed (Catholic and Protestant, Baptist and Pentecostal) to live out these simple God given instructions of our Lord. A pastor or other leadership in a church are simply people who have been given the responsibility to exercise the proven calling and gifts in away that glorifies Jesus, furthers His kingdom and causes God’s people to grown in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

 Then Jesus repeats chapter 9 verse 35 and the great little visible example of how you can determine if you are functioning as a leader with godly ambition, “*Whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all*.” ***Godly ambition is SERVANT LEADERSHIP;*** and when exercised in the power of the Holy Spirit something amazing happens. ***Authority is established not by constraint but by willing submission as you have demonstrated that you value the people above your position and self***! Those in authority in God’s church are those who have time and again demonstrated that they are servants of all and because of this have gained respect and honor from their fellow brothers and sisters that have been constantly served by them and have no problem submitting to their leadership.

Vs. 45 Of course the greatest example of this is none other than Jesus Himself who, “*did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many*.” Here is Jesus, the One who spoke everything into existence, the only One who has every right to be served by that which He created and He choose instead to relinquish His rights in order to meet our needs and demonstrate what true godly ambition is.

1. **Vs. 46-52 That I might receive my sight**

Vs. 46 First let’s address the threefold connection between these two stories:

1. When you look at the other gospel accounts you realize that Mark leaves out many other events that happened at this time. For instance, Luke tells us of Jesus coming to Zacchaeus’ house which happened at this same time. Matthew speaks of two blind men and never reveals the name of either. This revelation suggests to us that the Holy Spirit through Mark hand picked this story in connection with what had just transpired.
2. Then there is a repeated phrase that connects these two sections. In verse 36 Jesus asked at the request of the two brothers James and John, “*What do you want Me to do for you*?” Then down in verse 51 at Bartimaeus’ continual cries Jesus asks him the same exact question, “*What do you want Me to do for you*.”
3. Finally, there is the odd double ***repeat of Bartimaeus’*** name which certainty would draw the reader’s attention to this story. You see ***Bar-Timaeus*** means “***Son of Timaeus***”, so why does Mark say it twice in verse 46? It is not normal for the Greek or Hebrew and is quite redundant as they mean the same thing.

These three things cause me to believe that these stories are very much connected and that is further enhanced by what Timaeus means. This blind man’s name means “*Son of Honor*”! What are the odds that right after there was a through discussion on the request of having the place of “***HONOR***” next to Jesus that you were totally “***BLIND***” about the cost of; that you would run into a “***BLIND MAN NAME HONOR***” which Matthew doesn’t even record his name as one of the two blind men? The healing of ***Bartimaeus*** is the perfect illustration that would heal these disciples so that they could enjoy their places of HONOR in godly ambition at Jesus’ side.

Vs. 47-52 The trouble with these disciples is that they were as spiritual blind as ***Bartimaeus*** was physically blind. The difference was that ***Bartimaeus*** unlike the disciples was very aware of this fact and wasn’t willing to shut up about it even when he was warned to be quiet. ***Bartimaeus*** was far more concerned with his blindness then he was of anything else, as threw aside his garment to come to Jesus.

Don’t you find it a bit interesting that as ***Blind Bartimaeus*** comes before Jesus that Jesus asks, to my way of thinking an obvious answer, when addressing a blind, “*What do you want Me to do for you*?” I mean what else would ***Bartimaeus*** want but to receive his sight? And sure enough that is exactly what he asks for and receives for the first time in his life. **So are you ready to put this all together for our application**? Remember James and John’s request as they desired three things: ***Preeminence***, ***Proximity*** and ***Power*** from the Lord, but were blind as to the cost? Here then is ***the antidote to that which hinders us from godly ambition and enjoying an ever increasing amount of these three things in this life***. We need to be asking the Lord to continue to “***Cure our blindness about ourselves***!” That is what keeps us from:

* From enjoying heaven now
* From a growing closeness to Jesus
* From a greater power from Him to do what He has called us to do

Oh that each and everyday we would be like ***Bartimaeus*** and ask Jesus to grant us that we may receive our sight about our self’s! David said it so well in Psalm 139:23-24 “*Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me. And lead me in the way everlasting*.”

**Mark 11:1-11**

**“The Triumphal entry”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 1-6 The timing of the event**
3. **Vs. 7 The behavior of a colt**
4. **Vs. 8-10 The response of the crowd**
5. **Vs. 11 The response of the religious leaders**
6. **Introduction**

We move forward in the time line of Jesus earthly life, as we enter the 11th chapter of Mark’s gospel and moved into His final week. The final 6 chapters are divided into four events that fit into that final week:

1. 11:1-13:37 From the temple to the Mount of Olives
2. 14:1-14:52 From the upper room to the garden of Gethsemane
3. 14:53-15:20 From His arrest to His sentence
4. 15:21-16:20 From the cross to the great commission

There is in each gospel account by design a disproportional amount of time spent in the final week of Jesus’ earthly life. As noted above we are about to investigate the event known as Palm Sunday or the triumphal entry. One of the interesting things to me is how easy it is to misdiagnose the miraculous of this scene. For example, there is a tendency to assign the miraculous to the “*finding of the colt*” while not recognizing how utterly miraculous the response of the multitude was to Jesus ridding on that colt. As I analyze that fact I wonder if the same could not be said of our lives as a whole? Do we assign some events of our lives as “*miraculous*” that in reality aren’t, while missing our Lord showing up at other times? Though the study at hand is a historical narrative it may very well be more than that as the Lord is at all times desiring to make a “*triumphal entry*” into our everyday life.

The story at hand appears to be simple and straight forward at first glance but like everything about our Lord there is nothing about Him that doesn’t surprise even the slightest investigation. The 12 with the multitude have come up from Jericho all following Jesus as they arrive a week early for the Passover feast.

Geographically, a person could go to Jerusalem and enter the temple a few different ways. What we read is that Jesus went up to Jerusalem through Bethphage which tells us that His approach was going to be through the main gate. This is the route that dignitaries and important people would enter the City and temple. It is believed that most of the time that Jesus had previously entered the city He had done so through the opposite way through the “sheep gate”. Clearly Jesus did this as He wanted to make an entrance. As you ascend the Mount of Olives you leave the little village of Bethany and at the top of the Mount is Bethphage (house of figs) the larger better known village. Than you start your dissent into the Garden of Gethsemane. Right after this you would cross the little Brooke of Kidron in the valley and go into the temple. From Bethany to the Temple would only be about 3 miles. Bethany was the place where the colt was to be picked up and Bethphage was the place where Jesus mounted it and road it down towards the temple on the descent from the Mount of Olives to the Garden of Gethsemane. In John chapter 10 verse 22 we learn that three months earlier Jesus in January, during the Feast of Dedication known today as Hanukkah, was in this very area. As such it seems obvious to me that the instructions given by Jesus in verses 2-3 and what the two disciples discovered in Bethany in verse 4-6 need not be attributed as a miracle. It most likely was planned back in January by Jesus in anticipation of His Triumphal entry. Further more I believe that Jesus did this because He was very aware of the prophecy in Zechariah chapter 9 verse 9 where we read “*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey*.” The reluctance of some to have this interpretation is they feel that in holding it that in some way it lessons Jesus. The argument goes like this: “*If Jesus* ***engineered*** *this just to fulfill a prophecy, that is not fulfilling a prophecy it is manufacturing a prophecy*?” My answer to that is; “*Arranging for your transportation in line with the prophecy, is not the same thing as manufacturing the event*!” ***There are four things that Jesus could not have manufactured***:

1. **Vs. 1-6 The timing of the event**
2. **Vs. 1-6 The Timing of the event**: Jesus knew the exact day that this event was to take place. So we can get the timing of events down: This would have been the Saturday the Sabbath which means that there would have been no money changers only priests and Jesus’s arrival would have been as if He was the Great High Priest. Sunday the first of the week would have been when Jesus cleanses the temple spoken of in verses 15-19, it is where Jesus revealed himself as the King with authority. Then on Monday according to Luke 19:41 Jesus goes back into the city and weeps over it before again cleansing the temple, where He presents himself as a prophet. As interesting as those details are they are only a part of the picture along with ridding the colt. Zechariah’s prophecy is placed in the middle of a prophecy where the prophet is speaking about the land of Syria. When Matthew recorded that the triumphal entry was done to fulfill Zechariah’s prophecy he deliberately leaves out two phrases from Zechariah’s words “*Rejoices greatly*” and “*He is just and having salvation*”. The reason for this is the difference between Jesus’ 1st coming and His 2nd coming. But what this prophecy points towards is another prophecy, Daniel 9:25 “*Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times.*” The time tables importance was discovered by the former director and detective of the Scotland Yard in the 1900’s who was not only a brilliant detective but also an avid bible student. Sir Robert Anderson put all this in a book called “*The Coming Prince*” where he pieces together the exact date of the fulfillment of Daniel’s and Zechariah’s prophecies. The key to unraveling this date was finding the time when the “*command to restore and build Jerusalem*” was issued. You find that answer in Nehemiah chapter 2 verse 1 where we are told that it was issued in the “*Twentieth year of King Artaxerxes*”. What Sir Robert Anderson discovered by analyzing the book of Daniel as well as factoring in the fact that in the day that Daniel wrote this prophecy they used a 360 day’s a year calendar; was that the date of *King Artaxerxes* decree was March 28th, 445 B.C. Next he looked at the specific phraseology of “*seven weeks and sixty-two weeks*”. The word used for “*weeks*” is “*sevens*” and in Hebrew literature it refers to years. So that would make the math out to be 49 years and 434 years for a total of 483, using the 360 day years or 173,880 days from the date of the decree “*Until Messiah the Prince*”. If you count out those days it places the date at April 6th, 32 A.D. which just so happens to be this very day when Jesus road into Jerusalem on a colt.
3. **Vs. 7 The behavior of a colt**
4. **Vs. 7 The behavior of the colt**: Matthew records for us that there were two donkeys where as Mark just mentions the colt. But there is no contradiction here as Jesus rode the colt and the colt’s mother came along. Also of interest is that a donkey is an animal of peace where as a horse is the animal of war and in Revelation chapter 19 verse 11 we will see Jesus riding a horse upon His return. There is no way in which Jesus could have pre-engineered the behavior of this colt as they do not enjoy the first experience of being ridden. They will buck and kick in the process known as “breaking”. Yet we read of none of this with regards to this colt, it was docile, responsive, and obedient which completely contradicts the animal’s natural instincts. ***I submit to you that the procurement of the colt was not miraculous but it’s behavior sure was***! The only conclusion I can make is that the rider that day was none other than the very person who created the colt and the very one that even the wind and the waves must obey!
5. **Vs. 8-10 The response of the crowd**
6. **Vs. 8-10 The response of the crowd**: This event that had been prophesied for 483 years went largely unnoticed by the people of Jerusalem. John in chapter 12 verse 12 tells us that the “*great multitude had COME to the feast…and had heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him*.” According to Matthew we know that those that spread out their clothes and tree branches that day were not the inhabitance of Jerusalem as the people of the city asked “*Who is this*?” and the answer came back from those from the surrounding areas of Galilee “*This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee*.” The citizens of Jerusalem were going about their normal business and were completely oblivious to the fact that Jesus was that very day fulfilling a 483-year-old prophesy. It was the strangers and pilgrims that day that fulfilled the prophecy of Psalm 118:22-26 a psalm which Jesus ascribes to himself. They began to praise Jesus as He road that colt down the Mount of Olives because of “*all the mighty works they had seen*.” So powerful was this praise that it drew the anger of the Pharisees who told Jesus to rebuke the crowd of followers and Jesus told them that “*If these should keep silent, the* ***stones*** *would immediately cry out*.” Now that is miraculous, the heart of people praising Jesus and a warning that if they stopped a “*rock concert was about to break out, staring the* ***stones***”! There was no way Jesus could have orchestrated that, the spontaneous praise of people over His mighty works singing Hosanna, “*Save now, save now*!”
7. **Vs. 11 The response of the religious leaders**
8. **Vs. 11 The attitude of the religious leaders**: Historian’s tell us that at this time Jerusalem had a population of around 80,000 but during religious feasts the population would swell to over 250,000. Yet with this said as the opposite of those singing praise songs to him the people of Jerusalem were disinterested and the religious leaders were antagonistic. Here the Lord was about to fulfill a 483-year-old prophecy as Jesus was riding into the city on a colt as people praised Him. Unwillingly they also fulfilled prophecies as Psalm 118:22-26reminds us “***The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone****. This was the LORD'S doing; It is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day the LORD has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it. Save now, I pray, O LORD; O LORD, I pray, send now prosperity. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! We have blessed you from the house of the LORD.*” Here were the “builders rejecting the chief cornerstone” and on Monday as Jesus again approached the city we are told in Luke 19:41-44He wept over it
saying, “*If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation*.” Forty years from this pronouncement the Roman general Titus armies laid siege to the city. Titus gave a command not to burn the Temple but the soldiers violated that order which caused the gold in the temple treasury to melt and run through the cracks of the stones. When the fire had gone out the soldiers dismantled the temple to get the gold that not one stone was left upon another. And this was done because they hadn’t known the time of their visitation!

I find it interesting that when Jesus made it into the temple that Saturday “*He looked around at all things*” then He just left with the 12. I think that our Lord often comes into our lives like this, looks around when we can’t put on our Sunday best inspecting what we ought to have been asking Him to reveal in our blindness about ourselves. Spiritual blindness is a preventable disease if we will simply be open to Him revealing it to us and not be all caught up in making “*finding our colt*” a miracle!

**Mark 11:12-19**

**“Cursing and cleansing”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 12-14 Fruitless fig trees**
3. **Vs. 15-19 Corrupt commercialism and religious rituals**
4. **Introduction**

We come now to verses 12-26 of Mark chapter 11 and two incidents that took place on the 2nd day (Monday) of the passion week:

1. ***The cursing of the fig tree***: This is divided into two segments: Verses 12-14 the cursing of the fig tree and verses 20-26 the lessons of the withered fig tree as it relates to prayer and fruitlessness.
2. ***The cleansing of the temple***: In between these two sections is verses 15-19 and Jesus’ cleansing of the temple. This serves as an illustration of the cause of fruitlessness.

This passage presents many challenges as to both the proper interpretation as well as personal application. The reason for this is the forgetfulness of the context. As I have said all along in our study; Mark’s readers were the Romans. His perspective is the contrast between the “*son of God*” that the Romans were very familiar with and Jesus as the true **Son of God**. Nothing could have demonstrated that better than the way the Roman Caesar would have entered a city and the way Jesus just done in the so called “Triumphal Entry”. Had Caesar entered Jerusalem that day everybody would have been lining the streets, he would have been riding a golden chariot pulled by a perfect stallion. The people that would have been praising him that day would have been the very people he had imposed his will upon when His armies invaded their world with forced oppression. Not so with our Lord He has come unto His own and His own has known Him not even though the event was foretold 483 years to the day earlier. He is ridding a colt that has never been broken to the shouts of Hosanna from those outside the region. Those that should have been most excited to see him at best asked “*who is this*” before they demand that those singing His praise be silent. Jesus’ entrance was nothing short of a “***parade of the poverty of spirit***” from a Roman perspective! It would have been impossible for the Roman mind to comprehend the people publically rejecting their Caesar as Jerusalem had just done Jesus. What Mark records is that as the nation rejects their long awaited promised King, the King will finally reject the nation. Jesus would say this very passion week in Matthew 21:43 “***I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it***.”

1. **Vs. 12-14 Fruitless fig trees**

Vs. 12-14 This is a very difficult section as it is the only account given of Jesus exercising His power that has a destructive outcome. Though you could argue the destruction of the pigs into the Sea of Galilee but it must be remembered that such an act led to the deliverance of the demon possessed man. This incident causes two challenges as it relates to Jesus:

* **His knowledge**: Did Jesus know or didn’t He know that the fig tree had no figs upon it? If He knew it had no figs than why did He go hoping to find something on it? And if He didn’t know that it hadn’t any figs how can He be the all knowing, God the Son? The answer to that is to comprehend that Jesus was both full man and fully God. It was not His Deity that hungered but His humanity who had humbled Himself and became a man that did. This reveals to us that ***this story is presented to us from the vantage of His humanity and not His deity***. He has come to His own as the long awaited Messiah who they saw as a man not, God the Son.
* **His action**: The 2nd difficulty requires us investigate Middle Eastern botany as we are told that “*seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it, but He found nothing but leaves,* ***for it was not the season for figs***.” So then why did Jesus curse a poor fig tree for being fruitless when “*..****it was not the season for figs****?*” We have never witnessed or heard of Jesus doing a single thing that would benefit Himself, let alone punish a tree for not providing for His necessities, when it wasn’t even it’s season to do so. Further more sense Jesus had the power to curse and wither the fig tree could He not have just as easily caused the fig tree to instantly produce figs? There are two things that shed light upon Jesus’ action:
1. **The timing of the event**: It transpires two days into His final week of His earthly life! This was the week where Jesus had predicted in the parable just before His Triumphal Entry that the nation would say “*We will not have* ***THIS MAN*** *reign over us.*” The “***Man Christ Jesus***” who was the one that was told was coming 483 years earlier.
2. **The nature of Middle Eastern fig trees**: Jesus Himself gives us a little Middle Eastern botany lesson in Mark 13:28 when He said, “*learn this parable from the* ***FIG TREE****: When it’s branches has already become tender, and put forth leaves, you know that summer is near.*” Typically, the fig tree produced leaves in March or April and then started to bear fruit in June. Often a 2nd crop would come in August and possibly a third crop in December. As such the presence of leaves would mean the presence of fruit was coming, or possibly that fruit was "left over" from the previous season. We know that the date of this was early in Spring as it was the 7th of April but it “*was not the season for figs.*” There is one other thing of note concerning fig tress is that they require “***cross pollination***” to bear fruit. And based upon the Greek in Matthew’s account this fig tree was all by it’s self and had no possibility to “***cross pollinate***” in order to bare fruit.

Putting these two things together it is clear that Jesus had an expectation that this fig tree should do as it was called to do in Genesis 1:11 “*bear fruit after its kind*”. Further more the condition in which he saw the fig tree was twofold and exactly illustrated the condition of Israel at the final week of earthly life:

1. ***Promise without performance***: The leaves of the fig tree had the promise of fruit and like the nation of Israel it had been created to bear fruit after it’s kind. But there would be no fruit and in Israel’s case their whole history had been pointing to the coming of Jesus the Messiah, as recorded to the day in their own scriptures. Their complete existence was waiting for this very moment and they became like so many in life as they fulfilled the tragic three stages of life: Those that ***WILL DO SOMETHING***, those that ***COULD DO SOMETHING***, and those that ***MIGHT HAVE DONE SOMETHING***! This tree held the promise to do what it had been created to do, bear fruit but it “stood alone” while still publically demonstrating that it was going to do something.
2. ***Profession without practice***: This tree, with it’s leaves, professed to offer something that it didn’t have and could not produce. Like Israel it had the “Leaves” of religious ceremonies and traditions but produced no fruit. The tree and Israel had spent there inter existence producing luxuriant foliage, so that it looked healthy but it was never productive in it’s true calling. The cursing of the fig tree and the cleansing of the temple are the same message: ***Fruitless is unacceptable as God has given us everything necessary to do what He has created us to do, “bear fruit”***. Jesus found the fig tree and the nation had the same condition ***the profession of foliage without fruit***.

The fig tree was a symbol of the nation and its curse was a judgment at it’s roots. The central part of this is the principal that “*faith is key to fruitfulness*”! At the start of Jesus’ earthly ministry, John the Baptist had warned the nation that the ax was already at the foot of the tree and now life had departed because the nation had refused to believe God. In the corresponding interpretation to what Peter observed the next morning with the withered fig tree Jesus teaches them **NOT** on the “*secret of destroying fruitless tress and people*” but rather the “***secret of making the removal of such completely unnecessary***”. The secret is faith that God can remove the “mountains of unbelief”. Jesus charged them to pray that they and the church not fall into the same state. Prayer and Faith are God’s secret for a life of fruitfulness.

1. **Vs. 15-19 Corrupt commercialism and religious rituals**

Vs. 15-19 This is the 2nd time Jesus cleansed the temple, having done so at the start of His ministry 3 ½ years earlier, yet in that time they had not changed their practice so Jesus again goes into the temple. This time we see that he repeats the first action of “*driving out those who bought and sold in the temple, and over turned the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves.*” But we also notice in verse 16 that Jesus “*would not allow* ***ANYONE*** *to carry wares through the temple*.” Jesus completely stopped all traffic in the temple area including the priests. The temple was laid out into ***four precincts*** that filled up the 30-acre temple mount area:

1. The outer space was called ***the court of the Gentiles***. It was here that the tables would have been set up and money changers would be located.
2. ***The court of the women*** as they were not allowed to go further than this court even if they wished to offer a sacrifice.
3. The court was called ***the court of the Israelites***; it was here that the men would gather to hand the offerings to the priests.
4. The inner most court was called ***the Court of the priests***: It is here where the sacrifices took place and only the priests were allowed to enter.

The incident took place in the court of the Gentiles where over time this area had become completely commercialized. ***This was the very area that had been designed to be a place where “light could come to the Gentiles” through prayer and preparation***. So much commercial traffic was being done here that it was impossible for prayer and devotion to take place. Not only was in being used as a place of commerce it was being used as a road way so that people could pass easily between the courts for convenience. There was a greater possibility of being robbed in the temple from the commerce then there was of the road up from Jericho to Jerusalem. Jesus was angry for two reasons:

* ***The exploitation of the people***: The religious community were treating these people not as worshippers, not even as people they were treating them as a commodity, exploiting then for their own gain. God has always been against the exploitation of people especially under the religious banner.
* ***The desecration of God’s purpose***: The nation had deposed of the presence of God through the commercialization of God’s Holy place. The temple was designed as a meeting place for God and man but they had turned it into Walmart.

Jesus took two significant actions that were symbolic to what had just transpired at the curing of the fig tree:

1. ***He cleansed it***: Jesus drove out those that bought and sold in the temple, He over turned the tables of the money changers and knocked over the seats of those who sold doves. Jesus stopped the commercialization including that of the selling of the sacrificial offerings. The merchants were offering a convenience for the worshippers but it became extortion as they were making an excessive amounts and money changers were employed by he High Priests family as a business. So Jesus came in swept out the whole mess for the 2nd time in three years. He said that all their activity was not profitable except to be a habitation for robbers.
2. ***He cleared it***: Second, Jesus stopped all traffic through it. The Greek is very specific here saying that He stopped “***anyone***” carrying “***wares***” and the word is “***Vessel***” which refers to “***instruments essential for worship***”. Jesus not only shut down commerce in the temple He shut all religious rituals as well. In the books of Leviticus and Numbers we read of God instituting rituals sacrifices in the temple and there was a continual procession of priests passing trough the temple every day. But on this day Jesus stopped it, refusing to allow the empty religious activity to continue as it had all been pointing him and they had rejected Him and His sacrifice to He stopped the religious activity.

Looking at these two events together and the picture is that ***Jesus saw the nation as both spiritually fruitless and bankrupt.*** The temple was the heart of the nation and now it produced nothing but empty leaves becoming nothing more that ***corrupt commercialism*** and ***religious rituals***. When the religious leaders had learned of Jesus’ activities they were filled with a murderous rage and they met together to see how they may destroy Him. There was no longer any discussion on what they may do to reduce His popularity the only question was how they could kill Him in the name of God. They had reached like the fig tree the point of no return when Jesus cleansed and cleared the temple four day later they would see Him hang of a cross.

**Mark 11:20-26**

**“Have faith in God”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 20-21 Dried figs**
3. **Vs. 22-24 How to avoid withered roots**
4. **Vs. 25-26 Our greatest obstacle**
5. **Introduction**

Last week started looking at the cursing of the fig tree, the strangest miracle done by Jesus. Not only is it the ***only miracle he did that has a negative outcome***, it also is the ***only miracle done that didn’t directly benefit others***. Another oddity is that ***the explanation given by Jesus to Peter’s observation of the fig tree the next day being “dried up from its roots” doesn’t seem to fit the curse***. That will be the text under our examination today as we will be looking at Jesus’ explanation in the context of the cursing of the fig tree. Peter was amazed at Jesus ability to destroy and Jesus answered him with the secret of making destruction unnecessary and the secret of removing the obstacles to fruitfulness. Jesus doesn’t make His answer national but moral as He tells His disciples how to avoid fruitlessness and lack of spiritual progress.

1. **Vs. 20-21 Dried figs**

Vs. 20-21 This reverence to Peter is only in Mark’s account and Mark is very specific by telling us that Peter observed this “*in the morning*”. The point is that it was *both clearly visible as well as could have happened quicker but wouldn’t have been visible* when they went through he same area in the evening. Also the words “*dried up from the roots*” is in a Greek verb tense that means that it was completely withered and dead. This miracle, albeit a negative one, had nothing to do with this ***fig tree’s health it was instead a question only its productivity***. It is completely outside the normal possibility for this tree to have gone from healthy foliage to dead from its roots in 24 hours or less. One of the things about fig trees is that they are very difficult to kill, you can cut them done only leaving a stump and they will quickly send up shoots from the stump and soon you will have a weird looking fig tree on your hand. It is no wonder Peter exclaimed in surprise at the demise of this fig tree and recalled Jesus words towards it of “*Let no one eat fruit from you ever again*.”

 Then we have Jesus seemingly disconnected answer to Peter’s observation. There are some who have wrestled Jesus’ words away from the context of the cursing of the fig tree and used then to support a “**formula for working miracles**”; as if Jesus is saying in response to Peter, “*Why Pete, you too can curse fig trees and cause them to die because you have faith in God*!” There are even those who stretch this further to suggest that like Jesus we have “*power in our words*” that what ever we say will come to pass Just like Jesus did here, so we need to go around pronouncing the things we want to happen materially and avoid negative speech. There was no secret formula given by Jesus on how to “*speak things into being*” but instead the secret Jesus was communicating was how to live a Christian life that will always be fruitful and productive. Israel’s fruitlessness was a direct result of substituting, meaningless religious rituals and commercialism instead of practicing a true loving, obedient relationship with God. They had been going through the motions of performance as an outward show but in reality the priests were corrupt who were only as Jesus called them “blind guides”. The life of the nation was an example of fruitfulness as Jesus had warned and now He takes the opportunity to teach these men whom He was entrusting with being a blessing to the world so that they may avoid the same outcome.

1. **Vs. 22-24 How to avoid withered roots**

Vs. 22-24 Jesus doesn’t explain to Peter the lesson to be learned from the fate of the tree but instead He deals with the lesson of the importance of prayer. The test of faith is that we who pray see the fulfillment before it happens not after. Fruit wasn’t found in Israel, because life had departed from the roots; and life had departed because they had replaced obedient trust in God for religious rituals and commerce. So Jesus charged these men to exhibit the expression of faith, prayer. And that prayer must be aimed at the mountains of lack of compassion, pride, lack of forgiveness etc. True prayer purifies the person that prays. Where faith is exercised fruitfulness will always be visible! Indirectly this was a word not just for Israel but for the individual believer, the church and our nation!

Jesus continues on in the context of how to avoid being fruitless by having faith in God by talking about moving mountains. There are again those that want to wrestle these verse away from the context and say that it can be done if you just have “*enough believing faith*”. Yet I have never heard of these faith healers ever actually moving a mountain into the sea. I believe that what Jesus is trying to explain is that He knows that at times simply trusting in God is a mountainous obstacle. There are always going to be opposition and obstacles that stand in the way of our faith in God. Israel at the time of Jesus’ words faced a mountain called the occupying force of the Roman army and its enslavement of the nation. There is the normal doubts and fears of every day life but all of these drive us to a decision: ***Are we going to chose to use the mountains to interpret who God is, or are we going to chose to interpret the mountain by who we know God to be***? The secret of “*mountain removal*” in our lives is to always start with what you know is true about God. **Truths like**: *He is all knowing, He is perfect in all His ways, He loves me enough to send His Son to save me while I was still a practicing sinner. He is every where present and nothing escapes His loving eyes or hands. He will never leave me of forsake me.* As we go through the list of truths that we know to be true about our God, that we have experienced in our relationship with Him time after time, something happens in our hearts as we realize that what ever mountain is in front of us isn’t as big as we thought it was as we have faced mountain’s like this before and nothing we have ever faced was able to separate us from the love of God!

1. **Vs. 25-26 Our greatest obstacle**

Vs. 25-26 There is one mountain in particular that is the most difficult to overcome in our journey of faith. Our greatest Himalayan obstacle is one of our own making it’s the “*mountain of our own pride*.” Our pride is what keeps us from trusting in God as we won’t pray for those who have offended us, our thinking that we deserve better and are in fact better than someone else. I know of nothing I wrestle against more in my life than my pride manifested in nothing forgiving those who have offended me at some time. What is even more damming in my case is that I want and expect that others should not have pride towards me and forgive me when I’ve wronged them. The mountain of forgiveness and pride must be removed in our lives if we are going to regularly experience fruitfulness and spiritual health. The basis of this forgiveness as Jesus tells us in verse 26 is the realization of the fact that Jesus do easily and readily forgave us our sins. He assumed our debt and paid the price; He didn’t wait until we came groveling up to Him begging, no why we were still practicing our rebellion He laid down Hs life on our behalf. There is not a one of us that deserved such forgiveness so how come we want to apply a new spread sheet for those that have offend us? ***This passage has three rules for prayer as well as four truths about our faith***:

1. ***Vs. 22-23 Prayer to be effective must be according to faith***: The phrase about moving mountains was a common Jewish phrase, as it was widely used for removing difficulties. Good Rabbi’s were said to be able by their teaching to remove the difficulties in the minds of the students and were called “mountain-removers”. The prayer of faith requires two things from the person who offers it:
2. That we are willing to take that which hinders us to God: There are times when what we are asking of God is not something that He would have for us. So we either don’t ask Him for what we know He won’t give us or we ask Him for it and become disillusioned when He doesn’t grant us for us that which would only ruin us.
3. That we are willing to apply God’s answer to our lives once He has given it: It is common for folks to ask God for things that they have no intention to take. It is useless to ask God for guidance unless we are willing to be humble and obedient enough to apply it.
4. ***Vs. 24 Prayer must be expectant***: Prayer must never be a formality, a ritual with out hope! Like anything we must have an attitude of expectant confident hope increases the likelihood of success. Prayer must always be expectant; far to often what we want from God is **OUR ANSWER** and when God’s comes first, as it always does, we don’t recognize it.
5. ***Vs. 25-26 Prayer must be directed to personal transformation:*** If we are going to accomplish God’s purposes in our life than we need to aim our prayer at the areas we need to be changed in. If what separates us from our fellow man isn’t dissolved we will never have any answers to prayers, so we ought to start there first.

Jesus goes on to tell His disciples four truth to avoid becoming dried up:

1. **Vs. 22 Object of your faith**: Jesus didn’t tell them to just have faith or to have faith in faith as *the key is the object of your trust not your trust*.
2. **Vs. 23 Outworking of your faith**: Jesus didn’t say, study the problem, or even pray about the problem. No, Jesus said “*Who ever* ***SAYS*** *to this mountain*” This requires action not theory. *The* ***object of our faith*** *must come into contact with the* ***obstacle to our faith*** *and that will require* ***the working out our faith***. Prayer doesn’t change THINGS, prayer changes me while the object of my faith; God, changes things.
3. **Vs. 24 Obtaining faith**: Next Jesus tells us what do if we lack the faith to remove the obstacles to our faith, ask the Father to grant us the faith. You may recall the request of the father when Jesus came down from the Mount of Transfiguration and confronted the scene of the demon possessed young man and the unbelief of the father, where he said to Jesus, “*Lord, I believe; help my unbelief*.” ***Jesus didn’t teach that obtaining faith was the way to GET things you wanted, He taught that obtaining faith was the way of REMOVING the the things that kept you from enjoying the relationship with the Lord already had for you***! The faith healers have it all wrong, we need to be asking the lord to remove the mountains of the flesh, the obstacle's that keep us fruitless instead of fruitful!
4. **Vs. 25-26 Obstacle to faith**: The last thing Jesus does as He gives us the path to fruitfulness in our lives is mention our greatest foe, PRIDE and nothing reveals this clearer that our lack of forgiveness towards those who have offended us. Faith is always short-circuited because of our pride.

**Mark 11:27 – 12:12**

**“Who’s in charge”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 27-33 Who’s on trial?**
3. **Vs. 1-12 The answer to your questions**
4. **Introduction**

Having just finished the statements with regards to the fallen fig tree and how to avoid the same fate as the fig tree. The remainder of chapter 11 and on through chapter 12 we see that Jesus will face a series of questions concerning His authority, but what his interrogators will fail realize is that they are the ones being questioned. Indirectly these interrogators are like the priests who would examine the sacrificial lambs on Passover making sure that they were without spot or blemish. Jesus made the same observation in Matthew chapter 8:5-13 when the Roman Centurion came to Jesus requesting that his servant be healed; though willing to go physically at this request the Centurion said, “*Only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority*…” Jesus marveled at this understanding and commented saying that He had not “*found such faith, not even in Israel*!” Ezekiel the prophet declared God’s process in dealing with leaders who forget whose authority they are under in chapter 21:26-27 “*Remove the turban, and take off the crown; Nothing shall remain the same. Exalt the humble, and humble the exalted. Overthrown, overthrown, I will make it overthrown! It shall be no longer, until He comes whose right it is, and I will give it to Him.*” As we look at the verses over the next few weeks each of the stories at hand will deal specifically with authority and how we should live under it.

