The book of Mark

or

"To minister, and to give"

by Rick Shoemaker

OUTLINE

Mark is the man also known as John Mark. He was the nephew of Barnabas (Col. 4:10).

He joined Paul on his first missionary journey but, in a moment of weakness, he deserted Paul and Barnabas and went home (Acts 13:13). By the grace of God, Mark recovered and went on the serve God faithfully, with even Paul saying he had become "profitable" (2 Tim. 4:11). Thank the Lord, failure does not have to be final. Mark became close friends with Peter (1 Pet. 5:13).

Mark's failure and restoration should teach us to forgive those who fail. If God is willing to forgive, certainly we should be also.

Mark never claims to be the one who penned this book but the early church saints agreed that he penned this account.

The four gospel accounts picture Jesus in four different ways. Matthew views Him as the Messiah, Luke views Him as the Son of Man, John views Him as the Son of God. And, Mark views Jesus primarily as a servant. He wrote "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45). We see the human side of Christ often in this book. The emotions of Jesus are revealed by Mark (1:41; 3:5; 6:34; 8:12; 9:36).

The word "immediately" is found at least seventeen times in this book.

Mark's book was directed primarily to the Romans.

The theme verse of the book is where Mark wrote "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45). For this reason, I have chosen the title of this study "To minister, and to give". Jesus came to serve and to give Himself to those who could not help themselves.

The fact that the God who made and sustains all things is willing to come and serve man is astounding to me. I understand Him asking us to serve Him, but I do not understand Him being willing to serve us.

1. THE PROCLAMATION 1:1

The word "proclamation" means "An official announcement about a matter of great importance". That, my friend, is what we are getting ready to find in the first words of this book.

Mk 1:1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God;

The word "beginning" means "beginning". Mark gets straight to the point and carries us straight to Jesus. The quicker we can get to Jesus, the better we are.

Matthew used the same word when he wrote "he which made them at the *beginning* made them male and female" (Mt 19:4 emphasis added). That tells me, when God starts something, He starts it right. It's really difficult to get to a right end when you get a wrong start.

Jesus said "I am Alpha and Omega, the *beginning* and the end, the first and the last" (Re 22:13 emphasis added). Jesus said, "I am the way". If you want to end up at a good place, Jesus is the way. If we'll always start with Jesus, we'll end up right. If we start with anything, or anyone else, we'll end up in trouble.

The beginning God recommends is the "gospel of Jesus Christ". The word "gospel" means "good news". There is no better news than the fact that Jesus died for us and God will forgive our sin. There's something special about Jesus. One of the things that makes Him special is the fact that He is the "Son of God". He isn't average. Jesus was a man, but He was not an ordinary man.

2. THE PROPHECY 1:2a

Mk 1:2a As it is written in the prophets...

The words "As it is written" tell us this is not the first time God has spoken about this.

Mark's message wasn't something new. God had foretold of His coming hundreds of years before He arrived.

These words are of particular importance because they mean God was speaking again. For almost 400 years God had been silent. Malachi closing words (Mal. 4:6) were the last man had received from God.

God didn't just speak His message, He wrote it down. He wouldn't if He could, but since it's written, He cannot deny saying it. There's proof, it's called the Bible.

The God who can tell us what will happen hundreds of years before it happens is a God we can trust.

He wrote it down to inform us. Paul wrote "For whatsoever things were *written aforetime* were *written for* our *learning* that we through *patience* and *comfort* of the *scriptures* might have *hope*." (Ro 15:4 emphasis added).

The words "written for our learning" means God wrote it down before it happened that we might know what to expect. God does not want us to be caught off guard.

The words "that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" mean we can learn from them. When we look at what the Old Testament saints went through we'll see it looks a lot what we are going through. If they did something dumb, it is supposed to teach us to not do what they did. If they did something smart, it is supposed to teach us to do what they did. Smart is always smart and dumb is always dumb. If it worked for them, it will work for us. If it got them in trouble, it will get us in trouble.

The bottom line is, this book will help us if we'll get in it. It's profitable (2 Tim. 3:16).

2. THE PREPARATION 1:2b

Mk 1:2b ... Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

God said He would send His "messenger" (cf. Mal. 3:1; Isa. 40:3). He said He sent His messenger to "prepare" the way.

In ancient times, men were assigned the task of going ahead of a king to make sure the road was safe and smooth. They were to make sure there was nothing before the king that would hinder his progress. Any person living along the planned route was expected to make their property presentable to the coming king.

Also, a forerunner would go before the king loudly proclaiming his presence and demanding people prepare themselves for the king's arrival.

John the baptist was such a man. He came before the Lord preaching "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt. 3:2). Not only were they expected to clean up their houses, they were expected to clean up their lives.

In like fashion, we need to make sure our lives are free of the filth of the world to where we will be no hindrance to Him and His work in our lives and the world around us.

3. THE PREACHER 1:3-6

God sent a preacher. He still sends preachers (1 Cor. 1:21).

THE PREACHER GOD SENT WAS SPEAKING

Mk 1:3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

John simply said what God said. Oh how we need preachers who do the same today. There is nothing wrong with this world that good old fashion Bible preaching will not solve.

THE PREACHER GOD SENT WAS SURRENDERED

Mk 1:4 John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

As we will see, John's first interaction with Jesus was to baptize Him. He realized he was unworthy to do such a thing, but he recognized it was God's will for him to do so (Mt. 3:14-15). Humility is a vital part of the preacher's ministry. He is in trouble, if he gets to where he thinks he is something special. God knows how to knock the pride out of His children.

By the way, humility should also be a part of the life of those believers who are not preachers. James was not talking to preachers when he said "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord" (Jas 4:10). Jesus wasn't talking to preachers when He said "For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" Lk 14:11).

THE PREACHER GOD SENT WAS SERVING

Mk 1:5 And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.

John served God in many ways, not the least of these was preaching the gospel to a lost and dying world. God used John mightily and many souls were saved.

Every believer needs to find their area of service and get busy for the glory of God. There is no telling what God could do through the person who gives themselves completely to Him.

THE PREACHER GOD SENT WAS SEPARATED

Mk 1:6 And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey;

John's attire revealed his heart. He avoided the world at all cost.

Sadly, the average Christian is so worldly you can't tell the difference between them and the world. Many are like Lot, their lifestyle is a mockery to the cause of Christ (Gen. 19:14). We'll never win the world by living like the world.

The average believer of our day actually believes it does not matter how they dress. They unashamedly wear the clothes of the world, talk the language of the world, and life the lifestyle of the world. And they do this seemingly without any thought about how it may displease the God they say they love.

4. <u>THE PERSON</u> 1:7-11

John's message was about a person. That person, was Jesus, the Son of God.

THIS PERSON WAS ABLE

Mk 1:7 And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.

John's first description of Jesus dealt with Jesus' ability. He said the one coming would be "mightier" than him. The word "mightier" means "forcible" or "strong". It means, Jesus has the power to make things happen.

The Rabbis during John's day could require their followers to assist them with their personal needs. The one exception to this was requiring the person remove their sandals. That request was considered to degrading. But, John said he was unworthy to do such a degrading task.

THIS PERSON WAS ANOINTED

Mk 1:8 I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.

John baptized with water but Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit.

Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit and He is able to anoint the believer who is willing to pay the price for His power.

The anointing with oil was a symbol of being set apart for God's use. Items to be used for God's service were anointed (Ex. 30:26-29; 40:9-11).

People were anointed (Ex. 28:41; 30:30; Lev. 8:30; 1 Kgs. 19:16).

The anointing of a person with oil was a symbol of God's presence and power upon that person. In the New Testament, Jesus is seen as the anointed one. He said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor" (Lk. 4:18). Peter said "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him" (Ac 10:38).

The New Testament believer needs that anointing of the presence and power of God. As believers, we are indwelt with the Holy Spirit (Ro 8:9), but we need His power if we are to live as He desires.

THIS PERSON WAS ACKNOWLEDGED

Mk 1:9 And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.

When Jesus was baptized, God the Father acknowledged Him as His Son. The Father put His stamp of approval on His Son.

Mk 1:10 And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him:

The Holy Spirit descending on Jesus was proof that the Father was approving Him. God is very careful with who He blesses. God is not like the parade clown that walks along throwing candy to anyone and everyone. God is very careful in the dispensing of His blessings. If you want God's best blessings, you'll have to give Him your all first.

Mk 1:11 And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

The voice of God the Father speaking from heaven further put the final stamp of approval on Jesus. He acknowledged Jesus as His "beloved Son". And, He made clear that He was "pleased" with Jesus.

Every believer should long to hear the same words said about them. The only way Jesus will say "well done" is that we have truly done well.

5. THE PURPOSE 1:12-13

There was a reason for Jesus coming to earth. He came with a purpose in mind.

One of the primary reasons Jesus came into this sin cursed world was that He might identify with mankind. The writer of Hebrews wrote "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb 4:15).

Jesus knows how we feel because He has experienced what we are experiencing.

Jesus came to this world to teach us how to live in this world without becoming like this world.

JESUS' PURPOSE ON EARTH WAS TO TEACH US DEDICATION

Mk 1:12 And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness.

The first move of God in Jesus' ministry on earth was something initiated by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus demonstrated a Spirit-led life. He was totally dedicated to that which the Father desired of Him.

He said, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (Jn 4:34). He also said, "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (Jn 6:38). Even when He faced the worse trial of His life (the cross), He did that which the Father desired without hesitation. Luke tells us "he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Lk. 9:51).

This was something that happened "immediately" after the Holy Spirit descended upon Him. Anytime we have an experience with the Father, we can expect things to pick up in our lives.

This temptation, though instigated by God, did not come from God. God does not tempt man.

James said, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man" (Jas 1:13). Temptation always comes from our enemy. Matthew tells us the "temper came to him" (Mt. 4:3, 5, 8, 11).

JESUS' PURPOSE ON EARTH WAS TO TEACH US DENIAL

Mk 1:13a And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan;

Jesus' time of testing lasted forty days.

In Noah's day, the rain lasted forty days and forty nights. For Moses, his time in the desert lasted forty years. For Israel, their wilderness journey lasted forty years. Jesus time in the wilderness lasted forty days.

Jesus is our example of how to overcome temptation and say "no" to the devil. Jesus did not have a sinful nature as we do, but He did have a human body which had human needs and desires.

No believer is beyond temptation. Paul said it is "common to man" (1 Cor. 10:13).

We can expect to be tempted because there is a devil. He "walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). He is still looking for someone to "sift" as wheat (Lk. 22:31).

We can expect to be tempted because we still have an old nature. Paul said "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not" (Ro 7:18). Our old human nature still desires the things of the world. It is the one part of us that did not get changed when we got saved.

The temptation of man generally falls into one of three categories. They are, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 Jn 2:16).

The devil attacked Jesus in these three areas.

The devil's first temptation concerned the lust of the flesh.

Jesus was hungry from fasting forty days. So, the devil tempted Him to make bread of stones (Mt. 4:4).

The devil's second temptation concerned the pride of life. The devil tempted Jesus to cast Himself from the pinnacle of the Temple and use His power in a way contrary to the will of His Father (Mt. 4:5-6).

The devil's third temptation concerned the lust of the eyes. The devil offered Jesus the kingdoms of the world if He would fall down and worship him (Mt. 4:8-9). The devil was tempting Jesus to take a short-cut to His Kingdom and avoid the agony of the cross.

Thankfully, each time Jesus refused the devil's temptation and won the victory.

Matthew said, "the devil leaveth him" (Mt. 4:11). Luke tells us, "And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him *for a season*" (Lk 4:13 emphases added). Notice, the verse says, "for a season". This was not the only time Jesus was tempted.

Jesus faced His temptation to demonstrate to us that we also can have victory over our enemy. We are to respond to temptation in the same way He did. He used Scripture as His weapon, so should we.

The devil will attack us in the same way he did Jesus. He will use the same three ways of attack that he did Jesus. And, we are to use the same method Jesus used for our victory.

It is not easy to deny our own selves. Self is strong, but God has promised to give us grace to overcome.

Concerning temptation, Paul wrote "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Co 10:13).

We can be victorious over temptation. James tells us our first step to victory is to submit to God. He wrote "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (Jam 4:7).

When we fail the test and give in to temptation, we need to run to God as fast as we can. John wrote "And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 Jn 2:1). He is ready and willing to forgive us and restore our fellowship.

JESUS' PURPOSE ON EARTH WAS TO TEACH US DEPENDENCE

Mk 1:13b ... and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.

Only Mark records this part of Jesus' temptation.

Jesus depended on His Father for protection

Jesus depended on His Father to protect Him from the "wild beasts". Undoubtedly, Jesus was taken to such a remote area of the wilderness where there were wild animals.

As He did Daniel in the den of lions (Dan. 3:27), God the Father protected His obedient child.

We, like Jesus, can depend on our Father even in the place of danger. God has control over everything.

Jesus depended on His Father for provision

God sent angels who "ministered unto him". We are not told exactly how they ministered to Him. The word "ministered" means "to render assistance, to serve, to help". That means, whatever Jesus needed, they provided.

God has promised to take care of His children (Ps. 81:10; 145:15-16; Mt. 6:31-33; 7:7-8; Rom. 8:32; Phil. 4:19).

We can take Him at His Word and rest.

JESUS, CONFIDENT, CONFRONTING, CALLING, COMMANDING, AND COMMUNING 1:14-28

As I have mentioned, Mark emphasizes Jesus as a servant. He moves straight from Jesus being tempted to Jesus serving. Mark does not mention Jesus' ministry in Judea (Jn. 1:35-4:42).

1. JESUS AND HIS DANGER 1:14

Mk 1:14 Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,

Jesus, knowing John was "put in prison", goes into a heavily populated area and does exactly what John had done to get thrown into prison (cf. Mt. 14:3-4). By the way, John would lose his life while in that prison (Mk. 6:14).

Jesus was "confident" that His Father would take care of Him as He did His will on earth. We can have that same confidence.

John was put in prison because he was standing for what the Bible says. People don't like to hear that they are wrong.

If we do the right thing, God will watch over us. That does not mean we'll never get endure hardship, but it does mean God will be with us when we do. The three Hebrews boys did not escape the fiery furnace, but they found out there was a fourth man in the fire and the flame did them no harm (Dan. 3:25, 27).

We must face the fact that everyone does not love Jesus. Jesus said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Mt 10:34).

We are in the same world John and Jesus was. We have the same enemy and fight the same battle they did. But, we also have the same weapon they did. The Word of God and the Spirit of God.

Notice, Jesus did not change His message because the people weren't receptive. It was still God's Word and it was still the only source of real help. Hurting people keep searching for help in the wrong places. Only God's Word has the answers.

2. JESUS AND HIS DEMANDS 1:15

Jesus came making some demands. He did not make suggestions or recommendations, he commanded.

Mk 1:15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

His message was "Repent ye, and believe the gospel".

This is not a suggestion, it is a demand.

THERE IS A RIGHT CONNECTED TO GOD MAKING DEMANDS

God has the right to tell us what is right or wrong. He has the right to tell us what to do and not to do. He is the Creator of all things and that makes Him the boss. A boss has that right to make demands.

THERE IS A REASON CONNECTED TO GOD MAKING DEMANDS

God makes demands because He loves mankind.

A good daddy sees what his young child cannot see. Even though the child does not realize it, the daddy has his best interest in mind. He has no desire to hurt of harm his child. Therefore, if the child resists his father's will, he is resisting that which is best. In like fashion, God makes demands of His children because His plan is better than theirs.

God doesn't confront us about our sin because He hates us and wants us miserable.

He confronts us because He wants a relationship with us. He loves us and wants to be close to us. But, our sin separates us from Him.

2 Ch 36:15 And the *LORD God* of their fathers *sent to them by his messengers*, rising up betimes, and sending; *because he had compassion on his people ...* (emphasis added).

He confronts us about our sin because He sees the bondage of sin in our lives and wants to set us free. He knows our lives could be so much better if we would deal with our sin.

He confronts us about our sin because He sees the damage it does.

He confronts us about our sin sin breaks our fellowship with God.

God said to sinful Israel "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" Is 59:2). Adam and Eve ran and hid after they sinned (Gen.3:8).

He confronts us about our sin because He hates sin.

Sin is contrary to the nature of God.

The Psalmist said "For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee" (Ps 5:4). God cannot, and will not, tolerate sin.

God is angry about sin, and rightfully so.

Paul wrote, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness" (Ro 1:18).

The misuse of the house of God angered Jesus enough to where He overturned the tables of the moneychangers (Mt. 21:12-13).

The bottom line is, God confronts us about our sin for our own good.

We can never overestimate the need to see our own sin. It's easy to see sin in the lives of others, but somehow, we're blinded to our own. Unrecognized sin does the most damage because we don't see the need to get fixed. There is no doubt, we all are broken is some way. We won't get fixed until we see we need fixing.

THERE IS A RESULT CONNECTED TO GOD MAKING DEMANDS

If we do not listen to the demands of God, we will suffer the consequences. We may escape the demands, but we won't escape the consequences.

There is always, always, always a consequence to sin.

- Sinners won't escape the consequences of their sin

Ro 6:23 For the wages of sin is death

A wage is us getting what we deserve for what we have done. Eternal death is the wage of the sin of man.

Lk 13:5 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

His message was, you'll either repent of your sin or you will go to hell because of your sin. That message has not changed. It is still, repent or perish.

- Saints won't escape the consequences of their sin

Ga 6:8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption

God is too holy to ignore sin. What doctor would ignore the cancer? What policeman would ignore the criminal?

Nathan told David, "Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house" (2 Sa 12:10).

3. JESUS AND HIS DECISIONS 1:16, 19

Jesus, just like every person on earth, had decisions to make as He walked through this world. Since He came to do His Father's will (Jn. 5:30), He made those decisions according to what His Father desired.

Just one of the many decisions Jesus made was who to call as His disciples. These would be the men whom He would train to be His replacement when He want back to heaven. They would become His representatives on earth. Mark describes how Jesus chose some of His disciples (Mk 1:16, 19).

JESUS ALWAYS MADE WISE DECISIONS

Making wise decisions involves purpose

Jesus' one purpose in life was to do that which pleased His Father. He said, "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (Jn 5:30).

Every decision we make should boil down to one thing, what does God want me to do about this present situation? To make the right decision, we must first come to the point to where we are willing to do whatever God wants. His will must become our will. How much better would our lives be if we would make pleasing God the one purpose of our lives?

Making wise decisions involves preparation

Mk 1:16a Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

We know Jesus, being God, was never surprised by anything that came His way. But, the words "as he walked" makes me think Jesus was just living life, and, all of a sudden, He found Himself having to make a decision.

That tells me, at any moment, at any time of the day or night, we might run into one of those "unexpected" decisions. These are decisions that pop up right in the middle of us living our lives.

If we are going to be ready to do the right thing when a "surprise" decision pops up, we had better prepare ourselves beforehand.

It's impossible to make a right decision if we aren't right ourselves. We must be right with God. We'll do something dumb every time.

As a man, Jesus relied on His Father to help Him with His decisions. If Jesus did, how much more should we?

Making wise decisions involves prayer

Mark doesn't mention it, but John tells us, Jesus prayed all night before He chose His disciples (Lk. 6:12-13).

A sure way to make a dumb decision is to not pray about it. Most of the messes we find ourselves in are the result of us making a dumb decision.

Making wise decisions involves peace

In both instances of Jesus calling these disciples, we see no hesitation. Jesus did not hesitate because He knew was doing what was right.

There will be times when God gives us peace about the decisions we have to make. We can't explain it, we just know, this is what I should do. Thank the Lord for that kind of peace.

4. JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES 1:17-20

As we have already seen, Jesus chose men to go with Him. We may not be Jesus, but we should be just as careful about the people we allow into our lives. Who will you allow to go with you?

Mk 1:17–20 And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him. And when he had gone a little further thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him.

They were "casting a net into the sea". They were living life. That was what Jesus was looking for. He was looking for ordinary people. That sounds like you and me.

These men were ordinary men but they would become extraordinary men.

Jesus was looking for someone who would listen

Mk 1:17a And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me...

They heard what Jesus said. How simple, but that is what a good disciple does. A disciple is one who is willing to listen closely to what Jesus says. A know-it-all disciple is no disciple.

Jesus was looking for someone who would learn

Mk 1:17b ... and I will make you to become fishers of men.

The word disciple means "a person who learns from another". It means, you watch what they do and do what they did.

These men were expert fishermen. They caught fish because someone had taught them to fish. When Jesus spoke to them, He promised to make them fishers of men.

These men had to be willing to unlearn what they had been taught. Before we can learn what Jesus has to teach us, we will have to unlearn what others have taught us.

Unfortunately, there are some in this world whom cannot be trusted, and should not be listened to. Our heavenly Father is a good teacher and we can trust Him to teach us right.

We can trust God because He knows all things. He knows all things about all things. He knows what is right for you.

We can trust God because He always tells the truth. It may hurt, but He will tell us what we need to hear.

We can trust God because He loves us and wants the best for us.

Jesus was looking for someone who would leave

Mk 1:18 And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him.

The word "straightway" means "immediately". There was no delay, no hesitation, and no objections.

They "left their nets" (cf. 1:20) tells us their method of catching fish would not be successful with catching men.

They could not follow Jesus until they left where they were. We can't follow Him and stay where we are. We can't follow Jesus and hold on to what we have. We will have to let go of some things. Some of these things may be precious to us.

Jesus was looking for someone who would labor

Mk 1:16 ...he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

Mk 1:19 ...who also were in the ship mending their nets.

These were men who knew what it was to work hard. Theirs was not an easy job.

Likewise, the life of as disciple of Christ is not an easy life. He has a "work" for us all to do. We need to discover that which He wants us to do and get about doing it.

A lazy disciple is a worthless disciple.

Jesus was looking for someone who would lead

Mk 1:21 And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught.

Jesus led His disciples because He wanted to teach them to become leaders. The day would come when He would return to His Father (Jn. 14:3; 16:7). After Jesus left, it would be the disciples' responsibility to lead others as He had led them.

Notice, Jesus led His disciples to the "synagogue". The "synagogue" was a building where the Jews met to pray and worship. Though there are some differences, but the synagogue can be compared to the local church of our day.

After the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD, the synagogue became the main place of worship.

Some may wonder why preachers put such an emphasis on church and church attendance. The reason is simple, Jesus put an emphasis on church and church attendance. The Bible does, that means God does.

By leading His disciples into the synagogue, Jesus was setting an example that He intended they follow. Indeed, the synagogue would be a very important part of the disciples' lives. They, like Jesus, attended the synagogue and taught others to do the same (Acts 13:14-15; 13:42; 14:1; 17:1-2; 17:10; 18:4; 19:8).

After this, the persuasion against believers grew tremendously (Acts 4:3; 5:17-18; 5:33; 7:60). Saul, before his conversion, hunted down believers and went into synagogue to find them to persecute to kill. (Acts 8:1-3; 22:19; 26:11). And yet, in spite of the danger, the believers continued to go to the synagogue to worship. What was it about the synagogue that would cause them to do such a thing?

What was is special about the house of God? Why does the Bible so clearly encourage believers, not just to attend occasionally, but to be faithful to the church? (Mt. 18:20; Acts 2:46; 1 Cor. 11:18; 12:28; Heb. 10:25).

Let's take a look at that.

There is conflict at church

Mk 1:23b And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out,

Jesus came to this world to deal with sin and deliver those in its bondage. Amazingly, Mark's account of Jesus' deliverance begins, not in the slums and cesspools of sin, but at the house of God. Jesus' came to serve, so He went where He was needed most, the house of God. As we will see, Jesus certainly knew what He was doing.

The sad truth is, there is no place on earth where there is no conflict at all. Even the church is not exempt. Anywhere you have people, you will have problems.

One of Jesus' first encounters in the synagogue was with a man who was possessed by demons. We expect to find God's people in the synagogue. Unfortunately, there are times when one of the devil's crowd will slip in. The man mentioned here was such a man.

To make matters worse, the man was used by the devil to stir up conflict in the house of God. The demon spoke through the man and asked Jesus why He was sticking His nose in his business.

Problems in the church is not new. The church of Corinth was full of problems. Paul tried to deal with the problems of immaturity (1 Cor. 3:1), divisions (1 Cor. 1:10-11), fornication (1 Cor. 5:1-6), lawsuits (1 Cor. 6:1-3), marriage issues (1 Cor. 7:1-9), drunkenness (1 Cor. 11:21), and abuse of communion service (1 Cor. 11:17-22).

Unbelievably, the church of Laodicea was worse than the church of Corinth (Rev. 3:14-18).

Could I remind us, those in the church of Corinth were most definitely saved. Paul called them "saints" (1 Cor. 1:2). And, shockingly, they had all the spiritual gifts. Paul said, "So that ye come behind in no gift" (1 Cor. 1:6). That shows us, we can be saved and gifted by God, and still be carnal.

The existence of sin in the church is to not be taken lightly.

The Lord warns us of the effects of sinful and selfish activity in the church. He likens sin to leaven that eventually consumed the entire loaf (1 Cor. 5:2). Sin never remains dormant, it always spreads.

For this reason, believers are encouraged to keep unity in the church (Mt. 5:9; Rom. 12:18; Col. 3:12).

Believers are to, as much as possible, avoid those who live an ungodly life and cause division in the church (Rom. 16:17).

Also, believers are to be quick to forgive and restore those who fall. Believers are encouraged to restore those who have been "overtaken in fault" (Gal. 6:1).

There is complaining at church

It did not take long for the believers to complain about how the church was being operated. They complained about the widows being neglected (Acts 6:1).

Some of these complaints are selfishly motivated and only generate division. Every church has those who want things run their way and are quick to complain. The New Testament church has its version of Korah (Num. 16:3).

On the other hand, some complaints are legitimate and should be taken seriously. The apostles listened to the complaints about the widows and established a means of handling the problem. As a result, the widows were taken care of and the church grew (Acts 6:7).

There is conviction at church

The church is an excellent place for a sinner to come, hear the truth, and get saved. The Holy Spirit will move on the preacher to preach about the way of forgiveness. It may be difficult to face the truth, but there's help to be had for the one who will see their sin, repent and believe.

Many souls were saved in, and around, the house of God (Acts 3:6-9; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7; 14:1; 17:4; 17:12; 18:4).

There is communion at church

The word "synagogue" means "to come together". It was designed by God to be a place that brought people together.

The church is designed for communion with God.

Church is the place where God says, if you want to commune with me, I'm here. If we need to talk to Him, we can do it at church.

Joe Biden or Oprah will never invite me to come and visit them, but the good God of heaven asks me to come. We can come in, sit down, and experience real communion with a real God who really cares.

The church is designed for communion with fellow believers (Acts 2:42, 46).

This is a place where we can meet with people just like us, who face what we face, who have the same battles we have. They understand, they care, and it helps us face life.

There is comfort at church

God has given us a place where we can come and get some peace. That world out there is not our friend. It discourages, and defeats us. It can wear us down and wear us out.

There is cleansing at church

During Bible days, they wore sandals and walked on dirt roads and paths. They knew what it was to have dirty feet. Therefore, washing feet was a common practice (Gen. 18:4; 19:2; Jud. 19:21; 1 Sam. 25:41; Lk. 7:44; 1 Tim. 5:10).

Jesus compared dirty feet to dirty lives (Jn. 13:3-10).

The washing of feet was needed.

Walking dusty roads made getting dirty was unavoidable. No matter how careful they were, they would still get some dirt on their feet. As same is true of us. No matter how careful we are, this world will effect us. We will do, say, and think, things we should not.

Therefore, like those living in Bible days, we need a spiritual foot washing. The filth of this world gets on us and we need to get it washed off. As believers, when we sin we do not need to get saved again. We don't need a full bath, we just need to get our feet clean. Jesus said "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit" (Jn. 13:10).

The washing of feet was neglected.

The dirty roads and dirty feet were such a part of their lives that, if they didn't really pay attention, their feet could be dirty and they would not realize it. The same can happen to us. We can allow our spiritual condition to deteriorate without realizing it. Our interest for spiritual matters our thrill about being saved, our desire to know God better, our burden for lost souls, can be taken away. We can get more interested in our finances, friends, or fun, than we are in the house of God.

This is why the Lord admonishes us to examine ourselves. David said, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps 139:23–24). He asked God to search him, show him if there was any sin, and help him deal with it.

By the way, Peter said to Jesus, "Thou shalt never wash my feet" (Jn. 13:8). It isn't easy to admit we have gotten dirty and need cleansing. It isn't easy to ask God to cleanse us. But it sure is nice when we do. There is nothing better than knowing you're clean and there is nothing between you and your Savior.

There is change at church

No doubt, God gave the church that His children might come in and be changed.

What happens to us in the church should be taken out with us when we leave.

As we will see (1:29), the time came when Jesus and His disciples had to leave the synagogue and go back out into the world. And when they did, they walked straight into a world full of problems.

In a very real way, it is what happens in here that determines what will happen out there.

God gave a place where we can get away from the world. The problem is, we can't stay in the church all the time. So, while we are here, we'd better get all we can. We'd better not let our minds drift. We'd better put our all into the few minutes we have here. We'd better pray all week that God will meet with us and help us when we get here.

If we are not to be overwhelmed by that which is out there, we'd better make sure we get here what we need to overcome while we are in here.

If we are not to be defeated out there, we'd better make sure we get in here what we need to win the battle.

Every believer should ask themselves, "What type of church would my church be if every member was just like me"?

5. JESUS AND HIS DOCTRINE 1:21-22

The word "doctrine" means "that which is taught" Jesus preached and taught the Word of God (Mt. 4:23).

If we, as disciples, we are supposed to follow Him, we'd better know what He says.

Mk 1:21-22 And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.

Jesus led His disciples to Capernaum.

Jesus came into this world to serve, so He went where He was needed most, the house of God.

His doctrine was informative 1:21b

Mk 1:21b ... he entered into the synagogue, and taught.

Notice, when Jesus entered the house of God, He taught. He informed.

Speaking of the people of Capernaum, Matthew wrote, "The people which sat in *darkness* saw great light" (Mt 4:16 emphasis added).

Jesus came into the darkness with the light of the Word. When He spoke, he enlightened them to the truth.

His doctrine was inspired

His words were words from heaven.

He spoke with "authority" and "not as the scribes". The scribes preached the same Scripture Jesus was using but there was something different about Him.

Jesus got His authority from His Father. He came in the name of the God of heaven and earth. He was speaking for His Father and had His Father's approval in doing so.

At the transfiguration, the Father said of His Son, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Mt 17:5). The Father said He was well pleased with Jesus, but He also said "hear ye him".

His doctrine was invaluable

The only source of real help for our issues of life, is God's Word. Those who heard and heeded Jesus' words were helped. The word "authority" means "power". That means, when Jesus spoke, things happened and lives were changed.

The answer to the problems of life is still found in the Word of God. God is still speaking. Sadly, even believers think they need more than the Bible. When God's people have that type of view of God's Word, we are in trouble.

His doctrine was ignored

Even though some did accept and believe, there were many who rejected the words of Jesus. Jesus would say later, "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day" (Mt 11:23).

They heard Jesus speak, but they resisted Him. They saw His many miracles, but they refused Him. They knew who Jesus was, but they rejected Him. The world has not changed very much since then.

6. JESUS AND HIS DELIVERANCE 1:23b-34

The 1828 Webster Dictionary defines the word deliverance as, "Release from captivity, slavery, oppression, or any restraint".

Jesus came to deliver mankind from the bondage of sin and Satan

Jesus was able to deliver from demons 1:23b

Mk 1:23b ... a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out,

Demons, the fallen angels that followed Lucifer in his revolt against God, are still very much active in the world today (Acts 16:16-18) Paul talks about demons being "transformed as the ministers of righteousness" (2 Cor. 11:15).

Much of what is commonly called "hauntings" in our world today, is really demonic activity. It is certainly not the spirit of someone who has died. The spirit of a person goes straight to heaven (Lk. 16:22a; Phil. 1:23; 2 Cor. 5:8), or to hell (Lk. 16:22b-23), at the moment of their death.

A believer should avoid avoid anything to do with witchcraft or the occult (Dt. 18:9-12; Isa. 8:19; Acts 19:19; Gal. 5:20). God tells us to "resist" the devil (Jam. 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8-9).

That being said, since the devil, and his demons, are aggressive in their attack (1 Pet. 5:8), we cannot avoid all demonic activity. Thankfully, our Lord does still deliver us from the attack of the wicked one. John wrote, "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 Jn 4:4).

As scary as the subject may be, a believer can be confident in God's power to protect them from the devil or his demons (2 Cor. 12:7-10).

Mk 1:24 Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.

The words "us" and "we" indicate this man was possessed by more than one demon with one of them speaking on behalf of them all.

His cry was "Let us alone". This attitude is alive and well today. A lot of people just want God to leave them alone. They want to live their lives their way with no one, including God, telling them how they should be living.

The problem is, when you refuse to allow God access into your life, you open up room for the devil to slip in. If you're here and lost, you may think you're the one in control of your life. I have bad news, you are not in control. You are being led around by the devil like a little puppy. He will lead you straight to hell.

Notice, what the demon asked. He said "Art thou come to destroy us". That means, this demon knew he was on the losing side.

You can live as you please, but I want to warn you, you're joining the losing side if you don't go with God.

Nazareth was a city that occupied approximately 600 acres of land, had a population of about 500, and was on a road that led to nowhere.

Mk 1:25-26 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him.

The words "hold thy peace" are from one Greek word that means "to muzzle" It's the same word Paul used when talking about muzzling an ox (1 Cor. 9:9). It carries with it the idea of forcibly shutting the mouth. Jesus was not requesting, He was commanding.

Why did Jesus command the demon to be quiet? Perhaps it was because He did not want to be associated with the devil in even the slightest manner. He refused to allow, even the slightest, connection to be placed between the demon and Himself. The devil loves to confuse and deceive (Rev. 12:9). He has transformed himself into an angel of "light" (2 Cor. 11:14). Some of his best work is under the disguise of the church.

We need to remember, all this took place in the house of God. The devil is the most faithful member of any church. He, or his demons, will be at every service. The modern church ought to follow Jesus' example. So many churches have adopted worldly devices and call it worship.

It's interesting to notice, while Jesus refused to be associated with the devil, He was willing to be known for associating with sinners (Lk. 15:2; 7:34; 15:30; 19:7). He came to seek and to saved the lost. You can't find the lost unless you go after them.

Before the demon left the man, he hurt him. The word "torn" means to convulse like epilepsy. Mark uses the same word when he wrote about a demon possessed boy. He wrote, "Straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming (Mk 9:20).

When we think about demon possession, we usually think of a case like this one. But, demon possession is just a prevalent on Wall Street as it is in the slums of our world. The demon possessed person may be the one who wears a 3-piece suit and drives a Mercedes.

I would not want to give control of my life to someone as evil as the devil. We can yield our all to God without fear. He takes good care of that which is given to Him.

When Jesus spoke, the demon obeyed. He had no choice, he had to do what Jesus said.

The man got help. But, he got help only when he turned to Jesus. If we want help, we need to go to Jesus.

Jesus was able to deliver from doubt 1:27a

Mk 1:27a And they were all amazed...

The word "amazed" means to "stupefy" or "surprise". They saw something they had not expected to see. They saw something they thought they would never see. They saw someone doing something that no one else had been able to do.

Sadly, we are living in a day when most people would be surprised if God did do something. Doubt is crippling us and hindering God.

Matthew tells us Jesus did not do what He could have done because people did not believe He would. He wrote "And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief" (Mt 13:58).

Jesus said, "All things are *possible* to him that *believeth*" (Mk 9:23 emphasis added).

Jesus was able to deliver from deception 1:27b

Mk 1:27b ...insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him.

They began to "question" among themselves.

Jesus was able to deliver from darkness 1:28

Mk 1:28 And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.

The news about Jesus spread across the country like the rays of the morning sun. The Light of the world had come.

Spiritual darkness is the state of man living without God.

Jn 1:5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

The sad thing is, people love darkness rather than light. Jesus said "Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (Jn 3:19).

They refuse the light because the light reveals their sin (Jn. 1:20).

The good news is, the Lord is able to overcome the darkness and bring light to those who want it. Isaiah wrote "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light" (Is 9:2).

Paul wrote, Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness" (Col 1:13).

He also wrote "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light" (Eph 5:8).

I'm thankful for the day light shined into my world of darkness. When Light walked in, I suddenly was able to see my sin. I got lit-up.

THE SERVANT SERVES THE SERVANT SO THE SERVANT CAN SERVE THE SERVANT 1:29-39

As we look at Mark's record in the next six verses, a question comes to my mind. That question is, why did Mark record this particular healing?

This healing was one of thousands that Jesus performed. Matthew tells us "Great multitudes followed him, and he healed them *all*" (Mt. 12:15 emphasis added). This healing was not Jesus' first miracle (cf. Jn. 2:11), nor was it His first healing miracle (Jn. 4:46-54).

So, why did Mark record this particular healing?

I believe it is because, as we have mentioned, Mark is describing Jesus as a servant. So, the first healing miracle he recorded, as we will see, had to do with a person's service to Him. Peter's mother-in-law, being one of the ladies of the home, would have been expected to serve the guests. However, her sickness hindered her from doing so.

The next three verses should remind us of the fact that we are in a world of sin and sickness. Both sin and sickness can take control of our lives if we allow it.

These six verses should remind us of how Jesus came to help us with both, sin and sickness.

These six verses should remind us of how we are to serve God and others.

Mk 1:29 And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.

Jesus, Peter, Andrew, James, and John went to Peter's house.

1. HER SICKNESS HINDERED HER 1:30

Mark tells us of the sickness of Peter's mother-in-law. As we will see, this account puts a good deal of focus on the service of Peter's mother-in-law.

The fact that she is living with Peter and his wife suggests her husband has already died.

Mk 1:30 But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her.

Peter's mother-in-law's sickness was keeping her from doing what she needed, and wanted, to do. Her sickness hindered her.

Notice, she "lay". If she was in bed she was too weak to go about her daily routine. And, more importantly for the point I'd like to make, too weak to serve her guests.

Notice also, she had a "fever". A fever is a sign of infection and causes aches, fatigue, sweating, dehydration, and loss of appetite. The simple fact is, that she felt so bad that she, even though she wanted to, she did not feel like, serving.

Luke says she was "taken with a great fever". The word "taken" means "to hold to" and the word "great" means "exceeding". It, quite possibly, was a sickness that could have taken her life if she not gotten help.

More importantly, in the days of Jesus, infection was a serious matter than often led to death. In other words, Peter's mother-in-law's condition was serious, and perhaps, life threatening.

These words make me think about the "*picture of sickness*".

Sickness is a picture of sin. Like sickness, sin is a part of this world. It attacks an individual and holds on as long as it can.

Even though every sickness is not because of personal sin, sickness itself is the result of the fall of Adam. It is, therefore, a sin problem.

Sin, like Peter's mother-in-law's sickness, is serious and should never be taken lightly. Simply put, sin does great damage.

Even though every sickness is not because of personal sin, sickness itself is the result of the fall of Adam. It is, therefore, a sin problem.

These words make me think about the "*purpose of sickness*".

She was sick but God had allowed it to be so. God never does anything without a purpose. With any physical problem, there is always a spiritual lesson to learn.

- God uses sickness to show us we are human

Living in physical bodies that are prone to disease, and in a world full of germs, makes it difficult, if not impossible, to stay totally well. God allows sickness to come our way that it might help us to deal with life.

- God uses sickness to correct His straying child

God afflicted David so that he might see his sin and get right (Ps. 119:67; 71). Thankfully, David recognized it to be the hand of God and repented. Speaking to God, David said, "Thy judgments are right, thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me" (Ps 119:75 emphasis added). David ended up being closer to the Lord than he had before.

- God uses sickness to mature His children

God's ways are above our ways (Isa. 55:9), so there will be times when He allows things to come into our lives that hurt. He is trying to teach us to trust Him. During these times, we must be careful to focus on God and not on that which is making us hurt.

There is no doubt, that there are times when the devil is responsible for sickness (Job 2:7; Mt. 17:15-16; Lk. 13:11). But, even though the devil can be the cause of sickness, God is still in control.

- God uses sickness to accomplish His will

Jesus said that man was born blind "that the works of God should be made manifest in him" (Jn. 9:3).

We may never know what all God is doing in our lives, even when He does things that seem to hurt us. We can be sure, He is doing it for our good. We should never lose sight of the fact that God is good even if we suffer. I have found that those who suffer are often the ones who talk the most about God being good.

- God uses sickness to use His children

It may be that God would have us be caregivers for someone who is afflicted. Even though it can be a seemingly overwhelming task, God can give us grace to serve with a pleasant attitude. God never puts us in something without giving us the grace to get through it.

These words make me think about the "*power over sickness*".

Jesus will relieve Peter's mother-in-law of her sickness. He wants to do the same for every sinner on earth. As we will see, God has the remedy for the sickness of sin.

The word "anon" means "immediately". In other words, as soon as they told Him about Peter's mother-in-law being sick, He went to help her. That leads us to our next point.

2. HER SAVIOR HELPED HER 1:31a

Mk 1:31a And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her...

As soon and she was healed, she served Jesus. The servant (Jesus) served the one who would become a servant.

It is interesting to note that Jesus was willing to go into a private home and heal one little lady. He went where He was needed. He did what He did because He cared about people. He did not require the large crowds and the popularity. In fact, as we will see, He tried to avoid those things.

Notice, that all Mark says about Peter's mother-in-law after her healing is, "She ministered unto them".

- Her service was practical

The word "ministered" means "render assistance, to serve, to help". We are not told exactly what she did, but what she did helped her guests. She probably saw to it that they were able to bath, fixed them something to eat, and gave them something to drink.

We think of serving the Lord as packing up our belongings and going to Africa as a missionary. But, serving God may mean we mow the yard or wash the dishes of a sick friend. It may be a visit to a nursing home to talk to the person who has been forgotten. Serving the Lord is practical.

It seems obvious that Peter's mother-in-law had a desire to serve Jesus and her other guests. Once she was well, she "immediately" ministered unto them.

- Her service was personal

It was something she *could* do if she could get well. In other words, after Jesus touched her, she was able.

Certainly, what she did someone else could have done. But she did what she was supposed to. It was her job and no one else could have done her job the way she did it.

Someone needs you. That means also, you need someone. God designed it that way.

God will use us to help others. And, God will help us while we are helping others.

That is why Peter's Mother-in-law was so serious. She was in such a state that she was unable to help anyone. It wasn't that she didn't want to, or that she could have if she had forced herself, she could not do it, she was too sick to.

- Her service was powerful

It was something that, even though it was a simple domestic task, was of the utmost importance. God sees those who serve as the greatest in His family. Jesus said, "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister" (Mt 20:26). There are no unimportant tasks in the work of the Lord.

- Her service was productive

It was something that helped Jesus and His disciples. They were rested and re-energized as a result of what she did. What she did, gave strength to Jesus and the disciples to go out and preach the gospel. Every soul saved, every life touched, and every family helped, was partly because of what she did.

Jesus said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Mt 25:40).

3. HER SERVICE HONORED HER 1:31b

Mk 1:31b ...and she ministered unto them.

To the world, her service was insignificant. To God, it was magnificent.

She is one of the three whom Jesus healed who are mentioned personally in the Bible. Only Bartimaeus (Mk. 10:46), Malchus (Jn. 18:10), and Lazarus (Jn. 11:1) are mentioned. We are not told her name, she is mentioned in a personal way.

- Her service is remembered

Her service, though considered small by many, was something Jesus and the disciples never forgot. Jesus and his disciples never forgot what she did. In fact, we are remembering what she did now, over 2,000 years after her deed was done.

If we have a desire to be remembered in a fond way, we need to serve. The friends of Dorcas wept at her passing and remembered her deeds of kindness (Acts 9:39).

- Her service is respected

I mean by that, Jesus and the disciples did not take it lightly. It meant a lot to them. Reading about someone else getting a drink of water sounds good, but drinking that water yourself is totally different. After days of difficult travel over dirty roads in a hot climate made a good meal, a warm bath, and a soft bed seem like a little bit of heaven on earth. It all was made possible because a little lady did what she should and could.

We can be sure before Jesus and his disciples left, they all said "thank you" to Peter's mother-in-law.

As a side note, saying "thank you" is a common courtesy. A person who doesn't appreciate an act of kindness does not deserve it. Forgetting to say "thank you" is not being Christ-like.

- Her service is rewarded

Jesus has another "thank you" for Peter's mother-in-law. He will thank her again when she stands before Him (1 Cor. 3:10). The smallest of deeds done for the Lord will be rewarded (Mk. 9:41; Heb. 6:10).

The rewards we receive in heaven are eternal. They will never pass away (Mt. 6:19-20).

The great missionary Jim Elliot said rightly "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose"

All this being said, I do not believe Peter's mother-in-law did what she did for the reward. I believe she would have done it if she had not been remembered, respected, or rewarded.

Being appreciated is wonderful. Your little daughter hugging you and saying you are the best mama on earth is wonderful. Having the Christian tell you they enjoyed your Sunday School lesson will give you encouragement to study and teach again.

However, we had better not rely on these things. If we have to be appreciated before we can be happy, we aren't going to be happy very much. The fact is, a lot of people are self-consumed and don't even think of thanking those who help them.

Jesus gave up heaven to become a servant. Those He served ignored, attacked, accused, took advantage of, and put Him to death, all while devouring the good things He had provided.

Oh, by the way, mankind may have not appreciated all He did, but His father certainly did. His Father exalted Him above all and gave Him a name above every name (Phil. 2:9).

I say to the believer struggling with sickness, God does not promise healing to all, but He can heal is He so desires.

I say to the believer who is not serving, get busy now while you can.

I say to the weary servant who is disappointed at how the circumstances have turned out so far, don't give up. Keep serving. Don't expect, or demand, recognition, serve because the One who served you was faithful.

Our work isn't over, our day isn't done. But payday is coming, and it will be worth it all then.

7. JESUS AND HIS DEDICATION 1:32-39

Jesus can be described in many ways. He was holy, wise, gentle, patient, and compassionate. But, one attribute of Jesus must not be overlooked. He was dedicated. He was committed to doing that for which He came to earth to do.

The word "dedication" means "Devoted to a cause or purpose". It also means "single-mindedness". Jesus was all of these and more.

In the next eight verses, we see Jesus' dedication.

Jesus was dedicated to people v. 32-34

Jesus came to a world full of suffering, sickness, stubbornness, and sin. In the process of dealing with such an overwhelming need, it would have been easy to see the problems and lose sight of the people. But, Jesus never lost sight of the human aspect of His mission on earth.

Our God is personal. He looks at the vast numbers of mankind and sees individuals. I'm glad He does because I certainly needed someone personal when I came to Him as a lost sinner. And, I need that same personal God every day of my life.

Mk 1:32 And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils.

They waited until the sun had set so that they would not violate the Sabbath which ended at 6 PM (cf. 1:21). I can imagine those who are suffering terribly, those who are near death, and those who have loved ones they intend to help to get to Jesus, are all waiting anxiously for the Sabbath to end. They look like runners in the starting block. This a perfect picture of those who need to get to Jesus for help but are bound by the law.

Mk 1:33 And all the city was gathered together at the door

The news of this man who could heal diseases and cast out demons was spreading like wildfire.

This vast crowd thronged the house of Peter. They gathered as close to the door as humanly possible. However, we read no indication whatsoever that there was any disruption. It certainly was not like those in Sodom who tried to break down the door to Lot's house (Gen. 19:11).

Mk 1:34 And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him.

No doubt, in this crowd there were the invisible but deadly internal diseases, the obvious twisted arms and legs. Some had to be carried, and some crawled themselves. There were old and young, little and big, and rich and poor.

Matthew tells us Jesus cast the demons out simply "with His word" (Mt. 8:16). Jewish tradition gave all kinds of man-devised rituals to be used to deal with disease. Jesus ignored it all and simply spoke.

We are so quick to run to the doctor, home remedy, or even the latest medical fad when we are dealing with sickness. Certainly, God is not opposed to doctors and may want us to take advantage of the medical know-how of modern medicine. However, since God has the power to deliver us from the afflictions of the body, we should go to the Great Physician before we go to the hometown physician.

Jesus is still dedicated to people. You matter to Him.

Jesus was dedicated to prayer v. 35-36

One of the greatest proofs of Jesus' dedication to the Father's will is that He prayed as He did. Jesus had more on His plate than any person who has ever lived, yet He found time to pray (Mt. 14:23; 26:36; Lk. 3:21; 5:16; 9:18; Heb. 5:7). At times, He spent the entire night in prayer (Lk. 6:12). His prayer life had such an effect on His disciples that they asked Him to teach them how to pray (Lk. 11:1).

Jesus rose

Mk 1:35a And in the morning, rising up a great while before day

Jesus had spent many hours the night before helping those who needed Him (v. 32). Yet, He got up a "great while before day" to pray.

Jesus got up early so He could start the day off right. There is something special about morning prayer that helps us prepare for the will of the Lord and the attack of the devil for that particular day (Ps. 5:3; 59:16; 88:13; 90:14; 119:147; 143:8).

Jesus relied

We may make the mistake of thinking that Jesus, being God, had a strength the average person does not have. Jesus was God, but He was also 100% man. He needed sleep and rest just as any other man. He was able to withstand the weariness because He relied on His Father to give Him the strength and stamina He needed. We have the same Father who can do the same for us.

We speak often, as we should, of how God will give us the spiritual strength we need to do His will. We should be just as thrilled about His gift of physical strength.

Jesus removed

Mk 1:35b ....he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.

Jesus "went out, and departed into a solitary place" so that He might be able to pray without any distractions. Jesus found a way to get away and pray. Matthew wrote "And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone" (Mt 14:23).

Jesus tells us to have a place of prayer (closet) and shut ourselves away (shut thy door) so we can talk to our Father (Mt. 6:6).

So much of our prayer, if we pray at all, is at times when we are preoccupied with other matters. We pray while we are working, driving, or absorbed with some other activity. It is a disgrace that we think so little of our Lord that we try to fit Him in with the "more important" matters of our lives. He deserves our full attention.

Certainly, there will be times when we, like Peter (Mt. 14:30), have to call quickly. But, for the most part, we should give God our utmost attention as we pray.

And, seeing that He knows our hearts, and He is the One who answers, we need to focus completely on Him.

Jesus requested

Mk 1:35c ... and there prayed

The word "prayer" means "to request" and implies asking humbly and earnestly.

No doubt, much of Jesus' prayers involved making requests. He had a world to pray for. He knew of problems that no one else was aware of. He knew what was needed, who needed it, and what they needed. Yes, He had plenty of reason to make requests of His Father.

In like fashion, we are admonished to bring our petitions before our heavenly Father. I am so glad that we can ask of our Father and expect Him to answer (Jer. 33:3; Ps. 65:2; 91:15; Mat. 7:7-8; Lk. 11:9-10; Jn. 14:14; 15:7; 16:23; Jam. 1:5; 1 Jn. 5:15).

Jesus relaxed

No doubt, Jesus' prayer life involved more than requests. I am convinced He took the time to relax in the presence of His Father. I mean, He simply talked with His Father. He enjoyed the time away from the world. He focused on His Father and bathed Himself in His presence.

I am convinced this is one of the missing ingredients in the prayers of the average believer. When start, and end, our prayers, with nothing but requests. In doing so, we miss the most exhilarating part of prayer. We need to learn how to just simply talk to God. He enjoys conversation.

Jesus received

These verses say nothing about the answers to Jesus' prayers but we can rest assured they were.

We can know that because:

First, Jesus received because He asked.

So many times, we fail to ask. We suffer and complain but still fail to ask God for help. James said "Ye have not because ye ask not" (Jam. 4:2). When are we going to grasp what that means, and start praying as we should?

How can we see all the condition of our world, how can we not pray? When we have lost friends and family, how can we not pray? If we aren't praying now, what will it take to get us to pray?

Second, Jesus received because He will of His Father.

God does not hear the prayer of those who are not walking in His will (Pro. 1:28-29; 15:8; 21:13; 28:9; Ps. 66:18; Zech. 7:13).

Third, Jesus received because He asked according to the Father's will.

When we ask for selfish reasons, the Lord will not hear us. James said "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (Jas 4:3). The word "amiss" actually means "evil". It refers to us asking for something for our own selfish desires or out of a wrong motive.

Fourth, Jesus received because He believed His Father would grant His petitions.

Faith touches the heart of God and moves Him to help us (Mt. 21:22; Mk. 11:24; 1 Jn. 5:14-15)

The most wasted resource on earth is not the oil deposits in America, it is the neglect of prayer. Prayer connects us to a God who loves us. Prayer connects us with the almighty power of this God. Prayer can do what God can do. We go without help because we do not pray as we should. We are weak, carnal, callused, sad, lonely, doubtful, afraid, all because we do not pray.

By the way, if we do not ask, we do not have the right to complain when things do work out the way we want them to.

C. JESUS WAS DEDICATED TO PREACHING 1:36-39

As we will see, Jesus was dedicated to preaching the Word of God in a clear and understandable manner. Mark records, at least a portion of, 16 of His sermons. Interestingly, the first sermon of Jesus that Mark recorded was about the sower and the seed (4:1-27). He certainly came to sow the seed.

Preaching the Word is like a sower sowing seed. The harvest depends on the sower, the seed, and the soil. When the sower sows (4:3), the seed is good (4:14), and the soil is receptive (4:20a), there will be a harvest (4:20b).

Starting with Adam (Gen. 2:15-17), God has used people to reach people with the truth.

Jesus' preaching involved prayer 1:36a

Mk 1:36a And Simon and they that were with him

This is the first time Simon (Peter) is seen as taking a leadership role.

Jesus' disciples followed Him to the spot where He had gone to pray (cf. 1:35). As I have already mentioned, prayer was a major part of Jesus' life. Certainly, a good bit of His prayer was about His preaching the Word. He understood the need, even though He was God, for the Holy Spirit's power as He preached the Word of God.

Every preacher should pray earnestly about, the content of his message, the people who will hear, and that God to use him when he preaches. Prayerless preaching is powerless preaching.

Jesus' preaching involved passion *1*:36b

Mk 1:36b ...followed after him.

The words "followed after" are translated from one Greek word that means "to hunt down" or "to search for". It has the idea of eagerly seeking and tells us these disciples were eager to follow Jesus.

That tells us they had a passion for Christ and for His work. This passion came from Jesus. He loved His Father and was excited about doing His will. That attitude was contagious, and His disciples had caught it.

They had what every believer needs, a hunger for God. Every disciple of Jesus needs this type of spirit. Jesus said, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness" (Mt 5:6 emphasis added).

Hunger deals with desire. Hunger makes it easy to go to the refrigerator or the restaurant. In like fashion, a hunger for God makes it easy to pray, read our Bible, and do what pleases Him.

Having a desire for God is wonderful, but there will be times when we lose our desire. Losing our desire for God does not mean we have lost our need for God. In fact, it is at those times, when we need Him even more.

That means we should pray when we want to, and when we don't. We should read our Bible when we want to, and when we don't. We should be faithful to church when we want to, and when we don't. We should do the right thing no matter what. By doing these things, our desire will eventually return.

Jesus' preaching involved people 1:37

Mk 1:37 And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee.

Multitudes were seeking Jesus (cf. 1:28, 33). Jesus never lost sight of the people He was speaking to. He saw them. He saw their need.

In these verses, we will find Jesus preaching to people. First, He preached to servants who were watching. He preached to His disciples watching Him closely and following His lead (v. 36). Second, Jesus preached to sinners who were wicked. He said they needed to go into other cities to preach where, no doubt, there were many unbelievers (v. 38). Thirdly, Jesus preached to saints who were willing. He preached in the synagogues where there were believers who were willing to hear and do what He said (v. 39).

Quite often, a single congregation will include all three of these groups. A preacher stands before all kinds of people with all kinds of needs.

A preacher must never forget he is dealing with real people with real needs. They are laborers who are exhausted, mothers who are overwhelmed, and businessmen who feel inadequate. They are happy, sad, mad, scared, confused, discouraged, defeated, and depressed. Some are lost, some are saved, and some aren't sure.

Knowing this, a preacher must realize, that only the Holy Spirit can touch the hearts, and meet the needs, of such a variety of people. In short, God's man needs God's anointing.

Jesus' preaching involved preachers 1:38a

Mk 1:38a And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also:

Jesus took His disciples because He was in the process of training them to preach later. Jesus was consciously preparing men to take His place and preach the Word of God (6:7-13).

The Bible speaks clearly about preachers and their responsibility.

Paul told the younger preacher Timothy "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Ti 4:2).

• He said a preacher is supposed to be ready

The words "be instant" mean constantly on duty. The preacher must be ready to preach at any time and any place the Lord opens the door.

He said a preacher is supposed to reprove.

The word "reprove" means "to tell the fault" or "to state the wrong".

Sin must not be hidden or neglected. God says "Ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out" (Nu 32:23).

• He said a preacher is supposed to rebuke

The word "rebuke" means "to forbid" and carries with it the idea of "cutting" (1 Tim. 5:20). This word was used when describing the comments of the repentant thief on the cross (Lk 23:40). The Word can cut (Heb. 4:12). Paul told Titus "Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith" (Titus 1:13).

Rebuking sounds harsh, but it is better than allowing sin to continue to consume our lives. Sin is an enemy and should be dealt with as such. Sin is a sickness that will not improve on its own.

• He said a preacher is supposed to refresh

He told Timothy the "exhort". The word means to encourage or comfort. He must "exhort, and rebuke with all authority" (Titus 2:15). This world wears people down. God wants to use the preacher to build them up and encourage them to keep walking with Him.

Jesus' preaching involved purpose 1:38b

Mk 1:38b for therefore came I forth.

Jesus said, this is why I'm here, I came to preach. In essence, Jesus said preaching the Word was a major purpose of His coming to earth. He never lost sight of the reason He was doing all that He was doing. He knew He was on a mission from His Father. We also are on a mission from God. There is a purpose to our lives. David said "Is there not a cause" (1 Sa 17:29). We are not walking aimlessly through a meaningless life.

Jesus didn't forget He was dealing every moment with eternal souls who would go to heaven or hell. What could be a greater purpose in life?

Jesus realized, that not one circumstance He was experiencing was an accident. His Father was in absolute control of it all.

Every believer needs to say to themselves, "There is a reason for me being here, I am on earth, I am a believer, and God has put me in this situation for a reason".

If we lose sight of the reason for our purpose, we will not stand when it gets difficult. Quitting sounds reasonable when we forget how important our purpose is.

Jesus' preaching involved preaching 1:39a

Mk 1:39a And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.

It may sound strange to say Jesus' preaching involved preaching but, as you may know, all preaching is not really preaching. Certainly, it is not always the case, but in some Christian circles, preaching is more entertainment than preaching and the preacher is more of a cheerleader than a voice for God.

The words "And he preached" speak volumes. Jesus preached the Word of God, not about the latest news.

Some see preaching as "foolishness" (1 Cor. 1:18). The word "foolishness" comes from a Greek word that means "stupid or blockhead". However, God chose preaching as the means of saving those who are lost (1 Cor. 1:21; 2 Tim. 3:15). Paul said, "Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men" (1 Co 1:25).

Many modern churches are replacing preaching with drama, choreographed dance, puppet shows, sports activities, and movies.

Jesus' preaching involved power 1:39b

Mk 1:39b ...and cast out devils.

Even though Jesus' preaching and His casting out demons were separate works, it reminds us of the power of God that was evident in Jesus' life. Jesus was God in flesh, but He preached in the power of the Holy Spirit. He said "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives" (Lk 4:18 emphasis added).

If Jesus depended on the Holy Spirit's work when He preached, how much more do the preachers of our day need Holy Spirit power?

A preacher preaches with power when he gets out of the way and lets the Holy Spirit do the speaking. He becomes God's mouthpiece. Like water through a water hose, a preacher lets himself become nothing but a vessel for the Holy Spirit to flow through.

In like fashion, a preacher can be a hindrance to the work of the Holy Spirit. Self-effort will restrict the Holy Spirit. Relying on self will hinder the Spirit.

Paul said God did not send him to preach with "wisdom of words" (1 Co 1:17). When preachers are more interested in being an orator than God's spokesman, they forfeits God's power. Paul said "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Co 2:4).

It isn't personality or persuasion, it's God's touch that moves mankind. Paul said, "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost" (1 Th 1:5).

Jesus' preaching involved problems

The fact that Jesus had to cast out demons (v. 39) shows us He had to deal with a vast number of problems. The devil attacked Him unmercifully.

A preacher must be ready to face all types of problems. The devil will not sit back and let him preach God's Word without attacking him and his message. Jesus likened the devil to a thief when He said "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy" (Jn 10:10). The preacher must not let it discourage, distract, or defeat him from his mission for God.

The preacher can trust God to give him grace for whatever problems he faces. God told Paul "My grace is sufficient for thee" (2 Co 12:9). That same grace is available today.

Before we move on in our walk through the book of Mark, I think I should make some comments to the people who listen to the preachers.

- People who listen to preachers should appreciate the preacher

A preacher has one of the most daunting, difficult, discouraging, and at the same time, delightful jobs on earth. He has to be able to tune out the world, hear the voice of God, and be willing to say whatever God says. He has to stand against the wicked and for the weak.

Even though a preacher should never be elevated above what God has intended (Acts 10:25-26), he deserves respect as a man of God. God said "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm" (1 Ch 16:22; Ps. 105:15).

- People who listen to preachers should accept the preaching

Of course, a preacher is human and can make mistakes or be in error. However, when a preacher has prayed, prepared, and preached what God has given him, the listener should listen as though they are hearing from God Himself. The listener should guard against thinking the preacher is attacking them personally. The preached Word can change lives (Rom. 1:16; 2 Tim. 3:15).

- People who listen to preachers should anticipate the problems

The preacher and the people should remember there is an enemy who hates God, His Word, and His work. He will do his best to cause problems between the preacher and the people. There may be times when there are legitimate issues that need to be handled in a Biblical manner. This should be done with much prayer, patience, and maturity.

Every church member and every preacher needs to remember they are on the same team. We are family, not foes. We have the same goals, the same grace, and the same God. Jesus said "And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand" (Mt 12:26). If that is true of Satan, it is true of God.

Jesus continued His ministry by going and preaching to those who needed to hear. This preaching trip may have lasted for weeks. Matthew tells us about this time (Mt. 4:23-24).

THE LORD AND THE LEPER 1:40-45

In these verses we find a leper coming to Jesus and asking for mercy. The fact that Jesus allowed this leper to come to Him is tremendous. Jesus said "Come unto me" (Mt. 11:28; 19:14; Jn. 7:37). God tells us to come boldly to the throne of grace (Heb 4:16).

This was not the only leper Jesus healed (Mt. 10:8; 11:5; Lk. 17:12-19).

AN INTENSE CIRCUMSTANCE 1:40

As we will see, a man with leprosy approaching Jesus made for an intense circumstance. No doubt, the presence of this leper caused chaos among those who were present. Everyone was wondering, will Jesus heal this man?

This was an intense circumstance for three reasons.

First, it was an intense circumstance because of the problem involved.

Mk 1:40 And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

A man suffering from leprosy came to Jesus.

- Leprosy was a spiritual problem

Leprosy was a spiritual problem because, in the Bible, leprosy is a picture of sin. Under the Old Testament Law, a person with leprosy was declared ceremonially unclean and was not allowed to participate in worship in the Tabernacle or Temple.

In like fashion, sin separates us from our fellowship of our Lord. Isaiah wrote "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God" (Is 59:2).

Leprosy was one of the most repulsive diseases known to man. God sees our sin as repulsive. He is too holy to tolerate any sin in our lives (1 Sam. 15:23; Ps. 5:5; Pro. 15:9; Hab. 1:13; Rev. 21:27).

Thankfully, God gave specific guidelines whereby an unclean person could be declared clean (Num. 19:11-12; Lev. 14:19). I'm glad God had given us a way to be cleansed from our sin (1 Jn. 1:9). The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin (1 Jn. 1:7).

- Leprosy was a serious problem

Leprosy was serious because it caused severe and debilitating physical problems. In like fashion, sin causes disease, disagreements, depression, despair, death, and damnation.

Leprosy was too serious to take lightly. In the same way, no reasonable person will take sin lightly. God certainly does not.

If God takes sin seriously whether we do or not. We will not see the seriousness of our sin until we see the holiness of God. When Isaiah saw God, he saw himself as "unclean" (Isa. 6:5). Peter said, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man" (Lk. 5:8).

- Leprosy was a social problem

Leprosy involved not only the leper but everyone around him. Anyone touching an unclean person would be declared unclean as well (Num. 19:19).

For this reason, lepers were forced to avoid any contact with others. A leper was not allowed to camp among the people of Israel (Lev. 13:46; Num. 5:2). When coming close to another person, the leper was to keep their distance and cry aloud "Unclean, unclean" (Lev. 13:45).

Sadly, this meant, a leper would have no close contact with anyone, not even his own family. He was forced to live alone or in a leper colony (Lev. 13:11). In like fashion, sin not only affects our fellowship with God, it affects our fellowship with others.

Our influence on others matters more than we realize. To the good or bad, everyone influences someone. We are living examples. Jesus said "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you" (Jn 13:15). He told us to let our light shine before men that they might see our good works (Mt. 5:16). Paul told Timothy to be an example of a believer (1 Tim. 4:12).

These things being said, a leper approaching Jesus, or anyone else, was by no means, the norm. No doubt, those present gasped in shock when they saw this leper coming close.

• Leprosy was a scary problem

Understandably, leprosy was one of the most feared diseases of Jesus' day.

Certainly, there are times when fear is unwarranted and causes people to overreact. We experienced this when the entire world was frozen by the fear when COVID-19 hit in 2019. As severe as Covid was, in many ways, the fear of the disease caused as much damage as the disease itself.

However, there are times when fear is completely justified. There are things in our world that should be feared. Certainly, sin should be feared. There is no greater justified fear than the fear of sin and its results. We should be terrified of sin. We should fear it, and avoid it, like we would a plague.

• Leprosy was a simple problem

Under normal circumstances, leprosy was one of the worst problems a person could endure. However, as we are about to see, Jesus has a way of turning that which is serious into something simple. Jesus spoke, and the leprosy was gone. How simple is that?

Certainly, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God" (Lk 18:27). There is no problem too big for God, including the problem you are dealing with right now.

Second, it was an intense circumstance because of the prayer involved.

The leper came to Jesus asking that he be healed of his leprosy.

This leper came helpless

He knew Jesus was his only hope. His problem was so severe that nothing, or no one else, could help him.

This leper came humbly

He came "beseeching" Jesus. He was asking for that which he knew he did not deserve. He was asking for mercy. Mercy is for those who do not deserve and cannot provide, what they need.

He was "kneeling down". Luke tells us he "fell on his face" (Lk. 5:12). He got as low as he possibly could.

This leper hoping

He was hoping that maybe, just maybe, Jesus would have mercy and heal him. There will be times when we have to ask the Lord to meet our need and simply wait to see what His response will be. During those times we need to know that our God knows best and trust Him with whatever He does. God never makes a mistake.

Third, it was an intense circumstance because of the people involved.

No doubt, every person there became focused on Jesus and was wondering what He would do. They understood the seriousness of the man's disease and they were aware of the guidelines God had given in the Scriptures.

Jesus' life, and ours, are scrutinized constantly by the public. We should not take this fact lightly for it does matter what people think of us. We are our brother's keeper (Gen. 4:9).

We certainly should not live our lives only by that which man thinks of us (Pro. 29:25; Mt. 10:28; Jn. 12:43; Gal. 1:10).

However, we should be aware of the fact that people are constantly watching us and it matters what they think (1 Cor. 10:32; 2 Cor. 8:21; Gal. 6:10; Phil. 4:5; Col. 4:5; 1 Th. 2:15; 4:12; Titus 2:8; 1 Pet. 2:12). Peter tells us we should live in a way to where no one would believe a lie about us (1 Pet. 3:16). Part of the requirements of a pastor is to have a good testimony among those outside the church (1 Tim. 3:7). Paul said a believer is to be "blameless" and "without rebuke" in the midst of a "crooked and perverse" world (Phil. 2:15).

The bottom line is, it does matter what people think of us. We should live in such a manner to where they can not rightly accuse us of unspiritual conduct.

AN INSTANT CLEANSING 1:41-42

Mk 1:41 And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.

Jesus cleansed the leper instantly.

The cleansing of the leper involved two touches.

First, Jesus was the one who was touched.

v. 41a And Jesus, moved with compassion

The condition of the leper touched the heart of Jesus. Before Jesus touched the leper, the leper touched Jesus.

The words "moved with compassion" are one Greek word that means "feel sympathy". It literally means "To have the bowels yearn". We would say, it broke Jesus' heart to see this hurting man. Jesus felt his pain.

Jesus is touched by the feeling of our infirmities (Heb. 4:15). He feels our pain as though it is His. God said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt" (Ex 3:7).

Second, Jesus was the One who was touching.

v. 41b ... put forth his hand, and touched him,

When Jesus touched him, the power of God was released and the leprosy was instantly healed.

Notice, that Jesus said, "I will". That means, Jesus chose to grant the man's request and heal him. Jesus did not owe this man anything so He did not have to grant his request. God has the right to do with His power that which He decides.

The question arises, did Jesus become unclean by touching this leper? As I have mentioned, anyone touching an unclean person would become unclean themselves (Num. 19:19). We will find the answer in the next verse where it says "as soon as he had spoken" the leprosy left the man. That means, that by the time Jesus touched him, he was no longer a leper.

Mk 1:42 And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.

Jesus did that which could not be done.

The word "immediately" means "at once". Since the healing came the instant Jesus touched the man there was no doubt about who did it. I love it when God does things in a way that can only be explained by "Look what God did".

Luke tells us this man was "full" of leprosy. That means his case was severe, but, it wasn't too bad for Jesus to handle.

AN IGNORED COMMAND 1:43-44

Mk 1:43–44 And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away; And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

Jesus not only healed the leper, He gave him a very distinct command. Sadly, the man did not obey Jesus' command completely.

This command was a divine command 1:43

v.43 And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away;

These words, like all the words of Jesus, came straight from God.

The words "straitly charged" are translated from one Greek word that expresses powerful emotion. Jesus meant what He said and He intended the leper to obey. When God speaks, we should listen.

This command was a difficult command 1:44b

v44b And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man:

This was one of the most difficult of all Jesus' commands. Here was a man who had spent, who knows how long, under the bondage of leprosy, with little or no hope of ever being well, and suddenly, he was set completely free. How could he help but shout it from the mountaintop?

And yet, that is exactly what Jesus commanded that he do. This would not be the last time Jesus told people to keep quiet (cf. 3:12; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26, 30; 9:9).

Why did Jesus stop this man from speaking?

First, Jesus knew the publicity about this healing would divert attention from His primary message. The message was to be His forgiveness, not His miracles. Jesus did not come to earth to heal, He came to save. He was more concerned about their spiritual health than their physical health. He did come to help and heal, but first and foremost, He came to seek and to save that which was lost (Lk. 19:10).

Second, He knew this type of publicity would stir a desire among the people for the kingdom. Later, the people did try to force Him to set up His kingdom (Jn. 6:15). Jesus did come to set up the promised kingdom, but it was in His control and He would be set it up at the right time and the right manner. Of course, the Jews rejected Jesus as their Messiah and it was postponed (Jn. 1:11).

Third, Jesus knew the publicity from this miracle would energize His enemy even more to try to stop Him (Jn. 6:15; 7:30; 10:39; 11:57).

Jesus would tell people to go and tell, but only after He died and rose again. After the cross and resurrection, they had a message, not of healing only, but of forgiveness.

We should learn from this, God's commands do not have to make sense to us. He knows what we do not and He sees what we can not.

We should learn also, a command is a command. We should obey God without question or hesitation. To do less is sinful and unwise.

This command was a delivering command

v.44c ...but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

Jesus told the man to go to the priest and give the offering required for the cleansing of leprosy (Lev. 14:4-7). By obeying Jesus' command this man would be delivered from all the restrictions the leprosy had caused him. Also, until this man gave the required offering, he would remain ceremonially unclean. In other words, his response to Jesus' command would determine whether he would continue to live in bondage or be set free.

We need to realize, that the commands of God, all of them, are for our good. John said the commandments of God "are not grievous" (1 Jn. 5:3). Jesus said His yoke was easy and His burden was light (M. 11:30).

Mk 1:45 But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.

That which Jesus was trying to avoid came to pass. The man who had been a leper told everyone he saw what Jesus had done for him. And, his actions hindered to work of God.

In like fashion, any time we fail to follow God's instructions we will hinder His work.

Our study of Jesus healing the leper makes me think of four things.

One, God is right. He is always right.

If we are wise, we will accept that fact and trust Him no matter what.

Two, we should obey God whether we understand it or not.

There are no unimportant commands when it comes to God.

Three, we are responsible for how we handle God's blessings.

We should use what God has given us in a way that glorifies Him.

Four, Jesus was interested in more than healing.

This should remind us of why Jesus came to earth. He came to do more than simply make people feel better. He came to assist people to walk with God and obey the Scripture.

FOUR MEN WHO CARED AND CARRIED (2:1-12)

Jesus goes to a house in Capernaum where four men bring a man with the palsy. Matthew tells us Capernaum was His "own city" (Mt. 9:1). He used it as His headquarters during part of His ministry on earth.

THE SAVIOR IS WELCOME 2:1a

Mk 2:1a And again he entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house.

Fortunately, Jesus was welcome in this house. He was not treated so well by everyone (Mt. 8:29; Lk.:25-27). How welcome would Jesus feel in your house? How welcome would Jesus feel in your church?

The place involved with the Savior's welcome

We cannot be certain, but this may have been Peter's house where Jesus stayed from time to time.

Jesus being in this house is a reminder of our modern day church buildings. God designed the church building as a place where He could meet with His people.

God wants to spend time with His people. He met with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day (Gen. 3:8). He established the Tabernacle, Temple, and New Testament church buildings, for this reason.

Of course the actual church is the people and not the building (Eph. 2:21-22) but God has ordained buildings for us to meet in. Jesus called the church His "Father's house" (Jn. 2:16).

The presence involved with the Savior's welcome

Mk 2:1b and it was noised that he was in the house.

The word spread quickly about Jesus being in this house.

The five words "he was in the house" are some of the most delightful in the Bible. How wonderful would it be if the same thing could be said about our churches?

His presence made a vast difference in this house. Things never remain the same when Jesus shows up.

The greatest need of our churches is the presence of God. It takes more than a building with a steeple to make a church. The presence of God is the key to life in any church. Without His manifested presence, church services will be dead, dry, divided, and discouraging.

Jesus said, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Mt 18:20). The early church met together (Acts 2:1; 2:46; 1 Cor. 16:2).

We don't know if this was Peter's house, but whoever owned the house had to have invited Jesus in. That means, someone was glad Jesus was there and would have disappointed had He not come in. In like fashion, believers should desire God's presence at their church, be thrilled when He shows up, and devastated when He does not. There is no substitute for the presence of God.

Sadly, most believers aren't concerned enough to invite Jesus. There are plenty who are willing to complain when the church service is dead and dry. But, very few are concerned enough to do what it takes to get Jesus in the house. Where are the believers who long for the presence of God at church? God's presence will solve any problem we have.

The people involved with the Savior's welcome

Mk 2:2a And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door:

We do not know all the reasons why the crowds came, but they did come. If the modern church could get Jesus in the house, people would come. We've tried every gimmick in the book but still lack the one thing we need, His presence.

Some were curious. They had heard so much about this man named Jesus, that they wanted to see Him for themselves. They weren't planning to follow Him or make any commitment to His cause, but they did want to know more about Him. There are some today who want nothing more than a head knowledge of Jesus and have no intentions of going further with Him.

Some were cynical. They had heard also, but they doubted if Jesus could do all they had heard. They failed to realize Jesus was more than a man. This bunch is still alive today. They are the ones who always point out the reason something won't work.

Some were critical. They were the type who always saw the negative and could never be satisfied with anything.

Some were confident. These came because they had heard about Jesus and they believed what they heard. They needed help or they brought friends who needed help and they were trusting Jesus to help.

There is no doubt, no one came and went away the same. Every person was affected by the presence and person of Jesus. You can't come face to face with God without something happening.

Whatever they reason, they came in such a manner that there was no way for anyone else to get into the house. I know a lot of pastors who would love to have that kind of problem.

The same is true of the church. The church is the body of Christ (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12-14; Eph. 4:12; 5:23; Col. 1:24). A body has one head, but many members. That means, we not only belong to Christ, we belong to each other. That means, every member of the church is vitally important and terribly needed.

Some claim to be living for God but reject, what they call, organized religion. The Bible is clear, no one can be truly right with God if they willingly separate themselves from the church house. We are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together (Heb. 10:25). No one can be right with God and oppose that which He has established.

THE SCRIPTURE IS WORKING 2:2b

Mk 2:2b and he preached the word unto them.

Whatever their reason for coming to see Him, His focus was on preaching the Word.

While on earth, Jesus healed multitudes of sick folks (Mt. 12:15) but as we see here, His focus was on preaching the Word of God.

Only the Scripture can help us live in a way that will please God. It is God's Word that gives us help to live right while in living in a sinful world.

His Word confronts us about our sin, comforts us in times of suffering, encourages us when we are discouraged, teaches us to handle stress, and strengthens us when we are weak. In other words, the Word works.

We should make much of God's Word (Dt. 6:6-10; 11:18-22; Pro. 2:1-5; Mt. 28:20; Col. 3:16; 2 Tim. 3:15). Jesus certainly did.

THE SERVANT IS WILLING 2:3-5

Mark tells us about four men who were willing to serve a man in need. Each of these four had a servant's heart and were willing to do what was needed to help the person in need.

Mk 2:3 And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.

They brought in a man who had a real problem.

His sickness was obvious

Everyone could see his problem. In the same way, sin cannot be hidden. When we allow it in our lives, everyone can see it.

His sickness was overwhelming

More than likely, this sickness had bound him all his life. The fact that he had to be carried tells us he could not walk. He may have been totally paralyzed with no ability to function at all.

His sickness controlled every part of his body and every aspect of his life. He was helpless, and had to depend on others. It was humiliating. Sin does the same, it controls us and becomes our master.

His sickness was overcome

The outlook of this man's life was bleak at best. He had little or no hope of getting better. Unless something unusual happened, he would live the rest of his life in this same condition.

In like fashion, sin refuses to let us go. We carry our sin nature with us every day, all day, and we have no hope of escape. Turning over a new leaf or trying another 12 step program offers no hope. All those self-made ideas will leave us just as bound and just as hopeless.

However, as we will see, Jesus was about to make a difference in this man's life. That leads us to our next point.

Mark tells us about four men who were willing to do what it took to get a friend to Jesus. Clearly, they were willing to go the extra mile.

They were bringing

More than likely, the man with the palsy was one of their friends. Whether that is the case or not, they brought this man to the One who could help him.

It is a blessing that four were willing but I wonder how many walked by him on their way to see Jesus and thought nothing about bringing him with them.

If anything shows the failure of the modern church, it is the fact that there are so few willing to go and get those who need to be at church.

People all around us need to go to the church so they can get help from God. There are the sad, the suffering, the stubborn, and the sinful, and Jesus can help them all.

A lost world scrambles all around us but seldom do we make an effort to tell them about Jesus or take them to church. Jesus can help them, if someone will simply bring them to Him.

They were burdened

Mk 2:4 And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.

The depth of their burden is seen here.

These four men were there, not for themselves, but for one of their friends. They had what we all need, a burden. They cared.

These men were burdened enough to remember the roof.

No doubt they tried every door and every window. Luke said "They could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude (Lk. 5:19). That means they tried everything but found no way in.

The vast majority of people who given up and quit trying. After all, what other option was there? Then, one of them said "What about the roof"?

The fact they remembered the roof shows they were thinking. They believed there had to be some way to get this man to Jesus. Their burden for their friend would not let them give up.

These men were burdened enough to remove the roof.

Most houses in Palestine had flat roofs made of slabs of hardened clay. Having external stairs, these flat roofs provided a place for the homeowner to relax during the day or a cool place to sleep at night.

Notice what did not happen. Jesus did not stop preaching and invite them to come through the crowd. He did not make it easier for them.

The four men broke up the clay roof and lowered the man, probably with ropes tied to the edges of his bed, into the house where Jesus was. To say the least, this was highly unusual and totally unexpected by those who were present.

They were believing

As much as they loved their friend, it was not their love only that caused them to bring him to Jesus. It was their faith that drove them. Faith pushes us, strengthens us, and keeps us going.

Mk 2:5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.

Jesus saw the faith of the four. They truly believed their friend would be healed if they could get him to Jesus. Their faith caused them to press on despite obstacles. The crowd did not stop them because they believed. No way in didn't stop them because they believed.

Notice, that Jesus "saw" their faith. Jesus was looking for faith. He still is. Jesus rewards faith. We must remember, without faith, we cannot please God (Heb. 11:6).

The four had faith but so did the man with the palsy.

First, we know he had faith because faith is a vital part of forgiveness. Jesus said, "thy sins be forgiven thee". God doesn't just forgive a person simply because He wants to. If He did, He would declare every person on earth instantly forgiven.

Second, we know he had faith because faith is not transferable. God will not forgive Person A because Person B has faith.

Third, we know he had faith because he consented to the tactics of his four friends and the extraordinary means it took to get him to Jesus.

The fact that Jesus dealt first with the man's sin may imply that his sickness was the result of some sin in his life.

They were back

We are not told, but I believe the four men went back on the roof repairing the damage. I do not believe they left the roof torn apart. By this time, Jesus, the crowds, and even the friend they had brought to Jesus were gone. It was just them and a broken roof. No one was there to see, to tell them what a good job they were doing, or to commend them for doing the right thing. They did what they did, not for recognition, but because it was the right thing to do. How different this world would be if everyone simply did the right thing because it is the right thing. Sadly, even God's people have forgotten about the importance of doing right.

Fixing the roof was truly a thankless job but there was someone who appreciated what they did. The owner of the house certainly did, and, I believe, God did. He notices when no one else does.

THE SCRIBE IS WICKED 2:6-8

Mk 2:6-7 But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?

Surprisingly, some were upset about this man getting help. The most shocking part is, those who were upset were the "scribes". The scribes were the ones who studied, copied, and taught, the written Word of God.

Sadly, this group who should have been examples of godly living, had become proud and saw themselves as closer to God than others (Mt. 5:20-28). They had perverted the Word of God by adding their self-made traditions to God's Word (Mk. 1:22; 7:13).

They should have been the first to recognize Jesus as God, but they were some of the first who denied Him. They would eventually play a major role in putting Jesus on the cross (Mt. 26:57; Mk. 15:1; Lk. 22:1-2)

There will always be those who oppose the work of God. We should not be shocked when it happens.

Let's look at some facts about these scribes.