1. **Vs. 27-33 Who’s on trial?**

Vs. 27-28 This would have been Tuesday of the passion week and the third strait day that Jesus had visited the temple. We have several things to investigate in these verses:

* We will need to look at the obvious two questions asked by this group: “*By what authority are you doing these things? And who gave You this authority to do these things*?”
* We will need to relook at what had brought about this public inquiry
* We will also benefit from understanding who made up this delegation

We will address the obvious questions at the end. First we will need to remember why the delegation was questioning Jesus and who made up this delegation:

1. The reason for their confrontation that day was what had transpired on Monday a day earlier when ***Jesus did two things in the temple***.
2. First, like He had done three years earlier Jesus halted all commerce in the temple area, specifically the court of the gentiles. What is interesting to note is that Jesus’s cleansing the temple three years earlier had no lasting effect on this practice as it had again reached a frenzy. The commerce that was being done in this area was under the banner of convenience but it must be understood that the convenience was only being done in the area of the court of the gentiles and secondly it was being done under the direct control of the religious ruling parties ownership and they were making a considerable profit for providing this convenience. Why was the so called “*convenience*” at the expense of the very people who they were called to be a “*light unto*”? And why was such a “*convenience*” making the religious elite wealthy?
3. Secondly, He single-handedly thwarted all religious activity by not allowing people to pass through where they shouldn’t have been passing through in the first place, the court of the gentiles. This had never been done before and apparently had went on for most if not all of the day until Jesus and His disciples left the temple area for the evening.
4. To answer who made up this delegation we need to compare the other accounts of this scene in both Matthew and Luke we gain a greater understanding of who confronted Jesus this day in the temple with their two questions with regards to His authority. This delegation made up the three higher classes of Jewish society: The **religious class**, the **upper class** and the **ruling class**. As such they were to represent the nation but were like most Politian’s and only represented themselves and their desire to stay in power. Mark tells us that it included the chief priests and immediately I note that it is “*priest****s***” plural, not “*priest*” singular. There was only one “*chief*” priest and that would have been Caiaphas but the fact that Mark mentions two informs us that Annas, his father-in-law, was also present. Annas had been appointed as High Priest by the Romans where he served for 10 years but had been deposed but remained in control by having Caiaphas placed as High Priest in his stead after having gone through his sons. This was the wealthy politically powerful family that ran the commerce in the temple. Next we are told that the “*scribes*” were present and they were the ones that had the responsibility to interpret the laws of Moses. We are also told that the “*elders*” were present and these men were officially appointed to serve in the Sanhedrin which was the ruling body of the nation. This entire group answered to no one except to the occupying forces of Rome, they were the people in authority over the nation. It was this group who confronted Jesus publically this day in the temple area demanding answers to their two questions.
5. They already knew the answers to their questions but wanted to publically indict as we are told in verse 18 they had already decided to “*destroy Him*” now they were just looking for a reason that hold up to the people and clearly they felt that the the issue of Jesus lack of authority was justifiable grounds. Politically Jesus would have had to of gone through them to get such authority or through Rome and they knew he had done neither. But they weren’t anticipating Jesus’ questioning of their authority.

Vs. 29-30 Jesus completely and utterly turned the tables on them as He demanded the credentials on those who were interrogating Him. What’s even more impressive to me is that He did so with such a calm and commanding manner. They were so convinced that they had Jesus on the spot only to realize that they were the ones on the defensive. That in and of its self should have been enough to show them by what authority and how He came about obtaining this authority. Also notice that Jesus’ offer to answer their interrogation was only partial as they wanted to know both: “*by what authority He was doing these things*” and “*who gave Him this authority*”. His offer only included answering “*by what authority*” as that would have answered who gave Him that authority. Jesus’ question brilliantly placed this band of interrogates impaled on the horns of a dilemma.

Vs. 31-33 The test question was regarding their view of the baptisms performed by the martyred John the Baptist; was it from God or was it the mere religion of man? This question went right too the very act of cleansing and closing the temple to which action and authority they questioned. The baptism which John had been engaged in doing was controversial in Israel, baptisms or ceremonial washing were common place in the Levitical system. They were performed privately and when done publically were done so in the temple area by a priest. John was not a priest and he wasn’t doing them either in the temple nor privately. As such John’s baptisms were very controversial were did John receive the authority to do what He had been doing, he hadn’t been a priest, he hadn’t received the authority from the religious leaders yet the populace was very supportive of John’s public display of personal repentance and challenge to greater commitment to God. So as they huddled together seeking the right answer they realized that if they said from God, then Jesus would have answered, “*Why then didn’t you support John*?” But if they said that John’s baptism’s were from man them they would alienate the very people they were trying to try Jesus before as the general population regarded John as a reformer sent by God. So they answered, “*We don’t now*” but that answer not only got Jesus off the hook it placed them on it as clearly they looked like they had no authority. So Jesus simply said, “*Neither will I tell you by what authority I do theses things*.”

1. **1-12 The answer to your questions**

Vs. 1-12 This is an unfortunate chapter division as it makes it appear as these two statements weren’t connected or that there was a time delay between them. The word “THEN” informs the reader that Jesus’ parable followed immediately after His refusal to answer their questions. Jesus followed the delegations silence with three parables each of them spoken against their authority. Matthew records all three, where as Mark and Luke only choose to record the middle one leaving out the parable of the “Two sons” and the parable of the “Wedding feast”.

To understand Jesus’ use of this parable we first must examine this delegation’s reaction to it in verse 12 where we read that, “*They sought to lay hands on Him, but feared the multitude, for they knew He had spoken the parable against them. So they left Him and went away*.” What stands out to me is that “***they knew He had spoken the parable against them***.” **What was it about this parable that caused them to know that it was about them?** The answer to that isn’t going to be found in the text in Mark, but there are ***two reasons that they knew this parable was about them***:

1. First we need to examine this parable next to the accounts in Matthew’s account. What we discover is that after Jesus told this parable He asked the delegation the question of verse 9 “*Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers*?” And it was the delegation then answered what we have recorded in the 2nd part of verse 9, “*He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons*.” It is right after this that Luke’s account tells us that right after some of that delegation made that statement others began to realize that they were speaking against themselves in their own answer and exclaimed “***Certainly not***!” It is then that Jesus responded with verse 10-11 with a direct quote of Psalm 118:22-23, “Have you never read in the Scriptures: *'The stone which the builders rejected* *Has become the chief cornerstone.* *This was the LORD'S doing,* *and it is marvelous in our eyes'?*” Then Jesus gave them the prophetic warning recorded in Matthew’s account of, “*Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder*.”
2. There is a second reason why at least some of the delegation would have known that Jesus was speaking this parable about them and that is it was familiar as God had used it before it speaking against the religious rulers of old. It is a very close quote of Isaiah 5:1-7 where we read, *“Now let me sing to my Well-beloved A song of my beloved regarding His vineyard: My Well-beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill. He dug it up and cleared out its stones, and planted it with the choicest vine. He built a tower in its midst, and also made a winepress in it; So He expected it to bring forth good grapes, but it brought forth wild grapes. "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, please, between Me and My vineyard. What more could have been done to My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes? And now, please let Me tell you what I will do to My vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it shall be burned; And break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. I will lay it waste; It shall not be pruned or dug, but there shall come up briers and thorns. I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain on it." For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are His pleasant plant. He looked for justice, but behold, oppression; for righteousness, but behold, a cry for help.”* In fact, Jesus’ parable adds onto Isaiah’s speaking of God’s further effort to show His authority and ownership over the vineyard and those He had entrusted to care for the vineyard the vinedressers.

This religious delegation wanted to know “*By what authority Jesus was doing theses things*?” And Jesus said I’m the vineyard Owner’s Son; “*The stone which the builders rejected* *has become the chief cornerstone.* *This was the LORD'S doing,* *and it is marvelous in our eyes'?"* Further more because of their actions Jesus said, “*Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.*” What Jesus predicted that day would happen 40 years later as Jesus would say after His resurrection in Mathew 28:18 “*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me*.” Jesus is the Lord of Lord’s and the King of King’s; best that every person who had authority remembers that when they rule over others. Their authority at best is delegated and temporary as the “powers-that-be” will become the “powers-that-were”!

**Mark 12:13-17**

**“Whose image?”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 13-15a Lawful to pay taxes?**
3. **Vs. 15b-17 Giving where it belongs**

**Introduction**

In verses 13-27 the examination of Jesus continues but from three different groups. Last week we saw that the Jesus was questioned by the delegation that held the power in the temple area: Annas and his son-in-law Caiaphas, the religious lawyers in the scribes and finally the ruling elders. Now we see that the groups will be comprised of the Herodians, Pharisees and Sadducees. The questions Jesus answers deal with two areas that most folks say are certainties in life “*death and taxes*”! Jesus will answer questions regarding these two things in reverse order. This week we will look at the area of who’s authority you are under as we deal with the question asked “*Shall we pay, or shall we not pay*?” Next week we will take up the area about death and as the Sadducees question Jesus with regards to the resurrection. The subject of Jesus’ answer covers today in verse 13-17 a far more than whether Christians should pay taxes and answers what authority the government has over a Christian.

**II. Vs. 13-15a Lawful to pay taxes?**

Vs. 13 I notice three things about Mark’s initial statement:

1. First, that “***they*** *sent*” to Jesus another group. The “***they***” can only refer to the above group comprised of the “*religious class, upper class and ruling class*”. It is clear that though defeated by Jesus’ answer and subsequent parables the leadership remained committed to His destruction.
2. Second, the sole purpose of dispatching this new delegation was to “*catch Him in His words*”. These were not honest inquiries but instead were traps that they could employ to cause them to be able to find something that they might indict Jesus with in order that they could execute their plan to put Him to death.
3. Finally, these two groups the “*Herodians and the Pharisees*” were sworn enemies. The Herodians were those that backed and supported Herod’s reign as king. The Herod’s were not Jew’s but rather descendant’s of Jacob’s brother Esau and as such had no right to the throne of Israel. They had got their kingdom through connections with the Roman Caesar’s but were hated by most Jew’s. The “Herodians” as such were Hellenistic or Greek speaking and cultured Jew’s who benefited financially by being linked with the Herod’s. The Pharisees were at differing times a political party, a social movement and after the destruction of the temple they became the foundation of the ritualistic basic for Rabbinic Judaism. To say that these two groups hated each other is an understatement, in fact the early church had to battle through the inherent prejudices even after some of them became followers of Christ.

Quite possibly this may have been the only time these two enemies had ever united over anything and it was over the One Person who could destroy the barriers that separated them in the first place.

Vs. 14-15a First they came with a word not only to disarm Jesus but to entrap Him so that He couldn’t escape their question but first they praised Him for not being afraid to answer. Next they came with a question most American’s ask at least once a year, “***Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not? Shall we pay, or shall we not pay***?” Though that opening statement was done very disingenuous it was quite accurate and reveals commonly held beliefs about Jesus and His earthly ministry even from hostile sources. Jesus was seen as a teacher who articulated the Word of God above the wrongly held views of man, regardless of a person’s power and popularity. The only thing wrong about this statement is the phrase that stated that He “*cared about no one*”. The truth was that He cared about EVERYONE and that was why He always taught the “*way of God in truth*”. If He didn’t care about people, He would have just let them continue in their error.

 The word “*lawfu*l” in the Greek doesn’t mean with regards to civil authorities but rather is it “*permissible*” in the context of the religious authorities. ***They asked whether a Jew should pay tax in relationship with God and poised the question in a yes or no format***. If He said it would put Him against the Roman government but if He said yes it would put Him against the nation. Each of the gospel writers give us a differing perspective upon the motive of these two groups: Mark says “*knowing their hypocrisy*” Matthew says, “*Perceiving their wickedness*” and Luke says, “*knowing their craftiness*”. ***They were cunning, wicked and hypocritical***! People of Israel wanted to know because they were forced to pay taxes to the Roman government it’s a question that through history to the present day people want to know, “***Should we pay taxes to a government when we know that the government will use the money we have to pay them for immoral and unethical ways***?” Jesus was aware of their hypocrisy, these were the same folks who supported the inflated tax revenue in the temple area as well as the overly high priced animals that “*qualified*” for the sacrifice. They would have never have asked Jesus the question about whether it was lawful to pay the temple tax but they did the tax to the Roman’s, total hypocrisy! There are three things that surprise me in Jesus answer:

1. First, how quickly and easily Jesus avoided their trap while answering their question. There was no hesitation, no let me think about this. Jesus was both quick and deliberate in His response.
2. Second, even though they had asked Jesus a yes/no question, He answers first with an understanding of the motive behind their question. I believe that Jesus always addresses our motives before He gets to our questions, it would be good for us to realize that before we ask instead of after!
3. I’m further amazed by the fact that Jesus had to ask for the coin. This tells me that he didn’t have a dime which would have been the approximate value of a denarius which was a Roman small silver coin in todays value would be around $3.50.

Jesus’s answer to this question is twofold:

1. The denarius had been in circulation for several 100 years and there was a history behind this question in this area. When Herod died in 4 B.C. he had ruled over Israel as a Roman tributary king. He had gained his position by loyalty to the Romans and friendships with those in power. Upon his death the kingdom was divided into three sections given to his three surviving sons:
* Antipas received the region of Galilee to Peraea which was from Galilee to ½ of the back side of the Dead Sea.
* Philip received the areas of the North East which would encompass the area of Jordan today, as well as the area around Mount Hermon.
* Archelaus received the Southern area that included both Samaria as well as Judah.

Antipas and Philip both did well and ruled wisely but Archelaus was a complete failure as a king and in A.D. 6 the Roman stepped in and took over to run things. This southern region was no longer allowed by Rome to be a semi independent kingdom and instead became a Roman province governed by a procurator. ***Provinces under Rome fell into two classes, peaceful and troubled***. Those that were peaceful required no troops and were governed by proconsuls but the troubled areas that had troops were under the direct rule of the Emperor and were governed by a procurator “Pilate” and the tax as such was paid direct to the Emperor Caesar. There were three taxes imposed at this time in Jerusalem:

1. ***Ground tax***: 1/10th of all grain 1/5th of all wine and fruit paid in kind and money
2. ***Income tax***: 1% of a man’s income.
3. ***Poll tax***: all men from 14-65 and all women from 12-65 paid one denarius per-person. It was the one tax every person paid just for the right to exist in this region. And the coin which Jesus asked for was this coin used to pay the tax for the right to exist. And the image would have been Tiberius with an inscription that read “*The High Priest of the Roman Nation*”. The coin was a sign of power, when anyone conquered a land the first thing they would do is mint coin. The coin was also the only valid currency for the realm. Finally, because the coin held the emperors image and inscription it was essentially the property of the emperor.

 “*Whose image and inscription is this*?” He asked and they replied “*Caesar’s*”. “*Well then*”; Jesus said, “*It must be Caesar’s money, so give what ever belongs to him back to him*.” Some today would say, “*This may have been appropriate in Jesus’ time but not today*.” “*Today we have abortion laws, same sex marriage and many other unbiblical, unjust and unethical ways our government is spending our hard earned dollars*.” Paul wrote to the church in Rome largely comprised of slaves in Romans 13:1-2 “*Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God*. *Therefore, whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves*.” The first thing we learn from Paul is that the forms of Government as well as those that occupy the positions of power are from God. Paul tells his readers that their ***obligation is for civil obedience*** and that there is not one Christian that is exempt from obedience to the state! ***This has nothing to do with the righteousness or lack thereof of the “powers that be”. The reason is because of the “righteousness” of the God who has sanctioned it***. All of society needs government as ***God intended man to live under authority***. Peter also wrote on this subject in 1 Peter chapter 2 saying, “*Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake*.” A French diplomat in August 1811 said of Napoleon that, “*Every nation gets the government it deserves*”. Paul and Peter wrote this of Rome who was under their 5th emperor the most ruthless of all Nero. God uses a government or the powers that be to bless a people and sometimes He uses them to judge them and to get them to repent! God has allowed the “*power that be*” to govern over us and the flip side of that is also true: ***governments are in power “under God”***. In February of 1948 Louis Bowman inserted those very words “*Under God*” in the pledge of allegiance quoting from Lincoln’s Gettysburg address. Then under President Eisenhower’s administration it was signed into law as part of the pledge of allegiance, it would do us all good to remember this truth.

1. The truth is all human government has limited powers over our freedoms. They can restrict our actions and speech, regulate our conduct and influence our society. But no government or powers that be can legislate HOW we worship, or WHO we worship, nor can it dictate our conscience. Jesus said a most impactful statement to all followers of Him, “*And to God the things that are God’s*.” Wherever God has “***minted***”, “***stamped***” His image upon your life, you should give that back to God. Has God stamped His image upon your marriage, your family, your gifting and talents? Has He minted His image upon your profession, your hobbies and interests, your bank account and wallet? Has He stamped His image upon your time? If so then give them to God and let Him dictate when, where and how! I can promise you that if you do you won’t be questioning if “***He is using them for immoral and unethical ways***?” Instead you will see fruit that will bring Him glory, honor and praise!

**The bible teaches three great truths with regards to the individual Christian and the state**:

1. ***The State is ordained by God***: Without the laws of the state life would be chaos, people can’t live together unless they agree on laws and obey those laws.
2. ***No person can accept the benefits of the state while opting out of the responsibilities of the state***: To receive the benefits from the state means that you have to accept the laws of the state!
3. ***The limit of the state upon the Christian***: The coin had Caesar’s image upon it and it belonged to him but the Christian has God’s image upon us and we belong to Him! If the state makes demands that conflict with our loyalty to God, then God must come first. But where the state requires obedience that doesn’t conflict with our loyalty to God we Christians must be the better citizens than any other non-Christian.

**Mark 12:18-27**

**“No microscopes in heaven”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 18-23 The case of the unlucky widow**
3. **Vs. 24-27 Ignorance of the Word and power of God**

**Introduction**

This is the only place in Mark’s account that the Sadducees appear, and their questioning of Jesus is very reminiscent of the other accounts of them. To understand their questioning, you would need to look into just **WHO this group** was and **WHAT they believed**. They were one of the three main religious movements during the time of Jesus and were aristocrats. They tended to be wealthy and held powerful positions, made up mostly of priests, including that of chief priests and high priest. They also held the majority of the 70 seats of the ruling council of the Sanhedrin. They kept peace by agreeing with the decisions of Rome being more concerned with politics than religion. Because of this they didn’t relate well to the common man, who sided with the Pharisees. Even though they held the majority of seats in the Sanhedrin, they had to go along with the ideas of the Pharisaic minority, do to the Pharisees popularity with the masses. Religiously, ***the Sadducees differed with*** ***the Pharisees in the authority of scripture as the Pharisees believed that oral tradition was equal to the written Word of God, while the Sadducees considered only the written Word to be from God***. They held many beliefs that contradicted Scripture:

1. They denied God's involvement in everyday life.
2. They denied any resurrection of the dead.
3. They denied any afterlife, believing that the soul perished at death, denying any penalty or reward after the earthly life.
4. They denied the existence of a spiritual world, i.e., angels and demons.

The Sadducees ceased to exist in A.D. 70. When the Temple was destroyed because of their political and priestly ties.

**II. Vs. 18-23 The case of the unlucky widow**

Vs. 18-23 The Sadducees had a strong belief if the scriptures specifically the books of Moses; so not surprisingly they use a particular legislation that God gave Moses to prevent the break up of the family. The case study is from Deuteronomy 25:5-10 and the obligation of brothers to take care of his brother’s widow. Theoretically, this would go on as long as there was brother’s and no child born when the child was born that child would be seen as heir of the original husband **this would ensure two things**: That ***the family name would continue*** and ***that the family property would remain within the family***.

Since the seven husbands had died and now also the wife the interest in the case was upon whose wife she would now be **IF** there was such a place called heaven. Apparently this case was supposed to present a difficulty to those who believed in life after death. ***Their denial of the resurrection was not over a particular type of life after death but any possibility to it***.

 It is clear by Mark’s comments that this was not a serious question but one that intended to mock Jesus and the Pharisees, though it doesn’t appear to be a question that was designed to entrap Him that would lead to His death. These aristocrats were the rationalists, materialists and secular humanists of the day. They come to Jesus to ask a question that they believed was complete nonsense with the aim of making Him look foolish. But their contrived story is so strange that it makes them foolish and Jesus could have just skipped ahead and said “***This woman had seven husbands in a row and they kept dying, you might want to know what she was putting in the soup***!”

**III Vs. 24-27 Ignorance of the Word and power of God**

Vs. 24-27 Before Jesus answers their question in two parts He first tells them they are mistaken on two accounts:

1. ***The scriptures***: God has insight and knowledge beyond that which we possess. It is for this very reason that He has given us the Word of God so that we can look into the scriptures to gain the insight we need to make it through what we don’t understand.
2. ***The power of God***: God has power that is infinitely greater than the power we humans have.

These Sadducees, like many today, limited themselves to only what they knew. People tend to trust solely upon business, science, religion, politics, psychology or family more than they do God’s Word and God’s power. Every human failure can be attributed to one or both of these things “***not knowing the scriptures*** *or* ***not knowing the power of God***”. The great scientist and philosopher, Pascal once noted that “***The ultimate purpose of reason is to bring us to the place where we see the that there is a limit to reason***.” The trouble with rationalists, materialists and secular humanists is that they, like the Sadducees, rely on only things that they can verify with their limited knowledge and power. People and life is far more complicated than just what we can verify! ***When people start the equation with the presupposition that there is no God, there is NO life after death, they have already stated by their presupposition that any thought of those ideas are irrelevant to their situation and purpose of life.*** All of this because they can not prove it with their limited knowledge and power.

 So Jesus boldly declares, “*Their wrong*” because they refused to see the full scope of reality beyond time, space and matter. ***You can’t view the resurrection in a microscope but the rationalist, materialist and secular humanist is more than that they are a human! They can not escape the great spiritual questions simply because they don’t conform to the scientific method of discovery.*** Everything we see in time space and matter dictates a belief in intelligent design. It is illogical to believe in random chance creating anything but chaos! ***No one has ever observed random chance creating anything but chaos***! We can test this theory over and over and the outcome will always be the same, ***chaos***. So if there is a Designer, it is illogical that this Designer would create with such complexity, variety and creativity without the possibility for that which He created to know Him who created them. That means that the emotions, intellect and will of humans not only have the capacity to know their creator but can intimately connected to Him. These things can’t be tested but our whole life experience testifies to the reality of it. It encompasses all of time, space and matter and never changes or advances. As far as ***God’s knowledge and power what was true at the beginning is still true today, even with all of our human advancements***. ***There is not a subatomic particle anywhere in space that God does not have full knowledge of and power over***!

Jesus answers their question in two parts:

1. Vs. 24-25 **The manner of the resurrection**: The Sadducees assumed either God could not raise from the dead, or that He could raise them only back to a life that would just like the material present. Further more Jesus points out that Angels (whom the Sadducees didn’t believe existed) were also created but in their sphere have no need for propagation thus no need for marriage to continue their existence. There are the same number of angels today as there was at the beginning, they are the same angels and in eternity though we will still be humans we will be like the angels in respect to no need to procreate. So Jesus dismisses the Sadducees hypothetical case because they lack the knowledge of the Word of God that Jesus possessed.
2. Vs. 26-27 **The matter of the resurrection**: Jesus speaks on the second aspect of the resurrection and uses Moses whom they only recognized. The point Jesus is making to the Sadducees in Exodus 3:6 is that God reveals to Moses ***His real present relationship*** to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; men whom in Moses time had been dead for over 400 years. The question Jesus is imposing to them is “***How can the living God have a relationship with men who had been dead for over 400 years if they cease to exist*** ***after they die***?” The answer is they aren’t dead but very much still alive, thus there must be life after death. **Jesus words establish not only the immortality of the soul but indirectly the resurrection of the dead**. That also means that humans do not remain in an imperfect condition and will recover a body that will be raised in perfection! Paul writes on all of this to answer the question of the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 15 where he writes, “*So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body*.” He went on to say, “*And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man*.”

**Mark 12:28-34**

**“What the world needs now”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 28-31 Four dimensions of our devotion**
3. **Vs. 32-34 Not far from the Kingdom**

**Introduction**

If you have been following our study through the Gospel of Mark than you know that we have chronologically come to the final week of Jesus earthly life known as the “*passion week*”. During this week Mark points out the examination from varying religious and political groups designed to either entrap Him or make Him look foolish. The context of these inquisitions was 11:18 after Jesus cleansed the temple for the 2nd time we read that they “*sought how they might destroy Him*…” This morning we will see yet another question posed to Him but it is radically different than all those who approached Him. The difference is not in the group or even the question but rather in the heart of the person who asked Him as it is ***the only honest inquiry***. Most of the scribes were Levites and were called upon to copy the scriptures and they belonged to the sect of the Pharisees. The Jews had in the 5 books of Moses 613 commandments in the law. Three hundred sixty-five of those were negative one for each day of the year. Two hundred forty-eight of them were positive, one for each of generations from Adam to their present day. Ah but if you go to David’s Psalm 15 you will find that he reduced them to only 11. But Micah in his book in chapter 6:8 reduced them down to only three. Now here Jesus reduces down to only two, ***love God and love your fellow man***!

**II. Vs. 28-31 Four dimensions of our devotion**

Vs. 28 Mark records for us the primary reason this scribe was different than the delegations that had been sent to try Jesus in that he had been ***only*** an observer of the inquisitions not a participant, “*having HEARD THEM reasoning together*”. Further more he had become quite impressed with Jesus’ answers. This caused this scribe, whose career it was to copy and study the commandments, to ask Jesus “*Which is the first commandment of all*?” The word “*which*” is a Greek word that refers *not to an individual commandment* but of quality or importance. He was asking Jesus the distinction between the **ritual** and **ethical** aspects of the law. There were two schools of thought: One placed a higher importance upon the ritual laws of circumcision and Sabbath-keeping and the like. While the other led by Hillel emphasized the ethical and moral aspects of the law such as how you should treat your fellow man. ***Love is moral not ceremonial***! If a person loves then they will do everything else they should do, but even if they do many right and good things except love then the moral obedience and motivation is lost. ***Every sin known to man is a violation of the law of love, and every grace and virtue is an expression of love.***

 Vs. 29-31 The quotation is from the Shema Yisrael or “*Hear, O Israel*” as it makes up the first two words of this section. It goes like this: “*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength*” from Deuteronomy 6:4-5. There are alternate interpretations of “*Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one*.” Some render this “The LORD our God ***is one LORD***.” Others have it “*The LORD is our God,* ***the LORD alone***.” It was recited twice daily at the morning and evening prayer service by every Jewish person. All the males 13 years and one day would carry this on a small scroll placed on phylacteries bound on their foreheads or arm. This passage was the preamble of the confession of faith and duty as it spoke of the “*individual’s devotion of their whole being to God*”. The scribe wanted to know of all of God’s commandments which one held the “*priorities of life*” and Jesus answered that all human priorities begin with “***Loving God completely***”. No matter what situation or circumstance a person finds themselves in when you don’t know what to do, start first with the only Person who has the ***Power*** and ***Resources*** to handle all of life. Most of us when we are hurting and disappointed don’t start with “*Loving God*”. Instead we obsess with our problems, wrapping ourselves up in knots with our struggles which keep us from the Answer to what confronts us. But Jesus says, start with the One who sees and knows all about our problem, He is the only One that can see it from every angle. There are two things Jesus words inform us that may be a surprise:

1. First, from our perspective it doesn’t seem possible to “***love God form a commandment***”. You can’t be expected to “love” unless it is free and spontaneous, from the heart. But this perspective is based upon a misunderstanding of our relationship with God that assumes that God is demanding and commanding that we “*love Him or else*!” But nothing could be further from the truth. Instead the perspective is from a child’s loving trust for their parents, who have brought them into the world and demonstrated their care and concern through consistent nurture. They have provided for their needs, cared and been concerned over their every hurt and heartache. They have affirmed them and taught them through their continual affection and love. ***It is only natural that a child under those circumstances respond towards their parents with affectionate loving trust***! The apostle John put it in the right perspective in 1 John 4:19 where he wrote “*We love Him because He first loved us*.” It’s easy to love some One who has loved us first and the reason why it is placed in a command is so that we will remember and recall His loving us first. We so easily forget what God continually does for us, we just don’t live with a continual awareness of God’s love for us but when we become aware of it our response is natural and spontaneous.
2. Second, the fact that Jesus tells us “HOW TO LOVE” reveals that the love for God in which Jesus is speaking of is **NOT** a mere emotion or sentiment but is instead an “***ACTION***”. ***In the Bible love is more than a feeling it is a logical choice seen in a specific action***! This action Jesus says has four dimensions to it that are in a different order as the three given in Deuteronomy 6:4-5. These four dimensions are what love is all about and what we need to put into practice. First the Greek word for “love” here is “***agapo***” which speaks of the Holy Spirit generate love in the heart of the yielded Christian. A divine love, which is do God from His creation.
3. “***Love God with all your heart***”: The Jews viewed the “*heart*” and “*mind*” differently then we do today. They saw the “*heart*” as the organ of the intellect and the “*mind*” as the organ of the desires and affections. As such the heart was the center of the human will as we read in Genesis 8:21 where God says that He saw that “***IMAGINATION*** *of man’s heart is evil from his youth*” which speaks every deliberate willful intention! The Bible also speaks of the “*hardened heart*” which speaks of the deliberate choosing to disobey God. As such Jesus in using the word “*heart*” in conjunction with “*loving God*” to illustrate **making a deliberate willful decision to give back to God the love He has first given to us**. We are not to wait until He has performed up to our expectations or standards before we make this deliberate choice we choose to do so. He has already shown His continual unending love towards us as Jesus said in Matthew 5:45 “*He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust*.” This is a moral and spiritual decision on our part, to cling to God’s love!
4. “***Love God with all your soul***”: The word for “*soul*” is the word “*psuche*” and it describes the innermost part of us the seat of our emotions and feelings. ***To love God with all your soul describes not only loving Him with deep passion and emotion but also choosing to do in spite of deep emotions of hurts and fears as well as joy and elation.*** The psalmist described it this way in Psalm 42:1 “*As the deer pants for water brooks, so pants my soul for You of God*.” But we do so not only when times are good but during seasons of great fear and anxiety as we read in Psalm 94:19 “*In the multitude of my anxieties within me, your comforts delight my soul*.” To love God with all your soul means we go to Him with all our joys and sorrows longing just to be with Him in the midst of our emotions and feelings!
5. “***Love God with all your mind***”: The word in the Greek for “mind” means the faculty of thought and understanding, especially moral understanding. It is with the mind that read God’s word, reason and comprehend all that God has done for us. Isaiah the prophet wrote in 26:3 that God would “*keep him in perfect peace whose* ***MIND*** *is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.*” Paul also reminds us of this in Philippians 4:8-9 that “*whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.*” ***God created our minds and wants us to meet Him in the quiet sanctuary of our thoughts where we can hear His still small voice***.
6. “***Love God with all your strength***”: Finally, once our heart’s as seen in our will have been moved towards God, then the emotional being of our soul has been lifted into His presence, which will move our mind to think of Him which only leaves “*all our strength*”. This means that ***we are to demonstrate our devotion towards God by obeying Him in all that He says. Applying our daily strength fulfilling His will for your life, daily living out His loving commands***. The will of God for us isn’t so mystical that no one can know what “God’s will” us for your life. In fact, Paul wrote of God’s will for each of us in 1 Thessalonians 4:3 saying “*For this is the will of God, your sanctification*” and went on to describe areas where they need to bring their life under His word.

Vs. 31 Then Jesus went on after stating the four dimensions of our love towards God the 2nd most important priority: “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself*.” ***There is a love of self which is necessary as there is a self-love that is destructive***. The point Jesus is making is that we must have the same loving care we naturally exhibit towards ourselves aimed at others. What we wish good for ourselves, we should wish for others and what we wish others to do for us we should also wish to do for them. As you and I reflect upon God’s continual demonstration of love towards us even when we have been particularly difficult and ornery we are softened by the truth that we didn’t deserve His love and we certainly didn’t earn it yet God has still offered it to us. Why what we are being asked to do by God is so small in comparison its not worth mentioning. You are free to love another person who is just like you because God has so loved you. We have been loved and forgiven in part so that we can love and forgive others. Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians says that, “*all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation*.” Love is how we are to respond to those who irritate us even if they miss treat us or are unfair in their dealings with us. ***Love is the only act that can change a person who is unlovely or unloving***!

**III. Vs. 32-34 Not far from the Kingdom**

Vs. 32-34 This unknown scribe immediately understood the great truth he had just heard and commented on it. He realized that God is not into religion with all its rituals and outward performance. God is not concerned with religion, He is concerned with relationships both towards Him and towards our fellow man! And this all starts with our love towards Him then flows to our love towards others.