One, they were *sitting*.

I say they were sitting because it is obvious that they were not doing anything. They certainly weren't helping the man with the palsy get to Jesus. They were a part of the crowd who were in the way of the four trying to get their friend to Jesus. It seems like those who are quick to complain are those who are those who are not doing anything themselves. There are a lot of people "in the way" in our day.

Two, they were *sneaking*.

They were reasoning "in their hearts". Matthew says they "said within themselves" (Mt. 9:2). It seems they gathered and quietly discussed the matter in an attempt to not be overheard. The ungodly always try to hide their evil deeds. Jesus would say at a different time, "Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (Jn. 3:19).

Three, they were *scheming*.

They had already decided Jesus was a fraud and were determined to get rid of Him.

The word "reasoning" means "to deliberate". In other words, they were considering all the options to determine the proper conclusion.

Reasoning is a wonderful thing when we consider the facts honestly. But, when a person enters a discussion with preconceived ideas, the outcome can never be good. It is obvious, these scribes were not willing to examine Jesus honestly.

Part of their reasoning was right. In essence, they said only God can forgive sin. That is absolutely the truth. Only God can take away sin.

If you wrong me, I can let it go and release you from the guilt of what you did to me. But, I cannot release you of your sin. Only God can do that.

In all the reasoning of all the facts, the scribes refused to accept one simple fact, that being, Jesus was God. And, since He was God, He had the authority to forgive sin. That was one fact that most of the scribes would never accept (Mt. 6:6; 23:13, 14, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29; Acts 4:5-7, 17-18).

Mk 2:8 And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?

Jesus confronted those who objected to what He had done. They probably had no idea how fortunate they were. There were times when He refused to respond (Mt. 26:61-63; 27:11-14; Jn. 8:4-6).

Mk 2:9 Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?

Jesus asked which is "easier", to forgive or to heal. He was saying, it is "easier" to deal with sickness than with sin. This man's sickness problem was nothing compared to his sin problem.

Sin is a sickness that is deeper than the body. To lack physical sight is bad, to lack spiritual sight is worse. Not being able to hear is bad, having no spiritual hearing is worse. Spiritual sickness is far worse than physical sickness.

I can think of three reasons why it is easier to heal than to forgive.

One, it's easier to heal because of the *person*.

To be forgiven, a person must admit.

The man with the palsy had no problem admitting he needed healing. He was sick and he knew it. It was obvious to everyone. However, admitting his need of forgiveness was quite different.

It's easy to know if you're sick. You hurt, you're weak, you run a fever. But, knowing you're a sinner is quite different. The Lord has to open our eyes so we can see how sinful we are and how badly we need forgiveness.

Those who accept God's forgiveness must admit their sin. That hurts and humiliates. It takes away our pride. A person must admit that their goodness is not good enough.

To be forgiven, a person must accept.

To be forgiven, this man had to admit his sin, but he also had to accept the Savior. Forgiveness comes only when a sinner submits themselves to the Lord and accepts His forgiveness. This man could be healed without giving his permission, but he could not be forgiven without giving his permission. God will not forgive anyone against their will.

No sick person in their right mind would refuse healing. Yet, every day, all over this world, thousands refuse to accept God's forgiveness. They love their sin so much they will not turn to Christ. That leads me to my next point.

Two, it's easier to heal because of the *price*.

It cost the man with the palsy nothing to receive Jesus' healing. However, it cost him a great deal to receive Jesus' forgiveness. He had to give up his sin.

God indeed grants us forgiveness by His grace without any works of our own (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:3; 4:6; Gal. 3:6; Jam. 2:23).

However, a person must be willing to turn from their sin if they are to be forgiven. The Bible calls it repentance. Jesus said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Lk 13:3). Repentance is not a work we do, it is us surrendering our lives to the Lord.

The sinful nature of man does not want to give up its sin. Unfortunately, some love sin so much they are not willing to turn to Christ. A rich man loved his riches so much he that turned from Jesus and walked away still in his sin (Mt. 19:22).

Thankfully, after we get saved, we realize it was worth it. The temporary pleasures of sin are nothing compared to the wonders of salvation.

Three, it's easier to heal because of the *people*.

Surprisingly, as we have already seen (v. 6), some of the people present were not pleased with how Jesus dealt with the man with the palsy.

In like fashion, the person who receives forgiveness must face the fact that some are going to misunderstand. Some will snicker, some will scorn, some will scoff. However, the person who receives Christ is getting far more than they are giving. God gives joy for sorrow, peace for anxiety, and heaven for hell. And, God will replace those fair-weather friends with real friends. I can testify to this myself.

Mk 2:10 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,)

The word "power" means "authority". Jesus, being God, had the right to forgive sin.

Mk 2:11 I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.

Jesus' ability to take his sickness away proved His ability to take his sin away.

Jesus told him to *rise*.

The word "arise" has the idea of being aroused from sleep or sickness. It is the same word used when Jesus arose and rebuked the storm (Mt. 8:26) when referring to Jesus being raised from the dead (Rom. 4:24; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:20; Col. 2:12; 1 Th. 1:10), and to describe the child of God being raised at the Rapture (1 Cor. 6:14; 2 Cor. 4:14). To say the least, this is a word that is used when referring to a life-changing event.

He told this man to do what he could not do. Contrary to what some believe, there are times when God will ask us to do what we cannot do. But, God will never ask us to do what we cannot do with His help.

Jesus told him to *remember*.

Jesus told him to "take up thy bed". That old stinky mat would be a wonderful reminder of where he had been and what shape he was in before he met Jesus.

Jesus told him to *return*.

He told him to return to his house. We aren't told if this man was married but the fact that Jesus told him to go home seems to imply that he did. It is unlikely Jesus would send him to an empty house.

Mk 2:12 And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

Luke tells us he went "to his own house" and "glorified God" (Lk. 5:21).

Mark tells us those who saw him said "We never saw it on this fashion". How wonderful would it be to be able to say "I have never seen anything like this". They had seen something that could only be explained by saying, "Look what God has done". Unfortunately, we are not able to say that very often in our day.

Jesus made a difference. He had the solution to this man's problem. He was able to heal and forgive. Only God can do that, but, thank the Lord, He is able. He is the One who can deal with our sin problem. He took our punishment and paid the price for our sin (Isa. 53:4-5).

Touching his body would have been wonderful, but touching his soul was much greater.

JESUS, A FRIEND OF SAINT AND SINNER 2:13-16

Jesus was the greatest friend anyone could ever hope to have. There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother (Pro. 18:24).

THE PATH JESUS WALKED 2:13-14a

Jesus traveled through this world on His mission for His Father. He walked the path designed by His Father. His disciples are supposed to follow Him.

Mk 2:13 And he went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them.

The "sea" was the Sea of Galilee (cf. Mt. 4:18).

The word "multitude" means "throng". As before, the crowds were so large there was no room. A multitude of people meant a multitude of problems. Every person there needed help of some sort. Jesus "taught them". Whether they realized it or not, He gave them what they needed. Only the Word of God can handle so many needs at once. The Word fixes whatever is broken.

Mk 2:14 And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.

Jesus was busy taking care of His Father's business (cf. Lk. 2:49). As He walked, He passed a tax collector. A "receipt of custom" was a booth where a tax collector collected taxes.

Jesus said simply, "Follow me". His request could not be more simple.

A note of interest: Taking time to study the word "follow" throughout the Bible is well worth the effort (Gen. 24:5; Judges 8:5; Mat. 8:22; 19:21-22; Mk. 8:34; 10:21; Acts 12:8).

Following Jesus will keep us close. You can't follow someone without staying close to them. Following Him means we stay close and go step by step.

Following Jesus will keep us clean. The person who follows Jesus will live clean and godly lives.

Following Jesus will keep us cautious. We do not know where He will lead us or what is in the path ahead. For this reason, the one who follows Him will be careful to not take even on step on our own.

The word "follow" means "to be in the same way". The Bible says, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed" (Am 3:3).

The word "follow" also means "to accompany". The one who chooses to follow Jesus will not walk alone.

He walked to path of life, leaving us an example that we should follow.

We should follow His example of self

He said, "Follow "me"

Eph 5:2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us ...

Mt 26:39 ... nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.

Php 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

We should follow His example of serving

Jesus was not standing still, He was busy doing His Father's will. God not only has a plan, He is actively doing what it takes to accomplish

Jesus' call to "follow" was also a call to service. A call to salvation is, at the same time, a call to serve. Once Matthew had his sin problem resolved, he was to give himself to the service of the Lord.

We follow Jesus by serving His Father as He did.

Jn 8:29 ... I do always those things that please him.

Jn 5:30 ...I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.

Jn 6:38 I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

Jesus saw what was truly valuable. He saw this world as temporary.

We should follow His example of supplication

Jesus was a man of prayer.

Anything worth thinking about is worth praying about. Anything worth worrying about is worth praying about.

Jesus prayed before every great event in His life.

Lk 3:21 Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened,

Jesus prayed when He had decisions to make.

Lk 6:12 ...he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

He was praying because He knew He had to select disciples.

Mt 14:23 ...when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray:

Jesus prayed when His disciples were in trouble. His disciples were in the storm on the sea, but Jesus was in the hills praying for them.

We should follow His example of separation

Jesus certainly lived a godly life. God uses people to do His work but He is very selective about those He uses. He looks for those who are spiritually clean.

Mt 23:26 Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.

Mt 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness;

We should follow His example of suffering

1 Pe 2:21 ..Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

Eph 5:1 Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;

Isa. 53:3 ...a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief

The word "acquainted" means "to know". Jesus was well familiar with grief and sorrow.

Lk 9:51 And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem,

Jn 17:1 ...Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:

Jn 18:8 ...I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way:

Jesus did not put himself first. He was facing the cross but He was more concerned about His disciples than He was Himself.

Php 3:10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings

When we read verses like this one that talk about His suffering, do we still want what He wanted? We want His power but we do not want His pain.

Jas 5:10 Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.

The Old Testament prophets are our examples. They learned from their experiences. We should learn from what they endured.

We should follow His example of sinners

Levi (Matthew) was a tax collector and a complete outcast, but Jesus called him just like the other disciples. We need to do as Jesus did and love those who are unlovable.

Thankfully, Levi did what Jesus asked. He "arose and followed" Jesus. As a result, he would never be the same.

Jesus was busy taking care of His Father's business (cf. Lk. 2:49). As He walked, He passed a tax collector. A "receipt of custom" was a booth where a tax collector collected the taxes from the people.

v.14a .... And as he passed by...

The words "passed by" are from one Greek word that means "to go along or go away". Both were true of Jesus. He was "going along" as He passed by the tax collector. And He was "going away" because He would keep going on to other places and other people.

What Jesus does before He goes depends greatly on our response to Him.

- There was planning involved with Jesus passing by

Jesus had a plan in mind. He was not just happening by, He was heading somewhere. God does not wander around in circles with no goal in mind. He always has a plan.

We are a part of His plan. Those who follow Jesus need to find and follow His plan for their lives.

- There was progression involved with Jesus passing by

The fact that Jesus was "passing by" means He was not standing still, He was busy doing His Father's will (Jn. 8:29). God not only has a plan, but He is actively doing what it takes to accomplish His plan. Jesus was making progress, He was getting things done, He was improving the world.

Jesus was changing the world by changing people. What He was doing in the world He wanted to do with those who followed Him. That is exactly what God wants to do in the lives of believers today. He wants to help us be more godly, more dedicated, have a greater burden, experience more joy, and have more power. He is still working on us.

A plan is worthless if it is not followed. It's easy to talk about what we need to do. We need to do it, not just talk about it. How often do we talk about how everyone needs to pray, but we don't pray? The same is true of so many aspects of our lives.

James said, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (Jas 1:22).

That means, learning what the Bible says is not enough.

It means, talking about what the Bible says is not enough.

It means we need to do what the Bible says. Anything less is not enough.

We need to follow Jesus every step of the way. We should get up every morning and give our day to God.

- There was passing involved with Jesus passing by

I mean by that, Jesus was passing by and would keep going. His path did not end at the receipt of custom. Soon, He would be gone.

If we want God's help, we had better call on Him why He is available. Isaiah said, "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, Call ye upon him while he is near" (Is 55:6). God may wait, but He will not wait forever. If we refuse, He will find someone else. We need to listen intently when He speaks and not take it lightly.

The time will come when we are not able to do what we once were. Sooner than we realize, our lives will be over. What we do for Christ, we need to do now.

THE PEOPLE JESUS WANTED 2:14b

Mk. 2:14b ...he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me.

As Jesus walked the path His Father had designed, He was choosing men who would become His disciples.

God's plan includes people.

Jesus' path led Him by a tax collector named Levi (also called Matthew).

Jesus wanted saints

Jesus had a problem. He was looking for saints but all He could find were sinners. All are sinners (Rom. 3:23).

But, the good news is, God specializes in making saints out of sinners. For that reason, when dealing with mankind, God always starts by dealing with their sin.

The fact is, none of the twelve disciples were worthy to be a part of Jesus' ministry on earth. They were all cut from the same cloth. By the way, so are we. None of us are worthy.

To make matters even worse, Jesus was approaching the worse or the worse. Being a tax collector, Levi was one of the worst sinners of that day.

At that time Israel was occupied by the Roman government and under Roman authority. The Roman government hired some of the Jews to collect their taxes and allowed them to keep whatever amount they collected over the taxes owed. Most of these tax collectors charged an outrageous amount. Zacchaeus, spoke of his taking money by false accusation while being a tax collector (Lk. 19:8). In essence, a tax collector was an extortioner and a traitor. He was a Jew cheating a Jew on behalf of an enemy government.

A tax collector was a complete outcast. He could not be a witness in the court of law nor allowed to be a part of the worship in the synagogue.

And yet, despite all of this, Jesus said "Follow me" to Levi. Everyone else would have avoided this man, but not Jesus.

Jesus' call to Levi was a call to salvation. He was offering forgiveness. The path of following Jesus always starts with salvation. Without salvation, there can be no true service.

There was a change in Levi when he answered Jesus' call.

Jesus wanted servants

Jesus' call to "follow" was also a call to service. A call to salvation is, at the same time, a call to serve. Once Matthew had his sin problem resolved, he was to give himself to the service of the Lord. We follow Jesus by serving His Father as He did.

For Matthew, this was just the beginning. As one of the original 12 disciples, God certainly used him. God would use him to pen the book of Matthew.

The cost involved with being a servant of Jesus

The is always a cost involved with serving God.

Becoming a good servant involved Matthew leaving his old life behind. Jesus said, "No man can serve two masters" (Mat. 6:24).

When Matthew followed Jesus, he left his means of security. He was leaving behind the luxury and pleasure his job as a tax collector had provided.

Levi's was a greater sacrifice than the other disciples. The other disciples had jobs making average income. Matthew's business could have made him rich.

Also, the disciples who had been fishermen could return to fishing if things did not work out with Jesus. At one point, for a short time, some did this (Jn. 21:3). But, Matthew could not go back to his business. If he gave up his tax collecting position, the Roman official would never allow him to get it back.

The conflict involved with being a servant of Jesus

No doubt, Matthew's joining the group stirred up some emotions among the disciples.

Notice, Levi was collecting taxes near the "sea side" when Jesus came by (cf. v. 13). That makes us wonder if Matthew had been the one who collected taxes from the fishermen among the twelve (Andrew, Peter, James, and John).

I wonder how the other disciples felt when this despised tax collector joined their group. Could this be one of the reasons why the disciples were arguing about who would be the greatest? The twelve disciples argued about who would be the greatest on three separate occasions (Lk. 9:46; Mk. 10:32-45; Lk. 22:24).

Believers haven't gotten any better since then (1 Cor. 1:11; 3:3; 6:1; 11:18; 2 Cor. 13:11; Gal. 5:15; 1 Tim. 6:4; Jam. 4:1). As I have already mentioned (1:23b), there will be conflict among God's people. If the devil doesn't stir it up, we will ourselves.

The twelve disciples were a perfect example. You could find a more diverse group of men. Four (Peter, Andrew, James, and John) were simple fishermen, one (Simon) was part of a political group seeking to overthrow the Roman government, Matthew worked for the Roman government collecting taxes from his own people, Judas Iscariot was a hypocrite who ended up selling Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. To say the least, this was not a dream team.

It is interesting to note that none of the original twelve were rabbis, scribes, or Pharisees. Jesus did not pick men who affiliated with the religious bondage of that day.

And yet, Jesus expected them to leave their past behind, unite as one, and follow him.

The compensation involved with being a servant of Jesus

There may have been a cost involved with following Jesus, but there was also a reward. They were being called by the greatest man who ever lived, to do the greatest job that had ever been. They would walk closely with God in the flesh. They would see what no one else saw and hear what no one else would hear.

They all willingly walked away from their old lives and, I am sure, they never regretted it. They were trading the temporal for the eternal. No one ever gave up something for the Lord and was sorry for doing so. The missionary Jim Elliot said, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose".

The continuation involved with being a servant of Jesus

The disciples continued to follow Jesus even after He left this world. "Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards" (Jn 13:36). The time came when the disciples did follow Jesus into the next world.

And when Jesus' ministry came to an end, He would instruct and empower them to keep doing the work of the ministry (Mt. 28:18-20).

When Jesus called His disciples, He did not give them a lot of time to think about it. They did not have time to discuss the details or haggle about their job description when He called, it was time to go.

By the way, Jesus is still calling, He is still searching for someone who will hear His voice and follow Him (Jn. 10:27).

The 12 disciples would all fail in some way or other, but all of them except for Judas would go on to do something for God.

Mk. 2:14c ... And he arose and followed him.

Thankfully, Levi did what Jesus asked. He "arose and followed" Jesus. As a result, he would never be the same.

Jesus would call Levi by the name of Matthew (Mt. 9:9). From this point on, the Bible refers to him as Matthew. The name Matthew means "Gift of the Lord". Matthew was a gift from God to the world.

Never again does the Bible speak of him being a tax collector. Interestingly, the only time his past is mentioned at all is when Matthew himself listed the 12 disciples (Mt. 10:2-3). I wonder if he called himself "the publican" because he remembered what he was when Jesus found him. We should never forget what we were before we met Jesus.

Matthew left his source of riches for the source of true riches. He left his means of temporal security for eternal security. He went from loving self to loving the Savior and from getting to giving. As the song says, "It always makes a difference when Jesus passes by".

Jesus wanted sinners

Mk 2:15 And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him.

Levi invited Jesus and the disciples to a meal at "his" house. Luke tells us it was Levi's house (Lk. 5:29). The fact that Luke says it was a "great feast" seems to suggest, as I have mentioned, Matthew was prosperous.

Many "publicans and sinners" came to the meal at Levi's house. More than likely, they were friends of Levi. No doubt, the news of Levi's conversion spread quickly and they wanted to find out what had happened to their old friend.

The most promising harvest is the old friends of a new-born believer.

As believers, we should avoid pollution in this world (Gen. 35:2; Acts 15:20; 1 Th. 4:3; 1 Pet. 2:11), but we should not avoid all sinners in the process. We have become so isolated we have become insulated from the sinners who need to hear about Jesus.

Jesus went to Levi's because He was searching for sinners. He came to seek and to save that which was lost (Lk. 19:10). By the way, He is still searching for sinners today.

THE PHARISEES JESUS WARNED 2:16-17

Mk 2:16 And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?

Jesus warned the Pharisees in an attempt to show them of their spiritual condition. Sadly, they rejected Him and His message.

Orthodox Judaism believes God had Moses write down the words of the first five books of the Bible. They also believe God gave Moses oral instructions about how to interpret those books. They believe these oral rules were passed on through the years until they were finally written down in what is commonly called the "Mishnah".

The Pharisees were a religious group within Judaism. They believed the Old Testament to be God's Word but, as we will see, they came to the point to where they believed these oral instructions were more important than the written Word of God. To make it worse, they continued to add more and more of their own rules.

Jesus tried to show the Pharisees serving God is more than just following the rules. That is especially true when the rules are ones we have made up ourselves.

Unfortunately, the attitude of the Pharisee is alive and well in our day. Recognizing these facts brings me to this conclusion, I do not want to be a Pharisee.

As we go through the following points, ask yourself, "Am I a Pharisee"?

A MODERN DAY PHARISEE WOULD SAY "I'M HERE"

A Pharisee is totally dedicated to the house of God. Every service a Pharisee would be able to say "I here".

No doubt, being dedicated to God's house is a good thing. Neglecting church is a sin. The "not forsaking" (Heb. 10:25) is a command, not a suggestion. However, a person can be as faithful as clockwork and still be carnal as the devil. Paul wrote 6,830 words in his first letter to the very carnal church in Corinth. Not one of them was about them being absent.

That tells us, church attendance, as important as it is, does not guarantee we are right with God.

A MODERN DAY PHARISEE WOULD SAY "I'M HOLY"

A Pharisee believes God is pleased with them.

Jesus tells us of a Pharisee who is a perfect example (Lk. 18:9-14). He was trusting his good works to justify him before God (Lk. 18:11-12).

A Pharisee believes salvation is obtained by doing good and following their self-made rules.

A Pharisee uses the Bible as a weapon to beat others down. They tried to use Scripture when they cast the guilty woman at the feet of Jesus but were guilty themselves (Jn. 7:3-11).

A Pharisee is more strict than the Bible. I know preachers who think it is a disgrace to wear anything other than a white shirt when they preach.

A Pharisee sees only black and white. They look only at the outside and ignore the inside. Jesus said, "ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess" (Mt 23:25). He called them "whited sepulchres" that are full of "dead men's bones" (Mt 23:27).

A Pharisee is not concerned about a person's heart. A person's motives or attitude means little to them. They are careful to not drink, steal, or cheat, but think nothing about their heart being filled with lust, anger, or jealousy.

A Pharisee believes if a person does not live up to their self-made standards it is a sign they are not really saved. They are quick to say "There is no way that person is saved".

A Pharisee seldom sees their own faults. They can see the faults of others quite clearly, but somehow, miss, or explain away, their own.

A Pharisee thinks they have no "serious" sin to repent of. Somehow, they miss, or ignore, what Jesus said about the inside of the cup (Lk. 11:39).

I have a homework assignment for you. Search the Bible and find all the times when you see a Pharisee repenting. I have found one, only one. Nicodemus. I have found many, many, who refused to even acknowledge the slightest chance that they may need to repent.

A Pharisee refuses to associate with sinners (Mk. 2:15-16; Lk. 15:1-3).

A Pharisee not only avoids sinners, they avoid any person who does not line up with their code of conduct.

A Pharisee is more about living up to standards than being transformed by the work of the Holy Spirit. What's the difference? One, God is doing, the other, I am doing.

A MODERN DAY PHARISEE WOULD SAY "I'M HUMBLE"

A Pharisee never sees their own pride (Lk. 18:11-12). They truly believe they are a humble servant of the Lord. Such an attitude is not only ungodly, it is dangerous for it opens a person up to the attack of the devil.

Pharisees love to confront and criticize. They spend a lot more time criticizing than complimenting.

A Pharisee never forgives.

A Pharisee refuses to associate with sinners.

As believers, we should insulate ourselves but we should not isolate ourselves. We should avoid pollution in this world (Gen. 35:2; Acts 15:20; 1 Th. 4:3; 1 Pet. 2:11), but we should not avoid all sinners in the process. We have become so isolated we have become insulated from the sinners who need to hear about Jesus. Jesus went to Levi's because He was searching for sinners. He came to seek and to save that which was lost (Lk. 19:10). By the way, He is still searching for sinners today.

A Pharisee fails to recognize the different levels of maturity among God's people. They expect everyone to immediately be on the "higher" level that they believe they have attained. A quick glance at the twelve disciples will show us there are different levels of development among the family of God.

Their, "we are against" list is long, while their "we are for" list is short or nonexistent.

They act like the spiritual police who have been sent by God to straighten everyone out.

A MODERN DAY PHARISEE WOULD SAY "I'M HELPING"

Shockingly, the Pharisees saw themselves as the protectors of the Law. They saw those outside of their circle as a hindrance to what God is doing.

Sadly, they not only did not protect the Law, they dismantled and destroyed it.

Actually, Pharisees hinder, they get in the way. These are the same type, perhaps even the very ones, who stood in the way of the man with the palsy (2:4).

Jesus said "ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in" (Mt 23:13b). That means, they actually keep people from getting saved. Jesus said also, "ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves" (Mt 23:15).

Their beliefs and actions actually caused more damage than good. We all need to ask ourselves if our attitude is helping draw people toward or push them away from God.

Jesus said, "Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition" (Mt 15:6). They so exalt their man-made rules that it makes the Word of God take a back seat.

Now, that we have looked at what Pharisees think of themselves, let's look at the facts.

A Pharisee has good intentions. They truly want the right thing. They believe they are helping the church. The problem is, that it becomes something very unspiritual.

Thinking too highly of ourselves has caused as many problems as anything in the family of God. That's called self-righteousness.

Perhaps the most dangerous part of a Pharisee is the fact that they are so hard. When Jesus confronted the Pharisees, they saw it as a personal attack, shut their hearts, and refused to listen.

The good news is, a Pharisee is not beyond the help of God's grace. Paul (Phil. 3:5) and Nicodemus (Jn. 3:1-2), were Pharisees before they met Jesus.

FIGHTING WITH GOD 2:16-22

In the rest of this chapter, we see the scribes and Pharisees fighting against God.

The conflict had to do with the fact that what Jesus was teaching was so different than what the scribes and Pharisees believed the Old Testament taught. Sadly, the scribes and Pharisees had added so many rules to the Old Testament Scripture that what they believed was no where close to what the Old Testament actually said. Jesus called what they taught the "commandments of men" (Mt. 15:9; Mk. 7:7).

The fact is, Christianity is different from any other religion in the world. The gospel does not blend with any other religion, including Judaism. The Old Testament was not flawed, but it did not provide a way of forgiveness. The gospel brought forgiveness of sin (Eph. 2:8-9) but the Old Testament sacrifices could not (Heb. 10:4). The Old Testament pointed to Christ who did provide the way of forgiveness. As difficult as it may be to accept, that means, trusting in the Old Testament rituals is as useless as trusting Muhammad or Buddha.

For those living in Old Testament times, the gospel of Jesus Christ was new. Everything about Christianity is new. The believer gets a new heart, a new garment, a new family, a new song (Rev. 5:9), and a new Spirit. In short, we get a new life (2 Cor. 5:17).

Many today want to believe the Christian and the Jew are pretty much the same thing. The fact is, the Jews deny the deity of Christ perhaps more fervently than any other religion on earth. Any religion that denies Christ is empty and corrupt. We should love and pray for the Jew, but we should never compromise with what they believe.

We are living in a day when it seems as though people, even believers, are afraid to make such a statement. Jesus was not afraid to say it. He boldly proclaimed, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (Jn 14:6). The Bible continues this thought by stating, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Ac 4:12). Jesus, and only Jesus, is able to save to the uttermost (Heb. 7:25).

The similarities of Jews and Christians

Jewish beliefs are similar to Christianity in that they both believe the following.

- Both believe in one God

They both believe their God is holy, almighty, omniscient, omnipresent, and eternal.

- Both believe in a holy book

The Jews have the Hebrew bible called the Torah which consists of the Old Testament Scripture. Christians have the Holy Bible which consists of Old and New Testaments. Both believe their Bible comes directly from their God.

• Both believe general facts that are found in their bible

For instance, both believe is the existence of heaven, which is the eternal dwelling place of the righteous. They also believe in hell, which is the eternal dwelling place of the unrighteous.

• Both believe it is right to obey the commands given in their Bible

Both believe their Bible is God's guidelines to living life in a way that pleases their God.

• Both believe God has a specific plan for the people of Israel.

• Both believe there is a Messiah coming who will be a descendant of David

They both believe a Messiah will set up his throne in Jerusalem and bring peace and prosperity to the world.

The one difference between Jews and Christians, is Jesus. Christians believe Jesus was and is the very Son of God and walked the earth as the God man. The Jews believe Jesus to be an impostor, lunatic, and a liar. Christians believe Jesus is the promised Messiah but Jews believe their Messiah has not yet come. Christians believe the work of sacrifice on the cross provides forgiveness for the sin of all mankind. Jews believe Jesus died because he was guilty of the crimes he was accused of and he deserved it.

The amazing thing is, the Jews have the same Old Testament Scripture Christians do.

We should slow down and take a close look as Jesus' response. With 119 words He explains the transition from the Old to New Testaments. The world would change forever.

God never changes (Ps. 90:2; Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8), but the way He deals with man does change. He does not want the New Testament believer to offer animal sacrifices as He did in Old Testament times. He probably will not ask us to build an ark (Gen 6:14), march around a walled city (Josh. 6:1-5), or blow a trumpet and break a pitcher (Jud. 7:7-22). Recognizing this fact is vitally important if we are to do that which pleases God.

As we might guess, things do not go well with the scribes and Pharisees. As anyone who has ever tried it will testify, we never win when we fight against God.

Their conflict with Jesus will be about friends (2:16-17), fasting (2:18-20), fabric (2:21), and fermentation (2:22).

THE CONFLICT WITH JESUS ABOUT FRIENDS

Three times in two verses we are told there were publicans and sinners present. The scribes and Pharisees could not comprehend why Jesus as a friend to sinners.

Mk 2:16 And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?

The scribes and Pharisees were close

2:16a And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him

The wording of this verse tells us the scribes and Pharisees were close, but separate from the publicans and sinners. That means, they were also separated from Jesus.

They were close enough to hear Him, yet they rejected what they heard. He spoke the words of life, but they refused to listen.

They were close enough to see Him, yet they rejected what they saw. No doubt, they had seen Him perform miracles but they were totally unmoved.

A search of Scripture reveals many who were close to Jesus but never touched Him (Mt. 19:21-22; Lk. 23:4; 23:39). Judas was the one who kissed the door to heaven but went to hell (Mt. 26:49).

It's one thing to have never heard or seen, but it is quite another to both see and hear and still reject the truth.

The scribes and Pharisees were critical

2:16b And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him

The word "saw" speaks of paying special attention and to inspect. They were looking for something about Jesus they could criticize.

There is little doubt that this is the reason we so often find the scribes and Pharisees where Jesus was. They followed Him, not because they saw their need for His message but because they were constantly looking for a way to trip Him up (cf. Mt. 27:15). Once again, we find them doing what they did best, criticizing Jesus.

It is clear, the scribes and Pharisees hated Jesus. I can see four reasons why they hated Him.

One, they hated Jesus because He turned the light on and showed them their sin. Jesus said, "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (Jn 3:19).

Two, they hated Jesus because of who He claimed to be. On more than one occasion, Jesus made comments where He was declaring Himself to be God (Mk. 14:62-64; Lk. 22:70-71; Jn. 5:18; 8:58; 14:8-11). He did that which only God can do. He forgave sin (Lk. 5:20). He accepted worship (Mt. 14:33; 28:9).

Had He not been God, the scribes and Pharisees would have had a reason to be critical. But, He was God.

Three, they hated Jesus because he was denouncing everything they had believed and lived all their lives. They had so perverted the Word of God with their man-made rules that when Jesus came speaking the truth, they thought He was a heretic.

Four, shockingly, they hated Jesus because they did not think He was holy enough. In their view, He did not live up to their standards. Imagine that, believing the Son of God was not holy enough. They truly believed they were more godly than Jesus.

The scribes and Pharisees were complaining

2:16c How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?

They did not have the nerve to ask Jesus personally so they asked the disciples.

They wanted to know why Jesus willingly associated with those who were obviously sinners. They were thinking, if He was, as He claimed, the Son of God, surely He would be avoiding those filthy sinners.

They truly believed themselves to be better than the sinners. The word "sinners" is a word the Pharisees used to describe people who had no respect for the Old Testament Law or their self-made traditions.

They considered them as the most vile and wicked of mankind. The Pharisees would never called themselves sinners.

Actually, their description of the "sinners" was accurate but their attitude was disgraceful. Thinking ourselves to be better than others is the epitome of pride and arrogance.

Spiritual pride is probably the worst of all sins. It is the one sin where those who are guilty of it are proud of it. Pride is the most satisfying of all sins because it gives the violator a sense of accomplishment.

Pride is saying "I don't need God" (cf. Lk. 18:12). It is saying "Surely God will accept me". It exalts the outward actions and ignores the inward attitude. Is it any wonder why God hates pride (Pro. 6:16-17a)?

The scribes and Pharisees complained that Jesus was getting too close to the sinners. They did not realize, Jesus came to be "A friend of sinners" (Lk. 7:31).

A friend is one for whom there is affection.

Jesus truly cared. The astounding thing is, that He cared not only for the publicans and sinners, He also cared for the scribes and Pharisees. Only God loves those who hate Him.

A friend is one with whom there is association.

Jesus went where the sinners were. He has told us to do the same (Mt. 28:19-20).

Being a friend of sinners does not mean Jesus was a friend of sin. He was their friend because He wanted to bring them out of their sin and set them free. A true friend is a person who wants the best for you.

The average believer of our day fails miserably in this regard. So often, instead of being their friend, we are their judge. We shun them, we avoid them, and we condemn them.

The scribes and Pharisees may not have wanted Jesus to associate with the sinners, but the sinners certainly were glad He did.

The scribes and Pharisees were confronted

Mk 2:17 When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Jesus confronted the scribes and Pharisees in response to their attitude about the sinners. He likened the sin of the sinners to sickness and Himself to a physician.

Notice Jesus said "the" physician, not "a" physician. He was "the" physician. He is the only physician who can heal broken lives. He is truly the great physician.

A good physician is available

2:17a ... They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick:

The scribes and Pharisees were complaining about Jesus being too close to the sinners. But, a physician must be willing to get close to sick people if they are going to do their job. Who wants a doctor who refuses to get close when they are sick? What good would such a doctor be?

Jesus made Himself available to the worse of the worse.

A good physician is aware

A good doctor knows how to examine the patient and determine their problem. Jesus knew the problem and had the solution.

2:17b ... I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Jesus was speaking not only of the sinners but of the scribes and Pharisees.

He not only knew their problem, He knew the solution to their problem. They all needed to repent.

The publicans and sinners had a problem that was obvious. Anyone could tell they were sinners.

The scribes and Pharisees, on the other hand, did quite well as far as their outward appearance. They adhered closely to the Old Testament ceremonial laws, but especially to their own self-made rules. However, they failed miserably when it came to the inward issues.

Jesus made it clear, the inward attitude of the heart is just as important, if not more so, as the outward actions. Certainly, our actions matter but so do the inward things like lust, jealousy, envy, greed, and anger. Most people would never commit murder, but they think very little about being angry at the person (Mt. 5:21-22). Hatred is the very same emotion as murder. Most people would never commit adultery, but they think very little of lusting in their hearts (Mt. 5:27-28).

Jesus said He did not come to "call the righteous" to repentance. He knew those who think they are righteous do not think they need forgiveness. He knew He could not help those who did not see themselves as sinners. The sooner we see ourselves as sinners the better.

A good physician is aggressive

A good physician is aggressive in their diagnosis and treatment. They see sickness as an enemy that should not be toyed with. So it is with sin.

A physician needs to be aggressive for four reasons.

One, some do not know they are sick. The scribes and Pharisees did not see themselves as sinners. Jesus was saying the scribes and Pharisees and the sinners were all in the same condition.

Jesus spoke about those who are well, but He knew no one is well. All are sick and in need of a physician.

Two, some know they have a problem but they are afraid of what the doctor may tell them. So they refuse go to the doctor and they keep suffering.

Three, some think they can heal themselves, and therefore, have no need of a doctor.

The Pharisees would not accept Jesus because he was offering a salvation that no one could earn (cf. Jn. 3:3, 7). They believed a person obtained favor from God by keeping all the rules.

Jesus was teaching that no one measured up and no one could keep all the rules. They rejected His words because they refused to admit their best was not good enough. They were way too proud to admit such a thing.

Jesus is a doctor who makes the right diagnoses, gives the right medicine, and has already paid the bill.

Matthew includes a portion of this conversation that Luke and Mark did not include. He wrote "But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Mt 9:13).

Jesus was not giving up on the scribes and Pharisees. He asked them to reconsider what He had said because He wanted them to repent. God wants all men to believe and come to Him (1 Tim. 2:4).

THE CONFLICT WITH JESUS ABOUT FASTING

The conflict between Jesus and the scribes and Pharisees continues. As I have already mentioned, they are wondering why Jesus was so different. This time, they asked Jesus why He and His disciples didn't fast. They ask Jesus Himself and not His disciples as in verse 16.

Jesus' first illustration deals with fasting (v. 18-20)

Mk 2:18 And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?

Jesus was asked why He and His disciples did not fast. The word "fast" means "to abstain from food". To fast is to go without food, and sometimes water, for a predetermined period of time.

As we will see, Fasting was usually connected to remorse, mourning, heartache, or need.

The "who" involved with this question

2:18a And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees

Who exactly was asking this question?

Matthew says it was the "disciples of John" (Mt. 9:14). Luke says "And they said unto him" (Lk. 5:33), which refers to the scribes and Pharisees who had been talking to Jesus in the previous verses. The obvious conclusion is, some of the disciples of John the baptist and some of the Pharisees had united to ask the question.

It is amazing how the devil can cause two opposing sides to join forces. It is no wonder why God warns believers to avoid those who deny the truth (Mt. 15:14; Rom. 16:17; 2 Th. 3:14; 2 Tim. 3:5; Ti 3:10; 2 Jn. 10-11).

The "why" involved with this question

2:18b ... Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast,

Why did they ask this question. I believe there were two reasons.

One, the disciples of John were asking out of sincerity. They had heard John's message about the coming Lamb of God and believed Jesus was the One (Jn. 1:29, 36-37).

John's ministry was to point people to Jesus and then to get out of the way (Jn. 1:35-37). He never exalted himself or tried to make a name for himself. He said, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (Jn 3:30).

However, some things had happened that the disciples of John had not expected. First, John had been put in prison (cf. Mt. 4:12; 11:2). Second, they were seeing some differences between John and Jesus.

Even John himself had brief moments of uncertainty about Jesus being the Lamb that was to come (Lk. 7:18-23). We must not miss the fact that Jesus defended John.

So, John's disciples were asking a logical question about why Jesus and His disciples were not fasting. Personally, I do not think Jesus was offended by their question. Faith in God is not blind faith. God does not ask us to take a leap in the dark. Faith is based on the facts we find in the Word of God (Rom. 10:17).

As a side note, the disciples of John were in the same house as the Pharisees. I wonder they were questioning Jesus because they had overheard the Pharisees talking about how the Jesus and His disciples did not fast. It is so easy to allow ourselves to be influenced by what others say.

Two, the Pharisees were asking because, as seen in previous verses, they believed Jesus was an impostor and were looking for a way to discredit Him. There is no doubt, them asking this question not only offended Jesus, it angered Him.

The "way" involved with this question

2:18c ... the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?

As with all things related to our walk with God, there is a right way and a wrong way to fast. As we are about to discover, a person can fast in a wrong way or for the wrong reasons.

For instance, there are presently hundreds of books that rave about the physical benefit of fasting. The Bible deals only with the spiritual benefits and never speaks of the physical benefit of fasting.

If we want to know the right way to fast, we need to go to the Word of God.

Interestingly, the Old Testament, God required fasting only once a year, on the Day of Atonement. The Day of Atonement was a day of recognizing and dealing with sin (Lev. 16:29-31).

The Old Testament Jews observed public fasts (Lev.16:31; 2 Chr. 20:1-3; Ezra 8:21-22; Acts 13:3; 14:23), and personal fasts (Dan. 9:3; Mt. 6:16-18). They fasted to get closer to God (Ps. 35:15), during times of heartache (1 Sam. 31:13), to get direction from God (Dan. 9:3), to be set free of sin (Isa.58:6), when prayers had not been answered (Mt. 17:21), when sending out servants (Acts 13:2-3, 14:23), to help someone serve the Lord (Ezra 8:21-22), when an enemy was attacking (2 Chr. 20:1-3), when making requests (2 Sam. 12:16), and when repenting and seeking God's favor (Ezra 9:5-8).

By the time of Christ, fasting had become a common practice of the Jews. Paul said of his life "in fastings often" (2 Cor. 11:27).

When speaking about fasting, Jesus said "when", not "if", thou fastest (Mt. 6:17). That assumes there will be times when the believer will fast. In the same chapter, Jesus spoke of giving (6:1), and praying (6:5). If He expected us to give and pray, it is logical to believe He expects us to fast. As with giving and praying, we should fast for spiritual reasons and not to be seen of men (Mt 6:17-18).

From all this we can determine, fasting is for our day and something that pleases God as long as we do it the right way and for the right reasons.

Fasting is denying self for a spiritual reason. Fasting helps us put the spiritual before the physical. We forfeit food for our bodies that we might receive spiritual help for our soul.

That brings us back to question that was asked of Jesus. They asked Jesus why should they fast if His disciples did not.

The Greek sentence structure of this verse tells us they were fasting at that particular moment.

As we might expect, the Pharisees had ignored God's instructions and devised their own way of fasting. They made what was supposed to be a heartfelt spiritual act, into a self-righteous display of pride. When they fasted they made themselves look miserable so everyone would know they were fasting. Jesus said, "They have their reward" (Mt. 6:16). They were fasting to be seen, they were seen, so that was all they received.

The "what" involved with this question

The discussion was about fasting but it went much deeper. What exactly were they asking? They were asking about fasting but they were really asking why Jesus was not like them.

As we have discussed, both John's disciples and the Pharisees were struggling about how different Jesus was to what they thought He ought to be.