 Jesus recognized that this scribe was on the right path and commended him for it but I notice that Jesus told him that “*You are not far from the kingdom of God*.” That fascinates me because the scribe had the right answer, he valued relationship above religion, so why wasn’t he IN the kingdom instead of just NOT FAR from it? I believe because knowing the truth is only the first step, the next is the application of truth! That’s why we read that we are to “*get wisdom*” and not “*get knowledge*”.

* ***KNOWLEDGE*** is by definition **the accumulation of truth**!
* ***WISDOM*** is by definition **the application of truth**!

How terrible a thing it is to realize that a person can be near the kingdom of God without entering in it! “*So near, that you hear the sounds from those who have found their pardon! So near, yet unwilling to give up their sin, while Jesus is waiting to welcome them in*!” That being the case what was that this scribe needed to get him beyond knowledge to wisdom, what was He lacking? Ah we will take up the answer to that question next Sunday!

**Mark 12:35-44**

**“Loving God, not counting coins”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 35-37 The destination of our devotion**
3. **Vs. 38-40 What can happen**
4. **Vs. 41-44 How we give**

**Introduction**

I purposely left last Sundays study with an unanswered question. We were looking at Jesus’ answer to the question from a scribe who wanted to know which was more important; devotion or duty. When ***Jesus replied that devotion would always drive right behavior but duty will never motivate devotion and the scribe enthusiastically agreed with Jesus’ teaching***. Yet surprisingly Jesus only committed that this scribe wasn’t **FAR** from the kingdom of God. When I consider that statement I want to know how a person can have the right “*theology*” but still only be “***NOT FAR***” from the kingdom of God instead of having “***ARRIVED***”? I’ve dedicated my life to being an instrument to make sure that people arrive, and not “*just missed it*” with regards to the kingdom of God! Eternity is not a place where God will give out “*participation ribbons*” or “*2nd place trophies*”! Instead I believe that there will be many in hell who would be able to say that they missed heaven by inches! That is one of the questions this section answers; “***How to not miss the kingdom of God by inches***!”

**II. Vs. 35-37 The destination of our devotion**

Vs. 35 For us this passage is difficult to understand as it uses thoughts and language which are strange to us. But it would not have been difficult for the people in the temple to understand. Verse 34 left us hanging after Jesus’ statement that this scribe was “*not far from the kingdom of God*” as it ***appears at first glance*** as told by Mark that “*no one dared question Him*.” The scribe had agreed whole heartedly that the most important commandment was to “*love the* ***LORD God*** *with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength*”. The **unanswered question** was: “***What part of that was this scribe unable to perform? Where was he failing to lay hold of the kingdom of God***?” He sees that God is more concerned with the devotion of the inward attitude than He is duty of the outward performance, yet Jesus says He is still missing something, but what? And with the apparent close of this section we are left with no answer, or are we? You see the linkage to the next paragraph is obscured in the English translation, as we are only told that “***THEN*** *Jesus answered and said, while He taught in the temple*….” The New International translation renders this “***WHILE*** *Jesus was teaching in the temple courts*…” And the literal translation is “*And Jesus* ***ANSWERING*** *said, teaching in the temple*…” Each of these words translated (THEN, WHILE and ANSWERING) are important as to the timing of the next paragraph; they put the next section **NOT at a later date and another conversation** but rather **an extension of the same conversation with the same scribe**. Jesus was answering this scribe while he was still teaching in the temple. These next words of Jesus are aimed directly at what was missing from this theologically correct scribe making him ***ONLY*** ***NOT FAR*** from the kingdom of God instead of ***ARRIVED*** at the kingdom of God. It is here that Jesus launches into a teaching with regards to Psalm 110 verse 1 and the question as to “*How could David call his son LORD, making the son greater than the father.*” The answer to that question is the key to understanding what this scribe was missing that left him not far from the kingdom of God instead of IN the kingdom of God.

Vs. 36-37 There are two things that I notice before we even get into Psalm 110:1 and the two questions Jesus asks concerning it:

1. First notice that there is ***no recorded answering*** of Jesus’ questions of:
* Vs. 35b “*How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David*?”
* Vs. 37a “*Therefore David himself calls Him Lord; how is He then his son*?”

The scribe doesn’t answer the questions we are only told that the common people heard Him gladly.

1. Second, notice that in verse 36 Jesus makes sure that all who were listening, specifically the scribe understood that what David wrote in Psalm 110:1 was inspired by the Holy Spirit. In saying this Jesus is making sure that what is said here was not a mere interpretation or mistake but rather divine information!

The key to Jesus questions are to be found in defining terms and words especially in light of the Septuagint (*the translation of the Hebrew Bible into the common Greek language of the day*):

* The word “*Christ*” is the translation of the word “*christos*” which means “*Anointed One*” and was used to translate the Hebrew word translated into English as “*Messiah*”. The use of the word refers to the part of the coronation ceremony for a king to be anointed with oil. The definition was used for the future King of Israel who would one day reign of the throne of David.
* The word “*son*” is a Hebrew expression used to speak of a future descendant, not just a son.
* The word “*Lord*” is the Greek translation of the word “*kurios*” which means “*master, one who has the power over another.*” In the Septuagint it was used as the title of God and was the transliteration of the Hebrew word Jehovah, as such its use implied deity.

It was common place for the Jews to refer to the coming Messiah as the Son of David but in this passage from David, inspired by the Holy Spirit, David himself refers to the “Anointed One” not as his “son” or offspring but rather as Lord. Both the scribes as well as the Jewish people believed that the Messiah would come from the royal linage of David and as David was human so too would the Messiah be human, He would be David’s son or a direct descendant of David. What Jesus brings to the attention of His listeners is that David wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and that David calls his future heir who would be the Messiah, Lord, the Jehovah of the Old Testament. The question is how can the Messiah be both human and deity bringing before them the incarnation. The Jewish leaders rejected the idea of the incarnation and the deity of the Messiah. Now to the two questions:

* Vs. 35b “*How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David*?”
* Vs. 37a “*Therefore David himself calls Him Lord; how is He then his son*?”

The answer is to the mystery of Jesus identity:

* A descendent of David according to the flesh
* The Messiah according to prophecy and the promise of the Father to David
* And the Lord of glory according to the Holy Spirit, in Psalm 110:1

The only way a son could be greater than his father is if he was more than just a descendent! ***What this scribe had missed was not devotion before duty but who He was to be devoted to, namely Jesus the Son of David the Son of God!*** You can’t have the proper order of devotion above duty if you miss the person you are to be devoted too! All this scribe needed to do was recognize that Jesus was the Messiah as described by the Holy Spirit in Psalm 110:1.

**III. Vs. 38-40 What can happen**

Vs. 38-40 In these next two stories Jesus gives a perfect illustration of the difference when a person has the religion but are not devoted to the right person. First notice that Mark starts off by saying “*Then He* (Jesus) *said to them in His teaching*.” The “***THEM***” in this passage is “*the common people*” who heard Him gladly in verse 37. Jesus spoke specifically of the scribes, the very sect that this man belonged to, saying watch out for the Scribes who make a great show of their religion, but are the first ones on the scene to rip off widows. Scribes were employed to make out wills and would swindle widows into giving their homes and property to the Temple and then would take a portion of the proceeds of the sale for themselves. ***Even if we have the proper order of devotion before duty but are not devoted to Jesus we will sooner or later be reduced to a religious show that exists for our own benefit.*** We will want the respect and adoration of people all the while taking what they give us.

**IV. Vs. 41-44 How we give**

Vs. 41-44 Jesus then contrasts this with that of the widow who they observed while they sat opposite the treasury. The location of this treasury was in an area called Solomon’s Between the Court of the Gentiles and the Court of the Women there was the Gate called Beautiful, from that vantage point you could look directly to the 13 collection boxes for the needy known as the “trumpets” because of the way they were shaped. Each of these boxes had a specific dedication and would collect a considerable amount but no greater amount ever given then when Jesus noted this widow giving her two cents. The coin she threw in was called a lepton as it literally meant “*thin one*” and was the smallest of all coins 1/16th of a penny. Some of the Scribes and Pharisee had taken up such an absurd level of religion that they hired a trumpeter to go before them as they made their way to a donation to the poor. The truth was they gave more to the trumpet player than they did to the needy as what was more important was getting noticed for giving instead of the gift. Jesus has never been interested in ***WHAT we give*** but He has always been interested in ***HOW we give***!

 So as they were watching here came this “poor widow” who threw into the needy box two tiny coins that were 1/8th of one cent. Jesus informs us that she hadn’t found these coins behind the sofa, it was her last and only cent and she gave it to the needy because she loved the Lord with all her heart, with all her soul, with all her mind and with all her strength and she loved her neighbor as herself. She had put into the treasury more then all other combined as she gave for love of God. What we see in this is three points of our giving is to be devotional:

1. ***Giving must be sacrificial***: It is not the ***amount*** of the gift, it is the ***cost*** to the giver! It is not the ***size*** of the gift but the ***sacrifice*** of the gift. True devotional giving costs us, it is a sacrifice, we forgo what brings us joy and pleasure for the work of God.
2. ***Giving must be carefree***: This widow held nothing back as she didn’t consider holding a coin back for her own needs. Symbolically there is a deeper truth to this devotional giving and that is that we are typically holding onto or hanging onto something for ourselves instead of giving all of ourselves to the Lord.
3. ***Giving must be by faith***: This is the story in the Bible that goes down as the greatest illustration of generosity but at the hands who gave the least amount. This suggests to us that devotional giving focus is not on what we give but on what God can do with what we give!

God is not impressed with our show; He is blessed by our hearts towards Him seen in our love for others! ***True devotion is not giving what you have to God, it is understanding that God has all of you, so you can can give all back to Him***.

**Mark 13:1-4**

**“The expectant life”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 1-4 When will these things be?**
3. **Introduction**

We know in chapter 13 very quickly in the text that the scene has changed, as Mark tells us that Jesus went out of the Temple, (*prior to this they had been in the temple as Jesus was being interrogated*). According to Mark one of His disciples took the opportunity to point out the grandeur of the buildings with their massive stones, (*both Matthew and Luke tell us that there were more than one that approached Jesus but apparently one did the speaking*.) Some of those stones are 40 feet in length and 18 feet high. Verse three gives the location of this chapter as the Mount of Olives, opposite the Temple. The thirteenth chapter of Mark along with Matthew chapter 24-25 and Luke 21:5-36 is often referred too as the “***Olivet Discourse***” do to the location in which Jesus spoke these words. Remember that Jesus was in the middle of the “*Passion Week*” only a day or two away from His trial, crucifixion and resurrection. We will be spending some weeks in this chapter for two very important reasons:

1. **First it will require a great deal of research and study to unlock its truths.**
2. **Second, any section that deals with the “*end of the world*” and the return of Jesus always carries a great deal of interest.**

We are going to begin our study into the 13th chapter of Mark with “***general observations***” both of this chapter in Mark as well as comparisons with the other two accounts in Matthew chapters 24-25 and Luke 21:5-36. Along the way it will be necessary to outline this chapter which will aid in our investigation. I want all of you to be aware of this up front as this mornings study will serve as an overview of the passage, with only a direct examination of a very few verses as time won’t permit us going further this week.

1. **Vs. 1-4 When will these things be?**

Vs. 1 Our first order of business is to establish the “**clear context**” of the passage. The comment issued by one of the disciples of “*Teacher see what manner of stones and what buildings are here*” causes us to ask and answer some important questions that will in the end clarify Jesus’ words in this chapter.

1. First, we know that this comment by one of the disciples ***followed directly upon Jesus words with regards to the Scribes*** and the danger of not being devoted to Christ. It seems as though Jesus words left an impression that wasn’t missed upon the disciples as Jesus had been particularly hard on the Jewish religion and religious elite.
2. Second, Matthew’s gospel tells us that Jesus disciples ***initiated*** this by coming up to Jesus to “***show Him the buildings of the temple***.” I find that very interesting as Jesus was no tourist. He wasn’t someone who had just arrived to the city who needed to have the details brought out to Him. Jesus was as aware of the buildings if not more so than they were. ***So what was the purpose of making that statement***?

**These two facts of**:

* A delegation of disciples coming to Jesus to point out the architectural details of the temple buildings
* Following an extended teaching of Jesus against Jewish religion, sets the context as an “***intervention***” of sorts.

This makes this statement of the disciples directly related to Jesus words about the scribe and about religion. It is a statement that seeks to put a positive spin on 1st century Judaism; contrasting on all the negative statements that Jesus had been saying. A way of saying, “*Look Jesus, religion ain’t all bad, it sure can make impressive buildings*!” To these patriotic disciples they must have viewed Jesus words more of an insult and better aimed at the Roman oppressors than their captors. That is further brought out in the fact that they must have been even more surprised by Jesus’ comments in verse 2 as they send two sets of brothers, who were all a part of the inner circle to find out further what He had meant by the statement.

Vs. 2 Jesus’ reply acknowledged the impressive nature of the temple but at the same time spoke of its complete demolition. What’s interesting is the accuracy of Jesus prophetic words of “*Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down*.” These words speak of a ***gradual destruction*** that didn’t occur completely in 70 A.D. Instead they wouldn’t be completed for 65 years later in 135 A.D. after one last rebellion that the Romans leveled the temple leaving only the bald platform behind.

Vs. 3-4 The disciples were understandably troubled by Jesus prophecy as they sent a delegation of the two sets of brothers to where He was seated on the Mount of Olives. Their inquiry was to ask Him further just what He meant with regards to the “***timing of this prophecy***”. ***They didn’t come to debate the truth of His words*** their curiosity was about “**WHEN**” it would occur and “**WHAT**” would be the sign. ***Well over 2000 years have come and gone and these are still the same questions that people have always wanted to know. With every succeeding generation and increasingly greater “signs” people have been expecting to see this fulfilled in their life time.*** **What’s interesting is that starting with the disciples every generation has thought that the events they were presently experiencing indicated that Jesus was coming back in their life time**. I can’t help but think that this fact is by design as we shall discover in Jesus’ final warnings in verses 35-37where Jesus says, “*Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming--in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning-- lest, coming suddenly, He find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!*” I believe that Jesus would have all of His followers ***live with expectant hearts***, living in the moment of His soon return, with a light hold on the world.

 Though Jesus will answer the “***WHEN*** and ***WHAT***” questions He does so by first bracketing this passage with warnings as we note that His statements start with the warning “***take heed***” in verse 5 and end with another “***take heed***” warning in verse 33, followed by two “***watches***” in verse 35, 37. **There are in fact four sections in this passage that tell us “*WHEN* and *WHAT*” the signs are that this prophecy is about to happen**. Before we look at this if we want to get the clearest picture of the meaning behind Jesus’ words we would need to to examine each of the accounts of the “*parallel passages*” found in Matthew chapter 24-25 and Luke chapter 21 verse 5-36. ***Each of the gospel writers select different aspects of Jesus teaching to emphasize specific things to their readers***.

* ***Matthew’s spends the most amount of time recording the “Olivet Discourse”. He is the only writer to record the two parables of the “Ten Virgins” and “The Talents” as well as the judgment of the gentile nations all found in the 25th chapter. As such his focus is on what’s going to happen to Israel***.
* ***Luke is the only gospel writer who writes of the fall of Jerusalem and the future captivity and dispersion of the Jews and the domination of the nation by gentiles, for thousands of years; which coincidentally ended in 1948***.
* ***Mark’s focus is the danger to believer’s faith that will arise in the age that follows the resurrection of Jesus***.

As noted the four sections of “**WHEN**” it would occur and “**WHAT**” would be the sign, are sandwiched in between the “***take heed***” warnings of verse 5 and verse 33 and both are the same word in the Greek translated “*take heed*” (*though some versions have verse 5 as SEE*). The word for “*take heed*” means to “*look out, beware*” where as the the final warnings of verse 35 and verse 37 rendered “*watch*” is a different Greek word that means “*wake up, don’t fall asleep*”. There the warning is that a calamity is coming. As such before Jesus answers their two questions with regards to “**WHEN**” the end of the world would occur and “**WHAT**” the sign would be; Jesus wants to make sure His church understands that ***the end of the world will be bring two specific dangers to the church***:

1. ***That there would be those who attempt to use these “signs” to deceive His church to follow false messiahs***.
2. ***And*** ***the danger that being to focused upon the end and His soon return can cause the Church to fall asleep in apathy when the signs they see don’t end up ushering in His soon return***.

There are **four sections** to Jesus message in verse 5-37 about “**WHEN**” the end would occur and “**WHAT**” the sign would be.

1. Vs. 6-13 **False Signs**: ***These are real events but are NOT indications of when the world will come to an end or that Jesus would return***. The context of this is in Jesus’ words of verse 5 and the warning to be on the “*look out*” against those who would use what He is about to say to deceive believers. In verse 6 Jesus says that the “***signs***” will be used “*by many*” to claim “*I am He*”; for the purpose of “*deceiving many*”. Further more in verse 7 Jesus says, “*for such things must happen*, **BUT THE END IS NOT YET**.” And in verse 8 He says, “*These are the* **BEGINNINGS** *of sorrows*.” That being said Jesus goes on in verse 6-13 to mention **four events** that these “***FALSE MESSIAHS***” will use to deceive many.
2. Vs. 6 ***Many will come in my name***: Jesus says that the 1st non sign is ***the proliferation of “would-be-messiahs”***. Ironically, the first non sign is false messiahs on the scene claiming that they are the messiah.
3. Vs. 7-8a ***Wars and rumors wars…nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom***: The 2nd non sign will be ***the inability of nations and kingdoms to get along with each other***.
4. Vs. 8b ***There will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles***: The 3rd non sign will be ***environmental calamities that will befall the world***.
5. Vs. 9-13 ***They will deliver you up to councils…synagogues…rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them. Brother will betray brother to death, father his child, and children will rise up against parents***: The fourth non sign is ***rising persecution of believers***. At Jesus words the church hadn’t even officially began and ***He is warning of its prolonged persecution*** at the hand of differing groups from the **secular communities**, to **the religious** and **even the immediate family**.
6. Vs. 14-23 **True Sign**: Here in this section is the answer to the question asked by the disciples as to “**WHEN**” the end of the world would occur and “**WHAT**” the sign would be. Notice in verse 14 Jesus uses the word “**WHEN**” which was what they originally asked and answers that the “WHEN” is an event “*spoken of by Daniel the prophet*” known as the “*abomination of desolation*” which is further clarified by Jesus as “*standing where it ought not*.” This ***true sign has three elements*** to it:
7. Vs. 14b ***The abomination of desolation***: we will look at this more in detail when we get to this section but it speaks of the antichrist standing in the Jewish temple attempting to receive worship. Obviously that means that there has to be a temple of the temple mount of which currently there isn’t one.
8. Vs. 14b-20 ***Worldwide tribulation***: There will be upon the above event an instantaneous and immediate peril to believers first in Jerusalem but then globally like nothing the world has ever experienced. It’s so bad according to verse 20 that “*unless the Lord shortened those days, no flesh would be saved*.”
9. Vs. 21-23 ***Worldwide deception***: The difference between these false messiahs is that they seem to be a direct agent of satan as they will have “*signs and wonders to deceive, if possible even the elect*.”
10. Vs. 24-27 **Climax of history**: In these four verse Jesus describes that at the end of the tribulation two things will happen:
11. Vs. 24-25 ***The end of the world as we now know it***, that will extend into the heavens.
12. Vs. 26-27 ***The second coming of Jesus to the earth coming in great power and glory***. What is not mentioned here is the rapture of the church which will precede His 2nd coming that is dealt with in other passages.
13. Vs. 28-37 **Guarantees and warnings**: This final section is divided into two sections:
14. Vs. 28-31 In these verse ***Jesus uses a parable as an exhortation to stay watchful and finishes it off with the assurance that what He has just told them is more certain than the heaven and earth***.
15. Vs. 32-37 The last warning ***Jesus issues has to do with not getting caught up in predicting the actual time but again be living an expectant life***.

Now have finished our outline next week we shall start our detailed look at each of these four sections.

**Mark 13:5-13**

**“Take heed no one deceives you”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 6 Proliferation of pretenders**
3. **Vs. 7-8a Permanent political problems**
4. **Vs. 8b Cataclysmic catastrophes**
5. **Vs. 9-13 Prolonged persecution**
6. **Introduction**

Last week we began our study of the “Olivet Discourse”; we discussed the timing and occasion of this message as being in the final few days of Jesus’ earthly life. It came from a statement offered by His disciples after His continual rejection of first century Judaism. Jesus informed them that though the buildings were impressive there would be not one stone left upon another, that caused them to ask Him “**WHEN**” it would occur and “**WHAT**” would be the sign. The bulk of last Sundays message was outlining the entire passage so that we could take a look at the “Olivet Discourse” in greater detail while still viewing it in its entirety. We noted that Jesus bracketed His words on **WHEN**” the end of the world would occur and “**WHAT**” the sign would be with two “*Take heed*” warnings. ***Those warnings form the context of the information as to “when” and “what”. Mark’s emphasis is the twofold warning that Jesus issued to the church with regards to end times***:

* ***That “signs” would be utilized by false messiahs to deceive the church.***
* ***That a church too focused on “when” and “what” could fall into apathy when their assumptive guesses didn’t pan out***.

The “Olivet Discourse” breaks apart into four sections:

1. Vs. 6-13 **False Signs**
2. Vs. 14-23 **True Sign**
3. Vs. 24-27 **Climax of history**
4. Vs. 28-37 **Guarantees and warnings**

This morning our focus in detail will be upon those four non-signs.

1. **Vs. 6 Proliferation of pretenders**

Vs. 5 I find it interesting that the delegation of four disciples wanted to know “when” and “what” but Jesus prefaces His answer with a warning and ends it with a warning. This suggests to me that the greater issue to address from Jesus’ perspective is not to satisfy the churches curiosity but warning His church of the dangers to that curiosity in the hand of our enemy. “***When***” and “***what***” were the wrong questions instead the church should be asking what we are to “***Watch out***” for! And since they didn’t ask Jesus goes on to list four events or “signs” that the enemy will use to deceive them.

Vs. 6 First there will be a ***proliferation of pretenders*** for the sole purpose to lead the church astray. The deception is not limited to those who claim to be the messiah but to those who would wrongly fallow them. Jesus explains how they are successful at perpetuating this lie as they attract a following by basing their claims by the using Jesus’ name. They claim authority and power by saying that they are the same in person and work as Jesus. There were dozens of false messiahs prior to and after Jesus. In Acts chapter 5:36-39 we learn of two of them when the Jewish teacher of the law Gamaliel was advising the religious leaders who had arrested the apostles not to take action when he said, “*For some time ago* ***Theudas*** *rose up, claiming to be somebody. A number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was slain, and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing. After this man,* ***Judas of Galilee*** *rose up in the days of the census, and drew away many people after him. He also perished, and all who obeyed him were dispersed. And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it--lest you even be found to fight against God*.”

* ***Theudas*** claimed that he would part the Jordan river but instead led 400 of his followers to their deaths.
* ***Judas the Galilean***, was an anti-Roman radical who founded the Zealot movement that Simon, one of Jesus disciples had been a part of.
* A 100 years after Jesus had risen from the dead ***Simon Bar-Kochba*** began a rebellion that lasted for over three years and cost 100’s of lives. He was proclaimed the messiah by Rabbi Akiva in Jerusalem and gained control of the Jewish population. He was convinced of his messianic calling and ruled the people with an iron fist. He demanded that all Christians deny Jesus as the Messiah and tortured or killed any men, women or children that didn’t. In the end the Romans put an end to him and his followers by killing 1,000’s and sending the rest into captivity or slavery.
* There was ***Moses of Crete*** who promised to part the Mediterranean Sea and lead his followers across to Jerusalem on dry ground. He gathered them on a high cliff and at his command they jumped only to be swallowed up by the Sea and drown.
* There was ***Moses Al-Dar’I***, a Jewish Moroccan who predicted that the messiah was coming back at Passover in 1127 A.D. so all the people sold everything and met together watching the date come and go being left destitute.
* In the 1200’s Sicilian mystic ***Abraham ben Samuel*** proclaimed himself the messiah and led a failed attempt to resettle Jews in Israel.
* ***Shabbetai Tsevi*** of Smyrna came in 1666 and said he heard a voice from God claiming he was the messiah. He led his followers to Constantinople where he was arrested and the sultan told him to prove it or he would die and he responded by converting to Islam.

This is just a small list of would-be messiahs who have come and gone through out history. We have had many in our time like Jim Jones and others who have deceived 100’s and thousands of their followers like Joseph Smith. Many of them were very convincing and charismatic people who made amazing claims. But just like Jesus predicted their claims are all false and what they taught is not what Jesus taught. They have been successful in leading many astray, all because their followers preferred to listen to their lies instead of following the warnings of Jesus when He said “*Take heed that no deceives you*.” But remember dear ones that the ***proliferation of pretenders*** is not a sign that the end is near as I have shown you this has been going on sense before Jesus.

1. **Vs. 7-8a Permanent political problems**

Vs. 7-8a The second non-sign Jesus mentions is, ***Wars and rumors wars…nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.*** The warning is to not to allow such things to “*trouble*” them. The word “*trouble*” is a word that means to be “*disturbed or terrified*”. There is little doubt that the disciples were “*troubled*” by their present condition of political unrest in their nation. ***History is ever in a state some where of permanent political unrest but these things must never unseat the believer if their task of speaking of the goodness and greatness of Jesus.*** There are two kingdoms at work in this world: The kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of the Son of His love. These two are moving along side by side and for the most part the world is unaware of the kingdom of God. Jesus’ warning is that we Christians should not be unaware of the kingdom of God no matter what the kingdom of this world is doing! No matter how dark the kingdom of this world gets it will never invade the Kingdom of God, it our privilege by works and words to invade the kingdom of this world. The depravity of the human race is the root of all wars, and it is this that makes ***nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom***, inevitable. With in a 100 years there were threats of wars or wars against the Jew’s from three Roman emperors, Caligula, Claudius and Nero. In A.D. 38 in Alexandria the Jew’s were special objects of persecution. In 115-117 AD at the second Judean-Roman war in modern day Iraq over 50,000 Jews were killed in the Kitos War or the war of the dispersion. There have been somewhere between 250,000 wars in human history, some have gotten to the category of “world war”. If you go back to the time during these horrible events, you will find well meaning Christian authors saying that right after World War 1 that this was the sign of our Lord’s return. Then again they said the same thing right after world war 2. They would write things like “*No other war in history fulfilled prophecy like this war*.” What they fail to recognize is that Jesus clearly states in verse 7 that, “***the end is not yet***.”

1. **Vs. 8b Cataclysmic catastrophes**

Vs. 8b The third non-sign Jesus say’s is ***There will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles***: Josephus the ancient Jewish / Roman historian records the fact that between Jesus’ prophecy which was around A.D. 30 to the destruction of Jerusalem 40 years later in A.D. 70 there was four major earthquakes: in Crete in A.D. 46, at Rome in A.D. 51, at Apamia in Phrygia (modern day Turkey) in A.D. 60, and at Campania which is in Italy near Pompeii in A.D. 63, (16 years later the eruption of Mount Vesuvius happened). In a ten-year span between 2004 and 2014 there were 18 earthquakes with a magnitude of 8.0 or more which is an increase 265% over the average rate over the last 100 years which saw 71 great earthquakes. Josephus also recorded in that same 40-year span after Jesus wrote these words that there were four famines one of which according to Acts chapter 11:28 was in Judaea in A.D. 44. In China from 108 B.C. to 1911 A.D. there were 1,828 major famines or about 1 every other year. There were 95 famines in Britain during the Middle ages. In 1996 in North Korea over 600,000 died of starvation. And Jesus says that such things are not the sign they are instead just intolerable pains and anguish. All such “troubles” are so horrible as to cause a person to think that the world is about to end and for believers to get caught up into that hoping so as we know that Jesus is coming back at the end. Yet Jesus says that these events are not the “SIGN”.

1. **Vs. 9-13 Prolonged persecution**

Vs. 9-13 Fourth and finally Jesus says that, ***They will deliver you up to councils…synagogues…rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them. Brother will betray brother to death, father his child, and children will rise up against parents***. Verse 9 is a historical transition from the early believers being all Jewish who have trusted in Jesus as messiah. They Jesus says, “*Will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues*.” The first form of persecution against the church was Jewish but as the church expanded beyond Jewish believers Jesus says that, “*You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them*.” The book of Acts records this rapid spread of the gospel as it was preached to all the nations. Verse 10 as long been used to motivate evangelism and missions by suggesting that Jesus can not come back until “*the gospel must* ***FIRST*** *be preached to all the nations*.” The 14th verse introduces us to the beginning of the great tribulation and it will be just as Jesus said that the gospel will be preached by the 144,000 Jewish followers of Jesus and the two witnesses as well to all the nations just proceeding Jesus 2nd coming. Human history from the time that Jesus spoke these words to now has been riddled with martyrs but the exhortation by Jesus is verse 11 and verse 13. Jesus isn’t saying that we earn our salvation as the word mentioned is not spiritual as no one is ever saved by enduring but rather it is a physical salvation as those during the tribulation period who have received the Lord and suffered persecution will enter the millennial period. No believer “earns” their salvation by enduring to the end; no, we prove that our salvation is genuine by the fact that we endure persecution as every genuine Christian will survive the test. In every era we have seen professing Christians like the ones that the apostle John describes in 1 John 2:19 as those that, “*went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.*” Christian history has seen this phenomenon countless times with people who have made a profession of faith and even seen to be growing in maturity only to have their commitment dissipate under the pressure of unpopularity and trials of the times. They didn’t endure and showed that in reality they were only intellectually committed not spiritually joined as they didn’t endure to the end.

 Yet these four “signs” are not signs they have been happening since Jesus said these words. Next time I get with you will be looking specifically at what the “SIGN” of when the end of the world and the 2nd coming of Jesus.

**Mark 13:14-23**

**“When You See This”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 14a The sign**
3. **Vs. 14b-18 Watch and run**
4. **Vs. 19-23 World wide tribulation and deception**
5. **Introduction**

The second section of the Olivet Discourse was directed at the twofold question of the disciples as too “***when the destruction of Jerusalem would take place and what would be the sign of its occurrence***.” The challenge of this section as it relates to us is not as much centered upon the “***when or the what***” but **HOW FAR** and to **WHOM** Jesus meant to convey that this sign would extend. There are those that believe that Jesus words only extend to the Jews alive during the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. or the complete dispersion some 60 years later. In their view this passage of scripture is fulfilled as it was localized and directed only at Israel. The difficulty in maintaining this interpretation is that Mark inserts his commentary “*let the reader understand*”. Again is Mark’s insertion only a reference to the Roman reader or did he by way of the Holy Spirit look beyond to all readers? These are but some of the questions we will need to answer. As already mentioned Jesus doesn’t address the rapture of the church, His focus is centered upon warning the church of the deception that will be employed by satan as the end nears. Jesus is speaking to His disciple’s about what they believed was going to be the time He and they would rule over Israel and set all her enemies at her feet. Simply put these verse deal with the second coming.

1. **Vs. 14a The sign**

Vs. 14a First notice that this verse IS Jesus’ answer to the two sets of brothers question of “*Tell us when these things will be*?” We know this because Jesus starts off His answer with, “***When you see***…”. Now with that said we can get the answer to “**HOW FAR**” this sign extended as only one of those four present, John, lived long enough to see the destruction (he died of natural causes in 100A.D.). I’m of the opinion that the “YOU” here in Jesus’ statement was not only directed at John, or even the present disciples. I further submit to you that the context of “*when you see*” is directly related to ***WHAT*** they would see namely the “*abomination of desolation*” which as Jesus elaborates was prophesied by Daniel. Further more as we shall see as we go along in this passage that this event has not yet taken place and was not fulfilled in 70 A.D. or 60 years later. The “***abomination of desolation spoken by the prophet Daniel***” is found in Daniel 9:24-27 there we notice several things about this event.

1.) Vs. 24 First the words *“..for* ***your*** *people and* ***your*** *holy city*.” Tells us that this prophecy was for the Nation of Israel. To apply this to the church or anyone else is to take it out of context. The church prior to the millennial reign of Christ doesn’t have a “*Holy city*”, but Israel does and it is Jerusalem!

2.) Vs. 25-26 Next you will note this prophecy involves **70 weeks**. In Hebrew the word week means a week of years or 7 years. So 70 - 7’s would equal 490 years. And this is broken down for us by Daniel.

A.) “Seven sets of seven’s”: During the first 49 years the city of Jerusalem would be rebuilt and worship reestablished. As Daniel wrote this he was still in Babylon and the walls were torn down yet they would be rebuilt. We know that the time when the commandment to restore and rebuild Jerusalem went forth Artaxerxes was 445 BC and it took 49 years to rebuild the city.

B.) “..plus sixty-two sets of seven will pass from the time the command is given to rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One comes.” Daniel goes on to tell us that another 434 years would pass until “*the Anointed One comes*”. We know that according to 2 Chron. 36:22-23 and Ezra 1 that to the day 483 years or 173,880 days passed until Jesus came riding upon that colt into Jerusalem.