John's disciples were wondering why Jesus was not overthrowing Rome and setting up His kingdom. And, the Pharisees believed Jesus fell far short of keeping their rules.

They were struggling with the same thing we struggle with from time to time. What do we do when God isn't doing what we expect Him to do? We need to realize, God knows what we do not know. He will always do right, whether we understand it or not. So, we must trust Him and keep doing His will.

Jesus' response

In verses 19-22, Jesus responds to the question asked of Him in verse 18 by giving three illustrations that deal with fasting (2:18-20), fabric (2:21), and fermentation (2:22).

Jesus' first illustration dealt with a Jewish wedding ceremony. He likens Himself to a "bridegroom" and His disciples to the "children of the bridechamber".

Mk 2:19 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.

Jesus talked about a time of happiness

2:19a ...Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them?

The key word to this statement is the word "while". Simply put, Jesus told them it was not *time* for His disciples to fast.

The seven day Jewish wedding ceremony was a *time* of festivity and fun, not a *time* of fasting. It was the most happy event in the Jewish life so everyone attending was expected to have a wonderful time. 2:23

Some Jewish Rabbis went so far as to say if a commandment got in the way of having a good time, they could ignore the commandment.

The "children of the bridechamber" refers to the special friends of the bride and groom who were placed in charge of the wedding festivities. They were the ones who's job it was to make sure everyone, including the bride, the groom, and the guests, had a good time. Since fasting was connected to remorse, mourning, and heartache, a wedding ceremony would hardly be the time for them to fast. It would be inappropriate to fast during a wedding.

Jesus was saying while He, like the bridegroom, was with His disciples, it was not time for them to fast.

History tells us the Pharisees would fast while attending weddings because they wanted so badly to appear spiritual. They were trying to convince people they were so spiritual that they even fasted at weddings. This made their fasting a reproach to God.

As a side note, we don't think of it often, but Jesus did have a good time while on earth. We think about Him weeping (Mt. 23:37), and we think about Him getting angry (Mt. 21:12), but we seldom think about Him laughing. He tells us to have joy, no doubt, He had joy.

Jesus talked about a time of heartache

Mk 2:20 But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.

The "bridegroom shall be taken away" is the first mention of the death of Christ in the book of Mark. The time of heartache would soon arrive.

Like the wedding ceremony, Jesus would be on earth for a short time and would be gone. While He was near, it was time to rejoice. Soon, He would be gone and the serious time would return.

Certainly, the joy the disciples experienced while walking with Jesus was suddenly swiped away when they saw Him dead and stiff. If there would ever be a time when fasting would be appropriate, it would be when their best friend was hanged on a cross for something He did not do.

Things would be different for these disciples after Jesus died and rose again. They had to adapt to these differences. As Jesus said, the time for fasting would return.

The Savior was absent

Jesus spoke to His disciples and said, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you" (Jn 16:7).

As Jesus said after His crucifixion and resurrection, He did "go away". And, as He said, He did send "another Comforter".

The disciples has gotten used to Jesus being present with them. He had walked, talked, wept, prayed, and preached with them. Now, He was gone. They could still talk to Him in prayer, but not in person. They could still hear Him speak, but only through the Spirit of God speaking in their hearts. This had to be a difficult transition.

Satan was attacking

The devil did not lesson his attack after Jesus rose from the dead. In fact, in some ways, he probably intensified his attack. Peter called the devil our "adversary". The word "adversary" means an enemy who is continuously hostile. Our adversary is walking about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Pe 5:8).

The sinners were abusive

It seems as though the abuse of the sinners against believers got even worse after Jesus's death and resurrection. Multitudes came against Paul and Silas. Then the magistrates had them thrown into prison where they were beaten severely (Acts 16:22-23). Stephen was stoned to death (Acts 7:60). Luke said the Jews were "lying in wait" (Acts 20:16). The persecution of saints became a common thing (Acts 5:17-18; 5:33; 7:1; 8:12-15; 9:23-25; 11:19). The persecution was so severe that Paul said those who live godly "shall" suffer persecution (2 Tim. 3:12).

The saints were apathetic

As difficult as it is to comprehend, after Jesus' death and resurrection some of the believers became apathetic and satisfied.

Apathy is the believer's worse enemy. When we get to where we do not care, we are in trouble. The believer who finds themselves in this condition should immediately call out to the Lord and ask Him to stir their hearts afresh.

The person who has become apathetic should not allow themselves to stay in that condition.

First, we should make sure they are truly saved.

Second, we should confess all unconfessed sin. David did this when he said "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation" (Ps. 51:12).

Third, we should recommit ourselves to loving God and serving Him because of this love. Serving God can become an obligation instead of a privilege. It can become empty and dead. We can be guilty of leaving our first love (cf. Re 2:4).

God told the church at Ephesus to "remember". We need to remember how is was when we were thrilled about being saved and serving God.

God told the church at Ephesus to "repent". We should confess our apathy as the sin it is and turn away from it as we would any other sin.

God told the church at Ephesus to return. He told them to return to their "first works". We need to get a fresh start with our fellowship with God and recommit ourselves to worship and praise. We need to seek God as we did when we were first saved.

In essence, we need to start over and serve God because we love Him.

THE CONFLICT WITH JESUS ABOUT FABRIC

The conflict between Jesus continues and the scribes and Pharisees with Jesus giving His second illustration in response to their question (v. 18).

As previously mentioned, in verses 19-22, Jesus responds to the question asked of Him in verse 18 by giving three illustrations that deal with fasting (2:18-20), fabric (2:21), and fermentation (2:22).

Jesus' second illustration deals with fabric (v. 21)

Mk 2:21 No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse.

The word "also" tells us Jesus is continuing His explanation He began in verse 19.

Jesus talks about repairing a torn garment. Sewing new cloth over old cloth would not only, not fix the problem, it would actually make it worse. After a few washings, cloth shrinks. Sewing a patch of new, unshrunk, cloth over a tear in an old garment would be useless. When the new piece of cloth shrinks it would tear the old fabric, ruining the entire garment.

The emphasis is on the difference between new and old. Both are fabric but they are completely different.

Remember, the scribes and Pharisees were wanting to know why Jesus' teachings were so different than theirs. Jesus was saying His doctrine was not a patch to be added to their doctrine. Jesus did not come with a patch, he came with something new. They were to scrap their own traditions and let Jesus' doctrine become the guide to their lives.

Some try to use Jesus like a patch in their lives. They want Him when trouble comes but they don't really want Him to control their lives.

THE CONFLICT WITH JESUS ABOUT FERMENTATION

The conflict continues between Jesus and the scribes and Pharisees with Jesus giving His third illustration in response to their question. In verse 22, Jesus gives an illustration of new wine in an old bottle.

By no means is Jesus approving the drinking of alcohol in His comments.

Jesus' third illustration deals with fermentation (v. 22)

Mk 2:22 And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.

In Jesus' day they used animal skins to make "bottles" for carrying liquids. Over time, the skin would become hardened and brittle. The "new wine" built up pressure as it fermented, which would cause the brittle bag to burst. As a result the wine and the bottle would be lost.

The solution to this problem was to put new wine in new bottles. The new bottle, still have come elasticity, would survive the pressure.

In conclusion, Jesus' point with His illustration of the fasting (v. 18-20), fabric (v. 21), and fermentation (v. 23-27) is to point out the mistake of trying to mix the old with the new.

The Old Testament certainly had its place and was a vital part of God's work on earth. However, a new day was coming and the Old Testament rituals were going to be replaced by God's grace.

Jesus was not suggesting the Old Testament was inaccurate or incorrect. He was simply saying the time was coming when the Old Testament would be completed and New Testament grace would take over.

Jesus did not come to clean up the Old Testament system. He brought a completely new and better way. The writer of Hebrews wrote, "But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises" (Heb 8:6 emphasis added).

SLAVES TO THE SABBATH

The Sabbath and hatred

As we are about to see, the Sabbath day was one of the greatest, if not the greatest, areas of disagreement between Jesus and the Pharisees. This disagreement was as much about their hatred for Jesus as it did their belief about the Sabbath. Their hatred for Jesus was so intense that nothing He did would have been right in their eyes.

The Sabbath ran from sundown Friday night to sundown Saturday night. Sunday is not the Sabbath. Saturday is the Sabbath and Sunday is the Lord's Day.

The establishment of the Sabbath began with God resting on the seventh day of creation (Gen. 2:2-3). He set the example for His people. The Sabbath was implied when God gave manna (Ex. 16:4-5). God told Israel to gather twice as much on Friday and the manna did not appear on the Sabbath (Ex. 16:15). God mentioned the Sabbath rest when He gave the Law (Ex. 20:8-11), instructed Israel to build the Tabernacle (Ex. 35:2), and when they were entering the Promised Land (Dt. 5:12-15).

The Pharisees had butchered the Scripture by adding so many of their own rules. Jesus said "Thus have ye made the *commandment* of *God* of *none effect* by your tradition" (Mt 15:6 emphasis added). As we will see, they had made the Bible a burden instead of a blessing.

These verses should teach us to not play around with God's Word. The Bible warns us to not add to, or take from, the Word of God (Rev. 22:18-19). God is serious about His Word. Jesus said it is forever settled (Mt. 24:35). What we believe does not change what it says. If the Bible says it, we should believe it.

The Pharisees had become slaves to the Sabbath. That which God intended to be a blessing, they had made a burden.

Mark did not record it but between the events in Mark 2:22 and Mark 2:23, Jesus went to Galilee for one of the Jewish feasts. While there, and one the Sabbath day, He healed the man who had a disease for 38 years (Jn. 5:1-15). The Jews, instead of being glad about the man being healed, attacked Jesus about working on the Sabbath day (Jn. 5:9-10).

John tells us the Jews sought to slay Jesus because "he had done these things on the sabbath day" (Jn 5:16).

The hardness of the Pharisees is evident here. The man had not been able to walk for thirty-eight years. Now he is not only walking, but he has gone to the house of God. Instead of being glad, the Pharisees were mad because the man was carrying the pallet he had been sleeping on on the Sabbath day (Jn. 5:10).

When we look at the book of Mark, we see the Pharisees with the same attitude.

The Sabbath and hunger

Mk 2:23 And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn.

Matthew tells us the disciples were hungry (Mt. 12:1). That means this was more than just an afternoon snack and that makes a great deal of difference in how Jesus looked at this event.

During Jesus' day paths went through the fields that allowed people to travel from one place to another. Jesus talked about one of these paths in His parable about the sower (Lk. 8:5-8).

The word "corn" refers to an ear of grain. While Jesus and His disciples were traveling on one of these paths, the disciples reached into the field, plucked some grain, rubbed it in their hands to separate the husks, threw the husks away, and ate the grain (cf. Lk. 6:1).

Mk 2:24 And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?

The Pharisees, as they so often did, raised a compliant against Jesus and His disciples. Instead of concentrating on their own spiritual condition, they were busy trying to find fault in others. Unfortunately, this type of activity is all too prevalent in the modern church. Social media has become a place to hang the church's dirty laundry. As a result, the world sees the church as a bunch of hypocrites.

If someone is reading this who does not attend church regularity. Please realize that there are no perfect people, that includes those who attend church. However, the vast majority of those in church are godly people who want to please God and do His will.

Do not let the few rotten eggs influence you. Put your life into the hands of the Lord and let Him have His will in your life. You'll never regret it if you do.

The Pharisees asked why the disciples did that which was "not lawful". It's important to realize, they were referring primarily to their own, self-made, rules and regulations and not the Old Testament Scripture itself.

What were Jesus and His disciples doing that upset the Pharisees so much?

They were not stealing. God cared for the poor, orphans, widows, and travelers by allowing them to glean. Gleaning was allowing the poor, or those traveling, to gather the remains left in the fields after harvest time. The Bible says, "When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbour, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand" (Dt 23:25). God told landowners to not harvest the corners of their fields so the poor, or those traveling, could plunk the grain (Lev. 19:9-10).

So, the Pharisee's problem was not what the disciples were doing but when they were doing it. They were doing it on the Sabbath day.

That struck a nerve with the Pharisees for keeping the Sabbath had become the pinnacle of their self-righteous beliefs. They considered their strict observance of the Sabbath as proof of their superior spirituality.

The Pharisees believed the more a rule restricted them, the more holy it made them. They believed their spirituality was measured by their sacrifice and suffering.

The Pharisees had so perverted the Word of God that they considered the disciples plucking the wheat to be harvesting, rubbing it in their hands to be threshing, removing the grain to be winnowing, and eating it to be preparing a meal.

It is important for us to realize, Jesus never violated God's law, including the law about the Sabbath. Neither did He ever teach His disciples to do so. He did however, often break the Pharisees' additions to the law.

God did give guidelines that dealt with the Sabbath day (Ex. 20:8-11; 31:12-18). He said, "But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work" (Ex 20:10 emphasis added). He also said, "Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein: it is the sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings" (Le. 23:3).

Many of the rules the Pharisees had added were absurd.

The Talmud, the book containing the rules of the Jews, has 24 chapters of rules dealing just with the Sabbath. A few of them are as follows.

They had rules about how far they could walk on the Sabbath.

An individual was permitted to walk 2,000 cubits (3,000 feet) outside of the city limits before it was considered "work". However, they devised a way whereby a person could go further than 3,000 feet. To do so, the person had to, before the Sabbath, put some food within 3,000 feet of their location. Then, on the Sabbath, when they got to the location of the food, they were given another 3,000 feet to travel.

They could also lay a piece of rope or a piece of wood at the entrance of a narrow street between the houses on each side. They said this would make the street like an entrance to a house and give them 3,000 more feet to walk.

They had rules about how much they could carry on the Sabbath.

No one could carry anything that weighed more than of a dried fig, or a half of a fig carried two times. A tailor could not carry a needle, a scribe could not carry his pen, a student could not carry his books. If they threw an object in the air they could not catch it in a different hand. They could move an object with their elbow or their breath, but not with their hand.

They had all kinds of other rules about the Sabbath.

A man was not allowed to tie a knot but a woman could tie her girdle. Nothing could be bought or sold. Nothing could be washed. No fire could be lit. Cold water could be poured into warm water, but warm water could not be poured into cold. They could not bathe because water may drip off them and "wash" the floor. Women could not look in a glass because they might see a gray hair and pull it out.

Jesus rightly said "Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition" (Mt. 15:6 emphasis added). He said they were actually breaking the commandments of God by their traditions (Mt. 15:3).

Mk 2:25-26 And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him? How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him?

Jesus used a hint of sarcasm when He said "Have ye never read". Since the Pharisees thought themselves to be experts on the Scripture, this had to rub them the wrong way.

Jesus used an Old Testament example to explain the importance of having the right view of God's Word. Either adding to, or taking from, is strongly forbidden and will result in God's judgment.

The events Jesus mentioned refers to when David and his men were running from Saul (1 Sam. 21:1-6). They, being hungry, asked for food of Ahimelech the priest. Ahimelech, having no common bread, gave David and his men the shewbread in the Temple (1 Sam. 21:10). The shewbread was twelve loaves of bread that were placed each week on the table of shewbread in the Tabernacle. The old loaves were removed each week and could be eaten by the priests only (Lev. 24:5-9).

It is important to note that David and his men eating this bread was never condemned by God, or by the Scripture. The reason being, human need took priority over the ceremonial regulations of the law.

Jesus used the example of David and the shewbread to show the Pharisees how God was concerned about the needs of man. The bread provided needed substance for David and his men just as the grain provided Jesus' disciples what they needed at the moment. David and his men were hungry just as the disciples were when they plucked the grain.

Matthew recorded another example Jesus used to make His point about the Sabbath. Jesus said, "Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless" (Mt. 12:5). Jesus was talking about how the priests labored fervently on the Sabbath in the slaying and sacrificing of the animals. Their work was not a violation of the Sabbath law.

The bottom line is, God cares more for His children than He does for rules or regulations. Life is more important than rituals.

How can we make this applicable in our day? Imagine you are driving to church and you see a man who had been who has been run over by a car and left on the road to die. Do you obey the command to be faithful to church or stop to help the man? In essence, the Pharisees were leaving the man to die to keep from breaking their self-made rules.

Mk 2:27 And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath:

The "Sabbath was made for man" means the Sabbath was actually a gift from God to man.

God gave the Sabbath for rest (Dt. 5:13-14).

Even the word "Sabbath" reveals this fact in that it means "intermission" or "day of repose".

The Sabbath revealed man's need for physical rest (Ex. 35:2). Human bodies need rest. so God gave His people one day a week for rest.

God gave the Sabbath for remembering

God told Moses, "And *remember* that thou *wast a servant* in the land of *Egypt*" (Dt 5:15 emphasis added). We should remember where we were when Jesus found us and thank Him for His work of grace in our lives.

God gave the Sabbath for restoration

The Sabbath revealed man's need for spiritual rest (Ex. 35:2). The Sabbath was actually a picture of God's spiritual rest. It means, man can cease from his effort to keep the law of the Old Testament, and rest in Christ who paid the price for his sin (Rom. 3:24; Col. 1:14).

The gospel message brings rest to those who are heavy laden (Mt. 11:28; Heb. 4:1-10).

The words, "not man for the sabbath" mean, God never expected man to become a slave to the Sabbath.

As I have mentioned, the Pharisees missed these facts. God gave the Sabbath as a benefit and blessing to His people and they had turned it into a burden. They not only displeased God with their self-made rules but they put burdens on themselves that God never intended they have.

We must remember, God cares for His people. The Bible is not a prison to confine us, it is a shelter to protect us. God intended the Sabbath to be a day of rest and restoration but their regulations had made it the hardest day of the week.

The Pharisees had made so many rules there was no way they could have kept them all. It was a constant, overwhelming, burden. It is no wonder why Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mt 11:28).

An interesting note is the fact that the Pharisees were breaking their own rules by following Jesus and His disciples. Certainly they had traveled further than the 3,000 feet they allowed on the Sabbath. They made no mention of Jesus violating this rule because they knew they were guilty also.

It is amazing how easy it is for us to see the wrong in someone else's life but miss it in our own. Jesus said we should remove the mote out of our own eye first (Mt. 7:2-5).

Mk 2:28 Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

The word "Lord" means "controller" or "master". It means, He is in charge of the Sabbath. Since He was the One who established the Sabbath day to begin with, He had the authority to do as He pleased about it.

That means also, He had the authority to declare the rules of the Pharisees to be heresy and contrary to the Word of God. After all, it was He who established the day of rest when He Himself rested (Gen. 2:2-3).

The Sabbath and healing

In chapter three, the Holy Spirit moves us to another day and another place, but the subject matter does not change. More problems arise between Jesus and the Pharisees about the Sabbath (3:1-6). It is probable that these two events happened on sequential Sabbaths.

We will discover, when the Pharisees saw Jesus heal the man on the Sabbath they made plans to put Him to death.

And this is my emphasis on this event. Jesus, knowing the Pharisees would try their best to have Him put to death, healed the man anyway. The needs of the man were more important than the rules about the Sabbath and the threat of death from the Pharisees. Once again, we are shown the overwhelming love Jesus had for those in need.

Mk 3:1 And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand.

Jesus went into the house of God where He found a man with a withered hand.

The word "withered" means "to shrivel". The same word is translated "withered away" to describe the fig tree Jesus cursed (Mt. 21:19).

Mk 3:2 And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him.

Once again we see the Pharisees watching Jesus. The word "watched" means "to note insidiously". In other words, they were watching Him closely hoping He would break one of their rules. Luke tells us they were watching "that they might find an accusation against him" (Lk 6:7).

Luke tells us Jesus knew what they were thinking (Lk. 6:8).

Notice, they were not watching to see if Jesus "could" heal, they were watching to see if He "would" heal. That tells us two things about the Pharisees.

One, they knew Jesus cared about people in need. Had He not cared, He would not have healed the man and put Himself in such a predicament.

If He loved the man with the withered hand, that meant He loved the Pharisees also.

Two, they believed He had the power to heal.

If He had power to heal, that meant He was from God. And yet, they still refused to believe.

How could they see the compassion and power of Jesus and still reject Him?

Mk 3:3 And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth.

Jesus did not let the "trap" of the Pharisees deter Him from doing the right thing. His compassion motivated Him.

It would be such a blessing if more people cared enough to do the right thing when it isn't easy and someone didn't like it.

Mk 3:4 And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace.

By saying, "Is it lawful", Jesus was pointing the Pharisees to the Old Testament Scripture. The answer to His question was within it's pages.

The Talmud permitted physical assistance on the Sabbath only if it is a life threatening situation. For instance, a person could stop the bleeding but could not do anything that might promote healing. In other words, they could stop the bleeding but not use any medicine that might start the healing.

Jesus' question was, what does God say I should do? And that, is a question we will need to answer many times a day. Doing what God says, should be the theme of our lives.

Realizing they had no answer to give without condemning themselves, the Pharisees "held their peace".

Mk 3:5 And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.

Jesus' anger was justified. This is the only time in the book of Mark where we are actually told that Jesus was angry. There are other times when He was angry (Mk. 4:40; 11:15), but this is the only time we are told He is.

The fact is, Jesus did not actually do any work. He simply told the man to extend his hand. That did not matter to the Pharisees.

Mk 3:6 And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.

Their actions against Jesus had to do with the fact that they cared more about their self-made rules that a real human being with real needs.

They saw this man's hand instantly become whole, so they could not deny it. They denied Jesus' deity but they could not deny His miracles. They may have accused Him of healing through the power of Satan (Mt. 12:24), but they could not deny the fact that He healed.

After seeing such miraculous works, it looks like they would have rethought what they believed. Instead, they made plans to put Him to death.

Once again, this verse reveals the degree of hatred the Pharisees had for Jesus like few others in the Bible. The "Herodians" were a group who were devoted supporters of Herod, the Roman king. Jesus warned about this group and told His disciples to avoid them (Mk. 8:15). Since they believed the answer to the world's problem was in a man, they submitted their allegiance to King Herod and the Roman government. They were focused on the political rather than the spiritual.

The Herodians were the arch enemy of the Jews. And yet, the Pharisees were willing to join forces with them in an effort to do away with Jesus.

The Pharisee's attitude towards Sabbath was so dogmatic that they wanted to kill Jesus. Luke says they were filled with "madness" (Lk. 6:11) which is a word that means "stupidity". Jesus was totally ignoring their view of the Sabbath and it was more than they could handle. In their view, He had broken their rules, therefore, He deserved to die.

I am amazed that this is only the third chapter of this book and they are already talking about killing Jesus. Instead of being glad that the man was healed, they got mad because of the Sabbath.

With all we have considered about the Sabbath we need to ask, should the New Testament believer observe the Sabbath day? Do the rules of the Sabbath apply to the modern believer?

The modern believer is under no obligation to observe the Sabbath. As we have discussed, the Sabbath was observed by the Jews and was an Old Testament observance.

There is no evidence that the early church met on Saturday. They met and worshiped on the first day of the week to commemorate the resurrection of Christ (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2). The times they met in the synagogue or Temple was an effort to reach the Jews with the gospel (Acts 2:46).

JESUS KNOWS 3:7-11

In the next five verses many people coming to Jesus. This is not unusual in and of itself, but I can't help but notice the differences of those who come. There are different people, from different places, with different problems. What I notice even more so is the fact that Jesus knew everything about all of them. He also knows you and what you are facing and He knows exactly what you need.

Mk 3:7 But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judaea,

Jesus and His disciples withdrew themselves and the multitude followed.

v.7a He "withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea".

Jesus withdrew Himself and His disciples to avoid the conflict with the Pharisees and Herodians. Jesus knew when to stay and He knew when to walk away.

v.7b ...and a great multitude from Galilee followed him..

Jesus' popularity grew to such an extent that He had no time for Himself. The crowds were becoming such a hindrance that Jesus had no time to rest, sleep, or eat.

Jesus Knew Their Residence

Mk 3:8 And from Jerusalem, and from Idumaea, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him.

The news of Jesus and His mighty works is spreading like wildfire. The locations mentioned in verses 7-8 cover areas in all four directions.

Jesus didn't have to send out a disciple taking a census to find out where this crowd came from. He knew where they were from and He knew where they are going. There is nothing hidden from our Lord.

God knows where every believer comes from. He knows our background and how we were raised. He knows about the person raised in a drunkard's home and the one whose family went to church every Sunday. Since He knows our background, He understands the emotional baggage we carry.

God will not water down His Word but He will be more tender toward the person who was never exposed to the truth of Scripture. Jesus spoke more sternly to the religious scribes and Pharisees because they had been exposed to the truth of Scripture and rejected it. He called them "vipers" (Mt. 3:7), hypocrites (Mt. 23:13, 15), "blind guides" (Mt. 23:16, 24), and "fools" (Mt.23:7).

Notice, the multitude followed Jesus because they heard what he "did".

Mk 3:9 And he spake to his disciples, that a small ship should wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng him.

The crowd was so large and so pressing that Jesus had to device an escape route less He be trampled. This boat was kept just off shore in case Jesus needed it. We are not told if He ever actually boarded the boat but it was there if He needed it.

The word "throng" means "to crowd" and is used for pressing grapes. This word carries with it the idea of affliction or troubling. Paul used it when he said we are "troubled" on every side (2 Cor. 4:8; 7:5). The size and fervency of this crowd was making it unsafe for Jesus. On September 24, 2015, a total of 2431 lost their lives in a crowd rush in Mina, Saudi Arabia.

Jesus knew their reason

Jesus knew each individual and the reason they had come.

Many are interested in Jesus because of what He does instead of who He is. When a person follows Jesus only for what He can do for them, they will not follow Him for long. It will not take much for them the turn around and head back home.

JESUS KNEW SOME CAME FOR HEARING

Some of them were genuine and truly wanted to know Him better. They longed to hear Him speak. They hung on to His every word and drank it into their lives like a sponge. They realized what He said was true, and they needed truth. They had heard the lies of the world and it left them empty. They longed for something real and they believed this man was the One who had it.

Certainly, they were glad that He cared enough to heal the sick and fix the broken. But, they realized healed bodies would get sick again, straightened limbs would eventually grow old and cease to work. They knew, the truth of the Word of God would help them today and tomorrow.

JESUS KNEW SOME CAME FOR HELP

Jesus was not just a healer, He was a helper. And so they came for help.

They came for financial help. There was the mother with hungry children and an empty cupboard.

They came for emotional help. There was the wife who needed to know how to survive living with a wicked husband.

They came for family help. There were the parents who needed to know how to handle their wayward child.

They came, and they kept coming.

They believed this man could tell them how to live through this horrible thing called life. He knows what to tell the mama with three little children and drunken husband. He can give hope to that person with a gun to their head and absolutely no good reason to not pull the trigger.

JESUS KNEW SOME CAME FOR HEALING

Mk 3:10 For he had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues.

Sadly, more were coming for healing than forgiveness.

v.10a For he had healed many;

They had heard He could heal, and so they came. They came with twisted limbs, blinded eyes, and deaf ears. Some had been sick all their lives. They, like the woman with the issue of blood (Mk. 5:25-34), had tried all the doctors and home remedies with no benefit.

v.10b ....insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him,

And so they came, hoping that somehow this man named Jesus could do what no one else had been able to do. The agony of their disease, and their hope of healing, pressed them toward Jesus. They were all were trying to shove by the others in hope that somehow they might touch Him and be make whole.

v.10c ... as many as had plagues.

The word "plagues" means "scourging" and carries with it the idea of receiving a whipping. The prevalent belief in that day was that sickness was God's judgment for sin. The people asked about the blind boy, "who did sin" (Jn. 9:2), because they truly believed sickness was judgment.

This belief was so accepted that some sick folks would be discarded or cast out of society. At times, even family members, would avoid their sick relatives.

This belief was so accepted that many of those who got sick believed they were being judged by God.

So, the sick who were approaching Jesus had truly suffered because of their affliction. They, hoping to find healing, would all but tackle Jesus in hopes of His touch.

The word "pressed" means "to embrace" or "to seize with violence". It means they were literally falling upon Him. Their load seemed so unbearable, they felt they needed to dump it on someone who could help.

We must remember, they were not coming to someone who did not care. He isn't the type who can look the other way and walk on by (cf. Lk. 10:33-35).

JESUS KNEW SOME CAME FOR HARASSMENT

Mk 3:11 And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God.

Some who were possessed by demons came. They came to harass Jesus and cause Him trouble.

A mixed reaction

No doubt, some of those whom Jesus touched were forever changed. Their appreciation for His kindness was demonstrated by a life dedicated to the will of God and His service. Thank the Lord for those who appreciate God's goodness.

However, as impossible as it seems, some of the ones who were falling all over Him at this time will be waving their fist in the air and crying “Away with him, away with him, crucify him” before long. They'll scream "kill Him, He deserves it". They will devour His goodness and then turn on Him like wild dogs.

How we handle God's blessings tells us what we really are.

These were the ones who would claimed to know Jesus. As Jesus will tell them later "I never knew you" (Mt. 7:23).

HOW TO KEEP THE DEVIL QUIET 3:10-12

In the next three verses, Jesus told the demons to be quiet, and they obeyed. How can we get the devil to be quiet? Is it even possible?

Mk 3:10 For he had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues.

As mentioned earlier, multitudes were coming to Jesus.

Mk 3:11 And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God.

Some of those who came were possessed with demons. Jesus knew who they were and what they were doing.

Jesus was victorious because of who He was, what He knew, and what He did. If we hope to quiet the devil, we need to know what Jesus knew and do what Jesus did.

3:11a And unclean spirits

Jesus knew who He was dealing with. The path to victory begins by knowing our enemy. We'll never win if we do not know the one we are fighting against.

These demons were living inside some of the people who were following Jesus. Demon possession was common during the days of Christ and the early church (Mt. 9:32-33, 12:22, 17:18; Mk. 5:1-20, 7:26-30; Lk. 4:33-36, 22:3; Acts 16:16-18). There have been many dramatic changes since the days of Christ but the devil and his demons are still very much at work.

Paul said we wrestle against "principalities", "powers", and "rulers of darkness of this world" (Eph. 6:12). The word "principalities" means "first in rank". The word "powers" means "authority". The word "rulers" means "ruler". The devil is called "the prince of the devils" (Mt. 12:24). The word "prince" means "first in rank". All this tells us the devil has a hierarchy among the demons with him being the ruler over them all (Rev. 12:4, 9).

It seems that he gives his demons specific assignments. It may be that he places specific demons at specific places around the world. He does this in an attempt to carry out his highly organized attack against God.

We are not told how many demons there are. We do know the devil persuaded 1/3 of the angels to follow him when he rebelled against God. The devil has a vast army to do his will in the earth.

Jesus knew, the devil is close

3:11b ... when they saw him...

Jesus recognized the type of fight He was encountering. It is important that we know our enemy but it is equally important to know the strategy of our enemy. The more we know about his methods attack, the more likely we will be able to stand against him.

These words also remind us how the devil, or one of his demons, is always close. He sent demons into the crowd following Jesus. When we look for the devil we don't need to go far. We need to look first at our own homes and churches. He understands the importance of infiltrating the family of God.

Many in the modern church assume demon activity is restricted only to those who show extreme behavior like Linda Blair in the "Exorcist". Nothing could be further from the truth. Demons are as likely to possess the Wall Street Executive as an addict on skid row. Demon activity can be seen in morals just as much as madness.

Demons are still loose and active in the world today. Paul said those who worship idols are unknowingly worshiping demons (1 Cor. 10:20). Lying spirits (demons) spoke through the 400 false prophets (1 Kgs. 22:6, 23). An evil spirit oppressed King Saul (1 Sam. 16:14).

A true believer cannot be demon possessed. Certainly, the Holy Spirit will not allow a demon to possess the body He indwells (1 Cor. 6:19; 1 Jn. 4:4). A true believer cannot be demon possessed, but they can certainly be demon oppressed. The devil loves to invade the mind of the believer.

The fact is, we are never free from the devil's attack. Since that is true, we need to learn how to be victorious over him. God has given us the way to win. He has given us the "sword of the Spirit". This sword was not, as we might suppose, a long and large sword. The word "sword" speaks of a short, knife-like, sword used to hand to hand combat (Eph. 6:17). The devil comes in close to attack the believer. We must be prepared if we hope to win (Eph. 6:13).

As a side note, these verses also demonstrate the fact that there are more important matters than the size of the crowd. Every God-called preacher wants a church full but numbers do not always mean godliness. The devil still sends wolves into the flock. Jesus said, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Mt 7:15). Paul told the early church, "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock" (Ac 20:29).

Jesus knew, the devil is contrary

3:11c ... unclean spirits

Jesus knew His enemy was the type that could not be reasoned with. The devil is wicked and will use any means possible to win. We must realize, our enemy does not play fair. Jesus was describing the devil when he said "The thief cometh, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy" (Jn. 10:10)

The word "unclean" means "impure or evil". These evil spirits (demons) were part of the angels who followed Lucifer when he tried to overthrow God (Isa. 14:14; Ezk. 28:13-19).

The devil and his demons are against God, His will, His work, and His Word. The devil is opposed to anything, and everything, that is good and godly, including God's people.

The devil and his demons are complete opposites to God so they work against God's work on earth. If this is true, and it is, it is foolish to listen to him when he speaks to us. Certainly, it is foolish to do what he tells us to do.

God calls the devil "the prince of the power of the air" and says his spirit "now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2). Jesus said, when speaking of the devil, said there "is no truth in him" (Jn. 8:44). He "beguiled" Eve through his subtilty (2 Cor. 11:3; 3:13). The devil deceives the "whole world" (Rev. 12:9). He certainly is not able to do such a thing by himself. He uses his army of demons.

Our old nature is "contrary" to the Spirit of God (Gal. 5:17). If we allow him, the devil will work through our old nature to cause us to do that which is contrary to the will of God.

Paul told the believers in Rome to mark those who commit offenses "contrary" to the Word of God (Rom. 16:17).

Jesus knew, the devil is conquered

3:11d "fell down before him...

Jesus knew the devil was a defeated foe. The work of Calvary won the victory. This is not to say he has no power or that he will not do his best to work against God and His people.

Knowing our enemy is already defeated makes all the difference when we're facing his attack. We do not have to give in.

Verses 11-12 show us the demons recognized who Jesus was. James tells us the devils "believe" (Jam. 2:19). They believe in Jesus but they have never believed on Jesus. They "fell down before him" because they knew Jesus was God in the flesh.

3:11e "and cried"

They "cried" out because of their fear of Jesus. Jesus knew this. James tells us the demons believe, and "tremble" (Jam. 2:19). They were afraid because they knew Jesus will eventually cast them into the lake of fire. He will at the appointed time (Mt. 8:29). Jesus said the lake of fire was prepared for the devil "and his angels" (Mt. 25:41).

3:11f ... saying, Thou art the Son of God.

The demons had to admit to the fact that Jesus was the "Son of God". Sadly, the first one to declare Jesus as God in the book of Mark was a demon.

The demons knew who Jesus was but so did He. Jesus knew He was the Son of God, and therefore, had power over the demons. If we are to be victorious over the devil and his demons, we must know who Jesus is and who we are in Him.

Mk 3:12 And he straitly charged them that they should not make him known.

Jesus demonstrated His authority over these demons, and the devil, by commanding them to be quiet. Jesus often displayed His power over the devil (Mt. 4:24, 12:22; Lk. 4:33-36, 6:18-19, 7:21, 8:2).

All this means God is more powerful than the devil. Jesus cast the demons out, the man who had been a madman and he was "sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind" (Mk. 5:15). What a dramatic change.

Why did Jesus demand these demons not make Him known?

One, He did not want people to follow Him for the wrong reason. He did not want to be known especially as a miracle worker. He was more concerned about their soul than their body. His miracles were meant to prove He was who He claimed to be.

The person interested only in the healing of their body may never recognize their spiritual need. Unfortunately, many contemporary churches of today concentrate more on the physical than the spiritual.

Two, His increased popularity would bring about a military uprising. The Jews were expecting a Messiah who would overthrow the Roman government. He would be accused of revolting against the government(Lk. 23:2). Sadly, many of our day believe the solution to the world's problems lies in government and legislation.

Three, Jesus did not want to be affiliated with the devil or his demons in any shape or form. Despite it all, the Pharisees would accuse Him of doing His works by the power of the devil (Mt. 12:24).

Believers could certainly learn a lot from His example. He rejected the words of the impure, even when they spoke the truth.

Jesus knew, the devil is committed

Jesus knew the battle with His enemy would not end with this battle. The devil would return and try again. The Bible says when Jesus overcame the devil's temptation, "And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season" (Lk. 4:13). The devil left for a season, but he attacked again.

The demons were quiet, at least for a season. Of course they attacked again, but at least for a little while, they were quiet. We also can enjoy these seasons of the devil leaving us alone. Of course, he will come again, he will tempt again, but thank the Lord for those seasons of relief.

The devil is angry, active, and aggressive. Our children sing a song entitled "He's still working on me". Their song tells us God never quits working on us. The same song could be sung about the devil, he never quits working on us.

We must understand the fact that our enemy will never stop attacking us.

The devil knows he is defeated and his time is limited (Rev. 12:12). The destiny of the devil and his demons is sealed (Mt. 8:29; Mk. 1:24). They will spend eternity in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10). However, he still refuses to give up. I think he believes that somehow he can still pull out a victory and defeat God. Whether that is true or not, he will never give up, he will continue to fight against God and His people as long as he is able.

The devil is never inactive or neutral. He is constantly "going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it" (Job 1:7; 2:2). He "walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). He still desires to "sift as wheat" (Lk. 22:31). He is at this moment seeking a way to get an "advantage" of every believer (2 Cor. 2:11).

The believers should follow the example of Christ and stand against the work of the devil. We are told to "awake" (Rom. 13:11), be vigilant (1 Pet. 5:8), take the "whole armour of God" (Eph. 6:13), and to resist" him (Jam. 4:7).

We have no authority over the devil in ourselves. Our victory comes because of God's authority over the devil. That is why James tells us first to "submit" to God, and then "resist the devil" (Jam. 4:7).

We conquer the devil in the same way Jesus did. He used the Word of God to overcome the temptation of the devil (Mt. 4:4-11).

In conclusion, the people referred to in verses 11-12 had yielded themselves to demons to such a degree that the demons were controlling their thoughts and speech. The devil has always wanted control. When Lucifer determined to overthrow God, He said "I will be like the most high" (Isa. 14:14).

Demonic possession is when a demon or demons inhabits and controls a person. A perfect example is the boy who was cast into the fire and water by demons (Mk. 9:20-22).

I believe, for there to be true demon possession, a person must, in some way, yield themselves to the devil. As a result, these people are responsible for their actions even though the devil is working through them.

However, generally speaking, except in the case of demonic possession, the devil cannot control a person. Flip Wilson used to say "The devil made me do it". God rejected Eve's excuse when she said, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat" (Gen. 3:13). The fact is, the devil cannot make us do anything we do not want to do.

The bottom line is that the devil seduces, suggests, seduces, and scams, but he cannot force us to do anything against our will. We are the one who makes the final decision. The believer who gives in to sin can only blame themselves. Admitting our wrong may be difficult but we will never have real victory until we do.

HEARING THE VOICE OF GOD 3:13

Mk 3:13 And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him.

To say the least, Jesus was not having a good day. Many following Him wanted only what they could get out of Him. They had little, or no, desire for spiritual matters. As if that was not bad enough, demons were trying to discredit Him. Thankfully, Jesus did not allow this opposition to deter Him from doing His Father's will. He prayed and continued to do that which He had come to do.

Jesus responded to the opposition by going to prayer. He went by Himself into a mountain to pray. Luke tells us He prayed all night (Lk. 6:12). How we need to do the same.

Jesus “calleth” those “he would”. He chose the ones that He knew would be what He needed to do the Father’s will. Every good professional chooses his tools carefully for he will use his tools to do his job.

The word "calleth" means "to call toward oneself". It means Jesus spoke. It refers to something He has said. It means someone had to decide whether to listen or ignore what He said.

Before I begin this part of our study, I'd like to look at the end of this verse. It says the ones He spoke to "came unto him". They heard the voice of God and obeyed. We would be wise to do as they did and listen closely to His voice.

This verse tells us Jesus has a message. God has something to say to each of us.

This verse tells us there was a purpose to words. God never wastes words. Every word from God is important. Those who ignore His voice always miss out on something good.

This verse tells us Jesus' message was designed to affect the life of the person He is speaking to. Jesus called them "unto him".

All of these facts are still true today. God speaks, He speaks with a purpose, and He speaks that we might be drawn toward Him.

The Who involved with God's voice

v.13a ...."And he goeth"

Jesus is the One who spoke.

There are many voices in this world.

There is the voice of self.

The rich man said to himself, "This will I do" (Lk. 12:18). He relied completely on himself. He did not seek the advice of a financial expert for advice. Most importantly, he did not ask God. He made his own decision. Sadly, by doing so, he made a wrong decision (Lk. 12:19). The voice of self told the prodigal he would have more fun in the far country. It told the Pharisee he was good enough (Lk. 18:11-12).

The voice of self will always lead us astray from God's will because it comes from our fallen nature within. It speaks from a heart of pride as with Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:30).

There is the voice of society.

This voice tells us to trust the things of this world. This voice drives us toward prestige, prosperity, and popularity. It binds our hearts to the things that will not last (1 Cor. 7:31; 1 Jn. 2:17). This voice is heard on commercials telling us we must buy their product to be happy. It can be heard in the liberal classroom where professors spout their fall-left agenda. This voice tells us to seek the approval of man at any cost.

There is the voice of Satan.

This voice originates from the number one enemy of God, His plan, purpose, and people. This is the voice of a liar, a thief, and a murderer (Jn. 10:10). This voice comes from the one who had transformed himself into an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14). This was the voice that deceived Eve (Gen. 3:4).

There is the voice of the Savior.

This is the one voice that we can always trust. It is the one voice that will always be right and the one voice we should always obey.

There are many voices in this world that we can ignore with little consequences but this is not so with the Lord's voice. We will pay a high price when we refuse, reject, or resist His voice

The Where involved with God's voice

v.13b "he goeth up into a mountain"

The Bible does not tell us which mountain this was.

That tells us the voice of God knows no boundaries. He is as likely to speak to us at work or Walmart as at the church. He speaks anywhere and everywhere because every aspect of our lives matter to Him. His will is not restricted to the church. We need His voice as much, if not more so, at Walmart as anywhere.

God spoke to Moses in the desert (Ex. 3:1), to Abraham in his tent (Gen. 18:1), to Elijah in a cave (1 Kg. 19:9), to Jonah in the whale's belly (Jonah 2:1-2, 10), to Ezekiel in the valley (Ezk. 37:13), to Peter and Andrew at work (Mt. 4:18-20), to the prodigal in the pig pen (Lk. 15:17), to Peter in prison (Acts 12:6-7), to the people at church (Lk. 20:1), and the thief on a cross (Lk. 23:40-41).

God speaks to carpenters, shepherds, slaves, fishermen, kings, soldiers, doctors, tax collectors, harlots, thieves, prisoners, and religious hypocrites. He speaks to the religious and the rebellious, the saint and the sinner, the haughty and the humble, the intelligent and the ignorant. He is

I've said all this to come to this point, since God may speak to us anywhere and at any time we should be ready and sensitive enough to hear Him.

The Why involved with God's voice

v.13c ...."calleth unto him"

Jesus spoke with purpose. He had a reason. The primary reason was that they might come "unto him". In the next verse, Mark tells us Jesus called them "that they should be with Him".

Being with Jesus could forever changes their lives.

It was said later of Peter and John, "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus" (Ac 4:13).

It was obvious that the boldness of Peter and John was not of their own nature. Everyone knew it was because "they had been with Jesus".

That brings us to this important question, why should we listen to God when He speaks?

- We should listen because it pleases Him

It pleases God when we listen to Him (Col. 1:10; Rom. 14:18; 1 Tim. 5:4; 1 Th. 2:4; Heb. 13:16; 1 Jn. 3:22). That should be reason enough.

- We should listen because God has a will for our lives

Many believers live with little or no thought about what God wants from them.

We learn what God desires from us by first doing what we know. We know He has told us to trust Him (Jer. 17:7; Pro. 3:5-6; 29:25; Ps. 37:5; Mt. 6:25-26), to love others (Pro. 3:3; Mt. 5:44; Lk. 6:36; 1 Cor. 13:4-8; Eph. 4:32; Phil. 2:3; Col. 3:12; 1 Pet. 3:8-9), to speak right (Pro. 15:1-2; Ps. 19:14, 141:3; Eph. 4:29, 5:4; Col. 4:6; Jam. 1:19, 32), to pray (Phil. 4:6; Col. 42; 1 Tim. 2:8; 1Th. 5:17; 1 Pet. 4:7; Jam. 5:13), to witness (Ps. 126:5-6; Mt. 28:19-20; Mk. 16:15; Acts 1:8); and to obey His Word (Dt. 5:33, 10:13, 28:1; Josh. 1:8; 1 Kgs. 2:3; Jn. 14:23; Jam. 1:22).

Doing these things is the first step in discerning the total will of God. Until we do these things, we will never fulfill His will in our lives.

- We should listen because He is always right

When we have financial questions, we go to our banker, when we have physical questions, we go to our doctor. The problem is, no matter how much the banker or doctor knows, they do not know all things. Since they lack knowledge, there are times when their advice will be wrong, and doing what they say will cost us.

But, our Lord knows all things. He knows our future so His advice is always correct. Since this is true, it is unwise to not listen to what He says.

- We should listen because it keeps us out of trouble

God told Jeremiah, "walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you" (Jer.7:2 emphasis added).

Doing God's will brings blessings (Ex. 15:26; Lev. 26:3-12; Dt. 5:29, 33; 6:3). Jesus said, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (Jn 13:17 emphasis added).

God promised a blessing to those who obeyed (Dt. 11:26-27).

God also promised a curse to those who disobeyed His voice (Dt. 11:28).

Doing the wrong thing can get us into big trouble. Doing the wrong thing always makes things worse.

- We should listen because it keeps us from the agony of regret

Regret is being sorry for what you have done. Regret is suffering and knowing it is your fault. Regret is knowing someone is hurting because of what you did. Regret is realizing things would be so much better had you not done what you did.

There is no pain like the pain of regret. Imagine the shame and regret of

Adam and Eve when they realized one of their sons had murdered the other one. David said "My sin is ever before me" (Ps. 51:3). The Bible tells us Peter "went out and wept bitterly" after he denied the Lord (Lk. 22:62).

How much better would it be to listen to the voice of God, to begin with?

The Will involved with God's voice

v.13d ...."and they came unto him"

When Jesus spoke to these disciples they listened and obeyed.

When they heard His voice they were faced with the decision of listening or ignoring what He said. They could have simply walked away. Had they done so, they would have never experienced what they experienced with Jesus. And, they would have never been used by God as they were.

God gives every person on earth a will to decide what they will do when God speaks. We are held accountable for how we listen to God. We will gain or lose rewards according to how we listened to Him (Rom. 2:16, 14:10b; 1 Cor. 3:11-15, 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:10).

- To hear God's voice we need to be saved

Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice" (Jn 10:27).

When Jesus said "My" sheep, He referred to those who know Him as their personal Savior. He was saying, if you want to hear my voice, you have to be in my family.

At present, over 19 million students are enrolled in over 5,300 colleges and universities in the United States. Every person involved with these institutes of higher learning, whether teacher or student, is depending on one thing, the human intellect. The entire purpose for their existence lies in the ability of the mind of man to comprehend spoken information. They are trusting the human mind.

However, when it comes to the voice of God, the human intellect is not the key element. The Word of God is spiritually comprehended. That means, the Holy Spirit opens our understanding and we "get" what God has said. Apart from this work of the Spirit God's Word, as wonderful as it is, will mean nothing.

Paul said, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Co 2:14).

The Psalmist wrote, "Open thou mine eyes, That I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" (Ps 119:18).

Paul also said, "Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand" (Ac 28:26).

Radio waves move past us constantly but we cannot hear them without a radio. The receiver in the radio makes it possible for us to enjoy the music. In like fashion, the Holy Spirit is our spiritual receiver. Without Him, we cannot hear God's voice.

This is why a lost person can read the Bible and get nothing out of it. This is why that person can think the Bible teaches doing their best will take them to heaven or that God would never send a person to hell.

- To hear God's voice we need to be spiritual

As we have just discussed, a person must be saved to hear God's voice, however, we can be saved and not be able to hear His voice.

The writer of Hebrews rebuked the Hebrew believers because they did not know what they should have known. He wrote, "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God" (Heb 5:12). They were saved but, not as spiritual as they should have been, they had not learned the Word as they should.

The fact is simple, to truly comprehend God's voice, we need to have a heart for God and His will. That happens when we allow the Holy Spirit to conform us into the image of Christ.

Spirituality is a work God does in our hearts. Our inner desires and interests are on the things of God. Paul said, "the inward man is renewed day by day" (2 Co 4:16).

The fact is, the believer who lacks spirituality will not only not desire to hear from God, they will not be able to hear from God.

The fact is, the believer who lacks spirituality will not only not desire to hear from God, they will not be able to hear from God.

One reason this is true is because what God is saying may offend us if we aren't spiritual enough to take it. God can be quite abrupt when it comes to showing us our failures. He does not beat around the bush.

Jesus spoke harshly on more than one occasion. He told the church of the Laodiceans they were "lukewarm, wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked" (Rev. 3:16-17). He called the rich man a "fool" (Lk. 12:18), and Herod a "fox" (Lk.13:29). He called the Pharisees "vipers" (Mt. 12:34), "children of hell" (Mt. 23:15), and "hypocrites" seven times in one chapter (Mt. 23:13,14,15,23, 25, 27, 29).

There is no doubt about it, the time will come when we are on the hard side of His harsh words. If that happens, we had better be spiritual enough to listen, accept it, and obey His instructions. To do anything less will only lead to heartache and misery.

- To hear God's voice we need to be separated

The word "came" means "to go off" or "depart". In their walking to Jesus, the disciples were at the same time, walking away from something. They were coming and leaving at the same time.

God's voice is as likely to lead us away from something as to something.

If I call you and ask you to come here, you have to leave there before you can come here. In coming, you are leaving.

If we ever hope to be able to really hear the voice of God, we must be willing to shun the voice of the world.

God told Jeremiah, "*Obey my voice*, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and *walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded* you, that it may be well unto you" (Je 7:23 emphases added).

In talking to Jeremiah, God spoke of how He had to lead Israel out of Egypt before He could lead them into the Promised Land (Je 11:4).

God also reminded His people how much trouble they had because they refused to obey His voice along the way to the Promised Land. He said, "But my people would not hearken to my voice; And Israel would none of me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: And they walked in their own counsels" (Ps 81:11–12).

This is the reason God spoke through Paul and said, "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts" (Eph 4:22).

The world, and all of it's lusts, is supposed to be crucified to the believer (Ga 6:14).

Until we starve the old man, it will continue to crave the things of the flesh (Rom. 6:12, 13:14; 1 Tim. 6:9; 2 Tim. 2:22; Titus 2:12; 1 Pet. 2:11).

Until we tune the world out, we will never clearly hear the voice of God. Paul told Timothy, "For the time will come when they *will not endure sound doctrine*; but after their *own lusts* shall they *heap to themselves teachers*, having itching ears" (2 Ti 4:3 emphasis added).

- To hear God's voice we need to be sensitive

This is a vital key to being able to hear God's voice.

Being sensitive means we are really listening. Every wife knows it is possible to hear without listening. We should hang on to every word that God speaks.

Being sensitive means we hear Him speak when we aren't expecting Him to speak. God may speak to us in the middle of the day while we are busy at work. God is prone to interrupting His child. By the way, He is the only one who can interrupt and it is not impolite. He is God, if He wants to, He has the right.

The question is, are we sensitive enough to His voice to where we will hear Him?

Being sensitive means we are willing to listen. Being willing to listen does not come easily. Generally speaking, the average believer doesn't listen closely if things are running smoothly in their lives. God may have to bring us down a couple of notches to get us willing to listen to Him. However, once there, we will never be the same again.

God may use suffering to get us to listen to Him. It is amazing how much closer we listen to God when everything seems to be falling apart. An irritable boss, a suffering friend, or a wayward child can cause us to listen to the voice of God.

God may use sickness to get us to listen to Him. Sickness and pain can certainly get our attention. The voice of God seems louder in a hospital bed.

God may use someone to get us to listen to Him. God may use a person in this type of situation. I don't mind so much listening to God, but listening to some as flawed as I am, now that's a different matter.

Moses recognized this when he said "But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice" (Ex 4:1). He knew the people of Israel would have no desire to listen to him. If it is God speaking we need to listen no matter who He is speaking through.

God may use sin to get us to listen to Him. Jesus spoke to Peter when He said he was going to deny him, but he didn't really listen (Mk. 14:29, 31). Peter remembered those words after he denied Jesus, but it was too late then (Mt. 26:75). The damage had been done. I guarantee you Peter really listened when Jesus spoke to him after His resurrection.

The What involved with God's voice

v.13e ..."they came"

The disciples heard and decided to listen and obey. What happened?

First, because they listened to God, they were used by God. Had they not listened, all God did through them would have been left undone or would have been done by someone else. Nothing is more sad, or more unnecessary than one of God's children being unusable.

Second, because they listened to God, their personal lives were better. Serving God brings unspeakable joy and peace (1 Pet. 1:8; Jn. 14:27).

Third, because they listened to God, others were helped. Lost souls were saved, sick bodies were healed, demons were cast out, God's Word was preached, and even the dead were raised (Mt.10:7-8).

Fourth, because they listened to God, God was pleased. Pleasing God is the greatest of all reasons to listen to Him.

One of the greatest, if not the greatest, need of our day, is for God's people to listen to His voice.

Are you listening, are you really listening?

TWELVE MEN WHO CHANGED THE WORLD 3:13-19

As I mentioned previously, Jesus had been bombarded by many who wanted only what they could get from Him. Thankfully, He did not allow this to deter Him from doing His Father's will. He responded by going to a mountain to pray. Luke tells us He prayed all night (Lk. 6:12). He was about to choose the men who would eventually take over His ministry. So, He prayed.

Verses 13-19 tell of Jesus choosing His twelve disciples. This list of names is found in other places in Scripture (Mt. 10:2-4; Lk. 6:13-16). The names are not always listed in the same order, other than, Peter is always first and Judas is always last.

There could not have been a more diverse group. Jesus practiced diversity before it became something sinful.

Mk 3:13 And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him.

In this group were sinners who were saved

v.13a "and calleth unto him whom he would"

It is important that we understand that this call was the call to service, not the call to salvation. They had all, except for Judas Iscariot, had already accepted Jesus as their personal Savior.

The word "calleth" means "to call to oneself" or "to invite". They had already answered the Lord's call to salvation, now they were answering His call to service.

Jesus called those “he would”. The word "would" carries with it the idea of the future. In other words, Jesus was making choices at the present because He had plans for the future. Every professional chooses his tools carefully for he will use his tools to do his job.

He was inviting these men to an adventure of a lifetime. The Christian life, when lived correctly, is the most exciting adventure any person could ever experience.

v.13 ....and they came unto him.

As I mentioned earlier, many came because He healed them (3:10), others because He fed them (Jn. 6:26), and others came to ridicule Him (3:11-12). But, thank the Lord, there were some in the crowd who were real. They followed Jesus because they loved Him and wanted to learn from Him and live for Him.

They heard the voice of God and obeyed. We would be wise to do as they did.

In this group were servants who were sent

Mk 3:14 And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach,

The word "ordained" means "to make or to do". Jesus would make them what they needed to be so they might do what they needed to do. Jesus would eventually send them out to do what He had been doing.

As I have mentioned, Jesus chose the ones that He knew would be what He needed to do the Father’s will. Every good professional chooses his tools carefully for he will use his tools to do his job.

The “twelve” are also called “disciples” (Mt. 10:1). A disciple is a student.

These twelve, less Judas, would become the leaders of this new movement called Christianity. This is the beginning of what would later become the "church" (Eph. 2:20). God would use them to take Jesus' place after He ascended back to heaven (Mt. 5:13).

However, before Jesus could "send them forth", they had to spend time "with him". They became His students. One of the most important attributes of a believer is that they are teachable. The person who thinks they do not need to learn will be no good for God. Being a good learner begins by admitting our ignorance. That is difficult, but necessary, if we are to become the disciples God desires us to be.

These men will become what God wants them to be because they had been with Jesus. Luke tells us later when they saw the "boldness of Peter and John", they recognized they had "been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13).

Though they will learn a great deal, it will not be their intellect that makes them what they are. If they become anything, it will be Jesus in them. This is demonstrated perfectly in Peter. He preached one message and 3,000 got saved (Acts 2:41). A few days later, 5,000 (Acts 4:4).

Mk 3:15 And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils:

God used these men in indescribable ways.

They were more than just disciples, they were apostles. An apostle was God representative on earth. With that calling, came the authority and power of God.

God gave His apostles the power to “heal sicknesses” to confirm that fact that they were truly sent from God and were preaching His message. He gave His apostles power to “cast out devils” to demonstrate His victory over the devil and all his kingdom.

Verses 17-19 give a list of the twelve disciples Jesus chose. This list is found in other places in Scripture. The names are not always listed in the same order, other than, Peter is always first and Judas in always last.

In this group were saints who were struggling

A casual glance at these men will show us they were anything but perfect. They were saved, but they still struggled with the world, the flesh, and the devil. In other words, they had a long way to go to get where God wanted them to be.

Mk 3:16-19 And Simon he surnamed Peter; And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder: And Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Canaanite, And Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him: and they went into an house.

- I believe some of these disciples struggled with AGGRESSION

It seems obvious that Peter had an aggressive nature. He was always the one who spoke and acted first. His aggressive nature often ended him up in trouble. Peter was quick to believe. That sounds good but we should be careful to believe before there we have sufficient evidence. The devil is a master of deception.

Also, James and John could be called aggressive. Jesus called them "The sons of thunder". When the Samaritans rejected Jesus they wanted to call fire from heaven to consume them (Lk, 9:52-56). They, with their mother, requested they receive the place of honor in the kingdom (Mt. 20:20-28).

Aggression is good if produced by the Spirit of God but destructive if it is of man. Learning how to let the Holy Spirit control our human nature is one of the greatest needs of every believer. Acting too quickly can be as bad, or worse, than not acting at all.

- I believe some of these disciples struggled with ATTENTION

Some of the disciples barely get any attention in Scripture.

It seems clear that Peter was more popular than his brother Andrew. He is referred to as "Simon Peter's brother" (Jn. 6:8).

Being second place is not second place to God.

Not every believer can handle being in second place. Some crave the limelight and long to be recognized.

By no means does this mean they did not do anything. Every disciple had a ministry. None are called to do nothing. Nor does it mean they were not important in the work of the Lord. Every disciple has a vital work. The body of Christ needs every member if it is to function as it should.

You may not be a preacher, teacher, or singer, but that does not mean you are unnecessary. Your ministry for God may not bring a lot of attention, but that does not mean you are less important than any other servant. If you are doing what God wants you to do, you are as valuable to the work of God as Paul was.

If the second place person takes a demotion if they grab first place.

After all, God doesn't really need us. He created the entire universe without any assistance from man. In His mercy, He works through man to accomplish His plan on earth.

- I believe some of these disciples struggled with ACCEPTANCE

The 12 disciples were completely different. Four (Peter, Andrew, James, and John) were simple fishermen, one (Simon) was part of a political group seeking to overthrow the Roman government, Matthew worked for the Roman government collecting taxes from his own people, Judas Iscariot was a hypocrite who ended up selling Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. Bartholomew, also called "Nathanael" revealed his prejudice against those who came from the city of Nazareth when he asked, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth" (Jn. 1:45-46). I'm sure these differences made for some pretty interesting discussions around the campfire at night.

And yet, Jesus expected them to leave their past behind, unite as one, and follow him. And, despite their differences, these men did eventually bond together as one.

- I believe some of these disciples struggled with ACTING

An actor pretends to be something they are not. Sadly, there was one in the twelve who was acting, his name was Judas Iscariot. He walked with Jesus for approximately three years. He heard His words and saw His miracles, but he was never saved.

Judas is always last in the list of the twelve (Mt. 10:2-4; Mk. 3:16-19; Lk. 6:14-16). The order of these lists indicates their closeness to Jesus.

The truth is, he was a thief and a liar (Jn. 12:6). Jesus said, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil" (Jn 6:70 emphasis added). He said also, "But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him" (John 6:64 emphasis added). The name "Judas" almost always is followed by the word "betrayed" (Mt. 10:4; Mk. 14:10; Jn. 6:71; 12:4; 13:2). The Holy Spirit wants to make sure we never forget the evil deed of this godless man.

Judas never addressed Jesus as "Lord". When the other Judas called Jesus "Lord", the Holy Spirit made sure to tell us it was not Judas Iscariot (Jn. 14:22).

Like every good actor, Judas convinced others he was real. He was so convincing that he was assigned as the treasurer of the group (Jn. 12:6). If he lived today every pastor would love to have him as a member of their church.

Even his act of reforming at the end of his life was hypocritical. Judas "repented himself" but he never turned to the Lord for forgiveness. He sold his soul for 30 pieces of silver. Many today sell their souls for a lot less. He fooled everyone, everyone except the One who really counts, God.

Judas is a perfect example of how anyone can claim to be saved. Is it any wonder why Paul tells us to examine ourselves to make sure we are in the faith (2 Cor. 13:5).

While the Bible foretold of one who would betray the Lord, Judas made a conscious decision to do so and paid the price (Mk. 14:21; Acts 1:25).

- I believe some of these disciples struggled with AVAILABILITY

In spite of being close and committed the disciples struggled with staying faithful. Circumstances caused them to falter temporarily. Thomas doubted the resurrection (Jn. 20:25), Peter denied knowing Jesus (Mt. 26:74), all the disciples forsook him and fled (Mt. 26:56).

By God's grace, the eleven became steadfast and served God till they died. All of the eleven, except for John, were martyred for their stand for God. Being killed for their faith may not be a desirable way to leave this world, but being met by Jesus on the other side as Stephen did would be delightful (Acts 7:54-56).

God will use anyone who makes themselves available.

All the disciples left their lives behind when they chose to follow Jesus. God does not ask every believer to do such a thing. However, He does ask every believer to make themselves available. He may not want you to leave your job, but He does want you to be a good and godly employee. He wants you to let your light shine and be a godly example.

God may not ask you to leave your home and move to another country. But, He does ask you to live godly and be a consistent witness to your neighbors.

God wants every believer to make themselves available in every aspect of their lives. That includes our workplace, our homes, and our recreation.

Fortunately, the disciples showed up at the upper room and made themselves available (Acts 2:1-2). The Holy Spirit filled them and God used them mightily. He will do the same for any of His disciples who make themselves available.

WHO WAS JESUS 3:20-35

From day one, Jesus did not fit into the mold of the world. The world struggled with the fact that He was so different. The world has always resisted the ones who go against the flow of society. Anyone daring to be different will be opposed. So it was with Jesus. However, in this case, Jesus was right and the world was wrong. The world still struggles with who Jesus was and why He came.

Those who sell out to God's will are often misunderstood and ridiculed. Paul was called "mad" because of his faith in Christ (Acts 26:24-25).

Verse 19 tells us Jesus and His disciples went into a house. Some believe this was Peter's house but the Bible does not say.

Mk 3:20 And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread.

v.20a And the multitude cometh together again ...

Jesus' popularity continued to grow. The crowds kept coming. The more they came, the less time He had for Himself.

v.20b ... so that they could not so much as eat bread.

Jesus was so preoccupied by the needs of the crowd that He did not even have time to eat. As was always the case, He was putting others before Himself. He "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38). We are told we should "have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16). God tells us to "bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves" (Rom. 15:1). Paul said he made himself a "servant unto all" (1 Cor. 9:19).

All this attention brings us to one question, who was Jesus? Billions of men have lived and died without making a ripple in history. What was it about Jesus that caused multitudes to rush to His side? What is so different about Him?

Why did some love Him and others despise Him? Why were some willing to leave everything they owned to follow Him while others would try to kill Him? Who was this man named Jesus?

1. JESUS' FRIENDS THOUGHT HE WAS CRAZY

Mk 3:21 And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself.

The word "beside" means "to beside self".

Jesus' friends thought He was delusional. They knew Jesus claimed to be God but they had known Him as He was growing up. They had watched Him play with the neighborhood children. They saw Him help Joseph in his carpenter shop. They believed He is a man, a good man, but just a man.

So, Jesus' friends thought He was crazy.

The fact is, if Jesus believed He was God when He was not, He was delusional, He was beside Himself.

2. JESUS' FOES THOUGHT HE WAS CONNING

Mk 3:22 And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils.

v.22a And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said

This group of "scribes" may have been sent by the Sanhedrin to examine Jesus. Their opinion of Jesus would carry a great weight among the Jewish community.

They came but they already had a tainted opinion of Jesus. They were of the sort that believed Jesus was born of fornication (Jn. 8:41), and a gluttonous winebibber (Lk. 7:34).

v.22b ... He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils.

Jesus' enemies accused Him of intentionally lying about who He was. They believed Jesus knew He was not God, yet claimed to be. They believed He was a con-man. A con-man lies and knows he is lying. A con-man is concerned only about himself. The word "con" means "to deceive someone for selfish gain.

Jesus' foe went said He did His miracles by the power of Satan. They believed He was possessed by the devil. Notice, they never tried to deny that He did the miraculous works. His works were indisputable.

Since His miracles could not have been done by man, the only conclusion was they were done by God or by Satan. The scribes, never being willing to admit Jesus did His works by the power of God, said He was working by the power of Satan.

Mk 3:23 And he called them unto him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan?

Jesus refuted their argument with simple logic. Why would Satan work against Himself?

Mk 3:24-25 And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.

Jesus' logic was simple. The kingdom, or the family, that fights against itself will be torn apart. Sooner or later, it will destroy itself.

Mk 3:26 And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end.

The devil is not dumb enough to fight against himself. He knows the effects of division. That is why he tries to divide the church (1 Cor. 1:10-11; 3:3; 11:18).

Mk 3:27 No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house.

Jesus said the person who overcomes a "strong" man must be stronger than the strong man. His point was, He was the One who is stronger than the devil.

Jesus' power over demons and disease proved He was stronger than the devil. Jesus authority to forgive sin (Mt. 9:2) proved He was God, and therefore, stronger than the devil. Jesus came to spoil the house of Satan and did so at the cross and the empty tomb.

Mk 3:28-30 Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation: Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.

Jesus' response shows the seriousness of the scribes comments about Jesus. He said they had committed a sin for which there is "never forgiveness".

Let's consider the facts found in in these verses. First, God the Father had sent God the Son to do that which was humanly impossible by the power of God the Holy Spirit; Second, after seeing Jesus perform these miracles, the scribes not only did not believe it was it was done by the power of God, but said it was by the devil's power. They were saying Jesus was demon possessed and did His miracles through the power of Satan.

What more could God do than what He had done? There is no hope for such a person. They are beyond the forgiveness of God. Their comments reveal a spiritual cancer so advanced that it was beyond any remedy. Such a person is beyond the reach of repentance or forgiveness.

So, Jesus' foes thought He was a con-man.

By the way, if Jesus said He was God, when He knew He was not, He was a con-man and the world's greatest liar. And, most importantly, if He was a liar, He could not have been God.

The sin Jesus referred here is commonly called the "Unpardonable Sin" or "Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit". I believe, as many do, this sin could be committed only while Jesus walked the earth, and therefore, cannot be committed today.

3. JESUS' FAMILY THOUGHT HE WAS CONFUSED

The narrative from verse 21 resumes in verse 31.

Verses 31-35 tell us Jesus' earthly family came wanting to speak to Him. His response tells us their request, though well meaning, was contrary to that which God desired. More than likely, Jesus' earthly family thought He had gone overboard with His ministry and were trying to get Him to slow down.

Mk 3:31 There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him.

His "brethren and his mother" refer to His earthly family (Mt. 12:46; Lk. 8:19-21; Jn. 7:3-5). Contrary to the beliefs of some, Mary was not a perpetual virgin. She and Joseph had sons and daughters (Mt. 13:55-56).

In these verses, we find that even Jesus' family were struggling with who He was. As we will see, His devotion, in their view, was becoming excessive.

v.31a There came then his brethren

Jesus' brothers came attempting to speak to Him.

Jesus' brothers and sisters believed He was a good brother. They always knew there was something different about Him. He played like all little boys but he never did anything wrong. He always did the right thing at the right time and with the right attitude.

No doubt, as they were growing up, Mary had told them about the manger and how Joseph was not the father of Jesus. Yet, they still had not come to the point to where they believed Jesus was God in flesh. They did not believe (Jn. 7:5) until after Jesus' resurrection (Acts 1:14).

v.31b ... and his mother,

Jesus' mother came also to speak to Him.

Mary did not doubt that Jesus was God. She knew He had been virgin born. She had not forgotten the words of the angel (Lk. 1:30-38). She remembered when He turned water to wine (Jn. 2:1-11).

However, she was, as any loving mother would be, concerned about the lifestyle Jesus had chosen. Certainly she was concerned about His spiritual life, but she also worried about His physical well being. She knew He not getting the rest or nourishment His body needed. After all, would God not want Him to take care of the body He gave Him?

v.31c ... and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him.

His family was "standing without". The crowds were so great that even His own family could not get through.

They "sent" word through the crowd in an attempt to communicate their message to Jesus.

The word "called" means "to emit a sound" and implies a loud cry. The same word is used of the rooster crowing (Mk. 14:68). The family not only sent word through the crowd, but they cried aloud to Jesus. Their concern for Jesus had wiped away any embarrassment.

His family was genuinely concerned about Jesus. He had been on the go constantly with very little food, rest, or sleep. He was getting regular threats to His life (Mk. 3:6). His brothers especially, since they were not believers, could not comprehend why He, being the oldest son, did not take over Joseph's carpenter business. They could not understand why He would leave a thriving business for a life of poverty.

The world has never understood a believer. They see the believer's lifestyle as something that offers no freedom or happiness. Little do they realize, the life of a believer is the only life that gives joy, peace, and contentment.

Mk 3:32 And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee.

The crowd passed the message on to Jesus.

Mk 3:33-34 And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren? And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!

Jesus' response probably shocked the crowd.

Mary was Jesus' mother and they were His family but they had no right to make demands on His life. When 12 years of age Jesus submitted to Joseph and Mary's authority and returned home with them (Lk. 2:42-51). He did not this time. He submitted the first time because it was the right thing to do. He refused this time because it was the right thing to do. As a 12 year old boy it was not time for Him to launch out into His ministry, now it was time.

Unfortunately, there are times when doing God's will brings division in a household. Jesus said He would bring division to some families (Mt 10:35). There may be times when the opposition to our walk with God comes from those in our own family. In such cases, the believer should walk with God and pray for God to change their family.

We must realize our family is very much a part of our service to the Lord. How we treat our family matters a great deal to God (Gen. 2:24; Ex. 20:12; Pro. 22:6; 1 Tim. 5:8; Col. 3:20). Unfortunately, some of God's servants have lost their influence with their family because they were so focused on trying to help those outside their family.

We should remember, we actually have two families. One is our temporary earthly family, the other is our eternal heavenly family. Both are important to God. Balancing our attention between the two can be difficult. It is not an easy task but we should do the best we can with the help of God.

Jesus was not being rude when He did not respond to the call of His family. He, as He did so many times, used the opportunity to give spiritual instruction. Though they did not realize it, His family was asking Him to abandon the reason He came into the world.

Jesus was teaching that our love for God should be so great that our love for family would seem like hate in comparison (Lk. 14:26). The will of God should come before anything and anyone. We should not let even our dearest loved ones to draw us away from God's will.

Jesus must have done a good job for His siblings eventually became believers (Acts 1:14). Two of His brothers (James and Jude) penned books of the Bible.

4. JESUS' FOLLOWERS THOUGHT HE WAS CHRIST

Jesus' closing remarks pointed to those who willingly followed the Lord and did His will. Those who followed Him the closest, knew Him the best. They believed He was the Christ (Messiah) who was sent by God the Father.

Jesus never said the precise words "I am God" but He was declared to be God on more than one occasion.

As the virgin born child He was "God with us" (Mt 1:23).

He was called the Word (Jn 1:14) and the "Word was God" (Jn 1:1).

He said, "I and my Father are one" (Jn 10:30).

He said, "Before Abraham was, I am" (Jn 8:58).

He created "all things" (Col 1:16).

When speaking to Jesus, Thomas said, "My Lord and my God" (Jn 20:2).

He said, "if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (Jn 8:24).

He said He forgave sin (Mt 9:2) and gave eternal life (Jn 10:28). Only God can do such things.

The Jews said, "because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God" (Jn 10:33). They realized He was claiming to be God.

Paul called Him the "great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).

If He was Christ, all of mankind should follow Him and do as He did. Jesus ended His comments by saying just that.

Mk 3:35 For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.

Those in the family of God are recognized by their obedience to His Word.

If Jesus is God we should trust Him. If He is God we should worship Him. If He is God, we should obey Him.

THE SOWER, THE SEED, AND THE SOIL 4:1-20

Jesus spoke a parable about a sower, some seed, and some soil. It deals with the proclaiming of the gospel and the different responses of those who hear God's Word.

Jesus expounded this parable in verses 3-8 and explained it in verses 11-20.

This parable was recorded also by Matthew (Mt. 13:10-23), and Luke (Lk. 8:9-18).

1. THE MESSAGE IS EXPOUNDED v. 1-8

The words "he said" are found eight times in chapter four. As we will discover, this chapter has a lot to say about God speaking and us listening.

Mk 4:1 And he began again to teach by the sea side: and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land.

The crowds became so large that it caused Jesus to board a ship and move far enough away from shore to be away from the crowd yet close enough for them to hear His words. From this ship He spoke a parable about a sower sowing seed in the soil.

Mk 4:2 And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine,

Jesus spoke. What an amazing fact. We should never take it lightly that the God of the universe is willing to speak to us.

Jesus, the master storyteller, used "parables" to communicate to the crowds. At least one-third of Jesus' teaching was in parables. His reason for using parables is found in verses 11-12.

Someone has said, a parable in an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. The word "parable" means "to place beside". It provides a comparison. Parables are powerful, in that, they put a picture in our mind so that, seeing the physical, helps us understand the spiritual. Our tendency, when hearing a story about people, is to focus on the people instead of the story. A story with no names takes the emphasize off the people and places it on the message.

When examining parables it is important to remember three things.

One, there is one primary truth in every parable. For example, Jesus gave three parables in Luke 15. The primary truth of all three is how God's love causes Him to search for that which is lost (cf. Lk. 15:1-3). If we loose sight of that fact, we will misinterpret the parables and miss the message God has for us.

Two, it is important to not over-emphasize a parable. Trying to draw a spiritual truth out of every detail of a parable will cause all sorts of confusion.

Three, it is important to consider the context of a parable. As with all Scripture, it is vitally important to stay in the context of the verses surrounding the parable. As I mentioned, the context of the three parables in Luke 15 is that God loves and searches for those who are lost (cf. Lk. 15:1-2).

The primary subject of the parable we studying is the importance of listening when God speaks. Jesus gave this parable because many were rejecting Him and His message. It is vitally important to keep this main subject in mind when examining this parable.

THE SOWER

Jesus used a sower to illustrate the sowing of the gospel message throughout the world. However, we should not restrict the seed being sown to the gospel only. The sowing of seed can apply the Word of God being proclaimed in any manner and to any person.

Mk 4:3 Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow:

Everyone living in Jesus' day understood what a sower was. The sower would carry a bag of seed, and walk in a straight line across the field, broadcasting the seed as he went. Without the sower, there would be no harvest. In like fashion, without a believer giving the gospel, there will be no conversion.

The sower in this parable refers specifically to Jesus. Matthew's record of this parable tells us Jesus said the sower is the "Son of man" (Mt. 13:37).

Even though the sower in this parable refers specifically to Jesus it can be applied to any believer who shares the Word of God. We are sowing anytime we share the Word. Every believer is a sower. Pick up your Bible and hold it up, that is your bag of seeds.

It takes desire to be a good sower.

The desire for harvest causes him to labor hard. This desire causes him to leave the comfort of his house and go to a hot and dirty field. The sower of the Word of God should have a similar desire. He needs an overwhelming desire for a harvest. We must realize, that sowing will not happen accidentally. We must do it on purpose.

We should realize also, that we should want to be a sower. Every believer should have a burning desire to see lost people getting saved and saved people getting help.

It takes determination to be a good sower.

Desire is important but there will be times when our desire is gone. There are times when the sower does not want to go to the field, he does not want to sow the seed. At times like that, he needs determination. He needs to see the need for harvest even when he does not have the desire for harvest.

In like fashion, every believer should determine to sow even when they don't really want to sow. Want to or not, harvest is needed. If there is not harvest, people will go hungry.

We need to be sowing.

We can sow by witnessing (Is 43:10; Ac 1:8), by teaching (Titus 2:4; Mt 28:20), by encouraging (Heb 10:24; Eph 4:15), and by confronting (Lk 17:3; Ga 2:11; 1 Ti 5:20).

Jesus will explain about the sower in verse 14.

THE SEED

Jesus talked about the seed that was sown.

Mk 4:4 And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up.

v.4a And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell ...

Jesus said the sower sowed the seed. He will tell us later that the seed is a picture of the Word of God, specifically, the gospel (v. 14). If we miss this fact we will never understand the parable.

Jesus used this type of parable because a seed has many attributes that are similar to the Word of God.

- The potential of a seed

The potential of one seed is indescribable. From one seed of corn comes a stalk with multiple ears, each ear having from 500 to 1200 kernels. Of course it is not the norm, but, the Guinness World Record for the most ears on one stalk is 29.

In like fashion, the Word of God has the potential to do unbelievably great things.

The Word has the potential to convert the lost. Peter said we are "born again" by the "word of God" (1 Pet. 1:23). The Word has the potential to calm the troubled, comfort the fearful, correct the wandering, challenge the weak, and convict the wicked. It can do what nothing else can.

Who would expect something so big to come from something so small?

- The permanence of a seed

A seed produces a plant and fruit, but it also produces more seeds. Those seeds can be used future crops that will repeat the process. God's Word lasts forever (Ps. 119:89; Isa. 40:8; Mt. 5:18; 24:35; 1 Pet. 1:25) and is as up-to-date as tomorrow's Newspaper.

- The power of a seed

A seed produces a plant that will push through dirt, roots, and rocks. God's Word can push through all obstacles. There is much opposition to the Word, but it continues. God's Word will succeed. God said, "It shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isa. 55:11).

This is so prevalent in our day. It seems the hearts of mankind has grown harder than ever. The weary believer can trust the Word of God to do what is needed.

• The produce of a seed

A seed produces food that gives life. Hungry families are fed by the produce of the seed. Farmers, store owners, and trucking companies, make their living by the produce from the seed. The Word of God produces in that it fixes broken lives, helps the hurting, and gives life to the dead.

• The progression of a seed

No matter what type of seed, it takes time for harvest. There is a progression in the process of bearing fruit. That means, the sower needs to be patient and not get discouraged. The seed is growing even when the sower is sleeping. Every preacher, every teacher, every believer who ever tried to deliver the Word of God knows what it is to have people who seem to not be listening.

• The planting of a seed

A seed must be planted. There will never be a harvest if the seed is not sown. A bag of seeds on a shelf will never produce. Studying the Word, and even loving the Word, as wonderful as it is, is not enough to bring forth a harvest. That is why Jesus tells us to go and "teach" (Mt. 28:18). Paul said, "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher" (Ro 10:14).

The unspoken Word of God is useless and dead.

THE SOIL

As the sower sowed the seed fell on various types of soil. As we will see, the condition of the soil was vital to the success of the crop.

v.4b ... some fell by the way side

The "wayside" speaks of well-worn paths that crisscrossed the fields during Jesus' day. These narrow paths, perhaps only 3 or 4 feet wide, became hard as a rock because of the traffic. Of course, since these paths were scattered throughout the fields, some of the seed fell on them.

v.4c ... and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up.

The seed laying on the hard soil was and an easy meal for the birds. From this, we discover that birds are an enemy to the farmer. They can ruin a crop quickly.

Jesus will show us the spiritual significance of the seed by the wayside in verses 14-15.

Mk 4:5 And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth:

The "stony ground" isn't about a bunch of rocks in the field. The farmer would remove all those rocks before he cultivated the field. This speaks of a sheet of bedrock running parallel to the ground's surface. The wind would blow a thin layer of soil on top of this bedrock. There was very little soil, but it was enough to where some of the seed would stick when it fell.

Mk 4:6 But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.

There was enough soil for the seed to germinate and start growing, but there was not enough for roots to form. When the sun came up, the plant was scorched and withered away because it had no roots to sink down and get moisture.

Jesus will show us the spiritual significance of the seed on stony ground in verses 16-17.

Mk 4:7 And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.

The farmer had cleared the field but there were spots where unseen roots and seeds of thorny bushes and weeds were left behind. The seed that fell in this area would grow but the weeds and thorns would grow faster. These thorny weeds would rob the nutrients of the soil and also block the sunlight which would keep the good seed from growing.

Jesus will show us the spiritual significance of the seed in the thorns in verses 18-19.

Mk 4:8 And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred.

Some of the seeds fell on good ground. The soil is called "good" because it has been prepared to receive seed. This soil was no different than the other soil. The only difference, it had been cultivated, it was deep, it was soft, and it was open to the seed.

Notice, that this is the only soil that brings forth fruit.

Jesus will show us the spiritual significance of the seed on good ground in verse 20.

2. THE MESSAGE IS EVALUATED v. 9-13

Jesus explained why He was speaking in parables in verses 9-12. He will explain the parable itself in verses 13-20.

Every person who ever heard Jesus' message had to evaluate what they heard and determine what they would do with what they had heard. Those who hear today do the same thing.

Mk 4:9 And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

The words "ears to hear" refer to the Holy Spirit opening the Word of God to the person who listens. Apart from this work of the Spirit, no one will understand God's Word. That is one of the reasons why there are so many who are misinterpreting the Word.

This answers the question about how so many can hear the Word, and be untouched.

What could be worse than hearing the Son of God preach the Word of God, and miss it entirely?

Jesus was saying anyone who could hear, had better listen. It is foolish to ignore the voice of God.

Mk 4:10 And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable.

The words "when he was alone" are very important.

They tell us Jesus did not explain the parable to the multitude (cf. v. 1-2).

They tell us also that the disciples did not understand the meaning of the parable. Even His disciples, without the help of the Holy Spirit, did not know why Jesus was speaking in parables, let alone what the parable meant.

This reveals the importance of the Holy Spirit revealing the truth of God's Word.

Mk 4:11 And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables:

Jesus began His explanation about parables by saying believers are supposed to understand God's Word but unbelievers are not.

Jesus did not explain the parable to the multitudes because many of them had heard His words and rejected them. He had spoken clearly but they had rejected His words. If they would not hear, Jesus would speak in a way where they could not hear.