C.) Vs. 26 “*After this period of sixty-two sets of seven, the Anointed One will be killed, appearing to have accomplished nothing, and a ruler will arise whose armies will destroy the city and the Temple. The end will come with a flood, and war and its miseries are decreed from that time to the very end*.” Daniel goes on in his prophecy and says that Jesus will “*appear to have accomplished nothing*” and a ruler will arise whose armies will destroy the city and the temple, then there will be a great dispersion and miseries to the very end. It was 40 years from the time that Jesus said these words the temple with the city was destroyed.

If you add up the 62 sets of 7’s with that of the 7 sets of 7’s you end up with 69 sets of 7’s which takes us through the destruction of Israel. But Daniel’s prophecy says that there would be 70 sets of seven, where the missing 7 years?

D.) Vs. 27 “*He will make a treaty with the people for a period of one set of seven, but after half this time, he will put an end to the sacrifices and offerings. Then as a climax to all his terrible deeds, he will set up a sacrilegious object that causes desecration, until the end that has been decreed is poured out on this defiler*." Daniel is speaking of the Great tribulation period and he says that the Anti-christ will make a “*treaty*” with Israel for 7 years but at 31/2 years he will break it by setting up sacrilegious object and demanding people to worship it. this presupposes that the temple will be built by this time and that sacrifices will have been made upon the alter, which has not happened in Israel since the destruction of the temple in 70 AD. There are two more verses that will she light on this abomination:

1.) 2 Thess. 2:3-4 Here Paul was dealing with the false teaching that Jesus had already came back and he says, “*Don't be fooled by what they say. For that day will not come until there is a great rebellion against God and the man of lawlessness is revealed--the one who brings destruction. He will exalt himself and defy every god there is and tear down every object of adoration and worship. He will position himself in the temple of God, claiming that he himself is God*.”

2.) Rev. 13 Tells us that Antichrist will cause a living statue of himself to be put into the temple and the false prophet will cause the whole world to worship it. This is what is recorded in Mark 13:14 that Jesus calls the “*Abomination of desolation*”.

Notice that Mark says, “Let the reader understand.” It will be important for those living in the tribulation period to, understand this section. So if someone is reading this for the first time during the tribulation period and then they turn on the news they should respond as Jesus says next.

1. **Vs. 14b-18 Watch and run**

Vs. 14b If you’re in Judea, get out of their quickly! When you read Zechariah 13:8-9 of what follows the abomination of desolation we see that the Jews will flee from Judah but “*Two-thirds of the people in the land will be cut off and die, and a third will be left in the land. Yet He will bring that group through the fire and make them pure, just as gold and silver are refined and purified by fire. They will call on my name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'These are my people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is our God*.”

 Many Bible scholars believe that the mountains that they will be fleeing to is none other then the rock city of Petra in Jordan. It was founded by Jacob’s twin brother Esau in a volcanic crater 1 mile in length. To get to this crater you have to pass through a canyon that is only 12 feet wide at places with a rock face of 200 feet. The whole city can house over a million people and can be secured by 15 soldiers. One believer is so convinced that this is the city where the Jews will flee too that he has provided 1000 of copies of the N.T. in Hebrew with this passage underlined, putting them in earthen jars throughout Petra so that when they get there the Bibles will be waiting for them.

Vs. 15 The Jewish house tops in Jerusalem are still mostly flat top and you can walk across the city from roof top to roof top with out going down stairs. ***The point is that this will all happen very quickly, so they better not waste time***.

Vs. 16-18 If the worker in the field has left his coat at the end of a row just leave the thing and get out***. It is hard for us to imagine the swiftness of the massacre, but Jesus is warning them to get out quickly***. Jesus clearly loves that generation and is expressing His heart towards their destruction. Matthew mentions in verse 20 that they ought to pray this not happen on the Sabbath where Mark doesn’t an obvious difference in the readers of these two gospels.

1. **Vs. 19-23 World wide tribulation and deception**

Vs. 19-23 Jesus tells us why they will need to get out of Judea. A great tribulation greater then any the world has ever seen will start. By the time it ends 2/3 of the worlds population will be gone.

 There are some who try and say that the tribulation has already taken place and right now we are in the 1000-year reign of Jesus will if that is the case some one forgot to tell the devil. Folks, make no mistake about it this time will be obvious to all. By the way the word “elect” reveres to Israel not the church by the context!

Jesus tells them that it will be a time of great deception. Jesus is saying that His second coming will not be a secret one in fact if someone is saying that Jesus comes back the 2nd time secretly it marks them as a false prophet no matter how many signs and wonders they do. In 1917 Jehovah Witness said that Jesus came back into a secret chamber where He now rules the world. In the 1800 Joseph Smith said that He revealed Himself to him and gave him some magic glasses. Folks, Jesus is saying that His second coming is not a secret or invisible one. His coming will be visible to all!

**Mark 13:24-27**

**“In those days”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 24-25 The end of the world**
3. **Vs. 26-27 The beginning of the reign of Christ**
4. **Introduction**

We come to the 3rd part of the the Olivet Discourse and the part of Jesus’ answer as to “*when will these things be*” and “*what will be the sign*” that most likely left the disciples the most confused. What Jesus describes in these four verses is the **Climax of human history** as we now know it. It will come at the end of the 7th week of Daniel’s prophecy known as the “Great Tribulation” or the “Say of the Lord” which Jesus described as a time “*such as has not been since the beginning of creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be*.” These four verses describe two completely contrasting situations that will no doubt caused two reactions; one that is absolutely terrifying the and the other that is absolutely glorious:

B. Vs. 24-25 ***The end of the world as we now know it***, that will extend into the heavens.

C. Vs. 26-27 ***The second coming of Jesus to the earth coming in great power and glory***. What is not mentioned here is the rapture of the church which will precede His 2nd coming that is dealt with in other passages but for sake of interest in the subject we will take a greater look at this in light of this passage.

**II. Vs. 24-25 The end of the world**

Vs. 24-25 Matthew 24:29 uses the word “*immediately*” to describe the timing of these final two events with regards to the tribulation. The Day of the Lord is to be preceded by the darkening of the sun and the moon all of which is spoken of in the Old Testament in passages like Amos 8:9, Joel 2:10, 3:15. A time when the creator will shake His creation and the brightness of the sun fails at midday from the glory of heaven. The celestial disturbances in the sun being darkened and the moon giving no light occur at the close of the Great Tribulation. Jesus is speaking not of figurative illustrations but literal events as we see in Revelation 6:12-14 as the 6th seal judgment is broken. What is not mentioned any where in Jesus’ Olivet Discourse is the “*snatching away*” “*catching away*” or “*rapture*” of the Church. That is the topic of discussion in Paul’s letter to the Thessalonians in chapter 4:13-17. The Greek word rendered “rapture” in verse 17 is har-PAD-zo and was translated into Latin as “raptus” which is where we get our English word “rapture”. The church for the most apart all agree that there will be a “rapture” but disagree as too it’s time of occurrence. Some have it coming prior too the tribulation (Pre-tribulation), some have it at the mid point of 3 ½ years of the Daniel’s seven-year Great Tribulation (mid-tribulation) and the last group have it just prior or at the same time as the events mentioned here in verse 24 (post-tribulation). While I want to stay on topic with the passage I also realize that there is a great deal of interest in this one detail which Jesus doesn’t cover so let’s take a brief look at it:

 We will need to do a quick little bible study of this passage:

First the context of this section of Paul’s letter has to do with a concern that the church in Thessalonica had with regards to what happened to believers when they die. Based upon the epitaphs on tombs the average age of death was 29 and that fact clearly troubled believers in light of Christ’s 2nd coming. So the first thing Paul did in his letter to them was give them a word picture of what happens to a follower of Jesus when they die as he describes their death as “falling asleep”. Paul puts a different spin on this then the ancient world saw it as they believed that when a person died that they went to sleep and would never wake up. But Paul uses the same word to describe people who have died but are now in the presence of the Lord. There are three other verses that shed light on this in the N.T.:

1. James 2:26 “*For as the body without the spirit is dead*…”: The bible teaches that the body is just a tent in which our spirit resides. So when our body dies our spirit or soul departs.
2. 2 Corinth. 5:8 “…*rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord*.”: When we die our spirit departs our body to be present with the Lord. The Greek word “*present*” means **to be at home with, to make its permanent residence with**. For the believer it is death that is dead, as leaving this body is like taking a nap and awaking in the glory of the Lord. It for this reason that Christians first started calling burial places “*cemeteries*” or “*resting places*”.
3. Phil. 1:21 “*For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*”: Paul clearly saw death of the body and his presence with the Lord as a far better place than remaining alive on earth.

So Paul corrected the misunderstanding of what happens to the believer when they die.

Second, Paul addresses a two hypothetical question he anticipates that they would want answered:

A. “*How do I know if I die as a believer I will be in Jesus presence*?”: Paul’s answer is that the hope is based upon nothing less than Jesus death and resurrection. Our glorification is as certain as our salvation! Jesus resurrection serves as a promise of our own reunion with Him!

B. “*So the believer goes to be with Jesus when they die, what happens to them next*?”: The answer is that God will bring those who have died back with Him at His 2nd coming.

 Before Paul sets the timing of the rapture he first wanted the Church to know that what he was sharing with them was not just his opinion, that’s why he writes “*For we say to you* ***by*****THE WORD OF THE LORD***…*” The Thessalonian believers were afraid that those that died in Christ would miss the millennial reign of Christ. Notice that Paul uses the word “we” which tells us that this is in the “first person” and that Paul believed that Jesus could come back at any moment, he wasn’t looking for signs of Jesus return he was looking for Jesus! ***The only difference between the believer who dies before the rapture and the believer who is raptured is their position as the dead in Christ are first***!

 Finally, the 16th and 17th verses Paul sets the events that will reunite all believers in Christ:

1. “*The Lord Himself*”: Thus we are not waiting for someone else, we are waiting only for the Lord.
2. “*Will descend from heaven with a shout*”: The word for shout is a Greek word that is used for a ship’s captain to the oarsmen, as it has a tone of authority and urgency. Paul writes of ***three specific sounds that will signal the return of Jesus*** with those who have died in Christ:
3. **Jesus’ voice of authority**
4. **The voice of an archangel**: We are not told which archangel, but after Jesus voice there will be the voice of archangel.
5. **The trumpet of God**: It is believed by some that this is the reason for the archangel’s voice telling them to blow the trumpet of God, or shofar. The shofar was used for four things according to scripture:
6. *To gather the army for battle*: Clearly the Lord is calling all of His followers to get ready for the battle at the end of the tribulation.
7. *To announce special times and seasons*: It also is announcing a special time as we will be forever with Jesus.
8. *To gather people for a journey*: Jesus is gathering us for a journey, as He said when He left that “where He is was going we would also be with Him”
9. *In Rome they were used to announce the arrival of a great person*: This trumpet also announces the greatest person there has ever been, Jesus.

*It is interesting to note that both here in 1 Thessalonians 4 and Paul’s 1st letter to the Corinthians 15:50-54 Paul mentions that a shofar being blown at the rapture of the church. I think that it gives a clue as to the timing of the rapture of the church.* According to Leviticus 23 there are seven Holy convocations that God gave to Israel. The word “*convocation*” in Hebrew means “***rehearsal***” and as such these feasts were to be “***rehearsals***” for the real thing. Each of them fall upon certain months of Jewish calendar:

* ***Passover***: Is on the 14th of Nisan which is in our March – April Roman calendar. This is ***the rehearsal for when Jesus was killed as the Lamb of God***
* ***Unleavened Bread***: Is on the 15th of Nisan. This is ***the rehearsal for when the sinless body of Jesus was buried***.
* ***First Fruits***: Is on the 16th of Nisan. This is ***the rehearsal when Jesus rose from the dead and became the “first fruits” of those who would be risen from the dead.***
* ***Feast of Weeks or Pentecost***: Is on the 6th of Sivan which would be I May – June in the Roman calendar. This is ***the rehearsal of the birth of His church the marriage of the word of God by the Spirit of God***. What’s interesting is that there is a large gap in the calendar year until the next feast. The picture is that of the birth of the church here on earth being the instruments of His word and grace.
* ***Feast of Trumpets***: Is on the 1st of 2nd of Tishri or September – October in the Roman calendar. The feast of trumpets happens right after the seven weeks of mourning, Sefira (July-August) which was to remember the temple that was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. The 2nd temple was also destroyed in the same months in 70 A.D. The feast of Trumpets is also called “*Rosh Hashanah*” and is the Jewish New Year where they remember the binding of Isaac upon the altar and God granting Abraham a lamb Himself for the sacrifice. It is a festival of celebration and days of joy and holiness. Looking at all the Jewish feast the “rehearsals” *this is the only feast that hasn’t had a fulfilment and best represents the rapture of the church which will be followed by the return of Jesus and His millennial reign*.
* ***Day of Atonement***: Is on the 10th of Tishri (September-October) known as the day of atonement or Yom Kippur. This is a day when the Jews are given rest for the afflictions, which will take place at the end of the Great Tribulation, when Jesus returns to give rest to His people.
* ***Feast of Tabernacles***: Is on the 22nd of Tishri. This feast is to remind Israel that God tabernacled among them during their time in the wilderness and will do so again during His millennial reign.

As I look at the feasts and all the evidence it seems to me that the rapture of the church has to happen before the Great Tribulation. Paul says that the dead in Christ will will rise first, so those who have died in Christ and are in the presence of the Lord will rise first. That doesn’t mean that they will be reunited in their old earthly bodies as Paul told us in 1 Corinth. 15:35 that the Christian will receive a glorified body like that of Jesus.

**III. Vs. 26-27 The beginning of the reign of Christ**

Vs. 26 Of further interest to me is that we are told that “*they will see the Son of Man coming in the* **CLOUDS** *with great power and glory*.” But the Greek word for “*clouds*” has no definite article before the word. As such it isn’t speaking of literal clouds but the scene of Revelation 19:11-16 where Jesus clothed in a robe dipped in blood and returns in a “cloud” with the armies in heaven clothed in fine linen, white and clean following Him on white horses. This cloud is made up of glorified saints and angels. This word “cloud” is used of the multitude of believers in 1 Thess. 4:17 where the saints are caught up in the clouds at the rapture. It is also used of the “great crowd of witnesses” in Hebrews 12:1. The gathering of the elect refers to the re-gathering of all of Israel at the 2nd coming of Jesus. Israel will be saved and restored to complete fellowship to serve with us gentile followers of their messiah to serve our Lord in the Millennial Kingdom.

Vs. 27 The Jews will be gathered from the four corners of the earth and brought back to Israel, all of which was again spoken of by the prophets like Isaiah 27:13, 35. It is interesting here that Jesus says that angels will be sent out to gather Gods elect Israel, because at the rapture angels are not used for the Lord comes in person to gather us all up! The fact that Jesus words and language would have been familiar to the disciples reveals that He is not giving us a map of eternity nor a time table of the future; instead He is using words that all of the Jews knew and used for a 1000 years. The one and only thing Jesus did foretell in this passage is that He would return again!

**Mark 13:28-37**

**“Watch”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 28-31 The days of Noah**
3. **Vs. 32-37 The doorkeeper**
4. **Introduction**

Jesus was answering the disciple’s question of “When” and tells them that prior to it there will be “false signs”. Then He gave them the what they had asked Him for “the sign of the end of the age”, “*the abomination of desolation*”. This will take place at the 3 1/2-year mark of the great tribulation when the anti-christ with the help of the false prophet will enter the rebuilt Jewish temple in Jerusalem and set up an image of himself and demand that all people worship him. When that happens, Jesus goes on to say, get out of Judah and flee to the mountains. ***One of the points Jesus wanted to make to His disciples is that His return would be a visible one, both in the heavens and the earth***. I believe the reason for this has to do with His warning to the church about those who would come in His name attempting to deceive people into following them. Jesus 2nd coming is not in secrecy that only certain special “witnesses” will view, it’s a global event that all the world no matter where you are or who you are will experience. I think that is why Jesus follows up His words on the events on the 2nd coming with an analogy from nature (verses 28-31) and another warning against those who try to use His return as deception, (verses 32-37).

1. **Vs. 28-31 The days of Noah**

Vs. 28-31 This is an easy parable to follow when you see fig trees in the spring put forth leaves, you know two things:

1. Summer is near, it won’t be long until the days of warmer weather.
2. And nothing will be able to stop the certainty of it’s arrival.

Vs. 28 Jesus of the timing of these events and gives a lesson from the fig tree. The fig tree is often used as a picture of Israel and Jesus is using this illustration for the nation to pay attention too. The point Jesus is making is that the budding of the trees indicates the beginning of summer; so to when the anti-christ sets up his image in the temple you will know that His return is near. It is interesting to read through this section while looking at commentaries that were written several hundred years ago. The thought of Israel ever budding and becoming a nation again was inconceivable. So because of this they changed their eschatological position to that of the 1000-year reign of Christ all ready happening. We know that in AD. 70 the Romans marched into Jerusalem and destroyed it. We know for over 2,000 years the name of the land was changed from Israel {governed by God} to Palestine {land of the Philistines}. Yet during that 2,000-year period God did a neat thing in the **Jewish people, they maintained their**: ***cultural identity, language, ethnicity and religion***. No other nation in the history of the world has been able to do that without a home land. Every other nation that has been swallowed up by another nation has lost its identity within two generations. In Deut. 28:64-66 we read, “*For the LORD will scatter you among all the nations from one end of the earth to the other. There you will worship foreign gods that neither you nor your ancestors have known, gods made of wood and stone! There among those nations you will find no place of security and rest. And the LORD will cause your heart to tremble, your eyesight to fail, and your soul to despair. Your lives will hang in doubt. You will live night and day in fear, with no reason to believe that you will see the morning light*.” That is what happened on August 10th 70 AD, (***the exact same day and month on which it had been burnt by the King of Babylon***). Yet God said in Jeremiah 23:8 “*As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the people of Israel back to their own land from the land of the north and from all the countries to which he had exiled them.' Then* ***they will live in their own land***.” On May 14th 1948 the fig tree again budded.

Vs. 29-30 When Jesus said this the temple had not been destroyed, the nation had not been scattered. Israel was not without her home land; yet He says all of this will happen: “*Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place*.” The question is: ***What does Jesus mean or what generation is He speaking of?*** The challenge is that the WORD MEANS: **The generation of men living at the time of our Lord** where as **THE CONTEXT: Of the word is clearly the time of the great tribulation, the antichrist, Jesus 2nd coming and the gathering of the Jewish people from the farthest parts of earth**.

1. It can not mean the generation of the disciple’s because none of them lived that long.
2. I don’t believe it is speaking of the generation that comes back into the land in 1948. Biblically a generation is thought of as 40 years, which would have put this all happening 1988. And if you want to use 70 as a generation even though the bible doesn’t it would put this at 2018.
3. ***The context of the word must rule the meaning of the word in this instance***. The phrase “***will by no means pass away***” is NOT referring to the Jewish nation becoming extinct until after the events that Jesus spoke of happens. There is no question as to the extinction of the Jewish nation as we know that it is “indestructible.” All of God’s purposes and plans for the nation will have fulfillment. ***What Jesus is saying is that the Jewish nation will remain on earth as a nation through the time of the fulfillment of theses events***. The word “*generation*” can mean race or linage a person’s descendants. ***Jesus is saying that the Jewish race will be preserved and that when these things happen there will be those around to witness it***.

Vs. 31 Look carefully at this verse in light of what so many people say as Peter said they were saying in his day in 1 Peter 3:4 “*Jesus promised to come back, did he? Then where is he? Why, as far back as anyone can remember, everything has remained exactly the same since the world was first created*.”

 But Jesus say’s that His return is more “*Fixed then heaven and earth are they have an end but His word will never change it will stand through out eternity*.” In fact, we read in Rev. 21: 1 that John “*Saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared*.”

1. **Vs. 32-37 The doorkeeper**

Vs. 32 You may remember that in Acts chapter 1 verse 7 just prior to His ascension Jesus told His disciples, “*It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His authority.*” How can Jesus say that with absolute certainty then turn around and say that the day or hour know one knows not even the angels in heaven or the Son, but only the Father? ***What Jesus is referring to is the sign of His coming and He is saying that it will happen with certainty but to those that remain it will be unexpected***. That is what Matthew records in 24 verses 37-39 explain how this can be true. It will be like the days of Noah where according to 2 Peter 2:5 Noah *“..warned the world of God's righteous judgment*.” For 120 years Noah warned of Gods coming wrath every board he put on that ark everything he did was a witness. Yet we read in Luke 17:27 that “*In those days before the flood, the people enjoyed banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat and the flood came to destroy them all*.” They had more then Noah speaking to them according to Jude 1:14-15 Noah’s Grandfather Enoch was a prophet and said “*Look, the Lord is coming with thousands of his holy ones. He will bring the people of the world to judgment. He will convict the ungodly of all the evil things they have done in rebellion and of all the insults that godless sinners have spoken against him*.” As a matter of fact, Enoch had a son when he was 65 years old and named him Methuselah which means “*his death shall bring*”. Methuselah lived 969 years and died the week before the flood. These people could have known the day and the hour yet they were to going to parties to see it. ***It wasn’t that they didn’t know the day that judgment would strike it was that they were so caught up living for the moment***. Jesus says that “.***.so also will the coming of the Son of Man be***.” He links His 2nd coming with the time of Noah, the first judgment of God upon the earth. In Gen. 6:5-7 God said “*That the thoughts of mans heart was only evil continually and He was grieved in His heart that He had created Him and would destroy man from the face of the earth*.” God did so by sending the flood but in 2 Peter 3:6,10 Peter tells that that first world was destroyed by the flood, but the second *“..will pass away with a terrible noise, and everything in them will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be exposed to judgment*.” When we look at Jesus’ words recorded in Matthew 24:40-41 we read Jesus saying, “*Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and another left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and another left*.” You may have heard this interpreted as saying that Jesus is speaking of the rapture of the church. But remember the context? Being “***taken***” here in the context was **not a good thing** it was **a sign of judgment** and ***being left was the good thing for it meant that God preserved them miraculously in the ark***. The context of this passage is clear: Jesus is **NOT** talking about the rapture of the church, He is speaking of the sudden judgment of those on the earth during the tribulation period and of how some will make it through. The word “***taken***” is used **49 times in Matthew and it always means to be taken away in judgment**. It is the same word used when they took Jesus away to scourge Him in Matt. 27:27. What Jesus is saying that some people will perish in the judgment while others will remain.

Vs. 33 This is why Jesus tells them to “**watch therefore**”. The problem in the time of Noah was that they were not paying attention. This is Jesus’ warning to those who find themselves alive during the tribulation period. Paul says something very similar this in 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12 *“..God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness*.” ***Jesus tells His disciples and us that the important thing is NOT, WHEN but WHAT!*** We must always be watchful, aware, and awake.

Vs. 34-37 Finally Jesus gives them one last illustration as He gathers up all the interval time between His 1st coming and His 2nd coming and divides it into “*four watches*” of one long night. And He says that they don’t know whether the Master of the house will return in the early part on the night, at the middle part of the night, sometime before the break of day or just as the day breaks. What I find interesting is that Jesus uses this story **NOT** as an indicator of “WHEN” He will return but of the necessity of being watchful as the Master has assigned the servants “*each with his work*”. Jesus has an expectation of His servants to be busy carrying out the duties which He gave them to do. The question is: ***What is the doorkeeper keeping watch over***? Most folks will say that the “*doorkeeper*” was keeping watch *for Jesus’ return* but as you look at the context you notice that the “doorkeeper” keeps watch at as soon as the Master leaves the house, that would be the right at the ascension. So what is he keeping watch over? Well Matthew tells us something that Mark doesn’t include in chapter 24 verse 43 when he records Jesus’ words saying, “*But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed the house to be broken into. Therefor you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect*.” The “*doorkeeper*” is keep watch ***NOT for the return of the Master but is standing guard against robbers from entering and wrecking the Master’s house***. The Masters house is His church and we need to be on guard against those who would attempt to come into His Church and rip it off. There are two things the servants of the Master need to be doing until He returns:

* **Watching**
* **Working**

We are not to be looking up into the sky looking at signs of His return, that will happen at the hour the Father has determined.

**Mark 14:1-9**

**“Driven by devotion”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 1-2 The religion of self**
3. **Vs. 3-9 The beauty of devotion**
4. **Introduction**

This section comes right after Mark recording the Olivet Discourse with Jesus’ focus on what the Church should do when the world is coming apart prior to His return, keep busy working at the work that He has called us to and we need to watch for those who would coming into the church to rip us off from our work! In the 14th chapter Mark puts forth several stories that contrast the responses of people towards Jesus. What’s interesting to note is that these stories are NOT in chronological order. The fact is by design and ought to cause the reader to investigate what these stories are trying to communicate to the reader. In both of these stories we see that the people involved were “***driven by devotion***”, yet with two polar opposite outcomes!

1. **Vs. 1-2 The religion of self**

Vs. 1-2 In the first two verses Mark gives us some inside information of the Chief priests and scribes intentions with regards to Jesus and what the chief factors were that altered these plans. There is no mention of how Mark obtained this information as I’m certain that it wasn’t common knowledge and would have been considered “***inside information***”. My guess (and that is all it is) is that after the resurrection and Pentecost someone who had access to that information became a follower of Christ and came forwards and spoke openly about it. This plan reveals several things that the religious elite were very aware of:

1. ***That their opportunity to kill Jesus was growing very short****: The timing of this event had a very narrow window*.
2. ***That there were no grounds to accomplish their desired result****. This is why they would have to result to “trickery” to accomplish this task*.
3. ***That they were very conscious of Jesus’ over all popularity with the multitudes outside of Jerusalem****. Their concern as to the timing lie in the reaction of the crowds favorable towards Him*.

These facts reveal the motive and hatred the religious leaders had towards Jesus. Their jealousy was aimed at protecting their prestige and power that they had utilized to their advantage. Jesus was a direct threat to their way of life. Here was the religious elite whose responsibility it was to lead the people into a greater understanding of God but had become so enraptured with the trappings of religion that they were blinded by it; seen in:

* Their indifference to a man they knew was innocent of any real charges
* Their defiance of all that they held sacred to accomplish their desired results
* Their level of self love that they could hate a man whose only crime was that the people loved Him
* Their blindness, that schemed and panned under the power of darkness and secrecy

***They were not radicles that believed in their cause***, they were secretly meeting and discussing how to kill Jesus which went against the very religion they were sworn to up hold. Jesus was a threat to them and they loved to pose as holy, godly men and Jesus had exposed their hypocrisy and their actions towards Him only confirmed what He had spoken about them as being truth! When evil and hatred are exposed all it can do is retaliate and prove what it truly is.

1. **Vs. 3-9 The beauty of devotion**

Vs. 3-9 Though this next story appears immediately after in reality the story of the “*anointing of Jesus at Bethany*” happened 6 days earlier. We know this because John in His gospel has it chronologically correct in John 12:1-8. That leaves us with only two possibilities:

* ***Mark was ignorant of the timing of the event***: Something that I find hard to believe seeing that he was there and wrote long before John did.
* ***Mark knowingly inserts this story out of chronological order for a reason***: I believe that Mark deliberately inserts these stories in this chapter to convey the contrast between “*true devotion*” and false devotion.

The religious elite demonstrated “*intense devotion*” but the devotion that had was to themselves under the false banner of religion. I believe Mark wants to demonstrate this truth because of Jesus’ warning to the Church in the Olivet Discourse with regards to evidence of what false religion looks like.

 Mark doesn’t identify the woman who broke the expensive flask of spikenard and anointed Jesus but John does and there we are told that it was Mary of Bethany the sister of of Martha and Lazarus. The account recorded for us in John tells the story of the three siblings and give us a full picture **of what true devotion.** The three of them we are told in John 12 verse 2-3 were engaged in three things that make up true devotion.

1. First it says that “*Martha served*”: We always find Martha serving; she expressed her devotion by serving. Back in Luke 10 she became stressed in her service and told Jesus to tell her sister Mary to get up and help her in the kitchen. Jesus had to remind her to not allow her service to keep her from devotion. Something changed Martha’s perspective on her service as now we read, “*they made Him supper and Martha served*”. We see that “***they*** *made Him supper*”; there were some who learned that serving didn’t hinder worship and there was Martha who learned that devotion was the only way to serve. The second thing that changed Martha was the death of her brother and his sitting at the table with Jesus now. What was at one time seen as a burden was now seen as a blessing because it was lost to her and then brought back.
2. Second we are told that “*Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him.*” This speaks of yet another aspect of devotion and that has to do with our witness. “*Our witness? All Lazarus did was sit at the table with Jesus what kind of witness is that*?” Lazarus seems to be content to be known as *the man who sat at the table with Jesus rather than the man who spent 4 days dead and was now alive*. To Lazarus his devotion centered around his companionship and friendship with Jesus. And in this ***we learn three things as it relates to our devotion as a witness***:
	1. ***It isn’t what we do it is who we sit next too***. Lazarus presence at the supper table was proof positive that everything Jesus was saying was true. We are called to bear witness of that we who were once dead are now alive. Our witness is most visible not by what we do but rather who we are hanging around the table with.
	2. ***It can only be seen when, like Lazarus, we don’t come to the table still bound up in the trappings of death***. The greatest evidence of our devotion is the fact that you and I aren’t still walking around like we just came out of a tomb. We are free from the things of the old life, liberated from the things that stunk.
	3. ***It is most attractive when people see us at the table with Him, hanging out with Jesus***. I wonder if Jesus spoke of that day when he came out of the tomb and looks on people’s faces, I can’t be sure but if He did I bet they all joked about it. The best way to demonstrate your devotion is to show people your life.
3. Finally, we see the third aspect of devotion in verse 3 of Mark 14, where we are told that “*Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil*.” This is the focus of Mark’s gospel. What might not be immediately apparent is that this act of devotion was far more than what it first appears. That pound of costly oil in the alabaster box was her dowry and as she willing sacrificed it at the feet of Jesus and it mixed with her tears. ***We don’t see her using that costly oil to anoint her brothers body at his burial but she couldn’t wait to use for Jesus***’. Mary was giving the roses of her love while Jesus was still alive instead of placing them over His coffin after He was dead. To which Jesus both commended her and defended her. Perhaps during those four days of Lazarus death she took inventory of what she wished she should have said and done towards her brother and now she is not going to waste another moment to say I love you to Jesus.

***Mark records three movements of Mary’s devotion***:

1. Vs. 3 **The first movement is Mary’s loving devotion**: This happened at the house of Simon the leper as Jesus sat at a table she came with a jar of expensive perfume. John tells us that she took a pound of that costly oil and poured it on Jesus feet and wiped it with her hair and apparently poured it upon His head as well. The act caught the attention of those present to the same degree that the fragrance filled the house. There are four things about Mary’s act of devotion:

1. Mary’s act was ***premeditated***: She carried this alabaster jar of extremely expensive fragrant oil with her to Simon the lepers house, **this speaks of premeditation**.
2. Mary’s gift was ***pedestrian***: When a guest entered the home, usually the guest’s feet were washed with water and the guest’s head was anointed with a dab of oil or perfume. Here, Mary used this precious ointment and anointed the feet of Jesus. Then she used her hair to spread it upon Him. Her precious ointment was only good enough for His feet.
3. Mary’s gift was ***pricey***: She used a pound of oil of spikenard and based upon Judas’ estimation it was valued at a year’s wage. At that time spices and oils were used as an investment and such was the case as it appears this may have been her dowry. Spikenard comes from a plant found in India and she poured a whole pound of it upon His feet instead of dapping a part of it upon His head according to the other accounts she poured it upon His head and ran over His body unto it dripped upon His feet which then used her hair to wipe His feet.
4. Mary’s gift was ***personal***: Jewish women never let their hair down in public they always kept their hair up and covered. The only time they would do so would be for their husband in an act of adoration and devotion (*hence the phrase to let your hair down*). Notice the longevity of Mary’s devotion as it is still being remembered to day.

2. Vs. 4-5 **The Second movement is the onlookers’ response**: Mark tells us that people present were indignant about Mary’s act of devotion. John tells us that this was lodged by Judas. These are ***the first recorded words of Judas and we can see that he was the quintessential businessman***, “*Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor*?” On the outside it might appear that Judas’ actions seem nobler than Mary’s but the truth is that it was all a façade. Judas’ comments serve as a contrast to true devotion which he considered a waste of time. He does so by false pretenses of suggesting that the best way to worship Jesus is to give to man but we are told that this was only said because the man he had in mind was himself. There are those that suggest that Judas was embezzling in order to purchase land to build himself a mansion so that when Jesus became the leader of the world He would live in luxury and at the time of Jesus death he was only 30 pieces of silver away from the transaction. ***What Jesus saw as devotion in Mary’s gift, Judas saw as waste.*** John’s commentary says that, “*This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it.*” Judas was entrusted with the care of what had been given and he began to see what was in that box as his instead of belonging to Jesus. There will always be people who tend to view giving as an act of investment instead of an act of devotion.