They had closed their eyes and ears and rejected his word, so they would suffer the consequences.

Mk 4:12 That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.

Jesus referred to a verse in the Old Testament (Isa. 6:9) to explain why He used parables.

The word, "lest" speaks volumes.

First, the word "lest" tells us these people could have gotten saved, had they accepted the words of Jesus.

They willingly closed their eyes and ears to Jesus' ministry. They had seen the same miracles and heard the same words that others had, yet they refused to listen. Therefore, whatever would be the consequences, it would be their fault and no one else's.

Why would they do such a thing? Jesus tells us it was because they did not want to be converted. Getting converted meant they had to admit their sinful condition. Getting converted meant they could no longer live as they pleased. They refused to do that.

Second, the word "lest" tells us, that in spite of their rejection, Jesus was merciful. Jesus refusing to speak clearly was an act of judgment but it was also an act of mercy. The more they heard, the more accountable they would be. Jesus said, "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required" (Lk 12:48).

The saddest part of this verse is the fact that the Lord was willing to forgive them, had they listened. The answer to all our problems is always the Word of God.

3. THE MESSAGE IS EXPLAINED v. 13-20

Jesus explained the meaning of the parable in verses 13-20

Mk 4:13 And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?

Jesus said if His disciples did not understand this parable they would not understand His other parables. He was saying those lacking spiritual insight would not truly understand any of His parables.

Being able to hear and understand God's Word is one of God's most wonderful miracles. Jesus told Peter "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Mt. 16:17).

What could be worse than to not know what God is saying? God's Word has the answer to every question, it is the solution to every problem, it is our comfort when we are hurting, our strength when we are weary, our courage when we are afraid, and our lamp when we need direction. How awful it would be to have the Bible, and not be able to get from it the help it provides.

Jesus explained the sower

Mk 4:14 The sower soweth the word.

The seed is "sown" by the sower. As mentioned earlier, the sower refers specifically to Jesus but can be applied to any believer who shares the Word of God. When we share the Word, we are sowing.

- A sower needs to be cautious

A sower needs to realize how serious his job is. He knows what he is doing is a matter of life of death. In like fashion, every believer should recognize the seriousness of his labor.

A sower needs to make sure he is sowing the best seed and that he broadcasts it evenly as he walks. The sower of the Word should sow the gospel and do it every where he goes.

The sower must realize he can do more damage than good. For that reason, he is careful how he walks while he is in the field. Stomping through the field will damage the seed he has sown and hinder the harvest. In other words, how he walk matters.

Paul was careful to not do anything that might offend others. He said, "Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth" (1 Cor 8:13). If he was this cautious about offending a fellow believer, how much more should we be about offending a lost person?

In the physical world, the condition of the sower makes no difference. A farmer could be cheating on his wife, abusing his children, and sowing the field while drunk, but still have a great harvest.

This is not so in the spiritual world. For a spiritual harvest, the condition of the sower matters as much as the seed and soil. A successful harvest is dependent upon the Lord of the harvest (Mt. 9:38). God will not use an unfit servant.

- A sower needs to be concerned

He should see his farm as more than a paycheck. He knows his crop means life or death. In like fashion, every believer should have a similar concern. We are dealing with eternal souls.

Like the farmer, the believer should have a desire for a harvest. That's the only reason he left his house and went to his field.

- A sower needs to be confident

The sower can be confident because he knows he can trust the seed. The harvest does not depend on his talent or ability. He needs only sow the seed.

The sower's confidence causes him to expect a harvest. He knows the seed is good and some soil that will be receptive. In like fashion, those who sow the gospel should expect a harvest. We should never give up on God.

The Philippian jailer cried, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved" (Ac 16:30). A few minutes earlier he had whipped and chained the disciples. We never know when God is going to break the heart of a lost person.

The sower's confidence causes him to keep sowing. Believing there will be a harvest causes him to labor even when he is weary. In like fashion, expecting someone to hear and respond to the seed we sow will push us on. God still saves souls.

The Psalmist said, "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Ps 126:6).

Also, the sower's confidence keeps him from tampering with the soil. He may be tempted to dig around in the soil in an attempt to assist the growth. By doing so, he is doing more damage than good.

The sower's confidence in the Word keeps him from putting pressure on the listener. It is vitally important that we wait for the convicting power of God and not try to force someone to just pray a prayer. Many believe they are saved because of some empty prayer they prayed. Sadly, they think they are saved but they are still heading to hell.

- A sower needs to be committed

The committed sower keeps sowing even when he sees less harvest than he desires.

As this parable suggests, no field is without barren spots. Every farmer knows what it is to labor extensively yet have less harvest than he desires. And yet, the next day, he is back in the field doing the same thing again. He just keeps sowing the seed.

Any believer who tells others about Christ knows what it is to be rejected. When it happens, we need to keep on telling. It might be the next one we speak to who is ready to hear and receive the truth.

The committed sower keeps sowing even when he gets tired. Every sower gets weary. A good sower sows anyway.

As in the physical world, so it is in the spiritual. The more we sow, the more we reap (2 Cor. 9:6). So, we need to sow, and sow a lot.

Jesus explained the seed

v.14b ... soweth the word.

Jesus used a parable about a seed because a seed has many attributes similar to Word

- This seed is right

In the physical world a seed has to be planted at the right place. Planting an orange seed in North Dakota would be a waste of time. Also, a seed in the physical world a seed has to be planted at the right time. Planting a seed of corn in December in North Carolina would produce no fruit.

The seed of the Word is the only seed on earth that is always the right seed no matter where or when. The Word of God is always right.

It's right because it comes from God. It is God-breathed.
Paul wrote, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Ti 3:16a).

What else on earth can you say that about?
Everything in world, except God's Word, has been contaminated by sin.

Solomon said, "Every word of God is pure" (Pr 30:5).
The Psalmist said, " The words of the LORD are pure words" (Ps 12:6), "The law of the LORD is perfect" (Ps 19:7).
"For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pe 1:21).

- This seed is revealing

That which is inside the seed come outside when it grows.

God reveals Himself out of this book.

We know about God because of what the Bible says about Him. He wants us to know Him and His will (Lk. 24:27, 44-45; Jn. 5:39).

God also reveals us out this book. The Bible tells the good, the bad, and the ugly about man. James said the "hearer of the word" is like a man looking at himself in mirror (Jam. 1:23).

- This seed is refreshing

A seed brings forth new life and new hope. It is thrilling to see the green shoot of new life coming up in the garden. It is a new beginning.

The seed of God's Word can pick you up when you are down give you grace to keep going. It can help us want to when we don't want to. It can give comfort us in the time of trouble. David said, "This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me" (Ps. 119:50) and "I remembered thy judgments of old, O LORD; and have comforted myself" (Ps 119:5).

It can encourage us when we are discouraged. David said, "My soul melteth for heaviness: Strengthen thou me according unto thy word" (Ps 119:28).

It can give us faith when we are doubting.

Paul said, "Faith cometh by hearing, & hearing by the word of God" (Ro 10:17). We can increase our faith by spending time in the Word.

For these reasons, David could say, "I delight in thy law" (Ps 119:70).

The Word of God connects us with the God of the Word. He speaks to us through His Word. We grow closer to Him when we spend time in His Word.

- This seed is reliable

The seed of God's Word is the only thing of earth that you can depend on all the time. We never have to doubt the words in the Bible. Speaking to His Father, Jesus said, "thy word is truth" (Jn 17:17). David said, "Thy word is true from the beginning" (Ps 119:160). James called the Bible, "the word of truth" (Jam. 1:18).

We may doubt our doctor, our mechanic, our friends, and even our spouse, but we will never have a reason to doubt God's Word.

- This seed is required

The seed of God's Word does that which nothing else on earth can do. The fact that nothing else will do what it does means it is required.

There is no substitute for the Word. There are any number of substitute in this world and many of them are as good, or better, than the original. But, nothing can take the place of the Word of God.

If you need real forgiveness, strength, courage, power, or an answer, you'll have to go to the Bible.

- This seed is received

This primary truth of this parable is the importance of receiving God's Word. Not only must a seed be sown, it must be received. A seed on top of the ground will bear no fruit. A Bible on a table will do us no good (Jos 1:8).

Receiving the seed of God's Word means we need to read it. God gave us His Word but it will not jump off the page at us. Like the soil, we must receive it into our hearts. We must read it and heed it.

The unspoken Word of God is useless and dead. But, the Word of God unheeded is just as useless and just as dead.

- This seed is remarkable

There is something special about this seed. It has life in it. The Psalmist said, "I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil" (Ps 119:162).

In one way, the Bible is nothing more than white pages and black letters. But, look at it another way and you'll discover it is nothing short of a miracle.

The potential of one seed is indescribable. As I have mentioned earlier, from one seed of corn comes a stalk with multiple ears, each ear with 500-1200 kernels. In like fashion, the Word of God has the potential to do unbelievably great things.

- The Word produces conviction

The Word has the potential to convert the lost. Peter said we are "born again" by the "word of God" (1 Pet. 1:23). Peter preached the Word and "they were pricked in their heart" (Ac 2:37).

- The Word produces confidence

We can put our full confidence in God's Word. It will direct our every step. The Psalmist wrote, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, And a light unto my path" (Ps 119:105).

The Word will help our faith to grow. Paul wrote, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Ro 10:17).

- The Word produces consecration

The Word of God leads to a pure life. The Psalmist wrote, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word" (Ps 119:9).

- The Word produces contentment

God's Word produces peace of heart. Jesus said, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace" (Jn 16:33).

- The Word produces cheer

God's Word will encourage the downhearted and put joy in the weary believer. The Word has the potential to calm the troubled, comfort the fearful, correct the wandering, and challenge the weak. It can do what nothing else can.

Who would expect something so big to come from something so small?

Every believer should ask themselves these questions.

First, "Do I believe this is God's Word"?

Second, "Do I spend time in this book"?

Third, "Do I live as this book directs me?

Jesus explained the soil

The soil represents the heart of those who hear the Word of God. Of course, this parable deals primarily with sinners and their response to the gospel, but it can be applied to saints and their response to the Word of God.

Jesus mentions four different soils that indicate four different responses to the Word of God. Each response is determined by the condition of the person's heart.

Actually, there was only one type of soil. After all, dirt is dirt. The difference between these soils was how each had been prepared. It is the condition of the soil that makes the difference. Some will receive, and some will reject, the message of God.

Jesus teaches us there will be times when the sower does his best, yet there is little harvest. Even Jesus sowed seed that was rejected and bore no fruit. As believers, we will talk to all types of people from all types of backgrounds. Some will receive, and some will reject, the message of God.

It's important to realize also, that all these soils could have received the seed had they been prepared to do so. I am glad the gospel message is open to whosoever will (Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:13; Rev. 22:17).

Of course, this parable deals primarily with sinners and their response to the gospel, but it can be applied to saints and their response to the Word of God.

Mk 4:15 And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.

THE FIRST SOIL, THE PERSON WITH THE STUBBORN HEART

v.15a ... And these are they by the way side

As mentioned earlier (v.4), the "wayside" speaks of well-worn paths that cut through the fields during Jesus' day. When the sower sowed, some of the seed would fall on these rock-hard paths. The soil was too hard to allow the seed to penetrate.

The "wayside" speaks of the person with a stubborn heart who refuses to listen to the Word of God. Trying to talk to this person is like talking to a brick wall. You can tell, it isn't sinking in.

The stubborn-hearted person simply refuses to listen. The stubborn-hearted person has no interest in the things of God. The stubborn-hearted person believes they have no need of God.

Many people, like the soil spoken of here, are content to be left alone. They have little or no desire to have their lives invaded by a sower and seed. They are content in their condition and have no desire to have their lives interrupted.

Their hardness may be the result of any number of circumstances. Whatever their excuse, refusing to listen to God is serious.

v.15b ... Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.

Having not penetrated the soil, the seed lays on the surface of the ground where the birds find and eat. Matthew's record of this parable tells us Jesus said "the wicked one" catches away the seed. Satan, like the birds, comes trying to devour that which the sower has sown. They are the enemy to God's work and they can ruin a crop quickly.

When the Word is sown, the devil comes along and says "You know that isn't true" or "You know God is too good to send a person to hell". He did the same to Eve when he said "Ye shall not surely die" (Gen. 2:17). His intent is to cause the hearer to disregard what they have heard.

Sadly, many listen to the devil instead of the Spirit of God.

Of course, this parable deals primarily with sinners and their response to the gospel, but it can be applied to saints and their response to the Word of God.

Unfortunately, believers can be just as hard as sinners when it comes to hearing God speak.

THE SECOND SOIL, THE PERSON WITH THE SHALLOW HEART

Mk 4:16 And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness;

v.16a ... are sown on stony ground;

This speaks also of the person whose heart is hard.

The large bedrock that ran near the surface of the ground made the soil shallow. Here, the seed had enough soil to germinate, but not enough to send down roots.

v.16b ... immediately receive it with gladness;

The key to understanding this hearer is the word "gladness".

This is the person who hears only part of the message. They hear the part that tells of a life of joy and peace, but they miss the part that talks about their sinful heart and their need to repent.

This person hears the Word, gets excited, and without much thought, "makes a decision". They see Christianity as the thing that will make them happy. Maybe they have been facing some real problems, and they see salvation as a way to get some relief. They don't give their decision any real thought, they don't count the cost or realize there is a price to pay for being a real Christian.

This speaks of the person who hears the word and quickly makes a profession of faith. But, the profession is false. This is the person who hears about the joy that is found in Jesus and quickly grabs this "fix-all" religion. But, there was no conviction, there was no repentance, and there was no real conversion.

If this type of person lives today, how many more would have lived in Jesus' day? Many saw him heal the sick, raise the dead, and feed the multitude. As wonderful as his miracles were, they caused many people to want what they could get out of him. To them, he was a free meal ticket. Jesus addressed these people in the book of John (Jn.6:26).

Mk 4:17 And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.

The seed grows quickly but because it cannot sink to obtain moisture and nutrients, it dies.

This type of person may look genuine, to begin with. Remember, the sprout shoots up quickly. This is the person may show a great deal of emotion when they make their profession of faith.

But, once this person faces some of the difficulties of the Christian life, they show their true colors. When they find out that walking with Christ isn't always easy, they quit. When someone makes fun of them for going to church, when they are mistreated by their old friends, or they face a problem they weren't expecting, they quit.

Problems can do one of two things, they can strengthen the true believer, but they can also reveal the false believer.

This parable lets us know all professions are not genuine. At times, the ones who seem to be so real, are the ones that are false.

The word "offended" means "to entrap" or "trip up".

In like fashion, some believers want to hear only the encouraging and positive parts of the Bible. They resist hearing about the price of sin and the demands of a holy God.

THE THIRD SOIL, THE PERSON WITH THE SATURATED HEART v. 22 (cf. v.7)

Mk 4:18-19 And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

This person is the one who has a heart saturated with a love for the world. They have little interest in the Word. The thorns and weeds of worldliness consume them.

This is the person who simply does not have room in their lives for Jesus.

The "cares of this world" refer to the burdens of everyday living. Their daily obligations fill their lives. They have jobs to go to, bills to pay, and family to take care of.

The "deceitfulness of riches" keeps them from receiving the Word. They have believed the lie that happiness and contentment come from prosperity. So, they are more interested in making another dollar than the condition of their eternal soul.

The "lusts of other things" refer to the sinful desires of the flesh. In other words, they love their sin too much to listen to what God has to say.

This may be the person who loves to party, or the businessman who strives for success, or the teenager who longs to be popular. They have so much in their lives, that they don't have time for God.

All these things "choke the word".

This speaks of those who have heard the Holy Spirit speak, began to be convicted, but resisted the Spirit's urging. In time, the conviction, and the concern they had felt disappeared.

If any of the Word touches their heart, the devil is quick to spring to action. He reminds them of all the "fun" they are having in the world. He whispers in their ear and tells them the Christian life is for losers. He may simply tell them to wait, and get saved later.

As with the other soils, this can also be applied to believers. We also can become too busy for Jesus.

The weeds and thorn bushes consume the nutrients in the soil. The soil, any soil, has a limited amount of nutrients. There is not enough for the thorn bushes and the good seed. In like fashion, the human heart is limited. There is only so much time and so much room in any life. We cannot live for the Lord and the world at the same time. Jesus said we cannot serve God and mammon (Mt. 6:24).

We must not forget, that weeds grow naturally in any soil. Weeds will grow in places you would never dream possible. The lost person feels at home in the world. Sin and worldliness come naturally to them.

Sadly, the weeds of the world can also grow in the heart of a believer. Our flesh will always desire the things of the world. We will fight the battle between the flesh and the Spirit as long as we are in this world.

THE FOURTH SOIL, THE PERSON WITH THE SOFT HEART

Mk 4:20 And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred.

Some of the seed fell into good ground that was ready to receive it. This speaks of the person who listens to the Word, accepts its message, and turns to the Lord for salvation.

This is the only soil that brought forth fruit. Fruit is the proof of real salvation. It isn't leaves or vines, it is fruit.

Some have used this parable in an attempt to teach that we can lose our salvation. This is unbiblical. Those who did not bear fruit were never saved. Again, fruit, and only fruit, is the proof. Jesus said, "Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit" (Mt 7:17).

The harvest was good. The least amount of fruit was thirty-fold. Some produced thirty, some sixty, and some one hundred.

One out of four who heard the Word accepted it. This certainly does not mean that one out of every four people we witness to will get saved. It is simply saying, many who hear, will reject it. But, thank the Lord, some will hear.

We should not be discouraged if people don't accept the Lord every time we witness. The soil of their heart simply was not ready to receive it. God can still soften their heart. Very few people accept the Lord the first time they hear the Word.

So, what are we to do? We are to keep sowing. Keep praying, keep witnessing, keep handing out tracts, and keep trusting God to touch their hearts.

As I have mentioned several times, this parable can apply to how a believer responds to the Word of God. Certainly, we should allow God to tenderize our hearts so that we might be open to His seed.

God tells His people to "break up your fallow ground" (Jer. 4:3; Hos. 10:12).

Fallow ground is the ground that had been plowed and left alone without planting. The process of time has made it more hard than before it was plowed. God tells us to break it up so that it might receive the Word and bring forth a harvest.

LIGHT THE WORLD 4:21-23

In the next three verses Jesus speaks of how His parables conceal the light of the Word of God from those who refused to listen when He spoke clearly. He tells His disciples that He is temporarily hiding the Word but the time is coming when it will be proclaimed to the entire world.

1. THE LIGHT IS SHINING

Mk 4:21 And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick?

v.21a Is a candle ...

Jesus uses a candle to illustrate the fact that His message is designed to enlighten.

The Word of God is likened to light. David said, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, And a light unto my path" (Ps 119:105). He also said, "The entrance of thy words giveth light; It giveth understanding unto the simple" (Ps 119:130).

When the Word of God is spoken, it is like a bright light in a dark world.

Jesus' emphasis is on the light, not the candle. It is not us, but the Word of God that shines through us. We are nothing more than a vessel. We may be a simple vessel, but our light can make a difference.

v.21b ... brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed?

Jesus asks the question, "Do you light a candle to put it under a bushel or bed or to put it on a candlestick?" The obvious answer is "no." You light a candle so that you might be able to see what you have not been able to see.

Jesus said you don't light a candle and then hide the light. The one and only purpose of a candle is to put forth light. It shines, that's all it does. If it does not shine, it is worthless.

In like fashion, the Word of God is meant to shine. The Word of God gives light that the darkness might be dispelled. There is a spiritual darkness spread across this entire world. Sadly, men love darkness rather than light (Mt.5:19). Mankind loves darkness because darkness conceals their sin and the light reveals their sin (Jn. 3:19).

Light reveals what was there all along. The woman lighted a candle and found the silver she had lost (Lk 15:8). The light of God's Word reveals our sin (Ro 3:23). It reveals the Savior (Lk 19:10). It reveals the power we have in Christ (Acts 1:8; Ro 15:13; 1 Co 2:4; Eph 3:20). The light of God's Word gives light to direct our paths (Ps. 119:105).

2. <u>THE LIGHT IS SET</u>

v.21c ... and not to be set on a candlestick?

Jesus said you don't just light a candle, you place it on a candlestick and put it in a prominent place.

So, a candle is not only shining, it is set.

You put the candle where its light will shine the brightest. You put it in a "candlestick" and you place it where it is needed.

That's what God does with his children. He puts us in a place of darkness where we might shine. It may is not a fun place to be. There will be times when it is very difficult, but it is where He wants us and it is where we are needed. So, shine where He places you. Your light will make a difference in the darkness. One believer among many unbelievers can accomplish great things.

The word "brought" is interesting in that it means "to bring". God the Father brought His Son into this world so that He might shine in the darkness. Jesus is the One who is "come into the world" (Jn 1:9; 3:17; 3:19; 6:14; 11:27; 12:46; 16:28; Heb. 10:5; 1 Jn 4:9). As the Father sent His Son into this world, now He sends His children into the world to shine in the darkness. Jesus said later, "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world" (Jn 17:18). Jesus told His disciples, "Ye are the light of the world" (Mt 5:14). He said also, "Behold, I send you forth" (Mt 10:16).

Mk 4:22 For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad.

Jesus is talking about two things in this verse.

One, He is talking about how He has been hiding the light of the Word of God by preaching in parables. As mentioned earlier (4:11-12), Jesus used parables to conceal God's message from those who refused to listen. In other words, He had been hiding His message (light) under a bushel.

Two, He is talking about how the Word of God was not meant to be hidden, it was meant to shine brightly. He was about to put the Light of God's Word on a candlestick so that it might shine throughout the world. God was about to send His disciples to all parts of the world (Acts 1:8; 8:4; 11:19; 14:25; 1 Pet 1:1).

As mentioned, Jesus, by using parables, was temporally hiding God's Word, but the time was coming when its light would be released to the entire world. That which had been "hid" would be "manifested" and that which had been "secret" would be proclaimed "abroad".

3. THE LIGHT IS SEEN

v.22a For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested;

The word "manifested" means "to render apparent". It carries with it the idea of making known. In other words, God's Word helps us see what we have not seen before.

Again, the timing of these comments is vitally important. Jesus spoke these words while He was giving parables that "hid" the truth. But, the time was coming that the Word would be "manifested" by those who spoke clearly.

This is not the only time when that which has been concealed will be revealed (Lk. 12:2, 3; 1 Cor. 4:5; 1 Cor. 3:13, 4:5; Col. 1:26; 1 Tim. 5:24, 25).

4. THE LIGHT IS SHARED

Mk 4:23 If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.

Jesus says those who can hear when God speaks need to really listen. The "hear" means to really hear. It has the idea of taking into our inner person. Too often, we do not really listen.

We are to hear because God's Word is for our own benefit. What He says will always help the one who is willing to listen.

However, we are to hear God's Word because He wants us to pass it on to others. The light we receive from Christ, we are to share. We cannot give out what we have not taken in.

Jesus was the light of the world while He walked this earth. He said, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (Jn 9:5). But, now that Jesus has returned to heaven, we who are his disciples have become the light of the world. Jesus told His disciples, "Ye are the light of the world" (Mat 5:14).

Sharing our light involves our life

We are to live like a Christian should live. The word "Christian" means "follower of Christ". Paul said, "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light" (Eph 5:8 emphasis added). Paul said, "Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness" (1 Th 5:5).

The darker the world gets, the brighter our lights will appear.

Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Mt 5:16). Our lifestyle is seen by those around us. It does matter how we live. Some of those who see our light will come to the Father, be saved, and become lights themselves. They do so because they see something real in us. Remember, darkness can not overcome light but light can overcome darkness.

The most obvious characteristic of light is how different it is from darkness. The cry of the modern church is "identity". According to them, the believer is to fit in and get along. But, Jesus says we are to be different. Jesus did not fit in and neither will the believer who lives like He did (2 Ti 3:12).

Sharing our light involves our looks

How we look does matter. Our appearance tells us a lot about who we are. When Judah saw Tamar dressed like a harlot, he "thought her to be an harlot" (Ge 38:15). He thought she was a harlot because she looked like a harlot.

The world is watching us. If we look like the world they will think we are of the world.

Paul told the Corinthian believers "glorify God in your body" (1 Co 6:20).

If we are more concerned about our comfort than our testimony our priorities are out of place.

Sharing our light involves our lips

How we speak says a lot about who we are.

• *This deals with what we say*

First and foremost, we should speak the gospel to the lost. Paul said, "how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard" (Ro 10:14). Jesus sent His disciple into the world to share the gospel (Mt 28:19-20). That same commission applies to us today.

Secondly, our speech should be that which would please God.

• *This deals with what we do not say*

A believer should never be guilty of speech that would dishonor God. We should never be guilty of profanity, slander, gossip, lies, or boasting (Pro. 15:1-4; 17:9; 21:23; 34:13; Mt. 15:11; Eph 4:29; Col 4:6; Jam 3:5-12).

Sharing our light involves our love

Loving others tells the world we are true believers.

We should love the lost. Paul said, "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Ro 9:3). We should ask God to break our hearts and give us such a burden for lost souls.

We should love others. Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (Jn 13:35).

We should be nice and polite to those we come in contact with. As I have said, they should see a difference in us, but they should also hear a difference in us.

5. **THE LIGHT IS SUSCEPTIBLE**

The light is easily affected by its environment. A little wind or water will put it out.

As believers, we need to guard against anything that would hinder our light.

• *The devil hates our light*

The devil wants to steal our light. Paul said we wrestle against "the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph 6:12).

• *The world hates our light*

Jesus said, "For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved" (Jn 3:20).

TAKE HEED WHAT YOU HEAR 4:24-25

Verse 24 is the fifth occurrence of the words "he said" in chapter four. In verses 24-25, Jesus speaks of the results of our listening to God when He speaks. We will discover the importance of listening, understanding, believing, obeying, and sharing what God says to us by the Scriptures and by the Spirit.

Mk 4:24-25 And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.

1. WHEN I READ THESE VERSES, I THINK OF THE WORD APPRECIATION

v.24a ... And he said unto them

Jesus spoke. What an amazing fact. We should appreciate the fact that the God of the universe is willing to speak to us. If He had not spoken, all of mankind would be hopelessly, and forever, in darkness. We know who God is, why we are here, and where we are going because He spoke. If He had not spoken, we would not know how much He loves us. To be honest, when we look at the heartache around the world, it is easy to wonder, does God really love us. How can a God of love allow tornadoes, cancer, auto crashes, and child abuse to continue? We may not have all the answers but none of heartache of this world erases the fact that God loves all of mankind.

When we see the Word of God for what it is, we will appreciate its magnificence. It is the one and only God-breathed book on earth (2 Tim 3:16). God cared enough for mankind to give him a book that he could trust. It is historically, scientifically, prophetically, and morally, accurate. If either of these disagree with the Bible, they are wrong and the Bible is right. The Bible is always right.

No other book produces life for the dead and sight for the blind (Acts 26:18). It is the only book that can read its reader. Like a mirror, it tells the truth about us (Ja 1:23)

God did not just give His Son, He gave His Scripture for the world (Jn 3:16). What a wonderful gift. We can open this Book and hear God speak. Thank God for speaking to me. He did not have to.

Being able to comprehend the message of the Bible is perhaps the greatest of all blessings. One of the most wonderful phrases in the Bible is where Jesus said, "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures" (Lk 24:45). Thank our good God for opening our understanding that we might receive good things out of His Word. I understand why David prayed "Open thou mine eyes, That I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" (Ps 119:18).

I can't imagine life without the Scripture. How awful it would be to face problems without knowing there is a remedy, to feel guilty and not know there is a way to be forgiven, or to be mistreated and not know the right way to respond.

2. WHEN I READ THESE VERSES, I THINK OF THE WORD ATTENTION

v.24b ... Take heed

The word "heed" means to look at with wide eyes. We open our eyes wide to see, we need to open our hearts wide to hear. Jesus tells us to pay close attention when we hear the Word. God always has a message for those who are willing to hear.

We "take heed" by praying before we hear, ridding ourselves from all carnality, and by making our minds ready to receive.

I've often said, that if you were mentioned in the last will of one of your rich relatives, you would listen intently as the will was being read. You'd listen intently to every "whereas" and "heretofor" because you know somewhere in all those words, there is something just for you. We should be even more attentive when we hear God's Word for there is always something there just for us.

For this reason, the devil will try to plant thoughts in our minds in an attempt to distract us from what God is saying to us. We must be alert to this tactic, resist his attack, and pay close attention to God's voice.

3. WHEN I READ THESE VERSES, I THINK OF THE WORD AGREEMENT

v.24b ... what ye hear

It is vitally important that we agree with what God says.

The Bereans "searched the scriptures daily" to make sure what they were hearing agreed with the Bible (Ac 17:11). We should do the same. Many base their beliefs on what Grandma believed. The problem is, grandmas can be wrong.

If what we believe does not agree with the Word of God, we are the ones who are wrong. Sooner or later, the Bible will say something we do not want to hear. No one wants to hear they are sinners and deserve to go to hell. We'd rather not listen when God tells us to love our enemy and do right when we'd rather do wrong. The fact that we don't like what the Bible says makes it no less true. The fact that we don't like it will not change the fact that we will give an account of how we responded to the Bible.

We need to determine that we will agree with whatever the Bible says. Since it is always right, would it not be foolish to do otherwise?

4. WHEN I READ THESE VERSES, I THINK OF THE WORD APPETITE

v.24c ... with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you:

The person who has an appetite for the Word of God will not be disappointed. The Word feeds the hungry soul, directs the searching heart, and calms the troubled spirit.

When Jesus said, "with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you", He was saying, that what we put into the Word will be what we get out of the Word. The "reap what we sow" principle applies to the Word of God.

In other words, the person who loves the Word and devotes themselves wholeheartedly to its study will find themselves loving it even more. Those who come hungry to the Lord's table will always find a banquet. Those who hang on to every word of the preacher's message will be blessed with nuggets of gold. Those who hunger to know more will find the Word even more thrilling and satisfying. God's investment plan always pays big dividends.

When we search for a blessing from the Word, we will find it. If we are faithful to what God has given us, He will give us more. Job said, "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23:12). David said, "I opened my mouth, and panted: For I longed for thy commandments" (Ps 119:131). Peter wrote, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Pe 2:2).

However, the person who has only a slight interest will receive little, or no, blessing or benefit. Little hearing reaps little understanding and benefit. In fact, God may stop speaking to the person who rejects His Words.

How serious are you about God's Word?

5. WHEN I READ THESE VERSES, I THINK OF THE WORD APPLICATION

v.25a For he that hath ...

The words, "he that hath" speak of the person who has heard, and applied, the Word of God. In other words, this is the person who does what God has said.

The word "application" means "The act of putting something to use". God wants us to put His Word to work in our lives. God speaks because He is trying to change our lives. Learning is only the beginning. We need to do what we have learned. We need to make it personal when we hear or read the Bible.

We need to be doers of the Word and not hearers only (cf. Ja 1:22). James goes even further when he said, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (Ja 4:17). The second part of the Great Commission says we should teach them to observe all things that He commanded us (Mt 28:20).

v.25b ... to him shall be given

The person who hears and applies God's Word to their lives will be given more. To those who do His Word, He will give more.

This type of thing can be seen in everyday life. The salesperson who listens to, and applies, the instructions in their training manual, will be a better salesperson and be more prosperous.

When we hear or read the Word we should do so with obedience in our minds. The sowed seed produces fruit only if the soil receives it.

- This means God will give more information

The Word of God is information. It teaches. Information is power. The more we know the more we can accomplish. Man was able to walk on the moon because of the information he had gained. God's children can experience victory only when they have received the necessary information.

- This means God will give more understanding

God not only speaks to us but He gives us the capacity to comprehend what He is saying. Hearing is useless if the person does not understand what is being said. God gives greater understanding to the person who gladly receives His Word.

Being able to understand the message of the Bible is perhaps the greatest of all blessings. One of the most wonderful phrases in the Bible is where Jesus said, "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures" (Lk 24:45). Thank our good God for opening our understanding that we might receive good things out of His Word. I understand why David prayed "Open thou mine eyes, That I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" (Ps 119:18).

- This means God will give more maturity

The Word of God helps the believer mature spiritually. Spiritual maturity comes from learning the Word and applying it in the situations of our lives. The more we do it, the stronger we grow. Paul talked about the "meat" and the "milk" of the Word (1 Co 3:2). He told the Corinthians we not able to feed them with meat because they lacked spiritual maturity (1 Co 3:3).

- This means God will give more desire

The person who hungers for the Word will find themselves wanting more. Like a good banana pudding, eating it makes you want more.

- This means God will give more blessings

The fact is simple, God blesses those who loves and lives His Word. There are blessings by simply reading God's Word (Re 1:3). There are blessings for obeying God's Word (Dt 11:26-28).

God said through Moses, "Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey" (Dt 6:3). He said, "observe to do it" and "that is may be well with thee".

We must keep in mind, that all the blessings mentioned above are given to us in exact proportion to how we have received and applied God's Word to our lives. Little receives little and great receives great.

The great news is, there is no limit to God's blessings. We will never deplete His storehouse of blessings.

6. WHEN I READ THESE VERSES, I THINK OF THE WORD ACCOUNTABILITY

v.25c ... and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.

These words should remind us of the fact that God will hold us accountable for how we hear and obey His Word. We are accountable for the light we are given. Jesus said, "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required" (Lk 12:4).

Verses 24 and 25 have told us our response to God's Word will partially determine how much God will speak to us. God will continue to speak to the one who is open and receptive to His Word. This fact applies to every person on earth, whether they are lost or saved.

- This is true of unbelievers

As an unbeliever, Cornelius had been open to God's voice. God honored his attitude and continued to speak to him (Acts 10:4).

On the other hand, after Belshazzar rejected God's words, God cut him off and spoke no more (Dan 5:24-28).

There is no greater example of this than Judas. He heard all the other disciples heard, but refused to hear. The time came when Jesus told him, "That thou doest, do quickly" (Jn 13:27).

- This is true of believers

The believer who stays tender to God's Word will be blessed with more God-given insight. God continued to speak to Moses, but only after he followed His previous instructions by taking off his shoes (Ex. 3:5).

On the other hand, the believer who misuses or abuses the Word of God will be cut off from God's blessings.

This has been the point of these two verses. All the blessings mentioned above when we receive God's Word will be forfeited when we do not.

Certainly Satan plays a part in the taking away of the Word. The words "shall be taken" are from one Greek word that Jesus used when He said the devil "taketh away" the seed that had been sown (Lk. 8:12).

However, I believe the "shall be taken" mentioned here speaks of God taking away that which a person has heard. That is a scary thought.

I understand why God does this. If a friend misuses the gift you give them, you are unlikely to give them another gift. To not appreciate a gift is rude and thoughtless. By doing so, they abuse the gift and the friendship.

We will not treat the Bible like an unwanted house guest and still be blessed. An unused Bible is like an unused bank account, the treasures are there but are never removed and never enjoyed.

Shockingly, the modern church seems to think nothing of compromising, or changing, God's Word.

THE INCREDIBLE, INVISIBLE, WORK OF GOD 4:26-29

This parable, recorded by Mark only, deals with the internal work of God in individuals.

It has been interpreted in various ways. One, the church with the harvest being the Rapture of the church. Two, evangelism with the harvest being the conversion of a lost soul. Three, the work of God in an individual believer with the harvest being them being made fit to be used by God. Either of these can fit, but I will be using the third interpretation as I walk through the parable.

As I mentioned, this parable speaks of the work of God in the heart of an individual. This work, though invisible to us, is one of the greatest of all of God's work. The Bible speaks often of the process of spiritual harvest (Isa 55:10-11; 1 Co 3:6-9; Ja 5:7-8; 1 Pe 1:23-25).

The word "corn" refers to a corn of wheat, not to an ear of corn.

Mk 4:26 And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground;

1. OUR LOVE IS REVEALED

v.26a ... a man should cast seed

This parable is more than a story about a farmer planting a crop or a businessman making a living. It speaks of real people who do what they do because they care about others. It speaks of a person who cares enough to try to help someone.

Our love for others will make our service for God pleasurable. The person who serves God out of fear or obligation will live a sad life of bondage. On the other hand, the person who serves God because they love people will live a life of joy and fulfillment.

Trying to help someone because we care is the purpose of the Christian life. Paul said, "by love serve one another" (Ga 5:13). The good Samaritan demonstrated his love by serving a needy man who could not repay (Lk 13:33-35). We serve Jesus when we serve others (Mt 25:40).

Our love for God can be measured by how we try to help people (Mt 25:40).

2. OUR LABOR IS REQUIRED

This parable teaches the harvest depends on God but the farmer has a job to do. Believers are laborers together with God (1 Co 3:9a).

v.26b ... cast seed into the ground

Jesus speaks of a man who is casting seed. As we will see, the growth of that seed depends on God but, if there is to be a harvest, the farmer must do what he can. If he does not labor, there will be no harvest.

Every believer is a laborer for the Lord. Those who are the greatest in God's family are those who serve (Mt 20:27; Mk 9:35; 1 Pe 4:10). Jesus became a servant when He came to earth (Mt 20:28; Phil 2:6-7).

As in Jesus' earlier parable (cf. 4:3-8), the "seed" represents the Word of God. The seed "cast into the ground" refers to a believer sharing God's Word. We cast the seed when we preach, teach, share, or live the Word of God. Actually, every area of service for the Lord involves the Word of God in one way or the other.

The "casting" of the seed is a violent act. The farmer broadcasts the seed with vigor that he might spread it far and wide. In like fashion, what we do for Christ, we should do with all of our hearts (2 Chr. 31:21; Ps 119:34; Ec 9:10a; Col 3:23). He deserves our best.

3. **OUR LIMIT IS RECOGNIZED**

The farmer labors but he is limited in what he can do.

Mk 4:27 And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.

The farmer is limited in his ability

v.27a ... And should sleep

The farmer knows he is limited. He knows he can sow the seed but he cannot make it grow.

Knowing he has done what he can, he will "sleep" in the "night" and "rise" in the "day". Having sown the seed, he goes about his daily routine. He can do no more than that which he has done. It would be foolish for him to labor in the field at night. He could go in field, get down on his knees, and cry "grow seed grow", but it would do no good. In fact, doing so would cause more damage than good.

As believers, we have limitations. We can cast the seed but we cannot change the heart of those who listen. We can speak the words, pray the prayers, and live a godly life, but God must bless it if there is to be any good accomplished.

His sleeping at night and rising by day is not a sign of his unconcern. It is an indication his lack of self-effort. It indicates also, his faith. He is depending totally on the process of growth. While he is at rest, the growth process continues in the seed. In like fashion, we should trust totally in the power of God to work in the hearts of those we are trying to help. God is still working even while we are sleeping.

The farmer cannot do everything but he can do something. That which he can do, he should do. As with the farmer, we should do what we can and leave the rest to God.

The farmer is limited in his knowledge.

The farmer has little, or no, knowledge about agriculture or horticulture. He "knoweth not how" means he can't explain all the details involved with the growth going on in the field. He simply trusts the process and lets the results come. Modern man has learned a great deal about agriculture but the transformation of a seed into a harvest still remains a mystery. The fact is, the honest agriculturist must acknowledge the miracle of a harvest.

The farmer cannot explain how it happens but he certainly enjoys the process and the benefits thereof. In like fashion, those who sow into the lives of others will delight in seeing lives changed for the good.

4. **OUR LORD IS RESPONSIBLE**

The results in the field depend on the power of God alone. In verse 28, Jesus describes the process from the sowing of the seed to the harvest of the crop. His point is, that the work of God is done in the heart of an individual by the Word of God and the influence of the Holy Spirit. It is entirely, from beginning to end, a work of God. To miss this point is to miss the entire meaning of the parable.

Mk 4:28 For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.

God brings forth the fruit

v.28a For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself ...

The seed accomplishes that for which it is intended and the fruit comes forth. In like fashion, God said, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: It shall not return unto me void, But it shall accomplish that which I please, And it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it (Isa 55:11). Paul said, "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Php 2:13).

The earth bringing "forth fruit of herself" refers to the miraculous work of God that is accomplished without the industry of man. The word "herself", found one other time in the New Testament, is used to describe the gate opening of its own accord for Peter (Acts 12:10).

Paul said we are God's "workmanship" (Eph 2:10). The word "workmanship" means "product" or "something made". We are God's special project. God began His work by making us new creatures (2 Co 5:17). Whatever peace, purity, or power we have, is because of Him.

Different levels of spiritual maturity

The level of our spiritual maturity is measured by the level of our holiness, knowledge, compassion, faith, endurance, and service.

Mark describes the details involved with the growing of the corn with each of the steps showing an increase in development.

The first step, the blade

v.28b ... first the blade

The "blade" is the first visible sign of vegetation.

The hardness of the soil, the lack of rain, and the heat of the sun did not stop its development. The enemies of God's harvest will not be successful.

This speaks of the first evidence of God's work in the individual's heart and life. It is a sign that the individual has become receptive to God's Word and the work of the Holy Spirit in their heart.

The blade is small, just barely detectable, but it is real. It is a sign of good things to come.

This blade can be easily ignored. It is tender and can be easily destroyed. We should be extremely careful with the work God does in our hearts. We can easily grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:30) or quench (1 Th. 5:19) the Spirit of God. We should appreciate what He is doing and submit ourselves to His urging. To do so is unwise, for from this small beginning, great things can come. The individual should stay sensitive and submissive to the work God is doing in them. A miracle is taking place.

v.28c ... then the ear

The "ear" is the head of grain that comes from the stalk. The growth is continuing.