3. Vs. 6-9 **The third movement is defense of Mary’s devotion**: Jesus says five things about Mary’s devotion:

1. Vs. 6 “*Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me*. There wills always someone that will criticize your devotion. There are those who may profess their relationship with Jesus while putting you down for your devotion. Mary’s devotion filled the house with the fragrance of her love. And Judas words filled the house with the stench of the flesh. He complained that he could have had a year’s wage in the box but he would betray Jesus for just 30 pieces of silver.
2. Vs. 7 “*For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not always have*.” ***While other’s criticized her for being wasteful, Jesus affirmed her for being sensitive to the timing of the moment***. Jesus isn’t saying that meeting the needs of the needy is wrong; He is saying that making it a priority over the devotion puts it in the wrong place. We are always going to have the opportunity for activity but such activity should never be at the cost of devotion.
3. Vs. 8a “*She has done what she could*.” Mary came to realize that what was in that meant nothing when compared to her devotion towards Jesus. When she let down her hair she took on the role of a salve and in her devotion was ridiculed by Judas. She offered the only act of devotion that was open to her at that moment. She could not fix Him a meal or make Him a garment she had no time for that, but she did have time to anoint Him with costly perfume. The teaching in Jesus’ affirmation is simple: ***Use what you have and do what you can at the moment***!
4. Vs. 8b “*She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial*.” It is interesting to read the amount of times that Jesus had spoken to His disciples that He was going to die and it seems that none of them believed Him except Mary of Bethany. She believed Him and grieved for Him even before His death. Jesus knew her motives and was comforted by her devotion of Him. ***Of all those that surround Jesus at that moment only Mary had the sensitivity to understand what was happening to Him and cared enough to express it***.

Vs. 9 “*Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her*.” The Christian life ought to be a beautiful balance of worship, work, and witness. I wonder if Jesus still smelled this sent on the cross? In Ephes. 5:2 we are told that when we “*..walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma*.” There were two scents that filled the room Mary’s devotion and Judas’ devotion to himself.

Judas was a critic, he is picking at the thread of Mary’s devotion and will end up making a nose for himself. It is good to heed the words of Jesus, “*Let her alone*”. Jesus will never criticize you if you if your devotion for Him is extravagant. Mary knew that He was soon going to lay down His life for her and the whole world and this was the only way she knew to say thank you.

**Mark 14:10-26**

**“Between the cups”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 10-11 The Betrayal**
3. **Vs. 12-21 Preparation for Passover**
4. **Vs. 22-26 The Lord’s Supper**
5. **Introduction**

The 14th chapter of Mark is full of contrasts to enable the reader to comprehend what true devotion looks like. This morning we will look at three events:

* Vs. 10-11 The decision of Judas to betray Jesus
* Vs. 12-21 The preparation for Passover
* Vs. 22-26 The intuition of the Lord’s Supper

Nothing could give a better picture of true devotion than the contrasts of Judas’ act of betrayal and Jesus’ instituting communion at the Passover.

1. **Vs. 10-11 The Betrayal**

Vs. 10-11 The first picture is that of Judas’ betrayal and Mark wants the reader to understand the dynamics of this as he includes the revelation as too his identity as “*one of the twelve*”. The religious leaders had a challenge in their attempt to destroy Jesus of:

* Limited time
* Limited opportunity
* And No reason

Judas’ offer to them changed two of those towards their favor. From purely a practical observation, apart from Judas’ act of betrayal Jesus would not have been arrested, tried or crucified at this specific time. The Greek word for “*betray*” in verse 10 is a word that means to hand over our as we would say “*sold Him down the river*”. ***Judas wasn’t coerced into this deceptive plan he initiated it and went to the right people in order to carry it out***. Further more we are told that “*when* ***they*** *(the religious leaders) heard it they were glad*”; the Greek wording on this phrase indicates an inward feeling of joy but suppressed outwardly as to not give their inward feeling away. ***What this suggests is the element of surprise by the religious leaders at Judas’ offer of betrayal as they didn’t see it coming***, ***and didn’t want Judas to know how delighted they were at his proposal***. The religious leaders had the burden of finding a way to dispose of Jesus and they didn’t have one until Judas presented them with the the opportunity. As noted last week this information can only be classified as “*insider information*” and as such had to have been given to the disciples at a later date by someone who was there. In this horrible and bleak picture of unsurpassed betrayal we still see the light and impact of enduring devotion as it can penetrate even the hardest of hearts.

 There are those that for what ever motivation want to offer excuses for Judas’ act, saying he was mislead, that he thought that such an act of betrayal would force Jesus’ hand in establishing His kingdom. They suggest that Judas didn’t want to betray Jesus, his motive wasn’t evil, instead he was just overeager and misguided. The Bible doesn’t offer that view as Judas’ act was:

1. ***Deliberate***: He took the initiative and went to the religious leaders
2. ***Treacherous***: He was a trusted member of the disciples
3. ***Envious***: His stated motive was greed as he was an embezzler.
4. ***Calculating***: To Judas this was nothing more than a business transaction

It took very little money to transform Judas from a disciple to a deceiver; 30 pieces of silver according to Exodus 21:32 is the exact price paid to a master if his slave was gored by an ox.

1. **Vs. 12-21 Preparation for Passover**

Vs. 12 Mark gives several important clues as too the timing of this first communion as he says that it was “*on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover lamb*,” preparations for this meal were made on the 14th of the month and the paschal lamb was slain at 6 PM on the next day. Mark notes that the conversation with THE Lamb of God about the preparations for the Passover meal took place at the same time in which the lambs were being killed and prepared for the meal.

Vs. 13-15 Peter and John were the two commissioned to procure the room where the disciples and Jesus were to celebrate the Passover. The instructions were very specific they were to look for a man carrying a pitcher of water which would have been unusual as such a task was women’s work thus this man was most likely a slave. They were to follow him to his master’s house and once there ask the master of the house where the guest room was at. The phrase “**THE** *guest chamber*” is literally in the Greek “**MY** *guest-chamber*” which suggests that this was a prearrangement made between Jesus and the master of the house. The room was furnished and prepared for the meal in accordance to biblical Passover observance.

 What’s not immediately recognizable by gentile readers of this passage is that “*a man carrying a jar of water*” was linked to another very important feast. To dig deeper into this you need to go to John chapter 7 verses 37-39 there we are told that, “*On the last day, that* ***great day of the feast****, Jesus stood and cried out saying, if anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water*.” Now we know that the feast Jesus is revering to is the Feast of Tabernacles because John tells us so in John 7:2. The Feast of Tabernacles is an 8-day festival that begins at sundown and according to Moses words in Leviticus chapter 23 for 7 days of the 8 days it is a festival noted for being set apart from others for rest. But on the 7th day known as “***the great day***” the people observed it by coming together in a procession following a priest as he went to draw water from the pool of Siloam (*the pool where Jesus told the blind man to wash his eyes after He had put mud over them*). The priests took two golden pitchers, one for wine and the other for water from the pool. There was a musical procession as they went down to the pool to get the water for the golden pitcher singing the words of Psalm 118 with the 22nd verse of “*The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone*”. After getting the water the whole procession went back to the temple through the water gate and the trumpet sounds as the priest enters the temple area. When the priest approached the alter there are two silver basins waiting Him, he pours wine into the one basin as a drink offering and the water from the pool of Siloam into the other. The whole ceremony was a joyous occasion thanking the Lord for His provision and asking Him to provide water for the coming year.

 No wonder Jesus stood holding that pitcher of water of the 7th day, the Great day of the feast of tabernacles with this proclamation. But look again at John chapter 7 verse 39 where John look forward and says, “*But this He spoke concerning the Holy Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified*.” This was a deliberate set up by Jesus to let His disciples know that what John records in the 39th verse was about to happen. These men were going to need to reflect on what Jesus death was going to bring them that at this very moment they couldn’t comprehend.

Vs. 16 Mark records two things:

1. “*So His disciples went out, and came into the city, and found it just as He had said to them*..”: The first part is the preparation of our Lord where everything that He said He would do was done just as He had said. The Passover lamb had been slain and returned to the upper room and all they had to do was follow.
2. “..*And they prepared the Passover*.”: But there is a 2nd part of this as we are told that they had to prepare the Passover, roasting the lamb, the making of unleavened bread, the bitter herbs, the four cups of wine, making the paste symbolizing the mortar used for laying the bricks and getting the room ready with the candles and such. All this lie on the responsibility of the disciples. Saint’s we can count on the Lord doing what He has said the only doubt is will we do what we have said?

Vs. 17-21 After the preparations complete in the evening the 12 came. Most folks have a wrong picture of this scene do to Leonardo da Vinci’s famous painting called the “The Last Supper”. The painting looks as if Jesus told all of them to come over behind the Table for of photo. The disciples would not have been seated in chairs, instead they would have been lying on couches around a low table only a few feet of the ground. John and Judas would have been on either side of Jesus with the other disciples seated around the table. The dinner took an immediate somber tone with Jesus’ announcement that “*Assuredly, I say to you, one of you who eats with Me will betray Me*.” This prediction narrowed Jesus death to the direct betrayal of one of His disciples and with John and Judas next to Him sharing His dish it would have narrowed the focus directly upon one of those two. Yet with Jesus announcement that there was a traitor in their midst not a single person stood up and said “***I know who it is***!” Instead each of them in a moment of self evaluation looked deep within themselves and said “*It is not I, Is it*?” Next we are told in verse 20 that Jesus said “*It is one of the twelve, who dips with me in the dish*”. It was then that Judas dipped his bread into Jesus dish as John’s account tells in 13:27 that “*after the piece of bread satan entered him. Then Jesus said to him. “What you do, do quickly*.”

Vs. 21 Before Judas left Jesus said, “*The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed*.” Jesus doesn’t say these words because Judas was doing something he couldn’t help; he was free to act even though his actions had long ago been predicted. God didn’t drive Judas to this awful moment, Judas chose to do what he did. These words, “*It would have been good for that man if he had never been born.*” Are the most solemn words Jesus ever spoke and should drive every unrepentant sole their knees and light a fire of obedience upon every believer’s passion.

1. **Vs. 22-26 The Lord’s Supper**

Vs. 22 According to John 13:30 Judas, “*Having received the piece of bread, he then went out immediately. And it was night*.” In other word’s **Judas left before Jesus institute the Lord’s Supper**. With Judas gone Jesus instituted what is know as the Lord’s supper in the middle of the Passover. Note the words, “*as they were eating*” which tells us that this **took place, right between the third and forth cups of wine**. The Passover meal is like a big dinner theater only you aren’t just eating and watching you are a part of the production with things you say. Through out the ceremony they would be four times when they would all share a glass of wine together.

1.) First they would say, “*I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians*..”

 2.) Second, they would say, “*I will free you from being slaves*..”

 3.) Third, they would say, “*I will free you with an outstretched arm*..”

4.) Lastly, they would say, “*I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God..”*

They had just drank together the third cup together and said “*I will free you with an outstretched arm*..” The Lord’s supper was placed right in between those two statements. Think of what Jesus was saying, “*I’m freeing you from sin, with My death upon the cross.*” “*That will be the sole basis of your relationship with me, celebrate it, realize that it is because of this that I will take you as my own and be your God*.” “*This is my promise to you, my covenant to you*!” Then Jesus took one of the pieces of bread gave thanks and broke it and then distributed it to them. Saying to them, “*Take, eat this is My body*.” It is here that He took up the un-leavened bread, broke it, blessed it and said “*this is my body.*” The word Eucharist is taken from the words “*blessed it*”. ***Jesus is giving God the Father thanks for the opportunity to purchase us back to Him***.

Vs. 23 This cup would have been the one in which they would say, “*I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God..”* And here it becomes the new agreement between God and man. The word “*shed*” or “*poured out*” points back to Lev. 8:15 where we are told that only in the sin offering is the blood poured out upon the alter. So this blood represents a covenant by which you will be God’s people and He will be our God. It is by His sacrifice for our sins. Covenants were entered into by eating and drinking together; so when we partake of it we are agreeing to the terms of the covenant. **The terms are**: ***We are only saved by faith in Jesus finished work on the cross, further more we are only sustained by it!*** The Lord’s supper is all about His sacrifice and our rejoicing in it, thanking Him for it!

Vs. 25-26 Jesus finishes this with a prediction that will have its fulfillment in the Millennial Kingdom when Jesus has cleansed and restored Israel. In a worldwide kingdom where He will reign as King of the throne of David. The phrase in verse 25 “*I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it* **NEW** *in the kingdom of God*.” The word “NEW” in the Greek is NOT as it relates to TIME, but NEW as it relates to quality. The wine we shall drink together with our Lord will be of a NEW QUALITY, spiritual nut just physical! We know that the Hymn sung was Psalm 136 Over and over in this 26 verse psalm is repeated the words “*For His mercy (loving kindness) endures forever*”.

**Mark 14:27-31**

**“Confidence”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 27-28 Trusting the Shepherd**
3. **Vs. 29-31 Failure of the flesh**
4. **Introduction**

During a fierce battle of the Civil War, Confederate General Richard Ewell, looked across the battle field at the Union troops his army had been trading gun fire with 70 yards away. He noticed a Union Cavalry officer walking boldly out front and unprotected risking death to encourage his troops. General Ewell was so impressed with the action that he ordered his soldiers to not shoot the union officer. After the battle General Ewell was reprimanded by none other than his commanding officer “Stonewall Jackson”. When asked why he had ordered his soldiers to not fire on that Union officer, General Ewell replied, “*I admired him, sir, he was a brave officer*!” Stonewall Jackson’s reply was, “*Ewell, if you want to win this war, shoot the BRAVE officers – then the cowards will run away taking the rest of the men with them*.” I’m not certain that “Stonewall Jackson” knew it but he was for all practical purposes quoting Jesus own words “*Strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered*.” In this brief section there are two things to notice:

1. Vs. 27-28 Jesus fully understood what was about to happen to Him. He not only understood it but anticipated it and even mad plans for it.
2. Vs. 29-31 The disciples didn’t see any of what was about to happen to them. What’s even worse they all over estimated their own abilities.

One of the surprising elements of Jesus final few hours is the contrast between Jesus and His disciples as it relates to their confidence:

1. The absolute secure confidence of our Lord despite the situation He was facing. He was absolutely confident that He would remain victorious and never failing in His ability to maintain His watch over His disciples as their Shepherd.
2. This is contrasted against the false confidence of the disciples as it relates to their personal devotion and the power they falsely believed in their own will to carry this devotion ill regardless of the circumstances they were about to face. This false sense of security was what led to their soon scattering.
3. **Vs. 27-28 Trusting the Shepherd**

Vs. 27 They has just sung the song declaring Gods enduring loving kindness and made the walk in the full moon of Passover across the Brook of Kidron, no doubt red with the blood of a 1000 lambs for sacrifice. As They came to the Mount of Olives Jesus makes this statement. “*All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night*..” The word “*stumble”* in the Greek is where we get our English word “**scandalized**”. How startling this prediction of Jesus must have been as the disciples heard that He is “***Going to be the object over which all of them will be offended***.” I like the fact that Jesus is telling them ahead of time; He knows that they are going to stumble because of Him. In an odd way I find it reassuring as Jesus is saying, “*I know your frame guy’s and I know that you are going to act different then where you think your heart is*.”

I have little doubt that Jesus knew and had read the scriptures, specifically the messianic prophecies. He had spoken to the Father about them as John chapter 17 clearly indicates. I also believe that the Holy Spirit made known to Jesus the things not in the scriptures. Yet with that said the things Jesus tells His disciples in this quote from Zech. 13:7, was something that they were apparently unaware as it relates to our fallen human nature. When you look at the full quote in Zechariah 13:7 it reads, “*Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, against the Man who is My Companion, say the Lord of hosts. Strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; then I will turn Mt hand against the little ones*.” Comparing these two we see that Jesus changed the wording in the Greek from the “*imperative mode*” of “***strike the shepherd***” to the “*indicative mode*” of “**I WILL** *strike the shepherd*”. This makes these words come from God the Father striking the Shepherd, Jesus, making the result that the sheep becoming scattered. This means that the striking of the Shepherd that Jesus makes reference of is about to happen in the Garden of Gethsemane, the scattering of the sheep will take place according to Mark 14 in verse 50 as we see that “*Then they all forsook Him and fled*.” We all like to be identified with winners and as long as the Shepherd was keeping the flock, whipping up on all the wolves, lions, bears, they were all jumping up and down wearing their team jerseys saying, “*I’m a member of the* **SHEPHERDS**, *and we are un*defeated!”

 Months back in Luke chapter 10 verse 17 as Jesus was sent the 70 disciples out they came back saying, “*Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name*.” But Jesus said, “.*.do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven*.” Jesus understood human tendency to do ***get all caught up in the individual moments that we lose sight of the mission***.

Vs. 28 Jesus knew that this was about to happen this night in the Garden of Gethsemane but He also knew “*But after* **I HAVE BEEN RAISED**, *I will go before you to Galilee*.” ***What reassurance to these who will be in a short time scattered that even though they will abandon Him, He will nonetheless still not only be their Shepherd but will still be standing watch, guarding His flock***.

What was about to happen in a few hours was not the final out come, it was instead the sign of the ultimate victory. I pray that this encourages you this morning, perhaps you are experiencing some circumstance right now in your life and you feel like a failure. Saints, as a believer in Christ the game is not over! ***The truth is Jesus is going on ahead of us, after He has already won the game!*** Jesus never spoke of the cross that He didn’t also speak of His resurrection, yet these fellows never seemed to grasp that. Not one of them believed that Jesus would be raised from the dead. Perhaps that was because not one of them wanted to consider the reality of His death. That being said, isn’t wonderful that our initial lack of belief with regards to the resurrection doesn’t impact its reality nor does it it hinders our ability to believe it it’s reality later!

1. **Vs. 29-31 Failure of the flesh**

Vs. 29 ***The 2nd thing that Mark records about this incident to the bravado of Peter and the disciples.*** With that great pep-talk of Jesus about human failure and His faithfulness, Peter, missed what He was telling them. Jesus was saying that, “*ultimate victory was won*” and that ***victory was not based upon man’s faithfulness but rather on His***. Peter’s confidence is very unfortunate as it is **NOT in the Lord’s resurrection** but rather in the confidence of his own will, which Jesus accurately predicted would fail. The Greek wording of “*even if*” revels Peter’s confidence in a ***twofold certainty***:

1. In ***the estimation of the ability of his own will***
2. In ***the likelihood that rest of the disciples would fail, where he would succeed***

He was still stuck on those word’s “***all of you***”. Making the same mistake that we often do about our selves, ***the over estimation of our own ability***. “*I know myself man and I will never be made to fall away from you.*” Peter’s problem was that he was a passionate strong man and there lie his weakness. Peter is telling the Lord, “*Hey, Lord, I used to be Shifting Sand* (Simon) *but you re-named* ***The Rock***.” “*So the* **all of you** *must have meant,* **all of them**!” Peter had started believing his own press reports. There is only One that is invincible only One that never fails and it’s not me nor any other person, it’s Jesus. To many people put their trust in themselves or others only to see their hopes dashed.

Vs. 30 But ***Jesus turns Peter’s boast into a prophecy of his failure***. In the Greek Jesus gives three specific things with regards to the timing of Peter’s failure:

* **Today**: The Jew’s took this to mean around 6 P.M.
* **Even this night**: This would have placed it after sunset
* **Before the rooster crows twice**: There were four watches of the night and between midnight and 3 A.M. was known as the “cock crowing hours” which was before sunrise and would make this sometime before 2 A.M.

Jesus rebuffs his self-confidence by saying that in only a few hours he will deny Him three times. Well did Paul warn us in 1 Cor. 10:12 “*Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall*.” I appreciate our Lord’s use of illustrations don’t you? How appropriate it is that the final reference as to the time of Peter’s failure is forever linked to the “*roosters crow*”. Peter’s boastful attitude linked to the “*cocky call*” of a rooster who is always sounding off “*cocksure*” of their ability!

Vs. 31 The Greek words “*spoke more vehemently*” is in the imperfect meaning that Peter kept on speaking in passionate irritation. Instead of heading the warning, Peter says that he was ready to die for the Lord. The truth is most people are all ready to die for a winner, but what do we do when we feel as if our Shepherd has become a Lamb? Ever notice after some Pro team wins the title how many folks start warring their apparel? In Christ you will always have a winner, but His winning has nothing to do with your character or ability, it has everything to do with His!

**Mark 14:32-42**

**“Far from home”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 32-36 Press into obedience**
3. **Vs. 37-42 Watching n prayer**
4. **Introduction**

In 2nd Corinthians 12:10 Paul in speaking about his own physical afflictions took the time to explain how such troubles benefited him as he said, “*Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distress, for Christ’s sake*, **FOR WHEN I AM WEAK, THEN I AM STRONG**.” Last week this truth was on display in the over confidence of Peter and the disciples had in their self will in keeping their commitment to Jesus. The problems we face in our Christian life almost always ends up being in ***the faulty placement of our security***: We over value our “*personal strengths*” as the basis of our position of security instead of that which ensures our failure! In the Christian life “Self-confidence” is the quickest road to defeat and “Christ-confidence” is the easiest path to victory. There is no room for both of these to coexist, we will either be one of the other but not both. This morning we will examine this in more detail as we first see it demonstrated in Jesus in a very interesting passage then further see it explained in the narcoleptic disciples.

1. **Vs. 32-36 Press into obedience**

Vs. 32-33 Gethsemane means “*olive press*” and it is here that the weight of mans sin begins to press in upon Him. What initially strikes me is the loneliness of this moment. This in spite of verse 36 where we see in the three prayers of Jesus to the Father complete fellowship.

We notice that Jesus is amongst the 11 closest friends and He separates three of them to be even closer. These were the same three, (Peter James and John) who were with Him on the Mount of Transfiguration and they were also taken with Him into Jairus’s house when his daughter was raised. For all practical purposes these three comprised His “*inner circle*”. Yet, *we must* **NOT** *assume that it was there* ***exceptional qualities*** *that led to their advancement to this position*. I’m more inclined to believe, from personal experience, that these three were apart of Jesus’ inner circle **NOT** for what they offered Him but rather for **what He could do for them** and their “*special needs*”. I believe it was far more expedient in Jesus’ ministry to keep these three close to Him. When you examine the scriptures, even while they are part of Jesus’ inner circle, you see the crazy things they say and do I think my opinion has great merit. These three guys were the weakest of the bunch and constantly and consistently needed the most proof of who He was and even with this still managed to get into more then their fare share of trouble. How amazing is this in light of this revelation that Jesus wants them nearest to Him as He faces His greatest trial. You will remember at the beginning of His ministry as Satan tempted Him for those 40 days and nights that as Luke 4:13 records that “*when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him* ***until an opportune time***.” Here then was that “*opportune time”*.

Vs. 33 The words described here are very descriptive:

1. “***He began to be troubled***”: In the Greek this caries the idea of “***terrified surprise***”. This “***terrified surprise***” must be interpreted in the context of what Jesus had clearly already understood and taught for 3 ½ years with regards to His rejection, trial, cross and death! He had foreseen all of this and was fully aware of His passion, so how could there have been any “***terrified surprise***”? The only explanation is that ***it’s terrors exceeded His expectations***. This is further confirmed by the author of Hebrews when he states in chapter 5 verse 8 that “*though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience* ***BY THE THINGS WHICH HE SUFFERED***.” Such a lesson on obedience started with a sensation of inconceivable awe at what He was now facing in the Garden Gethsemane.
2. Second, we have the words that describe Jesus as being “***deeply distressed***” and in the Greek they literally mean “**far from home**”. The common usage of these Greek words is to describe the feeling one gets when they are “*home sick*” with *desolate loneliness*, the feeling of complete isolation. An overwhelming mental distress that leaves a person confused, restless and engulfed in grief.

Vs. 34 Clearly these three disciples witnessed this as Jesus explains what they had visibly scene. He tells the three that He is, “*exceedingly sorrowful.*” These words in the Greek mean “**grieved all around**”. Jesus clarifies the extent of this loneliness as being so overwhelming as to being to the point of death. **The question we must ask is what was the source or cause of such despair?**

Vs. 35-36 Jesus’ condition was physically noticeable as we are told that, “*He went a little farther and fell on the ground*”. The Greek word is in the “*imperfect*” and it tells us two things: First, that ***His disciples saw Him fall on the ground*** and second that ***He did so repeatedly***! This reveals the true nature of the struggle that Jesus was under at this very moment. We are given further insight in this battle in the words that Jesus “***KEPT ON PRAYING***” “*if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him.*” **He had a continuous prayer that the HOUR that He had clearly known was coming and was now upon Him, would pass away from Him**. **It is abundantly clear in this passage that for the FIRST TIME, Jesus doesn’t want to do what the Father wants Him to do**. There is a sense of a struggle of which His disciples witnessed and Jesus doesn’t attempt to hide the reality of it. This in spite of the reality that according to Hebrews chapter 10 verse 5 and 7 prior to His incarnation Jesus knew that this was His mission as we read, “***But a body You have prepared for Me….Then I said, Behold, I have come ---In the volume of the book it is written of Me----To do Your will, oh God***.” In John 8:29 Jesus said, “*The Father has not let Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him*.” I believe this verse holds the key to understanding Jesus’ reluctance to not do that which pleased the Father as John records in chapter 8 verse 29 “*The Father has not let Me alone.*” **This was the first time that Jesus had ever felt alone from the Father**.

This is better understood in Jesus prayer:

* Jesus says, “*Abba Father*..”: These words leave no doubt to His eternal abiding relationship with the Father. His trepidation was not based upon a **PAST** lingering doubt of His father’s love. This suggests that His reluctance was something not from His past experience but His present and future.
* Further more His words “*all things are possible for you*” implies that Jesus completely understood the truth of the divine will; the full expression of the Father’s righteousness, love and power. He had no doubt as to the willingness and ability of the Father to come to His aid. The phrase, “*nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will*” recognizes this truth. **So what do we make the shrinking away from the cup?**

Some interpreters think that the “CUP” spoken of here by Jesus is the “*agony of Gethsemane*”. But John 18:11 makes that interpretation impossible. Only a few hours later in this same garden after Peter wields his sword, Jesus says, “*Put your sword into the sheath,* ***Shall I not drink the cup which My Gather has given Me***?” This verse reveals two important things:

1. **The “Cup” still lies ahead of Jesus and was not the “*agony of Gethsemane*”**
2. **The reluctance that Jesus had of drinking from this cup has been resolved by the time Jesus says this to Peter**

There are two things about this “CUP” Jesus naturally and sinlessly shrank from:

1. First, I believe that what Jesus is speaking of is ***not of the physical agony*** of the cross but ***what was placed upon Him (our sin) and what that sin would mean as far as unbroken fellowship with the Father***. Paul writes of this in 2 Corinthians 5:21 saying, “*For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him*.” You and I can not comprehend this agony; you see we are sinners. I have times where I don’t experience the fellowship of God, but not so with Jesus. Upon the only HOLY person who had never known sin was placed all human sin, from every person from the beginning of humanity to the end. It is no wonder that Jesus naturally with drew from this, as a Holy God it is perfectly understandable.
2. The other aspect of the “CUP” is the agony of the separation from the continual fellowship of the Father that have this sin placed upon Him would produce. This separation would have been from 9 AM to 3 PM and is the reason why we hear Jesus quote Psalm 22:1-2 “*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, And from the words of My groaning? O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; And in the night season, and am not silent*.” The fellowship between the Father and the Son had had no beginning. For a sinner who has never known the bliss of the Father’s love, to deprived of it for eternity, is horrible. But for the Son of God who had never known anything else up to this moment, the loss of experiencing this love was the worst part of His suffering.

It was these two aspects about this “CUP” that Jesus shrank away from and what He said in obedience, “*nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will*.” Though this statement of Jesus is the greatest example of “*voluntary submission*” ever made; we rob the meaning of it if we first don’t understand the intense conflict expressed in the words “***not what I will***”! Jesus states that at this moment “*His will*” and the “*Father’s will*” were for the first time not identical, it is the first time we see a separation between the Father and the Son. In the parallel passage of Luke 22:44 we see that such anguish was more than mental it was physically visible in “*His sweat becoming like great drops of blood falling to the ground.*” It was so intense that blood from His capillaries was forced through the walls of His veins through the layers of skin and out as He perspired. We also get another look at this from the author of Hebrews 5:7-9 who writes concerning Jesus that “*In the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear,* ***though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered****. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him*.” If Jesus had never gone through this, then He would not have been able to sympathize with you and me. That’s what Hebrews 4:15 tells us saying,“*For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin*.”

In Matthew 26:39 he records the first part of the prayer Jesus as asking “*If it is possible*”. That is, if there is any other way in which mans sin can be atoned for apart from the cross. If a certain amount of good works or deeds; if some other religion can do the job. Yet in the 2nd and third part of the prayer, Jesus says that this cup can not pass. There is no other way for our sins to be forgiven except by Jesus dying! And each time Jesus submitted His life to that of the Father. Back in Luke 4:13 in the account of the temptation of Jesus, Satan tried to get Jesus to worship him and all the world would be His, but Jesus knew that there was only one way the world could be purchased back and the was through the cross.

1. **Vs. 37-42 Watching n prayer**

Vs. 37-42 The second half of this passage deals with: How can we submit to God and accomplish His purposes when we don’t want too? It is here we take note that Jesus accomplished this through prayer that enabled Him to grab hold of the Father’s purposes and power above His own. There will be times when our hearts and emotions are contrary too the will of God. The will of God is running contrary to our natural impulse. But our sole goal in this life is to follow God to bring our wills into submission to His and as an example. This is what again the author of Hebrews tells us in 12:3-4 saying, “*For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.* ***You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin***.” Thank God our salvation isn’t dependent upon them staying awake because if it was then they we would be all condemned. Jesus is the one who is staying watch over us! Peter had promised to be faithful but instead he was faithless. They all needed to be praying for themselves and instead Jesus prays for them. **There you have my Christian experience summed up, my complete failure His complete faithfulness**! It is only when I realize the truth that apart from Him I can do nothing that and enter into His faithfulness!

**Mark 14:37-52**

**“Demonstration of devotion”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 37-42 The sandman**
3. **Vs. 43-45 The kiss**
4. **Vs. 47-50 Fight of flight**
5. **Vs. 51-52 Richly rewarded**
6. **Introduction**

There are four different scenes emphasized in this section and the common denominator in each of them is what is commonly considered love and devotion:

1. Vs. 37-42 First, we notice the number one reason for our inability to stay committed in our love; powerless believers. We will see that what lies behind this condition is satan the sandman
2. Vs. 43-45 Second, we will see the worst kiss ever given, as Judas pretends love in order to betray
3. Vs. 47-50 Third we will examine the twofold tendency known in love and devotion as the “fight or flight” syndrome
4. Vs. 51-52 Fourth, we will look at a man who at first wouldn’t commit to love Jesus because he had great wealth and in the end runs off naked because of his love
5. **Vs. 37-42 The sandman**

Vs. 37-42 John describes the journey from the upper room to the garden saying that they passed over the book called Kidron. This brook was almost always dry except when it rained and during the Passover when the blood of the sacrifices ran like a stream from below the eastern wall of the temple. The name Kidron has two meaning “*the brook of cedars*” and *“to become black*” and by implication in the Hebrew, “*sad*”. Hundreds of years earlier, during the time of David, the king sinned by numbering the people to ascertain the strength of the nation. David’s problem was he failed to realize that their true strength was not in numbers but in the Lord. When the Romans wanted to know how many people were in Jerusalem the priests didn’t want to number the people and told them they could count the sheep of the sacrifice instead. During one Passover Josephus tells us that they sacrificed 256,000 lambs. It was so bad that the Roman’s built three aqueducts to wash the blood down from the brook Kidron but it would turn black and stink. It was across this same brook that David left the city after being betrayed by his son Absalom and like Judas, his closest adviser Ahithophel hanged himself. My point in bring this up is as Jesus crossed over this brook called “*darkness*” or sadness under His feet was a river of a ¼ of a million sacrificed lambs for the sin of the nation. ***So there walked the Lamb of God ready to be sacrificed crossing over the blood of sacrificed lambs***. It was this same brook that during the time of Hezekiah the king, he cleansed the temple and all the debris that was found there and tossed it into this brook to be disposed of. Both of which picture the sacrifice Jesus was about to under go as the Lamb of God.

It didn’t take much time to erase Peters fierce resolve to not stumble, as we note that he and and the other two couldn’t stay awake. I think this attack is one of the devil’s most successful attacks. The sword that scattered the sheep was yielded by the mysterious “sandman”, who has a history of weakening saints who couldn’t stay awake 1 hour in prayer. Peter could well understand what we do as well, “*The spirit is indeed willing but the flesh is weak*.” Perhaps we would say today that “*The spirit is willing but our flesh is ready for the weekend*!” The key to overcoming our flesh isn’t “***time off***” it’s time in Jesus who has become our rest. Had Peter and these other two been to appropriating Jesus as their rest they wouldn’t have denied Him! Imagine what would happen if we would come to Jesus in our fatigue and say, “*Lord I’m wiped out as person, I’m failing every where I look and I can’t make it with out you. So I’m asking that you give me Your power and strength to get through this.*” Prayer is the “***extension cord***” to plug us back into His power when we have reached the end of our rope!

1. **Vs. 43-45 The kiss**

Vs. 43 Jesus and his disciples came to a private garden where the wealthy planted things because it was against the law to spread manure in the city. This was a favorite spot for Jesus to go with His disciples for prayer and fellowship right out side of the city. Human history began in a garden called Eden and it was man’s rebellion that caused them to leave that garden but Jesus entered a garden in obedience to deliver us. Jesus went into a garden where the world’s manure was, a place where crushing took place. And it was in this garden where what was lost in Eden was reclaimed in Gethsemane.

Vs. 43-44 Judas knew the favorite location of Jesus and His disciples to pray at night when they were in Jerusalem and he used that knowledge to betray our Lord. He knew right where to find Jesus during a time of need, a place of prayer. He had lived by the Lord’s side for over three years had listened to His words. Yet, the only thing recorded of Judas with regards to obedience to the words of Jesus is found in his response to Jesus words in the upper room in 13:27 “*What you do, do quickly*”. This kiss was a deliberate, prolonged, cold-blooded act of counterfeit affection to a person who had never been anything less then loving to him. **How sad it is that people, like Judas, find obedience to the world that leads to death easier than obedience to the Word of love that leads to life**!

The word “*detachment*” is a Greek word that can mean as few as 600 and as many as 1200 men. So even if we take the smaller number of 600 with lanterns and torches we get the picture that they meant business and had everything necessary for the Posey but didn’t expect they would find Jesus in the first place they looked, out in the open. I believe that finding Jesus in the garden was no surprise for Judas, this ought to have caused him to reexamine his betrayal.

Vs. 44-46 It was common for a disciple to kiss his teacher, but clearly Judas wanted to identify Him. Perhaps Judas kissed Jesus repeatedly to pre-occupy Him in case Jesus would do some miracle to try to slip away. In Matthew’s account in 26:50 Jesus says to Judas, “***Friend****, why have you come*”. What amazing grace, as Jesus gives Judas one more chance to be forgiven.

1. **Vs. 47-50 Fight of flight**

Vs. 47 We know according to Luke 22:49 that as Judas drew near and identified Jesus with a kiss this caused the disciples to ask, “*Lord, shall we strike with the sword*”. Then according to John 18:10, Peter not waiting for Jesus to reply took his sword and cut off the High priests servant’s ear. We are also told by John that the servants name was Malchus which means king. Malchus is the last person healed by Jesus. *It was Thomas in John 11:16 who said to Jesus that he was ready to die for Jesus but it was Peter who demonstrated in misguided zeal his willingness to do so*. You may recall in the other gospel accounts that while Jesus was praying three times that this cup might pass Peter was asleep. Peter makes the mistake of many, “*Trying to prove his faith by the sword, while he could not do so by his tongue*.” According to John 18:26 “Malchus” is the relative of the second person to question Peter with regards to being a follower of Jesus. No doubt it was a bit difficult for Peter to witness to Malchus or his family after this. ***Judas’ action was rebellion against the WORD of God while Peter’s action is rebellion against the WILL of God and many of us have taking out our sword from its sheath to fight against the will of God in our lives***.

* Peter fought the wrong enemy
* Used the wrong weapon
* Had the wrong motive
* And accomplished the wrong result

***His failure can be traced to the fact that he was arguing when he should have been listening, sleeping when he should have been praying***. Just prior to this Jesus had told His disciples that were ready to defend Him in Matt. 26:53 “*do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels*?” We are told in 1 Kings 19:35 that one angel of the Lord killed 185,000 soldiers in one night and Jesus told Peter in Matt. 26:53 that 12 legions of angels were ready to take on those who came. A legion is 6,000 which = 72,000 men. Now do the math: 1 angel = can take out 185,000 soldiers and multiply that by 72,000 angels who each who could take out 185,000 soldiers. ***That means they could have in one night taken out over 13 billion which is double the worlds present population***. In other word’s Jesus doesn’t need our help! It’s interesting that what was cut off by Peter’s act was Malchus’ ear. We are told that faith comes by hearing. I wonder how many times have well meaning Christians have cut off some non-believer’s ear?

Vs. 48 Jesus asked the chief priests and the captains of the temple, “*Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs*?” “*When I was with you daily in the temple, you did not try to seize Me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness*.” Consider this from two perspectives:

1. ***To those that claimed Jesus was just a Galilean peasant; if true why was it necessary to bring out an army against an unarmed man who had made no threats***?
2. ***But if Jesus is who claimed to be, the Son of God, what army could possible subdue Him***?

John in chapter 18:4 records important commentary, “*Jesus therefore, knowing all things that would come upon Him, went forward*”. John tells us that ***this was no surprise attack, no situation by which Jesus was some how caught of guard but a voluntary surrender***. Jesus didn’t act as a wanted man; He wasn’t hiding in some cave as they had prepared for. And instead of running He comes foreword and asks “*Whom are you seeking*?” The soldiers were ready for confrontation and conflict and instead, saw calmness and control as the word brought them to the ground. David wrote in Psalm 27:1-3 “*The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?* ***When the wicked came against me to eat up my flesh, My enemies and foes, they stumbled and fell****. Though an army may encamp against me, My heart shall not fear; Though war should rise against me, in this I will be confident.*”

Again according to John’s account Jesus said to them in verse 5, “Ego Eimi” and as you will notice the “***HE***” is in italics which mean’s that it was inserted by the translators. So what Jesus really said was “***I am***”, a direct reference to His deity. And at the words of “*I am*” those who came to arrest Him fell to the ground just a small demonstration of what could have His arresting army’s destruction at His mere word. Paul said in Romans 14:11 “*Every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.*” And with 600 men laying on the ground clamoring to gather their swords as well as themselves He asked them again whom they sought. I wonder if this time they whispered His name afraid of the same reaction. “*I have told you that I am He*”, Jesus said. “*If you seek Me, let these go their way*” and all but Peter and John ran off. Even at His wrongful arrest Jesus concern was for others and not Himself.

G. Campbell Morgan observes, “*When a man unsheathes his sword, and aims at a man’s head but only gets an ear, it is a poor aim*.” I can imagine Jesus looking at Peter with that look that says, “*I have 72,000 angels ready to come here and defend Me and I need you cutting of a servant’s ear? I need that like….well a whole in the head*!” In 50 days Peter would unsheathe his sword of the word of God by the Spirit of God but his aim was the heart of man and 3000 would be brought to life. It was the grace of God that picked up the ear and healed Malchus as it probably kept the authorities from adding a forth cross to put Peter on. Jesus’ words here are good to remember “*put the sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which the Father has given Me*?” In Exodus 29:20 we are told that when the High Priest was installed they were take the blood of “*the ram, and put it on the tip of the right ear*” to signify that the High priest should always have his ear open to the Lord. I find it interesting that the last miracle of Jesus was the restoration of the damage done by one of His followers on His behalf. **There in lies a great lesson for us the Word of God is not to be used to take away the hearing of truth but to restore it.** We need to ask ourselves, “*Does the use of the Word of God in this situation going to take away a person’s ability to hear the truth or restore*?”

**V. Vs. 51-52 Richly rewarded**

Vs. 51-52 Marks adds this little postscript that none of the other gospel writers do. Most Bible scholars agree that this young man is Mark and it is his way of telling his readers that he was there. But I believe this postscript does two other important things as well:

1. These two verse give a conclusion to the story of the rich young ruler in chapter 10:17-22. Jesus had told him to sell everything he had and follow Him. But the young man went away sad, unable to part with his possession because they possessed him. There is some evidence that this young ruler was none other than Mark and it is his way of saying, “*Yes I walked away from Jesus at first but I considered His words and sold all I had and gave it to the poor to follow him.*” If that is the case, then the last thing Mark owned was that linen robe, and before the night was finished in the garden he gave that away as well. Mark was in darkness with great wealth but ended up in the light of the garden clothed only in the righteousness of Christ!
2. Second, this story provides an important detail as to where the gospel writers got this information in the garden on Jesus’ prayer. You see Judas wasn’t with them, eight of the disciples were outside of Gethsemane and the three that were with Jesus were asleep and could not have heard Jesus prayers. That means that Mark must have been there watching and listening to Jesus speak to the Father. This story may have never reached the pages of the Bible had it not been for a rich young ruler who lost what he could never keep to gain what he could never lose!

**Mark 14:53-65**

**“A life changing decision”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 53-54 Two trials**
3. **Vs. 55-61 Kangaroo court**
4. **Vs. 62-65 False verdict**
5. **Introduction**

For the better part of a year we have been hearing about the presidential election and the warning from both candidates that this is a “*the most important election ever*” as it has life changing implications. This morning we are going to examine the **ONLY** event in human history that not only has life changing implications is has eternal life changing implications, the trail of Jesus. The death of Christ is the most significant event in all of human history. In fact, it is the focal point not only of human history but of all time, space and matter, beyond our galaxy, solar system beyond all that there is or ever has been.

When we pick up Mark’s narrative: Jesus has been arrested in Gethsemane, the disciples have been scattered. Now Jesus will face the 1st of three trials:

1. First according to John chapter 18, Jesus was taken to Annas the disposed High Priest who was the father-in-law of the acting High Priest Caiaphas. Mark doesn’t record this event but John does.
2. Next Jesus is taken to Caiaphas and the courtyard of his residence where two events happen simultaneously:
3. ***First*** according to verses 53, 55-65 Jesus is question and false witnesses are brought forward for the expressed desire that the predetermined verdict of guilty would be rendered.
4. ***Second*** according to verses 54, 66-72 Peter under goes his trial in the courtyard of public opinion. Both by the way were found guilty!
5. Lastly in Mark chapter 15, Jesus will be tried before Pilate and Herod will make an appearance as well as they will find not enough evidence to find Him guilty but to appease the crowd they will go along with it.
6. **Vs. 53-54 Two trials**

Vs. 53-54 According to John 18:12, they bound Jesus. *Six hundred men bound a savior, the Lamb of God who needed no human rope to get Him to the cross as His love for the Father and His love for us was what was driving Him there, not the cords of human rebellion but the cords of divine love*. It is here that the words of Paul in Romans 8:38-39 come to mind where he writes, “*I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” ***The very ones that bound Him didn’t realize that He’s willingness to be bound was in order to liberate them from the bondage of sin***. In John’s gospel he tells us that the troops first led Jesus to Annas (John 18:13) so this must of been very early in the mourning. Annas’ family were racketeer’s as he and his five son’s ran the temple business. Normally the high priest served for life, but when the Romans took over they made the position an appointed one. Annas had served as high priest for 9 years then each of his five son’s served as well. Having run out of sons he had his son-in-law Caiaphas serve. But the truth was everyone knew that Annas was still the power behind the seat. They were all Sadducees which meant that they did not believe in the resurrection, or anything accept the first five books of Moses. Apparently when Annas realizes he can’t get any where he sent him across the court yard to his son in law Caiaphas. It was Caiaphas who only a few months earlier after the resurrection of Lazarus said in John 11:49-50 that it was “*expedient…that one man should die for the people*”. We are told again by John in chapter 18 verse 19 that Caiaphas, came and examined Jesus asking Him about His disciple’s and His doctrine. This information is important as the record shows that the sun is about to rise and based upon Jewish law this was a **completely illegal trial, for four reasons**:

1. ***All criminals must be tried in the daylight****.*
2. ***No criminal case could be tried during Passover time****.*
3. ***Only a “Not guilty verdict” could be issued on the same day of the trial, guilty verdicts had to wait one day****.*
4. ***Only decisions made at the official court were valid, this was at the home of the high priest****.*

These were the highest religious leaders in the land, they could trace their ancestors back to Aaron the first high priest. Their position was sacred, yet these men were nothing more then murders! Isa. 8:20 says, “*To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them*.” It is yet another reason we must not follow a man or religion but instead ONLY follow the Lord through His word! So while Peter was in the courtyard warming himself by the fires of the world denying Jesus, Jesus was before the court protecting Peter. As we look at John’s account his first impressions are not Jesus trial before the high priest but Peter’s trial before three servants. In Matthews account we are told that Peter followed Jesus from a distance. Now I suppose when compared with the other 9 disciples, that we can say that at least Peter followed Jesus. But listen up, ***I believe that we always invite trouble when we follow Jesus from a distance.*** You will **NEVER** hear someone say, “*I know when all my problems started, it was right when I became more devoted to Jesus and decided to follow Him closer without compromise*!” ***Denial never happens up close it always happens from a distance***!

1. **Vs. 55-61 Kangaroo court**

Vs. 55-61 They had already predetermined Jesus guilt and now they were just looking for people who could substantiate their conclusion. The 9th commandment states that you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor, but they didn’t care. The problem was they couldn’t find honest witnesses so they had to come up with some and a charge if they were going to put Him to death but none came forward that would substantiate each other. Finally, according to Matthew 26:60 after a night of searching two guys come forward. Now these guys twisted what Jesus said to make it sound something different. What Jesus had said is recorded in John 2:19 and what these two false witnesses claimed Jesus said is recorded in Matthew 26:61:

 A.) John 2:19 “*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up*.”

 B.) Matt. 26:61 “***I am able*** *to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days*.”

Jesus never said “***I am able***” to destroy the temple! He said “***destroy this temple***”. To the religious leaders, to speak against the temple was a serious matter, a charge that was punishable by death. Jesus is not the destroyer, that is not His work. To find the truth of what Jesus was speaking of you will need to go back at the beginning of His ministry to when He first cleansed the temple in John chapter 2:19-21as John adds the commentary saying, “*He was speaking of the temple of His body*”.

At this point Caiaphas steps up and saves their case by doing something that was illegal in their courts by trying to get Jesus to incriminate Himself. Notice Jesus’ reaction to their statement, silence! Isaiah the prophet said some 700 years earlier that the reaction of the Messiah would be, “*He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth*.” Jesus made no effort to defend Himself, to answer any of the lies of the false witnesses.

In verse 61 Caiaphas uses the legal system to put Jesus under obligation to speak. ***The question of Caiaphas reveals insight into what the nation had observed about Jesus’ life and ministry.*** “***Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of the living God***.” The hope of the nation was the Messiah and they understood that He should be the Son of God, anointed for the purpose of accomplishing Gods will upon the earth. *They affirm that what Jesus of Nazareth had been doing and saying pointed to the fact that He was making this claim*. You do not put a person on trial for pretending to be something if they had not acted as if they were indeed that person. These religious leaders had observed Jesus to the point that they understood what He claimed to be. So they ask Him, “*Let’s make it official under oath to God, are you what you claim to be, the Messiah?” “Give us an open confession in court*!”

1. **Vs. 62-65 False verdict**

Vs. 62 Jesus gives a twofold answer:

A.) “I am” or as Matthew records ***It is as you said***. Jesus’ answer to the question is as simple as it is profound. “***You have observed me correctly***!” There is such overwhelming evidence in the truth of who Jesus is. People who really search will find out, but then they will be faced with a choice of what to do with the truth!

B.) “***And you will see the Son of Man* sitting at the right hand *of the Power, and* coming with the clouds of** **heaven**.”: The Caiaphas, under oath asks Jesus the question concerning His Messiah-ship. Yet the high priest had already come to the conclusion that Jesus was not. He already had his bias, his presupposition and prejudice. Matthew 26:64 records that Jesus first said the words, “***Nevertheless I say to you***”. Which indicates the force behind these words of Jesus as being in spite Caiaphas’ prejudice and pride he would still see. *Jesus prophesies the destiny that awaits him at his insistence of continuing in his prejudice*. There are many critics of the Bible like Caiaphas, that say that Jesus never claimed to be the Messiah or the Son of God. They say that such claims were inserted by over zealous disciples. But here is a clear passage of scripture that contradicts such false assumptions. Jesus in making this statement quotes two old testament passages:

1.) Ps 110:1 “*The LORD said to my Lord, "****Sit at My right hand****, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.”*

2.) Dan. 7:13-14 “*I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man,* ***Coming with the clouds of heaven****!*

But why did Jesus choose those two verses to share with Caiaphas? What Jesus is informing Caiaphas is that no matter what Caiaphas decided to do; Jesus was going to raise, ascend and return in glory. ***What people do with the truth will never change the truth, but it will change where we will spend eternity***.

Vs. 63-64 With this twofold response Caiaphas displays a hypocritical gesture of righteousness as he tears his clothes in a move that demonstrated to all present that he believed Jesus was guilty of blasphemy and having done so in front of the Sanhedrin it sealed Jesus conviction. Without considering the evidence sentence is passed. This hypocritical gesture by Caiaphas according to Leviticus was in its self a violation of the law as it was against the law for the high priest to tear his garments in anger or sorrow. When Caiaphas did this he disqualified himself from being a high priest and unbeknownst to him established Jesus as the Great High Priest, who does not offer animals for the sins of man, He offers himself!

Vs. 65 Though not all recorded by Mark there were four impromptu punishments dished out upon Jesus.

A. **First they spit on him**: This is a sign of total disdain and contempt. A nasty thing to do as the Greek words inform us that this was not just saliva, it was mucus!

B. **Then they beat Him**: Only Mark informs us that they first blindfolded Him. If you blindfold someone then hit them they lose that natural reflex reaction of rolling with the punches. So the blows were having full impact upon His face.

 C. **Other hit him with the palm of their hands while others used rods**.

D. **Finally Isa. 50:6 tells us that pulled out the hair of His beard as well**. This is why Isa 52:14 says, “*So His visage was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men*;” Further more Isa. 53:3 says that, “*And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him;*” By the time the beating was over, you wouldn’t have been able to recognize Jesus. Yet, through out it all He did not upon His mouth.

**Mark 14:66-72**

**“Strength through weakness”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 66 The mystery of the other disciple**
3. **Vs. 67-68 Prediction of restoration before failure**
4. **Vs. 69-72 Failure of the flesh**
5. **Introduction**

We now take up the story that happened simultaneously with Jesus 2nd trial before Caiaphas, Peter’s trial in the courtyard of the world. The story enfolds with Peter eager to redeem himself after his epic failure in the garden of Gethsemane as he couldn’t stay awake. Next we saw him over compensate when, at Jesus arrest, he drew his sword and cut of the ear of the servant Malchus. Now in these verses we see Peter attempting a very brave endeavor as he follows Jesus into the joint courtyard of Annas and Caiaphas, and into the very enemies of Jesus moving so close as even warming himself by the fire with the guards. Quite amazing when you consider it was only a short time ago he had drawn his sword against these same guards albeit hitting a servant instead. This morning we will look at Peter’s failure with an eye upon why we like Peter often fail in our witness of Jesus.

1. **Vs. 66 The mystery of the other disciple**

Vs. 66 Peter’s first failure is better examined in the gospel of John as he records what happened in chapter 18 verses 15-17: “*Simon Peter followed Jesus, and* ***so did another disciple****. Now that disciple* ***was known to the high priest****, and went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest.* ***But Peter stood at the door outside****. Then the other disciple, who was known to the high priest,* ***went out and spoke to her who kept the door, and brought Peter in.*** *Then the servant girl who kept the door said to Peter, "You are not also one of this Man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not.*”

The apostle John is the only one that records the presence of “***another disciple***” who according to John’s account went to the servant girl who kept the gate and gained entrance for Peter. The indemnity of this 2nd disciple has been some what of a mystery. Though not a critical discovery as it relates to Peter’s failure it is nonetheless an important detail. Here is what we know based upon all the accounts:

1. The other “*disciple*” that followed Jesus with Peter according to John “***was known by the high priest***”.
2. This other disciple, ***went out and spoke to the servant girl who kept the door and because of this gained entrance for Peter***.
3. According to Matthew 26:73 and Mark 14:70 ***it was Peter’s speech or accent that gave him away at his 2nd failure***. Luke in 22:59 as well as Mark indicates that ***the servant girl detected that Peter was associated with Jesus do to the fact that he was a Galilean***.

So from these accounts who is this mysterious “other disciple”? There are two possibilities:

1. **He is the Apostle John**: There are those that believe that this description is a literary reference by John to himself. One of the questions this opinion generates is, “***What was John’s connection with the high priest***?” For this “disciple” to be John would require John to know the name of the high priest’s servant, Malchus, as well as the person who kept the door. Further more we know that the servant of the high priest was a relative of Malchus in verse 26. **These would all be indicators that John would have been very familiar with the high priest’s family.** To answer these challenges, those that hold this opinion suggest that the Son’s of Zebedee had a thriving fish market in Capernaum where the son’s of Zebedee were from along with Peter. When you walk through the ruins along side the Synagogue in Capernaum there is a marble plaque advertising the Zebedee’s fish stand. According to history their business was quite successful and their salted fish were considered a delicacy in Jerusalem but could only be afforded by the wealthy and because of this John and his family became acquainted with Annas and his family.
2. **He is Mark aka the rich young ruler**: There are several reasons why I believe this is a much more plausible possibility. First, there are several problems with identifying John as the “other disciple” that go against the text. We know that it was the Galilean accent that gave away Peter’s association with Jesus; so why didn’t it cause the same reaction with John? If John is the “mystery disciple” he was the first one to speak to the servant girl who later identified Peter and rather doubt that she would have granted either one of them entrance. There is “no evidence” of John being of wealth or of any relationship with the high priest. And if John was wealthy he was a business partner of Peter, he would have been wealthy as well. Now when you plug Mark (*aka the rich young ruler*) into this same scene and he fits much better. First Mark was not from Galilee, he was from Jerusalem and as such he would have had no problem with his speech. Second, as the “rich young ruler” it is much more reasonable to believe that he would have known the high priest and could have easily without question gained entrance for Peter. Further more we know that Mark later was a disciple of Peter and though a recent disciple not one of the 12 so no one would have associated Mark to Jesus. Having Mark as the other disciple would explain how Peter gained entrance into the courtyard and it would also give greater incite into the radical conversion of Mark after walking away from Jesus offer because he had great wealth.
3. **Vs. 67-68 Prediction of restoration before failure**

Vs. 67 Before we look at Peter’s three failures there is a note of great encouragement in Luke 22:31-32 that preceded not only Peter’s denials but also Jesus’ prediction of them. Only hours earlier Jesus had said in **Luke’s account a very interesting order that many don’t realize**. According to Luke’s account in 22:31-34 Jesus said first in verse 31-32, *“Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that* ***your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren***.” Jesus said those words **BEFORE** Peter’s response of “*Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death*.” And ***BEFORE*** Jesus responded to that by saying in verse 34, “*I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me*.” That means; **Jesus predicted Peter’s return before He predicted his denial**. **Jesus is more into promising our restoration then He is stating our failure**? Remember Jesus said “*But* ***I have prayed for you****, that your faith should not fail.*” “***Falter yes, doubts certainly but fail, no way!***” *Why? Because Jesus has got a hold on us!*

Vs. 68 John’s account alternates between Jesus and Peter’s trials. John tells us Peter was still outside the gate when Jesus trial before Annas had started and then moved inside once Mark had gained him entrance at the start of his 2nd trial before the son-in-law Caiaphas. John also tells us in 18:18 that it was cold that night; that is unusual for Israel at that time of year is was not normally cold and is usually very pleasant outside. I’ll regardless it is never a good idea to seek warmth around the fires of the enemies of Jesus as you will never fit in and you will eventually get burned!

It is also interesting in verse 67 that the first servant girl asked, “*You* ***ALSO*** *were with Jesus of Nazareth.*” This led to Peter’s emphatic denial of any association, when he said “*I neither know nor understand what you are saying*.” Based upon this I find this application: ***If someone is shocked that you aren’t living up to your profession a least they have at first made the association that you are a follower of Christ***.

* Peter followed from a distance
* Warmed himself by the fires of the world
* And according Luke 22:55 finally sat in the courtyard of the ungodly.

Psalm 1:1 shows the same order when we read, “*Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful*”. The difference between Peter and Judas is that though Judas wept the tears of remorse, Peter cried the tears of repentance! ***Remorse simple means that the outcome of our action didn’t turn out as we intended them to.*** *Repentance means the what our lament is not the* **OUTCOME** but *the* **ACTION**! True biblical repentance means: A **CHANGE** in what we **THINK**, **FEEL** and **ACT**. There is no greater contrast of these two than the difference between Judas and Peter.

It would be good to learn this lesson from Peter’s travels from the “*garden of grace*” to the “*court of public opinion*” as inevitably it will always end in denial if we chose to stay at a distance from our Lord. James wrote in 4:8 that if we “***Draw near to God and He will draw near to you***.”

In John’s account he takes us into Jesus’ trial before Annas and we see how differently Jesus acted then Peter:

* ***Peter was asked a fair question that had no adverse immediate consequences and he responded with a lie.***
* ***Annas questioned Jesus about two things in verse 19, “His disciples and His doctrine” but Jesus only responded to one and didn’t answer with regards to His disciples protecting them at all costs.***

In Hebrews 7:25 we read that Jesus, “*…always lives to make intercession for us.*”

1. **Vs. 69-72 Failure of the flesh**

Vs. 69-72 Here is the 2nd denial as the same servant girl questions Peter affiliation again saying, “*This is one of them*.” This young lady was in no mood to walk away from her opinion and make more of a public proclamation to “*those who stood by*.” Luke tells us what Mark doesn’t saying that Peter’s denial was “*Man, I am not*!” And Matthew tells us that this statement was a denial under “an oath”.

 Finally, we have the 3rd denial a little later (Luke says it was an hour) by those who stood by Peter while he warmed himself. John says that one of those men was in the garden and a “*servant of the high priest as well as a relative of Malchus whose ear Peter had cut off in the garden*”. ***Talk about the wrong guy to be standing next to when you are trying to deny you association to Jesus***! Peter’s denial began with a “curse” but we need to understand that this doesn’t imply foul language instead it means that Peter placed a curse upon himself saying, “***May God curse me if what I say is not the truth***!” Peter added a solemn oath to his denial of “*I do not know this Man of whom you speak*!” Luke 22:61 tells us that at this very moment the rooster crowed and ***Jesus turned and looked at Peter***, them Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He said to him, “*Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times*.” Peter’s conscience and confidence was shattered; he knew what he had done and he went out and broke down. The Greek word means to throw one’s self down in agony and tears.

 We have seen these two stories over two weeks but side by side they present a contrast between religion and the love of a relationship. The religious leaders easily set aside their law and tradition to fit their agenda of ridding themselves of a perceived rival in Jesus. In Peter we see a man who has denied under oath the very one he had sworn to defend to death. ***This contrast reveals why religion and fleshly devotion fail equally***: Peter’s faith and the religious leader’s faith both relied on the “FLESH” for its support and power. In the hour of crisis, the “*love of a friend who relied upon the FLESH is no more helpful than the hatred of religious jealousy*.” Through out church history far too much devotion to God has relied upon what the Bible identifies as the “FLESH”. The church has traded in devotion and the dependence upon the Holy Spirit for activism and direct-mail campaigns. ***We have reduced the gospel to intellectual theological battles instead of surrender to a loving Lord***. ***The only way the kingdom of God advances is by human weakness resting on the power and wisdom of God***.

**Mark 15:1-15**

**“Two bound men”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 1-5 Jesus before Pilate**
3. **Vs. 6-15 Decision day**
4. **Introduction**

At the end of chapter 14 we realize that religion has decided to kill the true High Priest, the only mediator between fallen man and a holy God. Now Jesus comes before government and politics to a man who was the epitome of the Roman system a freed slave who had risen to a position of power by way of the influence of the emperor’s mother and wife. The other gospel accounts spend more time on Jesus trial before the Sanhedrin where as John’s gospel chooses to focus more on Jesus trial before the Roman authority, Pontius Pilate. Jesus’ trial as priest before the religious leaders is over now He comes to the Roman authority on trial for being king. It most likely around 5 AM when Jesus came to the Praetorium. The Jews did not come to this trail so as to not defile themselves, so they could keep the feast of unleavened bread as Passover was earlier that night. They were more concerned with ceremonial defilement than they were moral guilt. The irony of this situation is amazing and yet another example of self righteousness religious pride. These religious leaders were about to commit murder but they were concerned about defiling themselves by stepping on a Gentile area which would have disqualified them to participate in the Passover celebration.

1. **Vs. 1-5 Jesus before Pilate**

Vs. 1 The three trials at the hands of the Jewish authorities had been going on all night. The Sanhedrin had convicted Jesus of blasphemy, but the problem was that the Roman Government did not recognize this as a capital offense. So they had to come up with some charges that they could apply to Jesus that would get Him sentenced to death by the Roman’s. According to Luke 23:2 they came up with two false ones:

2.) **He was telling people that they didn’t need to pay taxes to Rome**.

3.) **He claimed to be a King in opposition to Caesar**.

There was no proof of any of either of these, but they were all capital offenses. It appears based upon Luke’s account, as well as John’s (18:28-38) that the one that Pilate was most interested in was the one that dealt with Him being, King. To which Jesus had to explain that His kingdom is not like the kingdoms of the world it is a kingdom in men’s hearts.

 Capital punishment had been outlawed accept when the Roman Government did it and the Jew’s would never think of crucifixion as a form of punishment. What they did was to stone a person. Yet it is clear that Jesus was crucified as the Bible was clear on the way in which Jesus would die.

 A.) Deut. 21:23 say’s, “*cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree*.”

 B.) Ps 22: 14-18 explains the physical characteristics of crucifixion.

It is here in Matthew’s account in 27:3-10 we are told of Judas decision to commit suicide by hanging himself, but Mark leaves this detail out. One thing that does interest me with regards to Judas death is: “***If Jesus was really not sinless and the religious community wanted to find something to convict Jesus with why not just ask Judas***?” The fact that they don’t proves that Judas’ betrayal of Jesus had nothing to do with any inconsistency, or hypocrisy in Jesus. ***Judas hadn’t witnessed any sin Jesus had of done, nor any wrong attitude that He He manifested. There was not one time Jesus boasted, stretched the truth or lost His temper or else Judas would not have said as he does in Matthew 27:4 that Jesus was “innocent”***. Instead Judas would have said, “*Hey I’ve been with Jesus 3 1/2 years and “I remember the time He did this, or said that*.” Judas knew that there was nothing phony about Jesus!

Vs. 2-5 When you examine this passage you discover that it was really the trial of Pilate, not of Jesus. As I said the only thing that interested Pilate was the accusation against Jesus that claimed that He said that He was King.

 Pontius Pilate was an interesting historical person. John records his reluctance to execute Jesus but at the same time his inability to stand up for what was right. For many years the Bible’s naming Pontius Pilate was a source of doubt and ridicule as there was no ancient record of such a man that governed in Israel. But in 1961 during an archeological dig of Caesarea by the Sea they uncovered a plaque near the steps to the amphitheater that bore his name. There is more to this story then most realize as Pilate had been given this position from Rome. After Herod the Great had died his three sons became Tetrarchs or rulers over three regions of Israel but they had done such a lousy job that the Jews asked Rome to send someone else. Rome did so in sending Pontius Pilate a former slave who through marriage and political maneuvering became overseer. Upon his arrival he came into Jerusalem carrying banners bearing the image of the emperor and as he neared the temple area a riot broke out and people were killed all because the religious leaders saw the image of the emperor as idolatry. Rome sent a warning to get it together or he would be replaced so to appease the Jews he undertook a building project to bring water into Jerusalem by way of an aqueduct but to finance the project he diverted funds from the temple treasury. This again brought a riot in which blood was again shed and Pilate was issued a second warning and he wasn’t sure he’d get another chance. So it appears that Pontius Pilate feared another outburst from the Jews so he gave them what they wanted even though he felt uneasy about it.

Jesus answers Pilate just as He had said to Caiaphas. “***You’ve made the right assessment of who I am.***” And with that Jesus does not again defend himself as the chief priests and the elders make accusations against Him. All of which amazed Pilate, as he had never witnessed a defendant quite like Jesus.

 **Pilate looked at the battered face of Jesus and asked in wonderment, “*Are You the King of the Jews*” who would think of treating their King with such hostility**? According to John 18:24 Jesus asks Pilate the reason for his inquiry are you asking Me this from the perspective of the Jew’s or the Roman’s? And by Pilate’s response in John 18:35 we can tell that Pilate knew of the hostilities of the religious leaders. To the Romans the title “King” meant a political rival so Jesus tells him that “*His kingdom is not of this world*”. “*What kind of King do you think I am a political one or a spiritual one*”, Jesus asked Pilate. It is interesting that Pilate calls Jesus king four times during His trial; he even insisted on having a plaque placed over the cross with the words attesting to that fact written three languages.

1. **Vs. 6-15 Decision day**

Vs. 6-15 There are two things I notice in verses 6 and 7 that I find interesting:

A.) Vs. 6 First we are told that there was a political custom in place at feast time instituted by the Roman government to cause people to be more peaceable, releasing one prisoner to the people. This was already implemented; but with the added friction of an administration led by Pilate and at the same time the common people being dissatisfied with the religious leaders Pilate mistakenly thought he had away to kill two birds with one stone by releasing the popular Jesus back to the people which would also infuriate the religious leaders whom the populace already despised. No doubt Pilate was further convinced of the decision of releasing Jesus as Matthew 27:19 tells us that his wife who was a convert to Judaism had suffered in a dream concerning Jesus.