The work of the Holy Spirit continues to make progress in the individual. They have more of a desire to please God and do His will. They see the need and even enjoy, times of prayer and Bible study. They are more sensitive to sin and determined to avoid that which would hinder their spiritual walk. They find themselves being more concerned about the well-being of others.

At this stage, the changes of this individual are becoming apparent to those who know them. Their friends see the difference.

Something is happening. It is the incredible, invisible, work of God in his heart.

v.28d ... after that the full corn in the ear

The "full corn" refers to the fully grown fruit. Spiritually, this refers to a mature and stable believer. The Word that they once despised has now become their delight.

God's work had brought the seed into harvest. The result is a fully developed plant that is doing that for which it was designed. It is not just alive, it is producing. Paul wrote, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Php 1:6). The complete process, from beginning to end, has been a work of God (cf. Eph 4:13).

5. **OUR LITTLE IS REWARDED**

The farmer did little, but his little was rewarded greatly.

The miracle of the harvest is experienced by the person in whom the Lord is working. But, the miracle is also enjoyed by the person who sowed the seed. Both are blessed by the work of the Holy Spirit.

The one sowing the seed may be a pastor who wants to see a member of the church mature into a dynamic Christian. It may be a Sunday School teacher who wants one of their students to have a hunger for God's Word. It may simply be a believer who wants a friend to fall in love with the Lord and dedicate their lives to Him.

Whatever the case, this parable speaks of someone who does what they can to help an individual become more like Christ. And, they are rewarded for their effort.

Mk 4:29 But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.

v.29a But when the fruit is brought forth ...

Fruit is the result of the growth of the seed. Spiritual fruit is the result of the work of God in the heart of an individual. Jesus said, "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Mt 7:20). Paul talks about the "fruit" of the Spirit (Ga 5:22-23). In other words, the Holy Spirit working in the believer will produce love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. These are traits every believer should long for and they are traits every believer should have.

When the "fruit is brought forth" the farmer "immediately" begins the harvest. His goal has always been the harvest.

Those who sow into the lives of others will reap the harvest of changed lives. The pastor preaches to the man on the pew, who hears and answers God's call to preach the Word. The Sunday School teacher reaps the harvest of little children growing into mighty Christians who serve God themselves. The believer sees their friend spiritually transformed before their eyes.

v.29b he putteth in the sickle

The putting forth of the "sickle" means the harvest is reaped and that for which the seed was sown has come to pass.

The farmer sees his dream become a reality. He sees an ocean of wheat where there had been an empty field. It is time to enjoy the benefits.

The harvest brings him joy for he sees that which he has desired. The harvest brings him contentment for he realizes his labor was not in vain. The harvest brings him expectation for he knows there will be more sowing and more harvests in the future.

v.29c the harvest is come

The desired goal is reached. That which the farmer dreamed of has become a reality.

It could mean, the lost soul turns to the Lord and gets saved. It could mean, the fearful believer gains faith and stands true in the midst of trouble. It could mean, the wayward believer sees their need, gets right with God, and walks faithfully again.

The farmer did little, but his little was rewarded greatly.

This parable should teach us, that if we give our little to God, He can do great things with it. The Red Sea parted when Moses raised his staff and the people walked (Ex 14:21-22). The walls of Jericho fell flat and Israel won the victory when they sounded the ram's horn and shouted (Josh 6:5).

God can do indescribable things if we do what we can and trust Him with what we can't. God's incredible, invisible, work is still alive today.

THE MIGHTY MUSTARD SEED 4:30-34

Jesus continued to use parables. In verses 30-34, He gave a parable describing the condition of the kingdom of God. When He was alone with His disciples, He explained the meaning of the parables (v. 34). Luke (Lk 13:18-19), and Matthew (Mt 13:31-32), record the parable also.

The parable we are about to examine speaks of how something small and unappreciated, can become something great and mighty. As we will see, even though many have rejected God's kingdom, its influence has covered the earth.

1. **THE PLAN OF THE SAVIOR**

God has a plan for this world and He is carrying out His plan on earth at this present moment. Gamaliel was right when he said, "if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God" (Ac 5:38b-39).

In verses 30-34, Jesus gave a parable to describe how God is carrying out His plan for this world.

Mk 4:30 And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it?

Jesus, as He so often did, caused His disciples to think by asking a question. It would do us well to spend a great amount of time thinking. The Bible has a great deal to say about meditating about the work, will, and Word, of God (Ge 24:63; Josh 1:8; Ps 1:2; 63:6; 77:12; 119:15; 119:78; 143:5; 1 Ti 4:15).

The word "liken" speaks of a comparison. As with all parables, Jesus was giving a word picture to explain a spiritual subject.

The kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven are the same. Matthew uses the term "kingdom of heaven" probably because he was writing to a Jewish audience. The Jews avoided using the name "God" for fear of taking it in vain.

The "kingdom of God" can be viewed in two different ways.

First, it can be viewed as a universal kingdom. This is the rule of an Almighty God over the entire universe. He is God of all that exists. David said, "The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; And his kingdom ruleth over all" (Ps 103:19). All people do not acknowledge Him as Lord, but He is Lord nonetheless.

Second, it can be viewed as a spiritual kingdom. This is the rule of a loving God over those who have accepted His Son and been birthed into His family (Jn 3:5-7; 1 Co 6:9-10). God already ruled over the universal kingdom, so He sent His Son to establish a spiritual kingdom. This was a kingdom He would establish in the hearts of man.

This kingdom is more than a literal kingdom with a land, laws, and lordship. It is invisible. Jesus said, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation" (Lk 17:20 emphasis added). This kingdom is not one set up on earth where everyone can see, it is in the hearts of believers. It is a spiritual kingdom that resides in the hearts of believers. Jesus said, "the kingdom of God is within you" (Lk 17:21 emphasis added). Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world" (Jn 18:36). Entrance to this kingdom comes by believing the gospel and repenting of sin.

We must understand, that God rules over both the universal and the spiritual kingdoms. He rules over everything He has made (Ps 10:16; 145:13; Col 1:17).

I believe Jesus is speaking of the spiritual aspect of the kingdom of God in this parable.

Jesus is speaking of spiritual aspect of the kingdom of God this parable. God's plan is to change the world.

The mustard seed grows into a tree whose branches cover the earth. This speaks of God reaching out across the world with His grace. Some will accept it and be forgiven. Some will reject it and remain in their sin.

2. <u>THE POWER OF THE SEED</u>

Mk 4:31 It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth:

Jesus used a "mustard seed" to illustrate the kingdom of God in this world.

The mustard seed is so small that it takes more than 15,000 seeds to weigh an ounce.

Some have tried to discredit Jesus because there are seeds smaller than the mustard seed. This is not to be taken lightly. If Jesus was mistaken about the mustard seed, that means, He was wrong. If He was wrong, He was not God.

The fact is, the mustard seed was not the smallest of all seeds, but it was the smallest of seeds that were used for harvests at that time. Jesus was talking about a harvest (His kingdom), so He used a seed that was sown for a harvest. So, Jesus, as always, was right.

God's kingdom, like the mustard seed, started small.

The Jews expected God's kingdom to come with much pomp, pageantry, and promotion. They expected a powerful leader to overthrow the Roman government and set up a mighty kingdom. However, the King's arrival, quiet and undetected, began in the tiny village of Bethlehem with no fanfare and very little celebration.

The fact is, Jesus was born in a manger (Lk 2:7), raised in a carpenter's home (Mt 13:55), lived a lowly life (Mt 8:20), and had a very short ministry of only 3 ½ years. They ridiculed, rejected, ignored, and tried to kill Him. His ministry started with twelve men. After He ascended, there were only 120 in the upper room.

This seed was so small it had little chance to live. It was truly a speck against the world. There was every reason in the world for it to not survive. The odds against it are inconceivable. And yet, as we are about to find out, it does much more than survive.

v.32a But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches;

Jesus said the mustard seed starts small, but when it is grown, it becomes a tree. Certainly, he did not mean the mustard plant would be as large as an oak tree. However, in Palestine, the mustard plant has been known to grow as high as 25 feet high. Imagine, from a seed so small it is difficult to pick up, comes a tree 25 feet high.

The words "groweth", "greater", and "shooteth out" describe the increase of the mustard seed. This speaks of the influence God's kingdom has on this world. The effects of the kingdom will branch out across the world and influence everyone under its branches.

Look across this world and you will see the effects of God's kingdom everywhere. Our calendar is based on the birth of Christ. The Bible is still the number one seller. A great deal of the world has at least a portion of the Bible printed in their language. The nations that have embraced Christianity have better morals and are more advanced in every aspect of life.

Christianity has had a positive effect on any land that embraces it. Any good in America is because of the effects of Christianity. The moral principles of Christianity, the dignity of life, judicial system, education, free enterprise, and the dignity of women, all are benefits that have been instilled by Christianity.

The kingdom of God has not only survived, it has thrived.

From its small beginning, billions have come. By the time Paul died, only about forty years after Jesus gave this parable, the gospel message had spread to the ends of the known world. There had been 3,000 (Acts 2:41), 5,000 (Acts 4:4), and multitudes (Acts 5:14), saved. Even though the entire world has not yet heard, the gospel has spread across this world like wildfire. The devil has fought this kingdom from its beginning. Yet, like the mustard seed, the kingdom thrives. What a miracle!

The kingdom of God has survived because the God of heaven has protected it. When speaking of his church, Jesus said, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Mt 16:18).

We must not see Jesus ruling over the earth as only a future event. He is ruling at this present moment. And, this is what Jesus was talking about in this parable.

Americans have no experience with absolute monarchy. America was designed to have a balance of power and one man having absolute power scares us. However, the God of the universe can be trusted.

This parable tells us God is supreme, He is sovereign, and He is right to be so. The God who is beyond man's comprehension (Job 11:7; Ps. 147:5) does not have to ask for permission before He acts. He does not consult with others when He does what He does. He need not call for advice from an expert, for He is the expert no matter what the subject. God said of Himself, "To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal" (Is 40:25). When we consider such a magnificent God, it is no wonder why some have asked, "What is man" (Job 7:17; 15:14; Ps 8:4; 144:3; Ecc 6:11; Heb 2:6).

One of the most astounding facts about God working His plan on earth is that He never overrides man's will. The fact is, that much of His plan involves His attempt to bring mankind to the point of willing submission. He wants us to want to. He wants us to be willing.

3. THE PRESENCE OF THE SINNER

v.32b ... so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.

The mustard seed grows into a "tree" large enough for the "fowls of the air" to nest in its branches.

As earlier (cf. Mk 4:4), Jesus used birds to illustrate the work of Satan.

This tells us the kingdom does not grow until it converts the world. Jesus was not promising a spiritual utopia. He was saying the opposite. Great and godly things will result from the growing of the tree, but, as always, the devil is ready to sneak in and cause problems (cf. 1 Pe 5:8).

The birds lodge "under the shadow of it" means they experience the benefits of living in the tree.

The tree provides.

Insects that land on the tree provide a meal for the birds. They have access to the water from rain and dew that collects on the leaves. In the dry climate of Israel, this could be a matter of life or death.

In like fashion, God's kingdom on earth provides many benefits to those who, not only do not know God, but despise Him and His Word. Jesus said, "he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Mt 5:45). Believers have introduced the world to wonders in financing, medicine, education, agriculture, architecture, and even politics.

The tree protects.

The tree provides shelter from storms, warmth from winter's cold, and shade from summer's heat. God's wrath is often withheld because of the presence of God's people. Had there been ten righteous souls in Sodom, God would have spared the cities. The "salt" (cf. Mt 5:13) of God's people keeps the world from decaying.

The birds are not a part of the tree but they reside in the tree. No doubt, some profess to be saved but they are not a part of the kingdom. There are a vast number of organizations that claim to be of God. The Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Muslims, Hindus, Catholics, Worldwide Church of God, and followers of Wicca, all profess to believe and follow God. Even the LGBT groups claim they are living as God designed them.

All these groups, even though they are far from God's will, are enjoying the benefits of living in the branches of God's blessings. God is longsuffering to those who deserve judgment. He is kind to the unkind, loving to the unlovable, and merciful to the guilty.

We must not miss the fact that God is still working on His kingdom. It will eventually include the literal, worldwide, 1000-year kingdom, commonly called "The Millennium" when Jesus will sit on David's throne and rule from Jerusalem (Zech 8:3; Isa 9:7, 11:1-9; Mt 10:28; Lk 1:32-33; Re 20:2-7). It includes the doing away with the old and the making of new heavens and earth (Isa 65:17; 2 Pe 3:13; Re 21). It includes, also, the eternal state when God will rule over all (Re 21:3,4).

No doubt, this parable meant much to the disciples. They would see their leader mistreated, abused, and crucified. They would see multitudes turn their backs on Jesus. Though they did not grasp it as much as they should, this parable was meant to prepare them for these things. It is meant to do the same for the modern believer. We also, live in a world that does not appreciate Christ.

Mk 4:33 And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it.

Once again, we are reminded of the purpose of parables (Please read comments on 4:2). The parables enlightened those who had listened, but confused to those who had not. No one neglects God's Word without there being dire consequences.

Nothing is more sad than not being able to understand God when He speaks. The kingdom of God had already begun but the Pharisees had no idea. The King was walking among them, building His kingdom, and they were oblivious to it all.

Jesus preached "as they were able" to understand it

Mk 4:34 But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.

On this particular day and to this particular crowd, Jesus spoke only in parables. This does not mean, as some say, that Jesus never spoke unless it was in parables. Of course, on subjects other than His kingdom, Jesus spoke without using parables (Mk 10:5-12, 29-31, 39-40, 42-45; 12:29-31; 13:5-37; 14:27-28).

As before (Mk 4:10), when Jesus and His disciples were alone, He explained His parables. Oh, to be close enough to Jesus to hear and understand what He is saying.

THE SLEEPING SAVIOR 4:35-41

Verses 35-41 tell us about a trip Jesus and His disciples took across the Sea of Galilee. The lake is 13 miles long at its longest and 8 miles wide at its widest. Under normal wind conditions, a trip across the Sea of Galilee would take about 2 hours.

The Sea of Galilee lies in a basin surrounded by mountains that rise above the sea approximately 2,000 feet. Cold air from the tops of the mountains would often mix with warm air on the lake causing sudden and severe storms.

The theme of this event isn't the storm, the sea, or the saints, it is the Savior. Thus far in the book of Mark, we've read about Jesus baptized, tempted, preaching, healing, casting out demons, and forgiving sin. This is the first time we find Him sleeping.

Mk 4:35 And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.

This was the "same day" spoken of in the previous verses. It had been a long and difficult day and Jesus was exhausted.

1. THE SAVIOR'S COMMENT

v. 35a ...he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.

They were on the west side and heading to the east side of the Sea of Galilee.

Jesus had spoken to His disciples many times, but these were words they should have really listened to. We may ignore our spouse, our children, or our boss with little consequence, but we will never ignore God without tragic results.

The word "other" means "through" or "beyond". This was more than a casual comment, it was a promise. When the Son of God says you are going to the "other side", you can depend on it. What seemed as nothing more than an incidental comment about an ordinary trip, was meant as a message of peace to the disciples. Before this trip was over, they would need to remember these words. Every word God speaks is important and has meaning.

The fact that Jesus said nothing about the coming storm does not mean He did not know about it. The disciples were surprised by the storm, but Jesus was not. We need to remember, that God is never surprised.

By the way, He not only knew about the storm, He caused the storm. God sends storms to teach His children to trust Him.

As we will see (5:1-2), Jesus was needed on the other side. Nothing was going to stop Him from getting where He was needed. I'm glad nothing can stop Him from getting to us when we need Him.

Mk 4:36 And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships.

The disciples, as Jesus instructed, sent the multitude away. Jesus had a lesson to teach the twelve.

The "ship" may be the one from which He had been preaching earlier in the day (cf. 4:1).

The words, "even as he was" mean they launched out as soon as He spoke without taking time for rest or preparation for the journey. When God speaks there is no reason for delay.

The "other little ships" are mentioned only by Mark and he does not mention them again.

The fact that these ships were "with" the Lord tells us they wanted to be close to Jesus. They were not content with being with the "multitude" on the shore.

Those in the little ships benefited from what happened in Jesus' ship. If they followed Jesus' boat, they experienced the same storm Jesus and the 12 disciples did. They also enjoyed the same miracle Jesus and the 12 disciples did. The storm stopped and the sea settled for them also.

The other ships should remind us of how we influence others. They were watching the 12 disciples and were affected by how they acted during the storm. Someone is watching you to see how you respond through the storms of life. We need to show them that they can trust God, even in the worst of circumstances.

Mk 4:37 And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.

As Jesus and the disciples were crossing the sea, a "great storm of wind" arose. As mentioned, sudden and severe storms were common on the Sea of Galilee. Luke tells us the storm "came down" (Lk 8:23) which refers to the cold air from the higher elevation descending to the warm waters over the lake.

The storm is described as a "great storm". The word "great" means "exceeding" and carries with it the idea of high, large, loud, and mighty. This was not an ordinary storm. It was unusually severe.

It is described as a storm of "wind". There is no mention of rain in this, or the other, gospel records (Mt 8:23-27; Lk 8:22-25). This word is used to describe severe winds that have the characteristics of a hurricane (Acts 27:4, 14; Ja 3:4; Re 6:13).

The severe winds caused the waves to "beat" against and pour over the sides of the ship.

The word "full" means "to fill entirely". Luke used a word that means "to swamp". It is the same word used to describe the sponge full of vinegar (Mk 15:36) the water pots full of water (Jn 2:7) the twelve baskets full of leftovers (Jn 6:13) and the temple filled with smoke (Re 15:8).

Some commentators say the ship was "beginning" to fill, others ignore this word completely. I think we need to accept what it says. The ship being full only magnifies the miracle in that the ship did not sink and that Jesus could be asleep.

2. THE SAVIOR'S CONFIDENCE

Mk 4:38 And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?

The fact that the disciples, some of them seasoned fishermen who had experienced many storms, were frightened tells us this was an unusually severe storm. Humanly speaking, there was real danger and death was possible.

The presence of the Lord did not keep the storm from coming. The fact is, quite often, those closest to the Lord will experience the worst of the storms.

Jesus was in the "hinder" part of the ship. The back part of any vehicle is always the roughest place to sit. This means, Jesus was experiencing the worst part of the storm, yet He was "asleep".

Jesus being "asleep on a pillow" reveals two things.

One, it reveals the fact that He was human. Luke tells us Jesus "fell" asleep (Lu 8:23) which suggests He was exhausted from His busy day. The long day of preaching (4:1-34) had made Him weary. Like any man, Jesus got hungry, thirsty, tired, and sleepy.

Two, it reveals the fact that He had complete confidence in His Father. If Jesus was not worried, His disciples did not need to be. If He was not worried, neither do we need to be when we face the storms of life. Jesus sleeping during the storm should have been an example to the disciples. If He could relax enough to sleep, they should have been able to do the same.

Jesus had more than the storm that could have kept Him awake. He had the opposition of the religious bunch, the sicknesses of the multitudes, the immaturity of the 12, and His coming crucifixion, to occupy His mind. Yet, despite it all, He laid His head on a pillow and went to sleep. The person who trusts God can enjoy rest.

More than likely, the disciples tried bailing the water from the ship before they awakened the Savior. If they did, their effort was to no avail. This storm was too severe. How many times do we exhaust ourselves before we call on the Lord? Trusting self instead of Him is not wise. Trusting self never works.

3. THE SAVIOR'S CONCERN

v. 38 ... and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?

Their question, carest thou not that "we" perish can be taken in one of two ways.

One, the "we" may refer only to the disciples. In this case, it would mean they were thinking only of themselves and thought Jesus did not love them as much as He had said.

Two, the "we" may refer to everyone in the ship, which would include Jesus. If this is their meaning, it meant they believed, if the ship went down, He would perish also. As impossible as this seems, it shows us how unreasonable fear and doubt can be,

The disciples were complaining about what Jesus had not done. Far too often we struggle with that which God has not yet done for us instead of thanking Him for what He has done.

To accuse the Lord of not caring was the lowest of insults. Actually, the opposite was true. He allowed the storm because of His great love for His disciples. The storm, like all things He did, was for their spiritual development and to help them trust Him even more. God sends storms to help, not hurt, His children.

4. THE SAVIOR'S CONTROL

Jesus showed His control over the storm by calming the wind. The fact is, He was as much in control when He was sleeping as He was when He was speaking.

Mk 4:39 And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

Jesus "arose". The storm did not awaken Him, but the cry of His disciples did. Like parents of a newborn, the heavenly Father is sensitive to the call of His little ones.

Jesus rebuked the storm. The word "rebuked" has the idea of forbidding. He forbade the storm to continue. He put a muzzle on the storm.

Jesus rebuking the sea may mean the storm was sent by Satan in an attempt to drown Jesus and His disciples all at once. Whether it was sent by Satan or not, the Lord allowed the storm to come. He was the One in control. The Psalmist said, " Thou rulest the raging of the sea: When the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them" (Ps 89:9).

There are two rebukes in these verses. First, Jesus rebuked the "wind" and the "sea", then, He rebuked the disciples. He calmed the hearts, then He calmed the waves.

The word "peace" means, "be quiet" or "be muzzled". He told the sea to be quiet and stay quiet.

The word "calm" has the idea of tranquility. The sea instantly became dead still. If the storm had simply stopped on its own, the waters would have continued to be agitated for a while. Not this time, the sea instantly became as glass. The calm after the storm was as overpowering as the turbulence had been during the storm.

The God who spoke the universe into existence (Ge 1:3) had no problem speaking calm to this storm.

Though not mentioned here, when the sea calmed for the disciple's ship, it calmed for the other ships also (cf v. 36).

5. THE SAVIOR'S CONFRONTATION

Mk 4:40 And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?

First, Jesus confronted the disciples by asking why they were "so fearful".

The word "fearful" refers to being afraid but it carries with it the idea, as Jesus says, of not having faith.

Jesus' rebuke may seem harsh. Humanly speaking, we look at the severity of the situation and understand why the disciples were frightened. However, the severity of the storm, and even Jesus being asleep, did not give the disciples an excuse to be afraid. There was absolutely no excuse for their fear.

- Their fear was inexcusable because Jesus was in the ship

When Jesus is in our ship, it doesn't matter how severe the storm is. Their ship could not have sunk, no matter how severe the storm. God had a plan, and no amount of wind would derail His plan.

- Their fear was inexcusable because Jesus promised to go to the other side (v. 35)

They were afraid, not only because of the storm but because they did not believe His words. He had promised a safe journey, not an easy journey.

- Their fear was inexcusable because no storm is stronger than God

This was probably the worst storm any of the disciples had ever faced. However, despite its severity, it was not too bad for God to handle. There is no problem too big for God.

Second, Jesus confronted the disciples by asking why they had "no faith".

If anyone on earth, should have trusted God, it should have been these disciples. By walking with Jesus, they had seen and heard enough to cause them to trust God under any circumstances. Jesus was asking them why they did not have more faith than they did.

Mk 4:41 And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

The disciples were more afraid now than before. Their fear was because of the Savior instead of the storm. Seeing His power over creation caused them to see just how powerful He was. No one sees God as He is without it affecting them.

The disciples saw Jesus in a way they had never seen Him before. It would not have been possible had it not been for the storm. Maybe, one day, we will realize, that God knows what He is doing.

The disciples did not know where they were headed when they boarded the ship, but Jesus did. They did not know there was a storm ahead, but Jesus did. They did not know if they would make it through the storm once it hit, but Jesus did. We may not know what is ahead, but Jesus does. Since He knows, that should be enough. He is well aware of what is ahead. Our storms may be severe, but we can still depend on Him.

You may be in the worst storm of your life and you may feel like you are just about to sink, but God is in your boat with you. Trust Him, obey Him, and watch what He does.

6. THE SAVIOR'S COMMITMENT

Jesus didn't quit. He did what He said He would do, He took them all the way to the other side where He continued to help those in need (5:1).

Here, like so many other places, we see Jesus enduring severe circumstances but continuing to do His Father's will. May that Spirit work in us so that we might be faithful till the end.

And "let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Ga 6:9). May we be "stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Co 15:58).

In conclusion:

It is my opinion that the Lord wanted the disciples to trust Him all the way across the lake. It was wonderful that He calmed the storm. However, it would have been much better had they trusted Him and ridden it out. Enduring this storm by faith could have given them faith to face the next storm without fear. It is great when God takes our problems away, but it is even better when He gives us grace to endure the problems.

There are times when God wants us to endure difficulties. He sends troubles to teach us to trust Him (Dt 8:2; Isa 48:10; 1 Pet 1:7; 1 Pet 4:12; Ja 1:3-4). We should trust Him to give us His grace to see us through to victory.

CHAPTER FIVE

A MAD MAN IN MISERY 5:1-20

Mark tells us about a man given completely over to the devil. Matthew (Mt 8:28) and Luke (Lk 8:27) tell us there were two men but Mark centered his attention on the one to whom Jesus spoke. The fact that Mark mentioned only one man is not a contradiction. Luke tells us he had been a long time in this condition (Lk 8:27).

Admittedly, there are times when it is difficult to discern whether it is the man or the demon speaking.

Demonic possession is when a demon resides in a human body and influences the thoughts and actions of the person.

Demon activity still exists today. There are cases as severe as the one found here, but in America, demons are as likely to control the Wall Street executive as the skid row bum. A believer can be oppressed by, but not possessed by, demons. The modern believer should neither deny them nor over-emphasize them.

1. THE PICTURE OF SIN

The man possessed by the demons is a picture of how all of mankind is enslaved by sin. Adam's son was born "in his own likeness, after his image" (Gen 5:3). That means, Adam children inherited his sin nature and that sinful nature has been passed to all of Adam's offspring. Every person who has ever been born has a sinful nature (Ps 51:5; 58:3).

Mk 5:1 And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes.

As Jesus had promised (4:35), He and His disciples reached the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee.

Mk 5:2 And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit,

As usual, Jesus had no time to rest. Upon exiting the ship, He was "immediately" met by a man possessed by demons and desperately needing His help.

The description of this man gives us a great insight into the effects of demon possession.

We are not told about this man's past life or how he became completely controlled by demons. I wonder, did he have good parents who had high expectations and longed for their son to be successful? Would it not be even more sad if this man had been educated and once a successful businessman?

I do not believe the devil can take over a person's will unless that person allows it to happen. In other words, I do not think the devil can do anything against a person's will.

Whatever his past, the day came when he willingly opened himself up to the work of the devil. Sin always starts with something small. For Eve, it was a piece of fruit (Ge 3:6), for David, one glance at a woman (2 Sam 11:2), for the rich man, a twinge of greed (Mat 19:22).

Somewhere, somehow, for some reason, he gave in to the devil and opened a door he should not have opened. He gave Satan a chance and Satan took control of his life.

No matter what his past, this man shows how much damage the devil can cause.

Mk 5:3 Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces:

His actions were contrary to common reasoning for no normal person would desire to live among the dead and decaying.

The nature of an unsaved person craves that which is dead and cares nothing for the things of life. They love the darkness of sin and despise the light of God's Word. Jesus said, "men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (Jn 3:19). He said also, "For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light" (Jn 3:20).

His actions were also contrary to Old Testament law. Dead bodies were to be avoided and coming in contact with one made a person ceremonially unclean (Lev 5:2; 11:24-25, 39).

NO COMPASSION

He had no compassion for others.

Matthew tells us he was "exceeding fierce" (Mt 8:28). The word "fierce" means "savage" and carries with it the idea of "vacancy". It means, there was an emptiness inside him. He had no compassion for anyone or anything.

So it is with the unsaved. Unbelievers cannot experience true love because they desire only that which pleases themselves. John wrote, "He that loveth not knoweth not God" (1 Jn 4:8). The unbeliever loves only the things of the flesh and the world. Jesus said, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 Jn 2:15).

Mk 5:4 Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him.

NO CONTROL

v.4a the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces:

He was out of control.

Men tried unsuccessfully to control him by binding him but the demons in him gave him such superhuman strength that he broke the shackles (fetters) and chains like they were wet spaghetti.

In like fashion, the unbeliever thinks he is in control of himself and his life, but, the truth is, they are slaves to sin and self (Jn 8:34; Rom 6:16, 20).

NO CONSTRAINT

v.4b ....neither could any man tame him.

The breaking of the fetters and chains was only a sign of the rage he felt inside. He, like a savage animal in the jungle, had no rules or morals. He lacked all morality. He was completely given over to sin, having no shame, guilt, or remorse.

In like fashion, the thoughts and desires of the unbeliever cannot be constrained (Jn 12:40; 2 Cor 3:14; 4:4).

NO CLOTHES

Luke tells us he wore no clothes (Lk 8:27).

One of the most obvious signs of him being under the control of sin and Satan was the fact that he wore no clothes. It is not natural to want to be unclothed in public. The way a person dresses speaks of the condition of their heart. What we wear on the outside shows what we are on the inside.

The book of Proverbs talks about a woman with the attire of a harlot (Pro 7:10). She dressed like a harlot because she was a harlot. Her attire revealed what she was.

The Bible tells us to wear "modern apparel" (1 Tim 2:9). The lack of modesty in the modern world reveals its absolute disregard for that which pleases God.

Sadly, in our day, this is also true of believers.

NO COMFORT

Mk 5:5 And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.

He had no peace. The words "night and day" tell us he was constantly in a state of unrest. He cut himself and cried out in agony.

So it is with the person who does not know Jesus Christ. There is no peace without the Lord. Isaiah wrote, "There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked" (Is 48:22). Jesus said, "my peace I give unto you" (Jn 14:27). Paul wrote, "For he is our peace" (Eph 2:1).

NO CHANCE

Humanly speaking, this man had no chance of getting better. He was beyond the assistance of any man. He was what most would call, a hopeless case. Billions of dollars are spent on humanistic psychiatrists by people who are desperately seeking help. They go for years and are no better than when they began. The reason, there is no help apart from Jesus and the Word of God.

And so is the condition of all of mankind. The lost sinner has no hope apart from Jesus.

You man think this does not apply to you because you are not like this man. The fact is, every person who has ever lived has the same nature this man had. We are all born in sin (Isa 53:6; Ps 51:5; 58:3; Rom 3:23; 7:14; 8:8; Eph 2:3) and are, therefore, capable of everything this man did.

As we are about to discover, in spite of the horrible state of this man, there was hope. He could not help himself but there was One who could. He was about to meet Jesus.

Mk 5:6 But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him,

The word "worshipped" does not mean to worship in a heartfelt admiration. Instead, it refers to bowing before as one would a king. The same word is used of the soldiers who smote Jesus (Mk 15:19).

The demon was compelled by Jesus' presence to bow before Him in acknowledgment of His power and authority. How this must have angered the devil. The one who longed to to be worshipped (Isa 14:13), had to watch as his demonic servants bowed before the Son of God.

This was a preview of when the devil will bow before Jesus and acknowledge Him as Lord (Gen 3:15; Rom 16:20). The devil has already lost the battle.

Mk 5:7 And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.

Obviously, this was the demon speaking for he says "torment me not". At this point, the demons were speaking through the man and he was totally under their control.

The presence of the Lord of heaven and earth caused the demons to fear. The tormentors had become the tormented.

The words, "What have I to do with thee" mean, "What business do you have with me". He is asking Jesus to leave him alone.

The title "most high God" was used to distinguish Jehovah from all man-made gods.

Demons know the facts about God (Jam 2:19) but they have never exercised faith by believing "on" Jesus (Jn 1:12; 6:29; 9:35; 17:20; Acts 16:31; Phil 1:29; 1 Jn 5:13). Many humans live in that same state (Rom 1:32).

The demons begged that Jesus not "torment" him. Matthew tells us the demon said, "art thou come hither to torment us *before the time*" (Mt 8:29 emphasis added). He was referring to the time when God will cast the devil and all the demons into the lake of fire (cf. Rev 20:10).

The devil, and the demons, do not know the future but they know the Bible well enough to know their destiny is settled.

Mk 5:8 For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.

Jesus spoke directly to the demon and commanded him come out of the man. He knew the only way to reach the man was to first deal with the devil. Any type of self-reformation would have done him no good.

The same is true of a lost sinner. Reforming to change the outside does nothing to change the person.

Mk 5:9 And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.

Jesus was demanding, not asking, the demon to tell Him his name.

No doubt, the demon whose name was "Legion" was the leader of the many demons who possessed this man. He was their spokesman.

The word "Legion" was the name of a Roman military unit that consisted of 6,000 soldiers. The name speaks of their vast number and their military-like attitude in fighting.

Mark will tell us later (5:13) that there were 2,000 demons. There is no wonder as to why this man was in torment.

2. THE PLEA OF SATAN

The demons begged Jesus to not send them away from the area they were in nor to send them to the place of confinement. The devil pleading with God tells us who is the mightier.

Mk 5:10 And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country.

Having found an area where the people were easy prey, the demons did not want to be driven away. The person who opens themselves up to demonic activity is playing with dynamite and exposing themselves to all sorts of danger.

Luke tells us "they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep" (Lk 8:31). The "deep" refers to the abyss where demons are confined until the time of their judgment (2 Pet 2:4). Some demons are already bound in this place (Jude 6).

The demons knew Jesus had the power to send them to that place if He so desired. They also knew their eventual destiny would be eternal judgment in the lake of fire (Jn 8:29; 2 Pet 2:4; Rev 20:10).

Mk 5:11-12 Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.

The Jews considered swine (pigs) an unclean animal (Lev 11:7), but the Gentiles who lived in that area raised pigs for profit.

This must have been a frightening experience. Imagine "all" the demons speaking out of this man at once.

It seems that demons desire bodies to work through. Jesus told of a demon that was discontent to remain out of a human body (Mat 12:43-45).

Mk 5:13 And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea.

PETA would get very upset if they read this story. Sadly, some have rejected this account because they refuse to believe a loving Jesus could be unkind to dumb animals. The fact is, the God who owns it all can do as He pleases.

The Greek tense of these words tells us the pigs ran one after the other, or in single file, into the sea. What a sight this must have been.

Here Mark told us the exact number of demons was 2,000.

3. THE POWER OF SALVATION

The deliverance of the demon-possessed man is a wonderful picture of the power of salvation in the life of a lost person. Getting saved makes a difference.

The pigs going mad and running to their deaths proved the demons had indeed been driven from the man. He had been set free.

Mk 5:14 And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done.

Those who kept the pigs went throughout the city and country telling everyone what Jesus had done. Those who heard went to see it for themselves.

Mk 5:15 And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.

THE POWER OF SALVATION INVOLVES CURIOSITY

v.15a And they come to Jesus, and see him

Those who heard were curious and wanted to know more. They went to see for themselves.

Salvation involves more than just the person who gets saved. Their friends and family become curious and want to know what has caused such a change.

Sadly, most of the ones who were curious rejected Jesus and asked Him to leave (5:17). Sadly, many make the same decision today.

THE POWER OF SALVATION INVOLVES CHANGE

v.15b ... they see him

They came to see the once-tormented man. What they saw amazed them.

There was a dramatic difference in this man. His change was regeneration, not reformation. God had changed him.

Salvation changes the heart, and the life, of the sinner. They are made into a new creature and everything is different (2 Cor 5:17).

THE POWER OF SALVATION INVOLVES CALM

v.15b ... " sitting"

He had been roaming aimlessly through the tombs. Now he was "sitting". His inward agitation was gone and he was at peace. His violent nature was gone.

The power of salvation brings peace to the troubled soul. David said, "Great peace have they which love thy law" (Ps 119:16).

The believer has peace of mind because they have peace *with* God (Rom 5:1). The battle between them and God has ended. The believer has peace of mind because they have peace *of* God (Phil 4:7). God gives them His peace. Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you" (Jn 14:27).

THE POWER OF SALVATION INVOLVES CLOTHING

v.15b ..."clothed"

He who had been "naked" (Lk 8:27) was now "clothed".

Salvation changes a person, inside, and out. That which God did on the inside will reveal itself on the outside. Salvation not only changes our actions, it changes our attire.

THE POWER OF SALVATION INVOLVES COMFORT

v.15c ... and in his right mind:

He had been beside himself, now he was "in his right mind". The torment that had driven him insane was completely gone, he was comforted.

Paul explained it when he wrote, "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:7).

4. **THE PRICE OF SIN**

The reaction of the town's people gives us an insight into the power and price of sin. Sin always costs more than it is worth. They were as bound by sin as the possessed man had been.

Mk 5:16 And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine.

THEIR MISPLACED DESIRE

v.16a ... concerning the swine.

As we will see, they were more concerned about the loss of their pigs than the soul of the man who had been possessed. No doubt, 2,000 pigs were valuable but the soul of the man was of much more value. Jesus said the soul of one person is more valuable than all the world and everything in it (Mt 16:26).

Unfortunately, many have a greater desire for the things of this world than they do for God and His will.

Having all the world's riches would mean nothing if you don't have peace of mind and heart.

THEIR MISGUIDED DECISION

v.17 And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts

Their love for money caused them to make a misguided decision. They asked Jesus to leave. They were more interested in the loss of our pigs than the loss of their own souls.

The love for sin always causes a person to make unwise decisions. Many do as these town's people did. They decide to take the pleasures of sin for a season and reject God's way of forgiveness.

To me, this is the most amazing part of this account. After knowing the man possessed by demons and seeing the damage the devil did, after seeing the dramatic change, they still rejected the One who changed the man.

It was a decision they will regret through all eternity. Those who rejected Jesus that day are still burning in hell. The rich man still cries for mercy (Lk 16:24).

THEIR MISERABLE DESTINY

Little did they realize, they were sealing their doom that day. There is no record that Jesus ever returned to this place.

Many have rejected Jesus without realizing it was the last chance they had. That's why the Bible talks so often about getting saved immediately.

Why does the Bible say "now" is the time of salvation (2 Cor 6:2)? Why should a lost person accept Christ the moment the Holy Spirit convicts them of their sin?

Because everyone will die (Heb 9:27), and no one knows when. Life is short (Jam 4:14).

Because the Rapture could happen at any moment (1 Th 4:13-17).

Because God may give up on them (Rom 1:28). God's mercy can run out. Like God shut the door to the ark (Ge 7:16), He also shuts the door to salvation.

Because the heart often grows more hard as a person ages (Ps 95:7-8; 1 Tim 4:2; Heb 3:7-8).

Why would anyone refuse peace and forgiveness when it is offered to them?

5. THE PLEASURE OF SERVING

Mk 5:18 And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him.

When Jesus boarded the ship to leave, the man who had been possessed came to ask if he could go "with" Him.

HE WANTED TO SERVE JESUS BECAUSE OF THE PAST

v. 18a ... *he that had been possessed with the devil*

This man remembered how he had "been possessed" before he met Jesus. Remembering his past was part of why he was willing to serve Jesus in the present.

He remembered the pain of his sin (v. 5), the pain he caused others, the bondage of his sin, and his longing for peace of mind.

And, he remembered how it was Jesus who set him free from it all.

One of the worst things that can happen to a believer is to forget what it was like before they met Jesus. The people of Israel longed for the leeks, onions, and garlic but forgot their bondage in Egypt (Num 11:6).

The person who forgets their past will cease to appreciate the wonder of their salvation. Every believer should be thrilled that their sin has been washed away (Ps 31:1-2; 103:3; Isa 1:18; Acts 13:39; Col 2:13).

The person who forgets their past will become too judgmental. They will condemn others for doing what they used to do themselves.

Many believers condemn sinners for their actions while forgetting how they were bound by sin before Jesus pulled them out of the mire. A "holier than thou" attitude never accomplishes anything good.

Remembering what Jesus has done so much for us should cause us to serve Him gladly and without hesitation.

HE WANTED TO SERVE JESUS BECAUSE OF THE PERSON

v.18b ... prayed him that he might be with him.

This man remembered the One who changed his life. While the townspeople wanted to be further from Jesus, he wanted to get closer. He wanted to know more about Jesus.

He was interested not only in what Jesus could do for him but what he could do for Jesus. A true believer will have a desire to know the Lord better. Like Paul, we should cry from our hearts, "That I may know him" (Phil 3:10).

Every believer should remember the One who delivered them from the slavery of their sin.

HE WANTED TO SERVE JESUS BECAUSE OF THE PLAN

Mk 5:19 Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.

v. 19a Howbeit Jesus suffered him not

He longed to go with Jesus, but Jesus refused.

He realized Jesus' plan was better than his.

When Jesus told him to go home, he obeyed without a moment of hesitation. He had become a servant to the One who delivered him from the slavery of his sin.

The first step to becoming a servant for Christ is letting go of our own plan. We are to be bond-servants for Christ (Rom 1:1; 16:1; Col 4:12; Titus 1:1; Jam 1:1; 2 Pet 1:1). A bond-servant was a slave who willingly stayed and served his master when he could have gone free (Ex 21:5-6). He served his master because he loved him, not because he was forced to.

I'm afraid most believers miss the importance of serving God because we love Him. We can serve Him out of fear, we are afraid He will judge us if we don't. We can serve Him out of obligation, we feel we ought to serve Him because He has done so much for us. Or, we can serve Him because we love Him.

HE WANTED TO SERVE JESUS BECAUSE OF THE PEOPLE

v. 19b ... Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.

Jesus sent him to "Go" and "tell" what "great things the Lord" had done unto him. It was time to show the difference Jesus had made in his heart and life.

Jesus sent him to people who knew him or had heard of him. What an effect his testimony would have.

Jesus sent him to his "home". This speaks of his immediate family. He had hurt and disappointed his family horribly. Now was the time to make things right.