B.) Vs. 7 Second we are introduced to this fellow named Barabbas who we are told by Mark in verse 17 was a murderer and a guy who had been held for starting a riot. His name Bar-Abbas is an interesting name. It was kind of like a last name. The first part of it “Bar” you might recognize from what Peter was called “Bar-Jonah”; Bar means “son of”. Now Abba, other then being a 70’s Swedish rock band, you may remember is the Hebrew word for father, today we would say “Daddy”. So Barabbas means “*son of the father*”. ***What we don’t know is what was his first name***? I think we can make a reasonable guess by the way Pilate asks the question to the crowds in Matthew 27:17 when he asks, “*Whom do you want me to release to you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ*?” Why would Pilate use Barabbas last name and then distinguish Jesus from Barabbas as the one who is called the Christ? Well according to some ancient manuscripts of Matthew it is because both men shared a common first name JESUS!

As you go down and read Pilate’s question to the crowds as to which person he should release it brings up some interesting realities. A few blocks away in some cell lay this guy Barabbas and as far as he knew this was his last day to breath. His only hope was in this pardoning deal that Pilate did. Yet he was on death row for murder and trying to over throw the government that was going to put him to death. He no doubt couldn’t hear what Pilate was asking the crowd in verse 12, “***What then do you want me to do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews***?” but I bet Barabbas could here the large crowds response to Pilate’s questions, which according to Matthew’s account in chapter 27 would have been two things over and over:

 A.) Vs. 21 **Barabbas**

 B.) Vs. 22-23 **Let him be crucified**

And the more Pilate asked the more they shouted. I am thinking that old Barabbas must of lost all hope in that cell.

I offer this narrative up so that we may look at verse 15 a little more closely as Barabbas would have been the first person to recognize that Jesus the true Son of the Father died for him.

The last thing to notice is the tragedy of Pilate, a man who did not want to do something to Jesus but followed popular opinion. ***To all those in the crowd who are swayed by public opinion be careful because group think has a history of leading people right to hell***! No matter how much Pilate tried to divorce himself from his action he could not. Washing his hands did not change the facts. Saying that Jesus was a just man only made his cowardice even more unbearable. Pilate knew what was right, but did nothing about it because he was wanting to please people. I know of a lot of people who today do the same thing with Jesus. They know what they need to do is receive Him as their savior, but because they are afraid of what other will think they do nothing. Be careful what you do with Jesus for you will either by standing on His blood or His blood will be on you!

 **Mark 15:15b-20**

**“From Gabbatha to Golgotha”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 15b-16 The scourging**
3. **Vs. 17-20 The right ruler**
4. **Introduction**

This section of scripture takes us from Gabbatha (*the pavement*) to Golgotha, (*the hill of Calvary*), too finally the tomb in which Jesus was laid. There is a lot of this story that Mark in his account doesn’t mention but I believe is very important that we place into the story so we will again spend time piecing together the events. I’ve heard from many of you how much you have enjoyed looking at the event including all the accounts as it has enabled you to understand the significance of the events more personally.

1. **Vs. 15b-16 The scourging**

Vs. 15-16 To have Jesus scourged after Pilate had already declared Him not guilty was a huge miscarriage of justice! Pilate no doubt thought in doing this it would gain Jesus sympathy as the Romans mocked Jesus but it didn’t. Roman scourging had three main purposes:

1. It was used to beat the prisoner as a form of punishment.
2. It was used to extract a confession from the prisoner. As a tool to extract a confession, the Roman solider would beat the victim harder and harder until they confessed their crime. Because Jesus had nothing to confess, the blows never lightened on His back.
3. In cases of crucifixion it was used to weaken the victim so he would die more quickly on the cross. Scourging was a preliminary to every Roman execution the only exceptions being women and Roman senators or soldiers. The goal of the scourging was to weaken the victim to a state just short of collapse and death.

In Isaiah 50:6 we are given part of the prophecy with regards to the scourging as it says, “*I gave My back to those who struck Me, and My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting*.” Consider this:

* + In Matt. 27:4 Judas declared that Jesus was innocent
	+ When you put all the gospel accounts together you can see that ***seven times*** in the course of Jesus trial before Pilate he pronounced Jesus innocent
	+ Finally, in Matt. 27:19 the thief next to Jesus proclaims that Jesus was innocent

The question every person needs to ask is: **If Jesus is innocent than who is guilty**? Paul wrote the truth in case you aren’t ware in Romans 3:10-12 where he says, “*There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one.*” Ultimately what people are the most prejudice against is not religion or race but rule who is it that is in control of their lives.

The people choose the terrorist over the truth giver, the taker of life instead of the giver of life. According to Matthew 27:19 it was at this point a message arrived from Pilate's wife warning him, “*Have nothing to do with that just man. I have suffered many things in a dream about him*”. As a result of these words Pilate shipped Jesus off to Herod where Herod tried to question Jesus but Jesus wouldn’t say a word. Herod then returned the favor by sending Jesus back to Pilate and in a desperate attempt to get Jesus off the death penalty he scourged Jesus hoping that this would satisfy the Jews.

For a good while they tortured and terrorized our Lord after letting off a terrorist. Roman scourging involved leather strips with pieces of metal and bone embedded in them that stripped all the skin off his back; the result was leaving the victim bloody and torn.

1. **Vs. 17-20 The right ruler**

Vs. 17 The first scene is that of Pilate bringing Jesus before the multitude. Our Lord is bloodied and torn by the scourging he has suffered. He is still wearing his crown of thorns and the purple robe with which the soldiers had dressed him and repeatedly mocked Jesus but He with all this around Him He stands in regal majesty. A crown of thorns was pressed upon his head, and the soldiers mocked and taunted Him. Then after the beating was over Pilate presented this grotesque figure of a person who looked more like road kill then He did a man by this time. Nothing proved Jesus words before Pilate more than this, “*I am a King*” as we ponder the choices of three people:

* ***Pilate chose compromise and ended up murdering an innocent man.***
* ***The crowd chose Barabbas and ended up crucifying the Son of God.***
* ***Jesus chose the cross and ended up King of Kings and Lord of Lords.***

At that very moment Pontius Pilate consented to not only putting Jesus Christ on the cross he placed his conscience there as well. Perhaps he was hoping that the 39 stripes would have been enough to spare Jesus’ life but even that didn’t satisfy the religious leaders. On the cross provision was forever made for our salvation and at the scourging we are told in Isaiah 53:5 “*by His stripes we are healed*” so provision was made for healing in our bodies. Jesus’ judge and jury bowed their heads to Caesar in order to murder the King of Kings. But God had done what He had promised He would do, raise up a king for the Jews and for all humanity. As the Jews rejected their King choosing to place Him on a cross their King also became their redeemer.

Vs. 18-20 Isaiah the prophet foretold this in 52:14 saying that “*many were astonished at you, so His visage was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men*”. The truth of the matter is that the unspeakable horrors our Lord endured was done for you and me. He received upon Himself that which was due us for our sin! With every punch to the face and whip upon His flesh, every nail that slammed into His body each and every one of them is a concert of His love for you! Jesus’ death serves as a reminder of **two powerful truths**:

1. ***God does not take sin lightly***
2. ***And God loves us all very deeply***

According to John’s account in 19:6 the mob was whipped up into frenzy as they cry out only the words “*Crucify Him, Crucify Him*” and Pilate went on official record that Jesus was an innocent man. History still has **not** been able to reverse Pilate’s official decision of “*finding no fault in Him*”. There are still some who claim that Jesus never communicated that He was the Son of God but clearly Jesus’ adversaries thought that He did and it is the reason that they insisted upon His death. Pilate’s words were meant to illicit pity from the crowd and not to mock Jesus but the religious leaders. Paul said in Romans 1:25 that fallen humanity “*exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever*.” Pilate was trying to find away to set Jesus free and when that didn’t work he was trying find away to keep Jesus off the cross but in the end **when it came down to either Jesus dying on the cross or Pilate losing his way of life he chose to send an innocent man to death**.

According to John 19:7 the religious leaders told Pilate why they wanted Jesus dead as they plainly declared “*He made Himself the Son of God*”. That’s a very interesting declaration by the religious leaders as no one can “***MAKE*** *themselves the Son of God*”. **They may DECLARE themselves as such but the fact is they either are or they aren’t**. In John 19:8-11after having learned the true nature of the religious leader’s charge against Jesus Pilate had even a greater phobia with regards to Jesus. *This tells us that their words were supported by what Pilate had observed in his brief time with the battered Jesus*. Then upon not hearing any response from Jesus concerning where He was from; ***Pilate tried to let Jesus know that it was in His best interest to answer as he had the power to release Jesus***. But Jesus replies in John 19:11“*You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore, the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin*.” These were Jesus’ final words to Pilate reminding him that he has been granted power to fulfill God’s plan thus the ones who were making a willful choice were more responsible than was Pilate. The final two acts of Pilate are gain recorded in John chapter 19 verses 12-15! What they reveal is more about Pilate then Jesus as someone has well said that “*Great occasions do not make heroes or cowards, they simply unveil them to the eyes of men*.” Pilate sat down that day to judge a man and didn’t realize that it was he who was going to be judged based upon his decision. Pilate fully knew what was right but choose to do what was wrong for political gain. There are countless people who know what is right with regards to Jesus but chose to do what is wrong for temporary gain. **Pilate did not posses the courage of his convictions and would rather compromise and go against his own conscience then go without the comforts of this world**. There will always be people who think that if they just, “*Don’t believe in Jesus*” that some how that will cause Him to ceases to exist. Jesus is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords and as we are told in Philip. 2:10 “*that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth*”. According to history, Pilate was dismissed as governor and summoned back to Rome to answer to Tiberius' charges against him. On his way there, Tiberius suddenly died and Pilate was freed from the charges, then went on to southern France, then known as Gaul. There, according to tradition, he committed suicide. It is then that according to Matthew 27:35 “*They crucified Him, and divided His garments, casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet:* *"They divided My garments among them,* *and for My clothing they cast lots.*” Underneath the buildings that presently occupy the north side of the temple mount in Jerusalem, archaeologists have uncovered a pavement stone that bears markings of an ancient game, rather like the game tick-tack-toe, which was played by soldiers of the Roman Empire. It has been established that that is the actual pavement of the judgment seat of the Roman governors, the spot on which our Lord himself stood as he was condemned to death by Pilate. The pavement is called “*Gabbatha*” (pavement in Hebrew). There is a lesson for all of humanity to be learned from Israel as they brought upon themselves needless destruction and heartaches throughout their history for the refusal to be ruled by God:

1. In 1 Samuel 8:6-7 the people cried out, “*Give us a king to judge us. So Samuel prayed to the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, “Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you;* ***for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them.*”** So way back in the early stages of the nation the people rejected the Father’s rule choosing rather to be ruled by kings like the other nations around them.
2. In John 19:15 at Pilate’s question, “*Shall I crucify your King*?” The chief priests answered, “***We have no king but Caesar***!” They again reject the Son desiring again to be ruled by earthly kings instead of the King of Kings.
3. In Acts 7:51-53 at the trial of Stephen he charged them with “***always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you****. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it.*” The people rejected the Holy Spirit who continued to testify of the words and works of Jesus and chose again to be ruled earthly leaders instead of a heavenly Lord!

That is always at the heart of human rebellion: ***Who is are we going to chose to rule over our hearts this day?*** Joshua possessed this same question to Israel in Joshua 24:15 when he said saying, “*if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell.* ***But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord***.”

**Mark 15:21-32**

**“Easter at Christmas”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 20-23 The road to Calvary**
3. **Vs. 24-28 The cross**
4. **Vs. 29-32 The mocking**
5. **Introduction**

There are so many people this time of year that are totally oblivious to the “*Reason for the Season*”. ***And there are equally as many who see no link between the birth of Christ and His death burial and resurrection***. This truth reminds me of the story of two elderly women who were out on the town driving the their old 64 Buick when they came to an intersection. The stoplight was red but they just plowed right on through. The woman in the passengers seat thought to herself, “*Did we just run a red light*?” Not being sure she did not say anything. A few moments latter came another red light and again they drove right on through. The passenger was getting a little bit more nervous but she still was not 100% sure that the light was red. So she determined that she would watch real careful at the next signal. Sure enough as they came to the next intersection, the light was definitely red and they went right on through. This time the passenger spoke up quite frantically, “***Mildred****! Did you know that we have just ran through three red lights in a row! You could of killed us both*!” At which point Mildred turned to her friend very surprised and said, “*Oh, am I driving? I thought you were*!” There are many in life today just plowing on through the intersections of life thinking someone else is driving with out a thought of the consequences! All because they fail to examine the “***Red Light***” known as the cross of Christ!

Going back to the 16th verse we note that it says here that a whole “garrison” gathered around Jesus to mock and torture Him, the word “garrison” is rendered “cohort” in other translations and represents a Roman military unit with capacity of 1000 men. What this informs us is that roughly a 1000 men surround Jesus with the sole purpose of being cruel!

We are also told that they wove a crown of thorns and pushed it into His brow. What’s interesting is to realize that in Genesis 3:17-19 God said to Adam, “*Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground*,..” The thorns came as a result of Gods curse against man’s sin and that curse is now being placed upon the head of Jesus.

How little the world understands what Jesus has done for us! It is unthinkable that anyone would mock and despise the person who saved their life.

1. **Vs. 20-23 The road to Calvary**

Vs. 20-21 Says that they put His clothes back on Him as they led Him through the streets to Golgotha or in Latin Calvary. Again, I want to remind you that this is a historical fact it is not fantasy, this all happened. The march to the actual crucifixion was used by Rome as a warning to potential troublemakers that this would be their fate if they challenged Rome. It was led by a centurion on horseback, who shouted out the crime of the condemned. It was required that the prisoner carry his own crossbeam and a placard around his neck that announced his crime.

 I remind you that Jesus had been up all night being whipped and beaten, so He was unable to complete the gauntlet of carrying the crossbeam. So the Roman’s enlist a Northern Africa man and forced him to carry the crossbeam. Simon, who lived far away most likely came only this once his whole life to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. He had saved up for years to go to this feast and when he arrived he perhaps saw Jesus riding on a donkey with people claiming He is the Messiah. Then a week later, he like thousands of others line the street to watch this same man carry a cross on His way to Calvary. Suddenly Jesus falls right in front of him and he feels the point of a Roman spear in his back and he is forced to carry that crossbeam up to Golgotha. Ever wonder what happened to Simon? Well we are told in Mark 15:21 that he was the “..*the father of Alexander and Rufus*.” This is an indication that these two boys of Simon were well known in the Christian community. Further more in the book of Roman’s 16:13 Paul writing to the church in Rome salutes them saying, “*Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine*.” I believe that Simon became a strong believer and his family walked with God. Simon had come to Jerusalem to sacrifice his Passover lamb, and in stead he met the Lamb of God who was sacrificed for him.

Vs. 22-23 There are several interesting things to consider:

1. First, the hill called Golgotha was the very spot in Genesis 22:8 where Abraham said to Isaac his only begotten son, “*God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.*” And just as Isaac had to bear the wood up the hill so too did God’s only Son.
2. Second, someone has well said that Jesus being placed between two thieves is a fitting place as He stole my heart and He wants to steal yours as well.

In the original language “***gall***” and “***myrrh***” are the same word that describe a gummy substance that had many different uses. Here we see it mixed with “sour wine” or vinegar and it would have been used as a narcotic to deaden pain. It was customary to offer this extremely bitter narcotic drink to those who were to be crucified, as it would help ease the pain of being crucified. Yet Jesus refuses it. **What this tells us is very important**: ***What Jesus was about to do He did so with all of His faculties***. Even Jesus’ refusal of this drink is a fulfillment of scripture as we read in Ps. 69:*21 “They also gave me gall for my food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink*.” There are a lot of people who use drugs, alcohol and other stimulants to deaden the pains of their lives, but Jesus took every bit of our pain so that we wouldn’t turn to something to deaden our pain instead we would trust Him who took all our pain with Him on the Cross and it was nailed there!

1. **Vs. 24-28 The cross**

Vs. 24-25 Mark very simple states the crucifixion. The word crucifixion is where we get our English word “***excruciating***” from. None of the gospel describe the act it’s self in any detail. Instead they all describe the crucifixion as historical fact where the New Testament letters explain the meaning of the event. Or better put: ***History states Jesus died but the Epistles explain that He did so for our sins, (1 Cor. 15:3)***. In 1968, archeologists discovered the remains of a man crucified in Jesus’ era; (the skeletal remains are in the museum in Jerusalem.) It is clear by the remains that the person being nailed to the cross was in a sitting position, both legs over sideways, with the nail penetrating the sides of both feet just below the heel. The arms were stretched out, each stabbed by a nail in the forearm. Dr. Hass, an anatomy professor at Hebrew University observes that this was “*a difficult and unnatural posture*”, which would have increased the agony of the sufferer. ***What is interesting about this archeological find is that corrects the traditional view of the crucifixion which has both palms nailed to the cross and the legs stretching straight down with a nail piercing the feet in the front***.

The casting lots for Jesus’ garments is again a fulfilment of scripture; in Exodus 28 we are told that the High Priests robe was to be made seamless and Jesus being the Great High Priest had such a garment and rather than dividing it which would have ruined they cast lots for it. A 1,000 years before this took place the palmist wrote in Psalm 22:18 “*They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots*.” In garden of Eden, God sacrificed an innocent lamb to cover the nakedness of man’s sin and here at the cross what began in the garden was fulfilled on a hill called Calvary where the Father sacrificed His only begotten son to clothe us in His righteousness. Little has changed I the world today as there are still those in the world like these soldiers who are playing games at the foot of the cross. There has always been people who will call Jesus a prophet or a teacher, but play games when it comes to Him being on the cross for their sins. ***The world wants a Cross-less Christ, because if they accept the cross then they are forced to accept the reason for it***!

Vs. 26-28 They put this sign over Him in written in three languages Hebrew, Greek and Latin, which for ever would serve as the official charge and true reason He was put to death, “*This is Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews.*” Hebrew is a **theological language**, Greek is **philosophical language** and Latin is an **intellectual language** and as such Pilate placed the first gospel tract ever written above Jesus to declare the truth to the theological, philosophical and intellectual that Jesus is the true King of King’s. And as it was being nailed into place above Jesus head Pilate finally stood up to the religious leaders and said “*What I have written, I have written*.” ***This was the only thing that Pilate did not waver on and in so doing he did not realize that he had ordered the first gospel tract***. It announced to all including the revolutionaries on either side of Him that He was being put to death because He was the Savior and King. On that very day one of the thieves would believe Pilates gospel tract and become the first person saved by trusting in that message. According to John’s gospel 19:21-22 the religious leaders objected to Pilate’s gospel tract on the basis that they didn’t believe it even though Jesus proclaimed it. I’m afraid far too many people put way too much stock in what they believe instead of whether or not what they believe is true.

The word “*robbers*” in the Greek would better be rendered revolutionaries, for the word means “*robbery with violence*”. Most likely they were part of Barabbas gang who were trying to cause insurrection against Rome by killing and stealing. And once again Jesus’ placement between these two “revolutionaries” is a further fulfilment of scripture.

1. **Vs. 29-32 The mocking**

Vs. 29-32 Those that mocked Jesus said, “***Save yourself, if you are the Son of God come down from the cross.***” **The irony is that if He would have saved Himself, He could not have saved you and I**! ***So instead of coming down from the cross; He chose to rise from the dead instead***!

This twofold indictment of the religious leaders made on Jesus was:

 A.) He saved others

 B.) He trusted in God

And although they are the correct observations they lead these religious leaders to the wrong conclusions:

1. ***First, they determined He couldn’t be the true King because if He was then He should save Himself first***. They reject Jesus as their King but he wasn’t self centered and instead was as God the son always is, thinking of others first which proves why He is the King of Kings.
2. Second, they said, “***If He is the Son of God then, God should deliver Him.***” But the truth is His trust of the Father is seen in the fact that He was delivered to death for our sins!

**Mark 15:33-41**

**“The impact of the cross”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 33-34 The darkness of sin**
3. **Vs. 35-36 Cross at the cross**
4. **Vs. 37-38 A torn veil**
5. **Vs. 39-41 Changed by the cross**
6. **Introduction**

This morning we will note only see the impact of Jesus’ death upon the cross for our sins, we will also focus upon the devotion of 5 people who remained while Jesus hung on that cross and breathed His last breath. Devotion is a difficult thing to measure but one thing is for certain it can’t be measured by words it must be measured by action. Consider the following truths:

1. *When Jesus began His ministry with works and words the multitudes flocked around to the degree that he was endanger of being trampled*.
2. *When He began to speak of the cost of following Him the numbers declined to hundreds*.
3. *When He invited those to share in ministry proclaiming the truth in towns it shrunk to 70* (Luke 10:1)
4. *When He spoke of His death and the cost of following Him there were only 12*.
5. *In the Garden of agony only three came forward and one of them (Peter) couldn’t stay awake*.
6. *Finally, at the foot of the cross there was only one of His disciples (John) left*.

But when you look at John chapter 19:25 you see that along with John there were four women who stood devotedly by Him. Think of those four women looking up at the One they loved, watching Him die, hearing the insults being hurled at Him, watching the blood drip from His battered body. Yet they didn’t shrink away they stayed there at His feet no matter how hard it was. What caused them to remain when all but John had left? These four women reveal to us what true devotion looks like! Their devotion was not fixed upon His ideals, nor upon His promises, they weren’t thinking of what benefit might be gained to them with there affiliation. No they simply followed Him even though they didn’t fully understand His words or His works they were there because they loved Him. When I consider this I realize I have much to learn from John and these ladies about being devoted to our Lord no matter how difficult we find it to be at times.

1. **Vs. 33-34 The darkness of sin**

Vs 33 As we examine this moment in light of the Godhead one of the interesting things to note is the silence of God the Father.

* At His Son’s baptism the Father spoke: “*This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased*.”
* At the Mount of transfiguration, the Father spoke when He said, “*This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased, hear Him.*”

Yet here there is silence and the only communication is a darkness that fell upon the land. We know that Jesus was put on the cross around 9: AM and that around noon darkness covered the land that lasted three hours. A search of historical records through out history reveals that even in different cultures they speak of this time when the sky went dark. The Roman historian Tertullian speaks of this darkness at the time of Jesus’ death in the Roman archives. Of further interest is the reality that based upon the fact that this was the Passover season we know that it would have been a full moon. That reveals that this could not have been caused by an eclipse because the moon is on the opposite side of the sun.

Vs. 34 Jesus’ quote comes form the 22nd Psalm which is often called the 5th gospel because it is quoted 5 times in the gospels. But why did Jesus utter these words? To answer this question, we need to understanding what was happening here at the cross.

A.) First in Hab. 1:13 we read the words of the prophet where he declares of God, “***You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness***.” Thus at this moment our sin, our “***evil and wickedness***” was placed upon Jesus and God the Father was not beholding His only Son.

B.) Second, we read in 2 Cor. 5:21 “*For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us,*..” The Father had no choice but to turn His back to His only Son! And Jesus felt the isolation of that agony which was far worse then any physical pain. With the darkest of our sin being placed on the One that is the Light of the World the only thing that could happen is that the world was dark.

As it relates to this moment, in John 10 :17-18 Jesus said, “***Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again***.” Jesus didn’t have His life taken, He gave it away! He gave His life away for you and to you. In 1 Cor. 8: 6 we read, “.*.there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live*.”

1. **Vs. 35-36 Cross at the cross**

Vs. 35-36 In this section Mark’s account focuses in on a great amount of individuals and groups that were gathered around the foot of the cross. His purpose is so that his readers may witness their reactions to the crucifixion and evaluate which group they would fit into. Theses groups tend to be in one of two categories and contrast each other. They are truly timeless and if Jesus was to be crucified today in; Hamilton, Montana we would still find these two groups gathered around His cross. The faces would be different but the characterizations with their individual attitudes and actions would be the same.

Mark has already introduced to some of them:

1. Vs. 16-20 The Roman soldiers with their experience with death and crucifixion had become callous to suffering. It’s the only explanation to their gambling under the cross while Jesus suffered above them. These soldiers represent a group of people that have continued to exist since the death of Able, those who are more interested in entertainment and the appearance of authority and power. They can’t be bothered with the personal examination of a failed life. There have always been people who are consumed with the immediate at the expense of the eternal!
2. Vs. 27 The two robbers or better said the two revolutionaries. These two men had lived by a philosophy that says, “*What’s mine is mine, and what’s yours is mine*!” Living by this philosophy inevitably gets you in trouble but people like this will always be convinced that their situation is not their fault and their interest in spiritual matters is limited only to not get what they don’t believe they deserve in the first place. Mark doesn’t record the final responses of these to “revolutionaries” bur else where we find out that one of these two becomes a follower of Jesus.
3. Vs. 28-36 This group is comprised “mockers” that included the two revolutionaries but it also included the priests and the morbid curiosity seekers. Some of these “by-standers” would have remained just that had it not been for the fact that they had heard Jesus make great claims that from their perspective didn’t appear to be going to happen. Because of this they just couldn’t resist the opportunity to taunt Him in His hour of agony. Also in this group who had plotted His death who couldn’t resist to take one more shot at Him. Among this group Mark records, the individual only identified as “***someone***” who ran and filled a sponge full of sour wine, and offered it to Jesus. At first glance this would seem to be a rare heart of compassion until we read that what was offered to Jesus came at the price of a tease saying, “*Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to take Him down*.” This person is the worst, as they are like the people who see a person high up on a ledge ready to plummet to their death and offer the encouragement to “jump”!
4. Vs. 39-41 The last group is made up of what remained of Jesus followers and one by-standers observation. And we will examine them more in a moment.
5. **Vs. 37-38 A torn veil**

Vs. 37-38 At this point as it relates to the earthly life of Jesus Mark just simple tells us that Jesus called out and breathed His last. Before we get to this last group Mark draws his readers attention to the spiritual implication of the veil being torn in two from top to bottom.

First the veil was what separated the Holy Place, made up of tables of show bread and the alter of incense from the Holy of Holies where the Ark of the Covenant was at. The veil was massive, 60 feet tall, 30 feet wide, and 10 inches thick. It was made of 72 braids, each braid had 24 cords. It was so heavy that it took 300 priests to put it up or move it. Originally behind the veil is where the visible presence of the Lord was seen in the Shekinah glory which was between the wings of the cherubim over the mercy seat on the Arch of the Covenant. No one ever entered the Holy of Holies accept the high priest and him only once a year, on the Day of Atonement. On that day the high priest would go through the veil into the small room called the Holy of Holies and sprinkle blood about the mercy seat and pray on behalf of the nation and its sin. The truth of the matter was that the veil of the temple excluded men from God, the people were outside.

 The high priest had to be properly cleansed, if not he would die. On the hem of his robe were silver bells and pomegranates, which signified the gifts and fruit of the Spirit. As long as the priests could here those bells ringing behind the veil, they knew everything was good. Years later they realized that if a person died in their that no one could get them so they would tie a rope around their ankle, so they could pull him out. Heb. 10:31 reminds us *that “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*.” What this reminded the people was that God takes sin seriously. Heb. 9:22 says, “..*without shedding of blood there is no remission*.”

 When the veil was torn it was torn from top to bottom, it was God who created the access to Himself by the sacrifice of His own Son. We can do nothing to gain access other then receive His Son. Can you imagine those priests there in the Holy place setting out the showbread and all of the sudden they see the 10-inch-thick veil being ripped in two exposing the Holy of Holies for the first time in 1,000 of years’ light shone upon the mercy seat? Because Jesus took all of our sin, offering Himself He has opened the door for us to come into the presence of God! Not just once a year, at a certain place and only certain people. Anyone**, who has accepted Jesus sacrifice at anytime, at any place!** That’s why Heb 4:16 says, “***Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need***.”

In Matthew’s account he records three reactions to the death of Jesus that Mark doesn’t record.

A. **The earth quaked, and the rocks split**: Rom. 8:22 tells us that *“..the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now*.” Jesus only days before in Luke 19:40 said that, “*If these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out*." So, here were the rocks quaking and splitting out a worship song that was declaring that the curse had been lifted!

B.) Second, we are told that because the of the earthquake **the stones that covered over the tombs were opened**. The word “raised” here would better be rendered “appeared”. So the bodies of the some of the believers were made visible! In 1 Cor. 15:55-58 we read, “*O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?...Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*.” God was showing that death could not hold the believers in the grave.

C.) Lastly, we are told that **these same believers came out of the graves after Jesus resurrection, went into Jerusalem and appeared to many**. The word “appear” means to “*to exhibit (in person) or disclose (by words), declare (plainly), to inform*.” Paul tells us in Eph 4:8-9 that when Jesus “..*ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men. (Now this, "He ascended"; what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth*?” Peter tells us in 1 Peter 3:19 that Jesus “*preached to the spirits in prison*,” It’s my opinion that it is to these O.T. saints that Jesus went to share the liberty that they had looked forward too. And they responded by going out in Jerusalem to share that only through Jesus could you be made perfect! It is interesting to think that King David came up to somebody and proclaimed the victory won in Jesus!

**V. Vs. 39-41 Changed by the cross**

Vs. 39 The first person Mark introduces his readers to after Jesus’ death is the last person you would expect to be one of Jesus’ admirers, as it was one of His executioners. Centurions were in command of 100 men. They were tough guys, chosen to be in command of 100 men because they were the meanest, bravest fighters around. He was no doubt making fun of Jesus when he saw the sky darken and the earthquake. It shook up even this tough guy! He heard Jesus say in Luke 23:34 “*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do*.” He heard Him say in John 19:30 “*It is finished*!” He watched as Jesus bowed His head, He gave up His spirit. And for this Centurion there was only one conclusion, “*This was the Son of God*”.

Vs. 40-41 The final group of people impacted by the Cross are made up of four women and the apostle John. There was Mary Magdalene the lady who had seven demons cast out of her. Then you have two mothers who had two sons each that were a part of the disciple’s, Mary the mother of James (called the less) Joses. Then there was Salome the mother of the sons of thunder James and John. She was the one who went up to Jesus and asked Him if her two boys could be given the right to have special thrones one on the left and on the right of Jesus. I wonder as she was looking up at the Jesus if she understood His words about not knowing what she asked! Most folks believe that Mary’s sister’s name is Salome and if that is true that means that James and John were cousins of Jesus.According to John chapter 19 Jesus’ mother Mary was witnessing the brutality being placed upon her Son as she heard the tender words of her Son for her care. In the midst of His agony Jesus eyes met the eyes He first saw when He came into this world and He felt her agony as a sword was piercing her heart and He was at that very moment providing for the rest of every person who has ever been provided the rest for His mother. All Mary had to do was say that all of Jesus’ claims were false but she didn’t. Then there was Mary the wife of Clopas also spelled Cleopas. According to Luke 24:18 one of the disciples who met Jesus on the road to Emmaus was named Cleopas, perhaps this was his wife.

In John 19:26 Jesus’ uses an interesting choice of a word when He calls His mother “*Woman*” it is a term of respect but not one of intimacy. Why did He use this word at the very moment that His mother was watching Him die? The answer lies in the 2nd chapter of John three ½ years earlier. Jesus and His followers were invited to a wedding feast at Cana only three miles from the town Jesus grew up in. And Mary made her statement to her Son “*They have no wine*”; for 30 years she had treasured thing in her heart, 30 years she had waited for vindication as she had put up with all the disrespect and harsh words regarding her pregnancy, (*no doubt it had gotten worse after her husband Joseph had died*). She had waited for the time that Luke recorded in 1:48 when, “*He will regard the lowly state of His maidservant*” at time when “*all generations will call me blessed*.” That is what I believe she meant as she made her request that day in Cana. “*Do something that will show these people who You are, something that will show these folks that You were born by way of the Holy Spirit*”. And although He fulfilled her request for the wine He did so with out anyone realizing what He had done. Now Jesus upon the cross uses the same word “*woman*” instead of mother and I believe He did so to bring her back to those 3 ½ years earlier a way of saying “*Mom now is the time. During My shame and then My glory that you will finally be called blessed*”. As she stood there gazing up at her Son next to her we are told in Matthew 27:54 was a centurion who had witnessed “*the things that had happened, they feared greatly, saying, "****Truly this was the Son of God****!*” I wonder as she heard that word “*woman*” and understood what He meant by it that she would have gladly taken a life time of shame for one more day with her Son?

**Mark 15:42-47**

**“More than a fashion statement”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 42-43 Secret saints**
3. **Vs. 44-47 The greatest real estate deal**
4. **Introduction**

As we close out the 15th chapter of Mark it’s important that we realize that ***Jesus wasn’t a victim on that cross; He was instead a sacrifice!*** This morning our focus will be upon His burial and the events that surround it. Mark is quite brief in this regard but we will be using the other accounts to fill in some of the missing details. As I contemplated Jesus death and the cross I remembered a story I read about a man who was Jewish in Russia because of the political climate he had been sentenced to the gulag for 15 years. While there he met a Christian man who introduced him to his messiah. Those hard 15 years were only survivable because of his faith in Jesus and has longing to be with his son who was 4 years old when he went to prison. When he was finally released and reunited with his fully grown 19-year old son. He noticed that his boy had a cross around his neck and he elatedly asked him when he had become a Christian, as he shared that he too had come to know Jesus while in prison? His son looked at the cross that was around his next and said, “*Dad my generation doesn’t ware this because we believe in the superstition called Jesus, we ware it as a fashion statement*.” There is a great deal of difference between warring the cross as a “***statement of faith***” and warring one as a “***fashion statement***”. That is what we will examine this morning as we look at the two men who took Jesus body for burial.

1. **Vs. 42-43 Secret saints**

Vs.42-43 The focus of this section is the burial of Jesus’ body in the hands of His friends albeit secret ones, Joseph and according to John’s account 19:39, Nicodemus. John tells us that two “undercover brothers” came forward and did in His death what they weren’t willing to do in His life, be identified with Jesus. There are a lot of folks like these two who are perfectly willing to go along with Christianity, as long as there is no price to pay. The unasked question is: “***What made these two fellows who had been content to be secret saint’s come out of the shadows and into the day light***?” The only conclusion I can come up with was there was something about Jesus’ death that caused them to personally recognized what Jesus had done for them on that cross!

We learn from the other accounts that Joseph was a wealthy member of the Sanhedrim yet he had not voted for Jesus death, which means that the vote of the ruling council of Caiaphas was not unanimous as Joseph and we assume Nicodemus both voted against putting Jesus to death. I’m impressed by these two secret disciples who did not succumb to the popular vote but instead voted with their conscience. Nicodemus, you will recall first came to Jesus at night, heard His powerful truths believed but remained at a distance but in the end is brought out into the open. And in this hour of darkness these two who had remained in the shadows stepped boldly, courageously into the light, Joseph coming into the presence of Rome in Pilate and asking for Jesus’ body and Nicodemus bring with Him a 100 pounds of spices to prepare Jesus’ body for decay but those spices wouldn’t be needed. These two had both become followers of Jesus yet they were not hanging around the 12. Before you are to hard on these men for being secret disciple’s, may I’m reminded that the others are no where to be found. These two men that step forward at a time when all other shrank away. It is to celebrate with a winner, it takes no special courage, character or maturity to associate with someone when they are top, but these men are willing to identify with Jesus when it looked as if all He had said was a lie, a time when every promise looked as though it had been defeated! To me that take courage, character and maturity! In coming out in the open like this they risked, their lives, their reputation, and at very least as soon as they touched the body of Jesus they were ceremonially unclean and could not take part in the “Passover feast”. Yet it did not matter to them for they had met the real “Passover” Lamb who had just taken away their sin and they Loved Him more then their position and even their lives!

There was another man named Joseph who 33 years earlier only a few miles from here wrapped a little lamb on strips of linen and laid Him in a stone manger. As they lay Jesus in the tomb wrapped in lined would His sacrifice work, would He emerge from the tomb? In Hebrews 9:12 we read that Jesus, “*Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption*.”

1. **Vs. 44-47 The greatest real estate deal**

Vs. 44-46 When we compare Mark’s account with John’s we discover that John records for us three symbols surrounding the burial of Jesus:

1. **Buried in a garden**: The Bible records that sin began in a garden and John records that sin met its conqueror in a garden. Jesus entered into death so that he would conquer sin and loosed its hold upon our race.
2. **Placed in a tomb where no one had ever been placed before**: In the Garden of Eden man entered into an experience he had never been in before death. But here in this garden in Jerusalem was a **new tomb** where no one had ever been laid, no person had ever conquered death and in that new tomb death was conquered for the first time.
3. **The tomb was near the cross**: That beautiful garden, just a few yards from the cross, was this tomb where no one had ever lain, and there they put the body of Jesus. Friends when we have been to that cross, laid aside our pride, been broken of our self-sufficiency we will find ourselves broken crying out for help then now this the place of resurrection is just around the corner. You see when you are standing at a cross, the resurrection is just ahead if you walk with God.

Matthew 27:62-66 records something that amazes me as it shows that the enemies of Christ believed Jesus words more than His own disciple’s. In verse 63 we are told that they came to Pilate and said, “*Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, After Three days I will rise*.” They are afraid that some how Jesus’ body would come up missing remembering His promise that He was gong to rise from the dead, but the disciple’s who Jesus said these words to are no where to be found! Even though countless times He talked to them about His resurrection they just didn’t get it! So the enemies of Jesus believing His words decided to seal up the tomb up and set up guards who under the penalty of death if that seal was broken kept watch. History records for us that a year after this Pilate leaves Judah and goes to Germany where he commits suicide. It seems as though he never got over his cowardice of sending this innocent man to death. He never understood that this person that he condemned to death died to set him free. Pilate could have had free access to the King of Kings, but he chose otherwise!

Joseph gave up his garden tomb the place where he would one day lay to Jesus; it was **the greatest real estate deal ever made; Joseph traded his tomb for Jesus’ room in His Father’s house**. The greatest thing I want you all to realize is that every person can make that same deal: **All you have to do is be willing to give up that which is death that you may step into that which is life**! In John’s account he adds his poetic commentary in verse 41; “***Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden****, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid*.” You may wish to underline that verse as ***it is not only picturesque it is a promise***, that doesn’t come into view until you read Jesus’ words in Matthew 6:25-34 where He says “*Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore, do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.*”

* In the place where Jesus was crucified there was a garden where the birds of the air neither sowed or reaped yet their heavenly Father fed them.
* In the place where Jesus was crucified there was a garden where the lilies of the field neither toiled nor spun yet where more beautifully provided for then the earthly splendor of Solomon.

What a great invitation as when you draw near the cross of Jesus you will find this garden!

 No matter how we wish to look at these two friends of Jesus they treated Him as dead. Further more they treated Him two things in view:

1. **Love**: They came and took Him because they loved Him, again it was His death that forced that in the open but they truly loved Him and His death didn’t separate that love.
2. **Faith**: They still believed in Him, oh not fully but enough to risk being disbarred from the Sanhedrim, they believed in Him more than they believed in the religious institution that they had dedicated their lives two.

But there was something missing, something they lacked that day that the words of John that we just read that in the place where Jesus was crucified there was a garden should have spoken to this lack. What did they lack? **HOPE**! They were looking for answers and love and faith drove them to do what they had done that day but hope wasn’t present with them but it was all over that garden!

* The **world** believed that Jesus was dead and they were glad
* The **worshippers** of Jesus thought He was dead and they were sad
* Ah but friend’s no matter what your circumstance to day read with me again “**the place where Jesus was crucified there was a garden”** and you will be filled with peace and joy!

**Mark 16:1-8**

**“The reality of the resurrection”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 1-3 Lost hope**
3. **Vs. 4 Roll away the stone**
4. **Vs. 5-8 My brethren**
5. **Introduction**

For all intensive purposes we will finish off Mark’s account of his gospel today in the first 8 verses. Now if you have your bibles open you will notice that the 16th chapter doesn’t end at verse 8 but concludes at verse 20 but the earliest and most reliable manuscripts only include the first 8 verses and was most likely added at a later date. We will look at them next week as I believe that the Lord intended us to have them.

Matthew chapter 27:61tells us that near the guarded tomb came at least two women. The tomb had been guarded because at least practically the religious leaders believed Jesus words that after three days He would arise, albeit they interpreted that to mean that someone would steel His body. Yet these women are not there because they believed Jesus words, had they believed Him they would not have come to the tomb at all. The only conclusion we can draw is that they were not because they did not believe His words but because ***they were absolutely devoted to Him***. When you deal with doctrine you are dealing with your intellect and as we all know it is always easier to change your mind then it is to change your heart. The importance of being “*devotionally right above being doctrinally right*” makes our spiritual life far more attainable when we consider that this means: ***We don’t have to have all the answers we only have to be devoted to the One that does!***

1. **Vs. 1-3 Lost hope**

Vs. 1 Mark’s is the only account that includes Saturday and the Sabbath telling us only that the Sabbath had passed. That had to be the worst day in their life, as Jesus had been crucified and placed in a hopeless tomb. But that is not the reason why I believe the other gospel accounts don’t include it. No I believe that they have all but forgotten it do to the reality of the resurrection! In Matthews account he records the day and approximate hour that these two ladies first discovered the empty tomb. It was early Sunday morning when these women made their way in the dark, arriving at the tomb at dawn. These heart broken women left the walls of Jerusalem and I can imagine the heavy heart that they must have had. **Hope was lost but love had not been severed**. I find a strange comfort in this as I realize that you can be a follower of Jesus, devoted to Him and still go through times like this. With that said there is a wonderful truth in the angelic young man’s words too these two in Matthews account when he says, ***“He is not here, for He has risen, as He said***!”

Vs. 2-3 According to Matthews account there was a great earthquake and an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone. The question is, “***Why was the 4-ton stone rolled back up the hill***?” Was it to let Jesus out? Of coarse not! Jesus didn’t need an angels help to get out of the tomb. Mark tells us in verse 3 that these ladies had been wondering how they were going to get in as they said, “*Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us*?” ***It is in the combining of Matthew’s account with Mark’s that we realize that the rolling of the stone was not to let Jesus out but to let them in***! This scene becomes for me a perfect illustration of the limitation of religion as it’s chief concern and aim is about man trying to get in to where God is. The obvious impossibility is that religion can never do enough to remove the stone as it is to heavy! And when we look at faith in Christ we see that it is all about God rolling the stone away so you and I can come in and see! One of my favorite places to visit in Israel is the Garden tomb also known as Gordon’s Tomb. It was discovered by General Gordon in 1885 and since 1894 has been maintained by a non-denominational British trust. The first thing he did was gather soil from the ground he took it back with him to noted chemists with only one question: “Is there any trace of decomposition?” And in every case there was no sign of decay!

1. **Vs. 4 Roll away the stone**

Vs. 4 According to Mark’s commentary this angel’s appearance was like that of a young man. I’m picturing a look of a 13-year old boy. Yet, we are told in Matthew’s account that, “*the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men*.” Here were these buff battle worn Roman soldiers guarding this tomb when a young boy walks in among them and rolls up hill a 4-ton bolder from the mouth of the tomb. We are told that they passed out with fear at the sight of him and the question is: “***What caused this reaction***?” There is no mention of some sort of powerful weapon pointing at them. The only explanation given by Matthew for their reaction is that: “*His continence was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow*.” This would indicate purity and holiness and suggest that ***their fear was not in his physical stature but rather in his inward character***. To these harden soldiers the most powerful man was not one that had rippling biceps, but one who was humble and holy. What a great truth for all of us to understand: ***If you want to freeze the opposition you don’t need to go to the gym and work on your muscles you need to be in God’s word and presence by His Holy Spirit which will leave you humble and holy***!

1. **Vs. 5-8 My brethren**

Vs. 5-6 After entering the tomb these ladies notice the same aspects of this angel as he appears to have been waiting for their arrival. Apparently they were also startled as Mark tells us that they were alarmed and Matthew records that the angel’s first words were, “*Do not be afraid*..” I personally understand their reaction, they have just come up to the tomb of their Lord and upon their arrival they see the 4-ton stone rolled away, a bunch of passed out soldiers and a young man sitting inside the tomb. There are many things scare us but perhaps for most humans nothing more than the uncertainty of death. I know having dealt with this often that there is nothing that will move people out of their comfort zones faster and into fear quicker than the fear of death! Most folks live by the near sighted adage of: “***I intend to live forever, so far it’s going well.***” We all deal with fear but I want to show you this morning the great “*fear buster*” in verse 6. Mark includes, “*Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him.*” Everything may seem hopeless and lost, but these words are a complete and total game changer! Since Jesus conquered death the one thing that had 100% success rate against mankind, then He can certainly handle our difficult job, marriage, finances, illness or what ever. The resurrection is the great answer to what ever fear or doubt we may have. Before these ladies could ask, “How they could know this was true?” The angle says, “*Come and see the place* **WHERE** *they laid Him*!” Notice that it says “WHERE” as Jesus was no longer WHERE they had laid him. According to John chapter 20 verses 5-7 all they saw was the graves clothes lying on the stone shelf empty like a flattened cocoon. There was no sign of Jesus having struggled with the linen strips of grave clothes. Instead it looked as though He had passed right through them. Though some may argue that they weren’t there at the tomb to observe what these folks did, you and I can still check out in the Bible the many different appearances of Jesus after this event:

* Peter saw Him the same day
* Two disciples on the road to Emmaus talked to Him
* He appeared to the disciples in a closed room with out Thomas
* He then later again appeared to them with Thomas
* Seven of the disciples were met by Him by the Sea of Galilee
* In 1 Corinthians 15:6 Paul tells us that over 500 folks in Galilee saw Jesus at once and the greater part of them were still alive and able to testify to that fact 57 years later.
* James saw Him in two different locations
* Many saw Him at His Ascension
* Steven saw Him when he was being stoned
* Paul who had hated Him, meet Him near Damascus, then again years later Paul saw Him again in a temple.
* Lastly the apostle John saw Him while he was on the island of Patmos

Then there are countless people like me and you who can testify of how He changed our lives and this testimony goes back to the time of His empty tomb over thousands of years!

Vs. 7-8 I notice that “***going and telling***” follows “***coming and seeing***”. This informs us that if we want to grow in our ability to share Jesus with others we will need to continue to “***come and see***”! We all need daily a clear vision of Jesus work upon the cross and His resurrection from the dead. When we make that the center stone of our lives we will become effective in our telling others to come and see! I love the fact that Jesus choose two women to be his first witness. ***You see a women’s report was not acceptable in a court of law in those days.*** This reveals to us that Jesus clearly chooses the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. Devotion is always greater then our intellect. Humility and brokenness are always the essential ingredients to share Jesus with others. **The effectiveness of the truth of the gospel does not rest upon the strength of the messenger, but upon the truth that we are charged to share**! According to Matthew’s account in chapter 28 verses 9-10 Jesus met them and His first word out of Jesus’ mouth is, “Rejoice”. The word used for rejoice is the same word that we translate in the English as “grace”. And their response to Him and this word of “Grace” is that they grabbed a hold of Him and worshipped Him. When we understand His work for us then we know that it is only by grace that we have been saved and all we can ever do in is worship Him!

 Jesus also sends them to tell the rest of the disciples. What is not immediately recognized also in Matthews account is Jesus use of the phrase “My brethren” in conjunction to His disciples. This is the first time He calls them this and it’s after their greatest failure! ***Which one of us have not felt as though at times that Jesus is a shamed of us***? Look at this phrase “My Brethren”, in light of the fact that these disciples had totally blown it. And also consider the fact that Jesus sends these ladies to tell them that they are still “His family” and it is the greatest proof of the resurrection and grace? No matter how many mistakes we continue to make, ***Jesus still calls us family***! Further more He wants you to know that He longs for you to realize that He considers you His family! But there is obedience involved, you got to go to where He is. We now have no excuses to stay in death, defeat, and despair lets go and meet Him that we may worship at His feet!

**Mark 16:9-14**

**“Reasons to believe”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 9-11 Mary Magdalene’s testimony**
3. **Vs. 12-13 The Emmaus Road evidence**
4. **Vs. 14 Persistent climate of unbelief**
5. **Introduction**

We take on Mark 16:9-20 the “Epilogue”; “*the* *comment or conclusion to what happened*”. I mentioned last week that this was added to the oldest and most reliable Greek manuscripts. There are some biblical scholars who even question if these 12 verses should even be included in the bible. But it is note worthy to consider three facts as reasons why this should be included:

* The overwhelming majority of Greek manuscripts do contain these verses.
* The earliest recorded church fathers from the beginning of the 2nd century quoted Mark from these 12 verses found in this section.
* From the beginning, the church accepted these verses as God’s inspired word, even if it may have not been pinned by Mark.

The rest of Mark’s account is a departure from a “*narrative*” form of writing the events to that of a “*summarization*” of events that occurred over a period of 40 days. This would indicate that someone other than Mark wrote this passage. But what must be remembered is that, irregardless to who the human author of these 12 verses was it doesn’t change the fact that the true author is the Holy Spirit. Six times in these 12 verses we find an aspect of the word “believe” mentioned. Mark finalized this by recording Jesus’ death and resurrection as the true evidence for belief. This section can be divided into three sections:

1. Vs. 9-14 The reasons why the disciples should believe
2. Vs. 15-16 The call of the disciples to the message
3. Vs. 17-20 The witness of the disciples to the world

What is at issue in this section is what people are to do with the information Mark has recorded, “***BELIEVE***”! Human history is full of people to many to count that have taken the truths presented in this gospel and trusted in them. One such story is found in the 1912 fatal sinking of the Titanic that claimed 1,503 lives. One of those lives was Scottish evangelist John Harper who along with his six-year-old daughter was sailing across the Atlantic where he was to preach at Chicago’s Moody Church. After the ship struck the iceberg, Harper put his daughter into a lifeboat, then called out to the people of the sinking decks, “*Women, children, and* ***UNSAVED*** *into the lifeboats*!” Harper’s love for others was greater and he wasn’t willing that any unsaved person not have the opportunity to have enough time so they too could find Jesus. When the lifeboats were all gone, Pastor Harper continued to preach the message on the decks of the Titanic even giving up his own lifejacket to another man to before having to jump into the frigid water of the Atlantic and cleaning onto a piece of the wreckage. With the numbness of hypothermia sizing him within minutes and consciousness ebbing away, he saw a man floating near him when he whispered out the question, “*Are you saved*?” The man replied “*I am not*!” John Harper quoted Acts 16:31 “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you you will be saved, you and your household*.” This story was first retold in an early publish track and repeatedly only twice publicly by this un-named man who told the story of the final words of the Evangelist and being John Harper’s last convert.

1. **Vs. 9-11 Mary Magdalene’s testimony**

Vs. 9-11 ***The first thing that the writer records are the fact that these disciples upon hearing of Mary Magdalene experience with Jesus DIDN’T BELIEVE.*** To get a better picture of this scene requires the reader to do a “***chronological sequence of events***”. In the first verse of chapter 16 Mark had recorded for us how some of the women came to the tomb early in the morning and upon arriving found the stone rolled away and an angel who told them that Jesus had risen as He had promised. But these women didn’t see Jesus. According to John’s account Mary Magdalene started off with the other ladies for the tomb but in her eagerness to get there, she went ahead of the other ladies. Based upon the Matthew 28 passage before she got to the tomb there was a great earthquake and an angel of the Lord rolled back the stone from the door which caused the guards to shake with fear. So when Mary came to the tomb she saw that the stone was rolled away, her immediate conclusion was that they had moved the body of Jesus so without waiting for the other ladies to get there, she ran to tell Peter and John that the body of Jesus was moved. After Mary leaves that the other ladies then arrived and when they get there they see two angels who told them that Jesus had risen and to go tell the other disciples. Evidently, Mary arrived to where Peter and John are staying and she tells them that Jesus’ body is missing and again leaves before the other ladies return to tell the Angel’s explanation of why Jesus wasn’t in the tomb. (*It is this message that the two on the road to Emmaus hear*). Then Peter and John come to investigate running together until John out runs Peter. Mary decided to come back to the tomb but by the time she got back to the tomb Peter and John had observed, studied and believed then left. Mary then came back, not knowing that the other ladies had seen the angels, and at this time she looks into the tomb, sees the two angels and then meets Jesus and clings to Him. That about covers the chronological sequence of events.

 John’s account in the Greek makes it apparent that the linen burial wraps that were placed upon Jesus’ body by Joseph and Nicodemus were still there with the folds and spices only flattened. What this suggests is twofold:

1. The body was not tampered with by grave robbers as they would have just quickly removed the linen strips.
2. That the body was resurrected, taken through the wrappings.

Now all of this information on the burial cloth of Jesus brings up some question in regard to it:

***Whatever happened to the grave clothes? Is the Shroud of Turin for real?***

Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, states that “*The evidence thus far indicates the probable conclusions that the shroud is ancient (perhaps from the first century), that it does not contradict the NT accounts, and that the image is not a fake. It may well be the actual burial garment of Jesus.*” Results of the Shroud of Turin Research Project in October 1978 determined that the Shroud is not a painting or a forgery. They determined that its blood is real blood and the image seems to be some type of scorch, though they cannot account for how it was made. Further more based upon the evidence of the Shroud the image is of a crucified male, bearded, 5’11" in height, weighing about 175 pounds. His physique was muscular and well built, and he is an estimated age of 30-35 years. His long hair is tied into a pigtail and there is no evidence on decomposition on the cloth.

 ***The point the author of this section of mark is trying to make is that when Mary Magdalene told the disciples that she had seen Jesus alive, they “would not believe her”.*** This will be a reoccurring theme in the hours following the resurrection, **the refusal to believe the testimony of your fellow followers of Christ**. They refused to believe Jesus pre-crucifixion messages and now they refuse to believe the post-crucifixion eye witness accounts.

1. **Vs. 12-13 The Emmaus Road evidence**

Vs. 12-13 This next recorded testimony is the the two disciples on the 11-mile journey from Jerusalem to the little village of Emmaus. Luke tells us that one of the disciple’s name was Cleopas. Mark tells us that they didn’t recognize Him immediately because He “appeared in another form”. This phrase in the Greek means “*in a different outward expression or appearance*”. The word “*form*” is the same word that was used in the account of the transfiguration but here clearly there was nothing that gave away His glory. The contrast in the Greek has nothing to do with what Jesus had appeared prior to the resurrection but rather a contrast to How Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene being that she thought he was the gardener where as here these two thought that Jesus was a fellow traveler. The three of them carried on a long conversation, starting out with an indictment of Jesus as not knowing what had just transpired in Jerusalem. These two took the time to explain to Jesus all the events, including Mary Magdalene’s. Then Jesus “*beginning with Moses and all the prophets*” did an extensive bible study “*expounding to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself*.” The interesting truth to me is that Jesus had done this same bible study multiple times but this time we are told as He broke bread with them their eyes were finally open. Perhaps they saw the nail prints as he passed out the bread, maybe it was that they remembered as He broke the bread one of the two miracles that He had accomplished doing a similar task, or was it the location of being in an upper room. What ever it was, their eyes were finally open and they recognized Him, then He instantly disappeared. Both the writer here in Mark and Luke tells us they immediately returned those 7 miles back to Jerusalem. But the writer here in Mark tells us that they apparently arrived before Peter’s encounter with Jesus was told them as when they heard these two brothers story they “*they didn’t not believe them either*”.

1. **Vs. 14 Persistent climate of unbelief**

Vs. 14 The co-author of Mark has gone out of his way to present the ***persistent climate of unbelief*** that prevailed among the followers of Christ in-spite of fellow follower eyewitness testimony to the resurrection. This despite the persistent and continual teaching of Jesus throughout His 3 ½ years among them. This included the many prophecies and predictions Jesus had made about His death and resurrection, still the 11 disciples found it difficult to accept that Jesus was NOW the RISEN LORD who was living among them. Here in verse 14 we learn something very important: ***Jesus expected the 11 to believe, even though most of them had not yet seen Him***. Jesus wanted them to believe His words and if not His words, at least the eyewitness testimony of those among them He had revealed Himself to. These were people that they knew as trustworthy and were reporting what they had experienced that was 100% in line with what He had told them for 3 ½ years was going to happen! After all the miraculous events they had personally witnessed, after all the truths He had taught them, these eyewitness reports should have been more than enough to convince these 11 that Jesus had raised from the dead just as He had said. Jesus had every right to be concerned with their heart of unbelief as He had throughout His time among them.

 Jesus put an incredible amount of importance to testimony and it is the same importance He rebukes Thomas on on John 20:24-29 when Jesus says, “*Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed*.” In verse 27 Jesus had said to Thomas, “*Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side*.” The truth that we learn from this is that **doubt or unbelief doesn’t keep Jesus from us it keeps us from seeing Jesus!** Jesus’ word’s going beyond Thomas to all His disciples including you and I, “*Do not be unbelieving, but believing.*” Even when we don’t sense His presence, during our times of doubt, He is right next to us. Open your hearts to Him He is here, He is as close as our breath to you. Thomas’ conclusion was, “*My Lord and My God*!” I suggest to you that it was not only the physical evidence that caused that affirmation but rather when Thomas realized that when he had said those words Jesus was there. Notice that Jesus didn’t say, “*Knock it off Thomas, I’m a man just like you, I’m an angel not God*!” No he went on to admonish Thomas for coming to the right conclusions albeit through sight and not trusting His word.

 Saints, our faith and the Church will never be built on physical evidence alone, it is based upon something greater “BELIEF!” It’s not “blind faith” but rather faith that is centered upon irrefutable testimony from reliable eyewitness accounts! And Jesus expects that to be enough to cause someone to believe especially when it 100% is in agreement with what His word says!

**Mark 16:15-20**

**“Never stagnate nor silent”**

1. **Introduction**
2. **Vs. 15-16 Preach the gospel**
3. **Vs. 17-18 With power**
4. **Vs. 19-20 Come and go**
5. **Introduction**

We finally conclude our study in the gospel according to Mark with a look at the task of:

* Preaching the gospel
* Caring for the physical needs of people
* And to make sure that those are both done in the the power of the Holy Spirit.
1. **Vs. 15-16 Preach the gospel**

Vs. 15-16 After rebuking the disciples for their unwillingness to believe the testimony of their fellow believers concerning the resurrection, Jesus gives them a command which we commonly call the great commission. The first thing these disciples learned with regards to the risen Lord is that ***their failure didn’t hinder His willingness and desire to include them in His mission***. The Greek phrase translated as “*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature*” has some surprises. Unfortunately, many have placed the emphasis on one word, ***GO***! But the central command of the “*Great Commission*” isn’t “***GO***” **but what you are to do once you have gone namely** “***PREACH THE GOSPEL***”! In fact, the Greek has it “***As you are GOING***” and as such pre-supposes that as believers we are going to be “GOING” the command isn’t upon the going but rather on the “***PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL***” along the way. Yes, it is true that the church of Jesus Christ was never designed to be “***STAGNATE***” but more importantly it was never designed to be “***SILENT***”! **The world is not called to come to the Church, the Church is called to go to the World**.” But ***the importance placed here by Jesus wasn’t the destination but rather the discussion***! It doesn’t matter if you are crossing then ocean or crossing the street, going around the world or going around the block as His disciples we were to be speaking about Him! I’m convinced that most Christians want to do this but are intimidated because they just aren’t sure what the “GOSPEL” is. The gospel is NOT a lofty, complicated theological study that requires years of intense research. Neither is it the message that heaven awaits us after we die, or that God is love, both of which are true. ***Heaven is NOT the “good news” it is the result of the good news***! In 1Corinthians 15:3-4 Paul explained explicitly what the gospel is by explaining the **three elements that make up the gospel**:

1. “***That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures***”: The gospel is not about the 33 years that make up Jesus life, including His miraculous birth, sinless life and powerful ministry (all of which are true). ***The gospel centers around His death, not His earthly life.*** The importance of His death is defined as, “*for our sins according to the Scriptures*”. On the cross, He dealt with our rebellion, failures and sins. His death accomplished something, it has forever changed us who have received Him washing away all the guilt and shame of our lives. Twice in these three elements that make up the gospel Paul mentions that the events of the gospel were, “*according to the Scriptures*”. This tells us that this was not a new thing, a new plan of God. It was instead according to 1 Peter 1:18-20 “*.. was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you*”.
2. “***That He was buried***”: The second part of the gospel deals with His burial. Why does Paul include this truth as part of the gospel, I mean wouldn’t it be enough to say that He died & rose on the third day? Go back & read Jesus words about His death & their response to Him. In Luke 18:34 following Jesus telling them of His death we are told that “*they* ***understood none of these things****; this saying was hidden from them, and they did not know the things which were spoken*.” Then take the words of the two disciples who Jesus questions after His resurrection concerning the events of the last three days as they said “***our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel****.*” What’s my point? Jesus’ disciples didn’t want Him dead, they did not want to believe it prior to His death nor did they want to accept it after His death and even upon seeing Him alive struggled with it. In each of these three elements of the gospel the one thing that links each of them is that:
* He **died** for our sins
* They **buried** Him in a tomb
* He was raised from the **dead**

***Death is through out the whole gospel; it’s just not the final word!***

1. “***That He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures***”: The central point in the gospel is the resurrection. Not a resuscitation, He did not come back to life as He was before; no he came back to life as they had never seen Him before. Once again we are told that this was in fulfillment of the Word of God.

Matthew records these words differently saying:

1.) Vs. 18 “*All authority has been given to Me on heaven and on earth*”: **This is the secret of our service.** The word “authority” means the right to use power. Notice the importance of the word “ALL” here as Jesus didn’t say, “most of the authority”, and based upon this fact we are to:

B.) “**Make disciples**”: The Greek word was used of Socrates who had built an education system based upon Plato’s ideology. These apprentices that were so identified with the teacher were to impact all of society. The goal of conversion is discipleship as Jesus didn’t say go and make converts.

2.) “*all nations*”: Literally, “make all nations learns.” The commission is not to a select group but to every nation. Where ever we go we are to make learns of Christ!

A.) “**Baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit**”: When a person is baptized they are having a change of address. Jesus is speaking of far more then just a superficial change.

3.) “*Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded*”: The method employed to cause change is obedience to the Word of God. Notice the word “observe”; information without practice is worthless! People we need to know how to do it!

4.) “*I Am with you always, even to the end of the age*”: What a great fact this is! Jesus is with us every where we go. So Go!!!

Yes, we all need moral teaching and how to live in this world but more than anything else we need transformation above information! The essential work of the gospel is the need for every person to be transformed by believing so that we can be saved. That’s exactly what Jesus says in verse 16. The word “saved” in verse 16 not only speaks of the miracle of being “born again” (John 3:16) but also of experiencing the fullness of God’s abundant blessing. The difficulty of this section lies in the words, “*He who believes and is* **BAPTIZED** *will be saved*”. Some have taken that to an extreme position of “baptismal regeneration” which suggests that belief plus baptism is necessary to be “saved”. And if you believed and not baptized than you were never saved, this view is not supported by scripture. What Jesus means is that “belief must be demonstrated by inward change”. Mere intellectual consent without that which alters our life is not real belief and the first way we demonstrate this is by being baptized! Baptism can not add anything to what belief alone has accomplished, but it does demonstrate what belief alone has accomplished. The truth is that Jesus Christ didn’t die to improve us, or give us a boost in being better people, NO He died to save us! So salvation rests upon belief and baptism is merely a picture of this New Life and not the means of securing it.

1. **Vs. 17-18 With power**

Vs. 17-18 This is a controversial passage and because of it many wanted to not include these 12 verses all together. Others try to make it refer to only the original apostles and link the signs specifically to that time only. These two verses follow the clear teaching to go into the world and preach the gospel. This section is divided into two sections:

1. The first deals with that which would hinder the person from hindering the gospel as we are told that the church will receive power over three obstacles in those that would hear the gospel:
2. The god of this world, as we are told that those that would believe in Jesus name be able to cast out demons. The believer who goes and preaches the gospel will be given in Jesus name the power to remove the demonic influence and hold over a person so that they will be able to respond to the truth!
3. And over the limitations of communication. The word in the Greek means to speak in a tongue and the reference is to communicating the gospel. Here Jesus says that the person who goes and preaches the gospel will be given the ability to communicate with a person who has a different language.
4. Infirmities that hinder a person from listing to the gospel. In verse 18 the church will be empowered not just for the soul but for the body as well as they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover. Here we are told that this sign will also be given and again the context is to going and preaching the gospel.
5. Next Jesus mentions two obstacles that the church will be empowered against would hinder the speaker as they went out to preach the gospel:
6. Those bitten be snakes
7. Those that unknowingly partook of something that was poisonous

First notice that Jesus didn’t say, “***that those who believe shall follow signs***” instead He says that “***signs shall follow those who believe***”. Jesus is saying that He would protect them and those that they were preaching the gospel would see His power through them. Clearly this hasn’t happened every time the gospel has been preached, the fact is that the occurrences of such signs today are rare and as such it would seem that Jesus is address the extreme concerns of going into the world and preaching the gospel and the reluctance of some to going and preaching! The encouragement is for those times when we go and preach and face extreme adversity and Jesus saying, “***I’ll give you the necessary signs and power to accomplish that which I’ve called you to do***!” These signs were an encouragement to their faith in doing what God had called them to do, “Go and preach the gospel”! Thus God’s promise of empowerment to ease the concern as we go out and preach the gospel.

1. **Vs. 19-20 Come and go**

Vs. 19-20 Mark’s gospel closes with the Lord in heaven not in the heavens, some far off space. Instead as He promised in Matthew 28:20 “***I am with you always, even to the end of the age***.” What a great truth this is that Jesus is not out some where in space, He is here, living as Lord amongst His people, directing, empowering, carrying His truth through His people to the farthest reaches of human hearts everywhere. And as we are directed by Him we will go where He sends us and do what He has empowered us to do. The question is: “*Why did Jesus ascend this way*?” He could have just vanished, instead Matthew tells us He slowly ascended into heaven until He is a cloud of glory receives Him out of sight. I believe there are three reasons for this:

1. First, He had been appearing and then disappearing for 40 days clearly He wanted them to know that as for now He was not coming back.

2. Secondly, He wanted them to be assured of His coming again and that the coming again would be like the going, physical, visible and on the Mount of Olives!

 3. Third, He did not want the Church to be just standing around waiting for His return. Hey, saints, let’s not be stand looking up into heaven worrying about when He is coming back. He is coming back just as He left! Sense we are in between the time that He left and the time He comes back we are to be filled with His Spirit to tell the truth about Him to a world that has not heard and seen. The angels told them in Acts 1:11, “***You have seen Him go and you will see Him come, but for now the Spirit must come and you must go into the world for Jesus***!”