Jesus also sent him to his "friends". These were the friends he had spent time with before his possession. He had forced them out of his life by his dangerous conduct. If anyone needed to see the change in his life, it was them.

Every believer has received the same commission (Mt 28:18-20). We can all tell others what Jesus has done for us.

I'm afraid we miss the power of our testimony. Our testimony is us telling others three things. One, what we were before we met Jesus, two, what happened when we met Jesus, and three, the difference in us since we met Jesus.

Mk 5:20 And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.

He followed Jesus' instructions and told everyone about his life before Jesus came by. He emphasized his helpless state and the miracle Jesus had done for him.

The word "publish" means "to herald". It is translated as "preach" many times in Scripture. It is the word used to describe a town crier. He had not been quiet for the devil, he would not be quiet for God.

God used him mightily. The word "marvel" means "to wonder". They had known him before he met Jesus, and they could not deny the change in his life.

Decapolis was a group of ten cities. He told everyone he saw, and they told someone else. That is how the message of the gospel works.

A FATHER'S FAITH 5:21-43

The story of Jairus and his daughter gives us great insight into the importance of faith in the lives of God's children. God is touched by our pain, but He is moved by our faith.

JAIRUS' FAITH INVOLVED COMING

Like so many who needed help, Jairus came to Jesus.

Mk 5:21 And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto him: and he was nigh unto the sea.

Jesus left the Gentile region around the Sea of Galilee and returned to the Jewish towns on the "other side" of the Sea of Galilee.

As usual, many people flocked around Jesus.

Mk 5:22 And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet,

We are introduced to a "ruler of the synagogue" named Jarius. Please read my comments on Mark 1:21 about the synagogue. Somewhat like a modern pastor, a ruler of the synagogue was responsible for looking after the building, its contents, and the arrangements for the services.

The words "when he saw him" tell us he had come looking for Jesus. That was the only reason he was there.

Jarius came because he had heard about Jesus and he believed what he had heard. Faith comes by hearing (Rom. 10:17).

Jarius came because he had a need. His daughter was sick (cf. v. 23). Faith is always connected to a need.

Jairus came because he could not help his daughter. Faith admits its helplessness. Until we recognize our helplessness, we will never turn to God for the help we need.

Jairus came because he believed Jesus could help his daughter. He was depending on Jesus for the help he needed. In like fashion, we need to learn to come to Jesus when we have a need. The average believer is so quick to go to the doctor, the banker, or the psychiatrist when they have a need. Our first move should be to the Lord. He is the One who can fix all things.

The fact that Jarius "fell at his feet" reveals his humility and his great respect for Jesus.

JAIRUS' FAITH INVOLVED CARRYING

Many of the multitude never made it close enough to Jesus to even ask for help. They left because getting to Jesus was so difficult. They left as they had come, needy and without help.

But, Jarius was determined to get to Jesus. His faith carried him through the multitude and refused to be denied. To Jairus, each person in the multitude was another obstacle. His faith pushed him on when it wasn't easy.

In like fashion, real faith will push us on when all seems hopeless. Faith keeps us going when we can't go on. Faith doesn't give up. It keeps us praying, believing, and expecting.

JAIRUS' FAITH INVOLVED CALLING

Mk 5:23 And besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live.

Jairus' faith rested on Jesus. Like a beggar holding out his can to the passerby, Jairus reached out to Jesus.

Jairus begged Jesus to help his sick daughter. She was twelve years old (v. 42). Luke tells us she was his only daughter (Lk. 8:42).

Being at the "point of death", her condition was critical. Leaving his daughter in her condition must have been difficult, but he realized her only hope was Jesus.

How heartbreaking this must have been. No doubt, Jairus loved his daughter. She was his little girl. Somehow, he had heard about what Jesus had done for others. He believed He could do the same for him.

Jairus realized he had no power to help the one he loved. If Jesus did not help, there was nowhere else to turn. Dear friend, what problem is there in your life that you cannot fix? Will you believe as Jairus did? Will you take your need to the only one who can help you?

JAIRUS' FAITH INVOLVED CONFIDENCE

The next ten verses tell us, that as they are on the way to Jairus' house, a woman, like Jairus, came to Jesus for help. Most Bible students see this as an interruption and agitation to Jairus. Certainly, time was of the essence for his daughter was "at the point of death" when he left her (cf. v. 23). The last thing Jairus wanted was an interruption.

However, I believe this "interruption" was a divinely orchestrated lesson for Jairus. God not only does the right thing, He does the right thing at the right time.

Jesus intended to help this woman and increase Jairus' faith at the same time.

While Jesus dealt with the needs of this woman, Jairus was watching and waiting. What he saw and heard increased his faith and gave him confidence to keep trusting Jesus for his own need.

Seeing others trust God, and get help as a result, should cause us to trust God even more.

Mk 5:24 And Jesus went with him; and much people followed him, and thronged him.

Jesus "went with him". How this must have thrilled Jairus. I am so glad we have a Savior who goes with us.

Matthew tells us the disciples went also (Mt. 9:19).

The word "thronged" means "to strangle or to choke". As we would expect, multitudes went with them and continued to press against Jesus.

Jairus' faith was increased because he saw the lady's disease

Mk 5:25 And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years,

A woman who had an "issue of blood" came to Jesus for help.

Interestingly, this woman had been suffering from her ailment for twelve years, and Jairus' daughter was twelve years old (v. 42).

Her condition made her ceremonially unclean (Lev. 15:25). This meant, she was not allowed to enter the Temple to worship. It also meant anyone she touched would be unclean as well.

Meanwhile, her severe condition was encouraging Jairus to believe Jesus had the power to help his daughter.

So, he watched and he waited.

Jairus' faith was increased because he saw the lady's desperation

Mk 5:26 And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse,

She had done all she could to get better. She had "spent all" she had on doctors, but not only did she not get any better, she "grew worse". No doubt some were frauds who only wanted her money. Others were true physicians who wanted to help her. None of them could help, at all.

After twelve years of searching, she had become desperate. More than likely, she would rather have died than remain as she was. Like Jairus, she realized her only hope was Jesus.

Meanwhile, her desperation was inspiring Jairus to keep trusting.

So, he watched and he waited.

Jairus' faith was increased because he saw the lady's determination

Mk 5:27 When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment.

Multitudes surrounded Jesus, but few were determined to get to Him. Many were content to simply see Him from a distance. They were among the many caught up in the excitement of seeing the miracle worker.

But, for this woman, seeing Jesus was not enough. She was determined to get to Him so He could help her.

Her infirmity had made her extremely weak, but she pushed on. Many were standing in her way, but she pushed on. The whispers of doubt from Satan told her it was hopeless, but she pushed on.

Faith says "yes" when doubt says "no". Faith says "keep trusting" when doubt says "there's no use". Peter knew what he was talking about when he wrote about "the trial of your faith" (1 Pet. 1:7).

There were many obstacles, but she was determined to let nothing, or no one, stop her from getting to Jesus. To be honest, she wasn't polite, nor was she concerned about offending someone as she pushed by. She was determined to get to Jesus.

Real faith keeps pushing us towards Jesus. It does not allow us to give up in spite of the obstacles. Sadly, all too often, we pray half-heartedly and give up easily.

Meanwhile, her determination was producing in Jairus the perseverance he needed to keep trusting Jesus.

So, he watched and he waited.

Jairus' faith was increased because he saw the lady's dependence

Mk 5:28 For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole.

She, like Jairus, had "heard" about Jesus, and believed. She was depending on Jesus, and Jesus alone.

She believed if she could simply touch the hem of Jesus' garment she would be healed. She wasn't worried about whether she would word her request correctly. She reached out in total dependence on the Son of God.

Meanwhile, Jairus, seeing how this lady was depending on Jesus, recognized that he also could depend on Him.

So, he watched and he waited.

Jairus' faith was increased because he saw the lady's deliverance

Mk 5:29 And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague.

In an instant, Jesus was able to do what twelve years of doctors could not.

Mk 5:30 And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes?

Jesus knew "immediately" that power had been released from His body. This demonstrates the fact that God is completely in control of His power.

He "turned him about in the press". Jesus stopped, This had to be difficult for Jairus.

Like all questions Jesus asked (Mk 4:21; 6:38; 8:19; Lk 2:49; 17:17; Jn 6:67), He was not asking because He lacked information. He, being God, knew the answer. He asked the question so that He might draw the woman from the crowd.

Luke tells us more about this conversation (Lk. 8:43-48). Jesus asked, "who touched me".

Mk 5:31 And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?

Luke tells us Peter was the spokesman of this group (Lk 8:45).

The disciples were surprised He would notice anyone touching Him since there were crowds of people pressing against Him. But, Jesus knew power had gone from Him. This does not imply that Jesus had no control over His power. There is no doubt, Jesus was always totally in control and nothing happened without His willing it so.

Mk 5:32 And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing.

He looked about "to see her" because He knew who had touched Him.

Mk 5:33 But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth.

She was more afraid after her healing because she realized then that she was in the presence of God. She instantly was aware of the fact that God had done work on her.

Meanwhile, seeing this lady healed caused Jairus to become even more convinced that his daughter would be ok.

So, he watched and he waited.

Jairus' faith was increased because he saw the lady's devotion

Mk 5:34 And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.

Jesus said, "thy faith hath made thee whole". Does this mean she got saved at this point? It is difficult to be certain but it sure does seem so. She was healed of her infirmity the instant she touched Jesus. It certainly seems Jesus was speaking of more than physical healing at this point.

We cannot overstate the importance of faith. Many of the multitudes had touched the Lord that day. There was only one who touched Him by faith. Do we touch Him by faith? When we pray, do we expect Him to answer? I'm afraid we doubt even when we pray.

The tense of the word, "whole" means "to continue". Her healing was permanent. She would not suffer from this problem again.

Remember, Jairus was waiting while Jesus was dealing with this lady. I am sure he was not untouched by the condition of this lady, but his focus was on his daughter. Jesus had the situation very much in control. I am so glad that I have a Savior who is able to help me, and the millions of others who need His help, at the exact same moment.

I believe this had the greatest effect on Jairus. As much as he was concerned about his daughter's physical health, he was much more concerned about her spiritual well-being.

So, he watched and he waited.

His wait was just about over.

JAIRUS' FAITH INVOLVED COMFORT

Mk 5:35 While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further?

One came from the ruler's house to tell Jairus that his daughter had died.

This person asked, "why troublest the Master any further". While the child was alive, there was hope, now she is dead, and all hope seemed to be gone. Nothing is worse than having no hope.

Sadly, many today have the attitude of the person who came with bad news. There will always be a Deacon Discouragement, Uncle Unbelief, or Neighbor Negative, to tell us it can not be done. Thankfully, with the Lord, there is always hope. Jesus said, "all things are possible to him that believeth" (Mk 9:23).

Mk 5:36 As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe.

Jesus immediately counteracted the news with words that had the potential of comfort. Real faith produces peace (Phil 4:6-7).

At this point, Jairus had to decide who, and what, to believe.

Would he believe the messenger who had come from his house?

No doubt, this messenger cared about him. His wife would not entrust the task of bringing such heartbreaking news to just anyone. That means he knew this messenger was telling the truth, his daughter was indeed dead.

Or, would he believe Jesus?

Jesus' instructions were simple but profound. He said, "only believe". Jesus was saying, "trust me". Jairus was not to try to figure it out, he was to "only" believe. He wasn't to do something, he was to "only" believe.

Would he trust the facts, or would He trust Jesus?

We are faced with the same decision with every problem we encounter.

Mk 5:37 And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James.

Jesus often chose Peter, James, and John as His inner circle (Mk 9:2; 13:3; 14:32-33). He was preparing them for their future service for God. It doesn't mean God loved them more than the other disciples, it simply means He had different areas of service for them.

Before anyone gets jealous of this trio, they need to realize, with greater service, comes greater responsibility and greater accountability.

Mk 5:38 And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly.

They continued to Jairus' house where people were mourning the death of his daughter.

Because of the hot climate, the Jews buried their dead on the same day of their death. By the time Jesus arrived, the people had already gathered for the funeral.

The word "tumult" means "uproar" and speaks of a very loud wailing. The Jewish funeral was a time of loud wailing and mourning. For fear that there be no mourning, it was common that professional mourners would be hired. These "mourners" would, for a fee, attend a funeral, wail loudly, and cry out the name of the deceased (Jer 9:17-21; Amos 5:16).

Matthew (Mt 9:23), tells us there were flute players (minstrels). To illustrate the disharmony of their sorrow, they would all play all sorts of sounds that did not go together at the same time.

That means, some attending the funeral had no true sympathy, but simply wanted to make their money and leave as quickly as possible. However, some loved this little girl and were truly heartbroken.

Mk 5:39 And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.

The word "ado" means "tumult".

In essence, Jesus asked them why were they so upset. Luke tells us Jesus also told them to not weep (Lk. 8:52).

Jesus said she "is not dead" because by the time He left Jarius' house, she would be very much alive. Faith always sees the end result and not the present condition.

Those who had gathered knew without a doubt that the girl was dead. There had been enough time for her body to get cold and stiff.

We should trust God's Word even when it seems contrary to the facts of our circumstances.

Jesus said she "sleepeth" because death for the child of God is often referred to as sleep (Jn 11:11; Acts 7:6; 1 Cor. 11:30; 15:51; 1 Th. 4:14, 5:10).

Mk 5:40 And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying.

They laughed and scorned Him. So is the heart of the unbeliever. They can see only the facts. They do not see beyond the problem. They see things only as they are, not as God can make them.

Jesus put them out of the room. The "father" (Jairus), "mother", and "them that were with him" (Peter, James, and John) were the only ones in the room. Those who did not have faith missed the miracle.

The solution to the problem was faith. We may find ourselves in an impossible situation. Maybe no one believes your problem can be fixed and accuses you of refusing to face reality. Maybe it is impossible and it seems that all hope is gone. But remember, Jesus is still alive and He is still able.

Jesus, more or less, told them to get out of His way. He shocked them by announcing that the girl was not dead, but only asleep. Of course, they did not believe Him. They had touched her dead body and they knew she was dead. He was saying she would be alive soon.

Of course, she was really dead, but that meant nothing to Jesus. He was about to wake her from death. Even death has no power over the Lord of life. I am so glad that our problems are not even difficult for Him.

Mk 5:41 And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise.

The word "Talitha" is Aramaic and means "damsel" or "little girl". It is connected to the word that means "lamb".

The word "cumi" is also Aramaic and means "arise".

This is one of the most tender moments of the life of Christ. Like a loving father gently waking his little girl, Jesus tenderly took the girl's hand and said "Sweetheart, it's time to wake up".

Mk 5:42 And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment.

She "arose". She was alive.

She "walked" which means she had all her senses and was able to function as she had before she died.

The word "straightway" means "immediately". The instant Jesus spoke, she arose. There was no doubt about it, Jesus brought her back to life.

There was no doubt about it, she who was dead, was now alive. No one could deny what had happened.

"They" refers to everyone, those who were in, and out, of the room. They were all "astonished". They instantly went from wailing to wondering. We aren't told what they said, but I certainly would love to know.

Can we not trust our God? Where are the ones who will believe the impossible? When will someone finally believe that God is still God? One thing is certain, when He moves, when He works, when He does what cannot be done, even those who did not believe will have to admit....IT WAS GOD!

She was "twelve years" old. As mentioned earlier, I believe her age is given because it coincided with the years of sickness of the lady who touched Jesus (5:25-34).

Mk 5:43 And he charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat.

As I have mentioned, Jesus said similar things many times (1:25, 34, 44; 3:12; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26, 30; 9:9).

God can change our circumstances, or change us.

Jesus told them not to tell anyone what He had done. This was not the first time He had done this (1:44; 3:12), nor would it be the last (7:36). Please read the comments on Mark 1:44.

Jesus commanded that something be given to her to eat. Her life was back to normal. She would eat, play, sing, learn, grow, and live, as God had designed.

CHAPTER SIX

THE BATTLE WITH DOUBT 6:1-6

1. THE POWER OF DOUBT

Chapter six reveals man's unbelief at its worst. Unbelief, or doubt, is perhaps the biggest enemy of man. We talk, as we should, about faith, the opposite of doubt, having power. Certainly, that is true. Faith moves mountains.

However, not only faith, but doubt also has power. It has the power to keep the lost from salvation (Jn. 3:18), binds the omnipotent hands of God (Mt. 13:58; Mk. 6:5), and keeps God from answering the prayer of His children (Mt. 21:22).

Doubt caused Eve to sin, Israel to wander in the wilderness, the Pharisees to attempt to put Jesus to death, and the thief on the cross to go to hell.

Our pardon (Jn. 3:18), prayers (Mt. 21:22), power (Phil. 2:13), and our peace (Ps. 29:11; 119:65; Phil. 4:7), depend on our faith.

Doubt grieves, and angers, God. Our doubt tells God we do not believe Him. It says He did not mean it when He said He loves us (Jn. 3:16; 15:13; 1 Jn. 4:16, 19), would protect us (Pro. 18:10; Ps. 91:3-4; 121:5-8), and would never leave us (Heb. 13:5).

Doubt says we are alone, powerless, and without hope. In other words, doubt lies, and we believe it.

Mk 6:1 And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him.

His "own country" probably refers to Nazareth, where He lived close to 30 years. A year earlier, He had been rejected and run out of the synagogue (Lk. 4:28). In mercy, He returned and, once again, offered them a chance to repent. This time, they will not totally reject His message, they will disregard it. They paid Him no attention.

2. THE PEOPLE OF DOUBT

As we will see, those who doubted Jesus were the ones who should have been most likely to believe Him. These were the ones who had known Jesus when He was young. They had heard Him speak and watched Him live a clean and godly life. They, if anyone, should have believed.

His disciples "followed" Him. For around half of Jesus' three and a half years of ministry, it was Him that did all the teaching, preaching, and healing. If anyone got help from God, they had to come to Jesus. The disciples were simply following and learning. Jesus was teaching them to take His place. He was about to multiply His ministry by sending them out in His name. He knew the cross was coming, and He would be leaving.

Mk 6:2 And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands?

As Jesus had done before, he went to the synagogue and taught. Those who heard Him were "astonished". The word "astonished" means "amazed".

They were amazed because of the wisdom of His words. He spoke as no other man. He spoke brilliantly of matters that the average person would not know. He spoke with authority and not as the scribes (Mt. 7:26).

They were amazed because of His indescribable miracles. Since He did no mighty works, save heal a few, in this area at this particular time (cf. v. 5), they must have been referring to the works they had heard of Him doing elsewhere.

Mk 6:3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.

These were the people who knew Jesus when He was young. They knew He had not been to any school to learn what He was speaking about.

The word "carpenter" means "a craftsman." Considering the use of stone, Joseph and Jesus were likely masters of working with wood and stone.

Sadly, they meant this comment in a derogatory way. They saw nothing in Jesus as nothing special.

Calling Jesus the "son of Mary" pointed to the lie of Jesus being an illegitimate son and was also an attempt to insult the Son of God.

The lack of mentioning Joseph may also mean he had already died.

Jesus' brothers and sisters are named and proving the teaching of Mary being a perpetual virgin is unbiblical.

The word "offended" means "to stumble". They could not, or would not, accept Jesus to be, as He claimed to be, the Son of God. They refused to get past the fact of knowing Him as simply one of the boys who was raised in their town.

Notice, they did not deny His wisdom nor mighty works (v.2), they rejected Him because they thought He was an ordinary man. Truth is true no matter where it comes from.

Mk 6:4 But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.

A "prophet is not without honour" was a common proverb among the Jews.

Being in His own "country", among His own "kin", and in His own "house", made them too familiar to Him.

3. THE PRICE OF DOUBT

Because of their doubt, Jesus was not able to do what He could have and would have, done. In like fashion, our doubt hinders God.

Mk 6:5 And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.

Their doubt did more than separate them from His message. It separated them from His miracles. Their lack of faith kept Him from doing many "mighty" works.

They thought Jesus had gone crazy. Who was He to claim to be the Son of God? What right did He have to tell them they needed to repent of their sin?

The gospel is always offensive, but it is more so when the messenger is one who had lived among them.

Mk 6:6 And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching.

The word "marvelled" means "to wonder" or "be amazed". It is found 23 times in the Bible and almost always speaks of man being amazed (Mt. 12:23; Mk. 2:12; 5:42; 15:5; Acts 9:21; 12:16). Two times, however, it refers to Jesus being amazed.

One, speaks of Jesus being amazed at a man having great faith (Mt. 8:10).

The other, found here, speaks of man having great unbelief or doubt.

Jesus marveled because, despite all the evidence these people had been exposed to, they still refused to believe He was who He claimed to be.

Even irrefutable proof did not shake their unbelief.

- Doubt is ungodly

That may seem like a harsh statement but it is, nonetheless, true. Doubt certainly does not come from God. As mentioned above, doubt questions God's love, ability, and most of all, His Word. The devil loves to question God (Gen. 3:1).

- Doubt is unreasonable

There was reason for them, or us, to doubt Jesus. There were vast amounts of evidence that proved Jesus was who He claimed to be. There was absolutely no reason for them to doubt.

- Doubt is unprofitable

Doubt and worry do no good. Worry and fear does not help the problem. They only make the problem worse. It not only harms our mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being, it activates the wrath and judgment of God.

- Doubt is unnecessary

As long as God is alive, doubt is unnecessary. We can pray to the God who can do all things. He can, He will, and He is, working on your problem, there is no need to doubt, worry, or fear.

Jesus went "round about the villages" teaching. In spite of their unbelief, He continued to speak the truth.

Unbelief is powerful. We can see this demonstrated on several occasions.

Eve did not believe God when He said they would die (Gen. 2:17). Cain did not believe he had to bring a bloody sacrifice (Gen. 4:3-7). The people of Noah's day did not believe his preaching (2 Pet. 2:5). The people of Israel did not believe God (Heb. 3:18-19).

God basis our eternity on our faith or lack thereof. Jesus said, “He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (Jn 3:18).

This shows us how belief is more than an interest. Many followed Jesus because they were interested in His teaching (1:22), His food (Jn. 6:26), or His miracles (Jn. 6:2). Many were interested in Him but that did not mean they believed on Him. Their unbelief would manifest itself by their hostility towards Him when they tried to kill Him (Mt. 26:59; Lk. 4:29-30).

THE SENDING OF THE SERVANTS 6:7-13

Jesus sent out the twelve

Mk 6:7 And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits;

Matthew (Mt. 10:1-15), and Luke (Lk. 9:1-6) record this event.

1. **THEIR PARTNER WAS CLOSE**

v.7a And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them

Jesus now sent out His disciples. Before this, it had been Him doing all the preaching and all the mighty works. At this point, He gave them the power to do what He had been doing.

John tells us Jesus said, "as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you". His mission had become their mission.

Matthew tells us Jesus sent them not to the Gentiles or Samaritans, but only to those of the "house of Israel" (Mt. 10:5-6).

They were to preach "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt. 10:7). This refers to the kingdom God promised Abraham and his offspring (Gen. 12:1-3; 13:15; Dt. 30:1-10).

v. 7b ...send them forth by two and two

Jesus sent them out "two and two" that each one might have a partner to serve with. He (Mk. 11:1; 14:13) and the church (Acts 13:2-3; 15:39-40;19:22), would do the same later. Anyone who has ever participated in door-to-door evangelism will know that sending them in such a manner was a wise decision. It helps tremendously to have a partner on such a mission.

Solomon said, "Two are better than one" (Dt. 4:9). Certainly, two can do more than one.

A partner brings companionship. Just having someone to talk to makes serving God more enjoyable.

A partner brings confidence. It's easier to share Christ when another believer is with you.

A partner brings assistance. A partner can pray for the Holy Spirit to speak while the other person is witnessing. There must be conviction if there is to be conversion.

A partner can be a witness in case the need arises. Going into a house without a partner can open a believer up to all types of lies. The believer's reputation can be ruined forever by someone starting a false rumor. Jesus warned about those who say evil things about us falsely (Mt. 5:11-12).

2. THEIR POWER WAS CAPABLE

v.7c and gave them power over unclean spirits;

The power they received was not their own. It was the power of God given to them by Jesus.

The word "power" refers to two things.

First, it means "authority" or the right to do something.

God gave them the right to speak in His name. They were able to tell people that if they would repent and believe, God would forgive them.

Second, the word "power" also means "an ability". They were given the ability to cast out "unclean spirits" (demons), heal diseases (Acts 3:6-8; 5:15-16; 8:7) and to raise the dead (Acts 9:36-41). Jesus had power over the demons (Mk. 1:25; 5:7-8; 9:25). Now, He was giving the disciples the same power He had.

One of the most amazing facts about these men was the fact that none of them were men of renown. They were not rich, greatly educated, or sophisticated. They were ordinary men who God used to do unordinary things.

3. THEIR PROVISION WAS COMPLETE

God provided as the disciples went

They took nothing extra and lacked for nothing. They were to trust God to touch the hearts of those they ministered to. They were depending on people but really they were depending on God. God works through people to provide for people.

Mk 6:8-9 And commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse: But be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats.

A "staff" was a walking stick. Such a device helped while traveling the rocky and hilly roads and could be used for protection against wild animals or criminals. A "scrip" was a bag used to carry food or valuables. David used both of these (1 Sam. 17:40).

At this point, Jesus told His disciples to take nothing for their journey but to trust God completely.

Part of the reason for this mission was to teach them to trust God (Mt. 6:25-26). If God feeds the birds, He will certainly take care of His children.

This tells us God will take care of us even when our cupboards get low. They went out with nothing but their "staff," and God provided in every way. They had to trust God moment by moment for all their needs. If they got hungry, God provided the next meal. If they tore their coat, God would provide another one.

Just like the disciples, God wants to teach the modern believer to trust Him. He often does it by placing us in difficult situations and then taking care of us.

It's important to recognize that later, Jesus reminded the disciples of this event (Lk. 22:35). At that time, He told them to take what they needed for their travels (purse, scrip, and sword). The word "But" (Lk. 22:36), shows a change in the method Jesus wanted His disciples to use. In this instance, God was providing before they went.

God might provide as they went, or before they went, but either way, it was God who provided. Whether before or during, they were trusting God to provide, and it was a miracle either way.

A note of interest. In the next verses, we will read about the disciples having the power to heal (v. 12-13). Having the power to heal sickness would make it tempting to disregard Jesus' command about not asking for payment. People who are sick and hurting would be willing to pay anything for relief. The servant of God is not to desire "filthy lucre" (1 Tim 3:3). The love of money has caused "many sorrows" (1 Tim 6:10).

In our day, it is right for the preacher to receive material payment for their spiritual labor (1 Tim. 5:17; 1 Cor 9:7-11). You don't muzzle the ox while he is working (Dt. 25:4; 1 Cor. 9:9; 1 Tim. 5:18). While the ox worked at the grinding wheel, they let him eat the grain that fell to the floor at his feet. In like fashion, the preacher who labors is worthy of receiving wages from his labor.

Being told to go out with nothing is so different than some modern preachers. The wealthiest pastor in the world was, at one time, reported to have a net worth of $750 million. Modern preachers own houses worth $12 million and private jets worth $54 million. I'm not sure how that type of person can claim to be like the Jesus who never even owned His own home (Mt. 8:20) and still preach about trusting God.

4. <u>THEIR PREACHING WAS CRITIQUED</u>

As they traveled, the disciples spent the nights in homes. There were mixed reactions to their message. Those who heard critiqued what they heard and accepted or rejected it.

The disciples were to receive those who received them

Mk 6:10 And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place.

Of course, some heard and believed. The words "In what place soever ye enter an house" refer to a homeowner who believed their message and invited them to stay in their home.

The word "abide" means to "continue". This says two things.

First, the disciples were to accept the hospitality of the homeowner. To accept their provisions from the homeowner would require a certain measure of humility. Any honest person struggles with receiving from others.

Second, the homeowner was expected to willingly provide the necessities of the disciples as long as they were in their home.

The practice of providing a place to stay to travelers was common among the Jews (Lev. 19:33-34; Dt. 10:19). Abraham (Gen. 18:1-8), Lot (Gen. 19:1-3), and Rahab (Josh. 2:1) opened their homes to travelers.

The disciples were to reject those who rejected them

Mk 6:11 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.

Sadly, some heard and rejected the disciple's message. When this happened, they were to leave the home immediately.

They were not only to leave, they were to "shake off the dust" as they were leaving.

This action is similar to a common practice of the Jews. When a Jew traveled through a Gentile region, they would stop at its edge, take off their sandals, shake out the dirt, and then shake the hem of their garment to make sure not to take any of the Gentile soil into Jewish land.

This may sound abrupt, but it sent a message to those who were rejecting God's message. They needed to realize that they were rejecting the Son of God, and there would be consequences.

This verse tells us several things.

One, it tells us there is one way of forgiveness.

Jesus refused to change the gospel. He allowed those who refused the gospel to walk away (Mk. 10:22).

Two, it tells us of the seriousness of rejecting God's message.

Jesus told His disciples not to cast their pearls before the swine (Mt. 7:6). Like a dirty pig that has no appreciation of the value of a pearl, those who reject the gospel do not appreciate its wonder.

Three, it tells us God will let mankind reject Him if they are so determined.

God will not force anyone to accept Him or His forgiveness.

Four, it tells us God will reject those who reject Him.

Not only were they rejecting God's message, but God was rejecting them. One day, Jesus will say, "Depart from me" (Mt. 25:41).

Five, it tells us there are degrees of punishment in hell.

Being "more tolerable" shows us there are different levels of punishment. There are degrees of punishment in hell, just as there are degrees of reward in heaven.

Six, it tells us every person on earth will give an account of themselves to God.

Obeying this command took spiritual discernment and sensitivity. Only the Holy Spirit can do that in the heart and mind of a believer.

Jesus, knowing He was about to return to heaven and leave His disciples to preach, was trying to teach them how to handle rejection. They would most certainly encounter those who hated the gospel, so Jesus wanted them prepared.

5. <u>THEIR PURPOSE WAS CLEAR</u>

Mk 6:12 And they went out, and preached that men should repent.

The purpose of their ministry was clear. They "preached". God chose the "foolishness of preaching" to change man (1 Cor. 1:21).

The purpose of their message was clear. They preached to "repent". Their message had nothing to do with reformation or revolution. They did not decide their message, they delivered the message of God. Like any preacher who preaches the truth, they simply said what God had said.

Jesus, nor His disciples, came to make man better or improve the country. The message of God was meant to change the hearts, not the habits, of mankind.

Only the gospel can bring forgiveness (Acts 13:38; 26:18; Col. 1:14). Only the gospel can change hearts and lives (2 Cor. 5:17).

Mk 6:13 And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.

The power Jesus had, the disciples had.

They had power over demons. Luke tells us their response, "And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name" (Lk 10:17).

They "anointed with oil". James speaks of anointing the sick with oil and praying for them (Jam. 5:16). The oil was not a magical formula that produced the healing. The oil, like the clay Jesus once used (Jn. 9:6), was merely a symbol that provided a visual effect to a supernatural work.

The method of healing is not the most important thing. Jesus healed by touching (Mt. 8:15; 9:25, 29: Mk. 1:30-31, 36), speaking (Mt. 8:5-13; Mk. 2:11; Jn 5:8), commanding (Mk. 9:25), using objects (Jn. 9:6-7), and simply willing it so (Mk. 1:29-34; 5:25-34; Lk. 6:18-19). All these healings, no matter the method used, came from God.

It is vitally important that we realize the supernatural works of the disciples were more than miracles done to help people get well. These miracles proved they were who they claimed to be. They were done so that people might believe.

Just as Jesus' miracles confirmed He was the Son of God as He claimed to be, the miracles done by the disciples confirmed to the world they were men and messengers of God.

Notice, in verse 12, they preached "repent". Their focus, as it was with Jesus, was the gospel and the saving of souls.

A GHOST FROM THE PAST 6:14-29

1. HEROD'S WEAKNESSES CONTROLLED HIM

Mk 6:14 And king Herod heard of him; (for his name was spread abroad:) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him.

v.14a And king Herod ...

The name "Herod" was merely the family name of the dynasty that ruled over Judea under the Roman Empire. There were four different rulers named Herod in the New Testament days.

The Herod mentioned in these verses was Herod Antipas. For this reason, I will refer to him as Antipas.

He was the son of Herod the Great, a descendant of Esau, and therefore not a Jew. He was the one who questioned Jesus after His arrest (Lk. 23:6-12).

Matthew referred to him as a "tetrach" (Mt. 14:1). The word tetrach means "ruler of a fourth part". When Antipas' father, Herod the Great, died, his kingdom was divided between his three sons and his sister. Antipas was given rule over Galilee and Perea.

So, Antipas ruled over a fourth of a region while under the rule of the Roman emperor Caesar. He had a limited amount of authority, but he was very much under the authority of Rome and Caesar.

As we will see, Antipas' weaknesses caused as many, or more, problems than his wickedness.

He was a man riddled with fear. He feared his wife (v. 25), John the baptist (v. 20), those who ruled over him (v.26), and the people he ruled over (Mt. 14:5). He feared everything and everyone except the One he should have feared, God.

Antipas especially feared the Roman emperor who reigned over him. Anyone who displeased Caesar would be quickly exiled or executed.

Antipas was a contradictory mixture of emotions. He vacillated from one position to another at a moment's notice.

v.14b ... Herod heard of him; (for his name was spread abroad:)

Antipas "heard" of Jesus. No doubt, he watched anyone who gained attention from the common people. He was terrified of anyone who might attempt an insurrection and remove him from his position.

Jesus' name was "spread abroad," which speaks of His growing popularity among the people. Multitudes came to see and hear Jesus (Mt. 4:25; Mk. 3:7-9; Jn. 6:2).

2. HEROD'S WRONG CONFRONTED HIM

v.14c ... and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead

A glaring example of Antipas' weakness is seen in his treatment of John the baptist.

As we will see, because of his incestuous marriage with his brother's wife, Antipas had imprisoned John the baptist (Mt. 14:1-12; Mk 1:14; Lk 3:19-20). It was now over a year later, and Antipas' wrong had come back to confront him.

Eventually, everyone will be confronted by their sin. Sin does not lessen or go away over time. Only confession does away with sin (1 Jn. 1:9).

v.4d ... therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him.

Antipas believed Jesus was John the baptist risen from the dead because his "mighty" works were similar to those done by Jesus. John's message and miracles were the same as those of Jesus.

Antipas' belief that Jesus was John the baptist risen from the dead was a great testimony of John's character and conduct. John reminded him of Jesus.

Mk 6:15 Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets.

Others were quick to voice their opinion about who John was. It's interesting to notice that everyone saw John as being more than an ordinary man. There was something different about him.

"Elias" refers to Elijah. The Old Testament spoke of Elijah returning (Mal. 4:5).

Notice how many were ready to believe a prophet could rise from the dead, but they refused to believe that Jesus was the Messiah.

Mk 6:16 But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead.

Antipas heard the opinions of others, but it did not change his mind. He said, "It is John, whom I beheaded". His guilty conscience would not be silenced. He was being confronted by his wrong.

Antipas did not see Jesus for who He was because his vision was blurred by a guilty conscience. No one sees Jesus clearly through sinful eyes.

3. HEROD'S WEDDING CONFIRMED HIM

The word "confirmed" means to establish the truth or validity of something. It means to remove doubt. If there was ever any doubt about the condition of the heart of Antipas, his wedding to his brother's wife, like nothing else he did, confirmed the fact that he was a wicked and ungodly man who allowed himself to be controlled by his ungodly desires.

Mk 6:17 For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her.

v.17a For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison

Antipas had imprisoned John the baptist over a year before the events described in this verse.

v.17b ... for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her.

Antipas put John in prison because of his wife, Herodias.

Antipas had married his brother Philip's wife, Herodias. According to the Jewish historian Josephus, the two started an affair while Antipas was visiting his brother. They both divorced their spouses and got married.

Herodias was the daughter of Aristobulus, another son of Herod the Great. So, when she married Philip, she was marrying her uncle. And when she married Antipas, she was marrying a different uncle. To say the least, their family tree was rotten to the roots.

Antipas' marriage to his sister-in-law proved he did not care about the feelings of his own wife, his brother, or their families. It proved he was unconcerned about the effect his marriage would have on the people he ruled. But, most importantly, it proved he did not care what God wanted and believed he could do as he pleased and get by.

Mk 6:18 For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.

John the baptist had publicly rebuked Antipas for his incestuous and adulterous marriage to his sister-in-law, Herodias.

Their marriage violated the Old Testament Law (Ex. 20:10, 14; Lev. 20:21).

Antipas would have killed John at that time, but he feared the people who believed John's message (Mt. 14:5), and he feared a rebellion among the people he ruled over.

Mk 6:19 Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not:

v.19s Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him

The word "quarrel" means "to entangle". Paul used the same word when telling the Galatians not to be "entangled" again in the yoke of keeping the Old Testament Law (Gal. 5:1). It means Herodias set herself against John and would not be satisfied until he was dead. It sounds much like Jezebel (1 Kgs. 18:4; 21:5-13).

v.19b ... would have killed him; but she could not:

As I have mentioned, Herodias had wanted John dead from the moment he spoke against her marriage to Antipas. She hated John so much that she would have killed him herself if she could have gotten away with it.

v.19v ... but she could not:

She was not able to bring about the death of John at that time, but she did not give up. Her hatred for John only grew as she devised possible ways to get rid of him. All the while, she kept nagging Antipas and urged him to put John to death. He would eventually be overcome by her persistence.

Mk 6:20 For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.

v.20a For Herod feared John...

The word "feared" means "frightened," but it carries with it the idea of having great respect.

v.20b ... knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.

Once again, we see the weakness of Antipas and his wavering from one view to another.

In spite of his fear and hatred of John, Antipas was intrigued by John's life and his message.

Antipas "feared" John because he knew John was a man of God and proved it by the way he lived. John was the real thing.

Knowing John was "just" and "holy" meant Antipas knew John was right. But he still refused to admit that he was wrong.

v.20c ... and observed him; when he heard him,

When "he heard him," suggests Antipas had John summoned into his presence to talk.

The word "observed" means "to keep closely" or "to remember".

v.20d... he did many things

We aren't told exactly what these "many things" were. We know he protected John from the evil desire of Herodias. Even so, Herodias would find a way to do away with John.

Antipas tried to improve his actions so that he might ease his tormented conscience. Perhaps, he improved the conditions for the prisoners, or was more kind to the poor in his jurisdiction. We do not know what he did do, but we do know what he did not do, the one thing he should have. He refused to repent of the one sin that consumed him, his adulterous marriage.

v.20e ... and heard him gladly.

The words "heard him gladly" seem so contradictory to the usual actions of Antipas. Little did he realize that the good God of heaven was giving him a chance to repent and be forgiven.

It seems that hearing John caused Antipas' conscience to be smitten. No doubt, John spoke of Antipas' spiritual need and urged him to repent. Certainly, John would have told him of the peace that he could have if he would get right with God.

Later, Antipas would interrogate Jesus after His arrest. Even then, he would still have a desire to know more about Jesus (Lk. 23:8-11). He hoped Jesus would do a miracle while in his presence. Jesus answered none of his questions. He probably had passed God's deadline.

4. HEROD'S WICKEDNESS CONSUMED HIM

Mk 6:21 And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee;

A birthday party was given for Antipas, and governmental, military, and social leaders of the day were invited. No doubt, this attention thrilled Antipas.

It was a "convenient" day for Herodias. She had been watching and waiting for an opportunity to get rid of John the baptist.

Mk 6:22 And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee.

The name of the daughter of Herodias is not given in the Bible, but the Jewish historian Josephus identifies her as Salome. I will use that name throughout this study.

v.22a And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in

This event, by no means, was spontaneous. Herodias and Salome saw this opportunity to execute their plan to get rid of John.

v.22b ... came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him

How could any mother be so vile as to cause her own daughter to do such a wicked act?

Pleasing Antipas and those who sat with him does not mean Salome was a talented dancer, and they were impressed. It means her seductive movements stirred the sensual lusts of dirty old men. There is nothing on earth more vile than a dirty old man.

Mk 6:23 And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom.

The overpowering influence of the flesh is seen here. To promise to give up to half of his kingdom to a young girl because she stirred his carnal nature for a few moments is beyond insane. All common sense had left Antipas. He was truly consumed by his wickedness.

When the carnal mind is at work, all common sense is discarded. This person chooses the temporary over the eternal, places themselves into bondage, ignores the final consequences, and displeases God in the process.

5. HEROD'S WIFE CONVINCED HIM

No one can persuade a man like an overbearing wife. This is especially true when the woman has an ungodly and selfish temperament like Herodias. Over a year earlier, Antipas imprisoned John to appease her (Mt. 14:3; Mk. 6:17). No doubt, since then, she had been nagging Antipas to get rid of John completely. To say the least, things were not happy at their house.

Mk 6:24-25 And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist.

Mark tells us Salome "went forth" and talked to her mother, then "came in" and gave Antipas her request. It is clear that she left the banquet hall and came back later.

However, Matthew tells us Salome had been instructed previously by her mother to ask for the head of John (Mt. 14:8).

The solution is simple. Mark does not record the discussion between Herodias and Salome. The chronology of the events seems to be, Salome danced, Antipas made the promise, Salome went to her mother to discuss what she should ask for, Herodias told her to ask for the head of John, Salome came back and told Antipas.

How could any woman be so vile as to instruct her own daughter in such a manner?

Herodias had an opportunity to set herself and Salome in a place of luxury for the rest of their lives. Antipas had promised anything up to half of his kingdom.

A "charger" was a platter.

Mk 6:26 And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her.

v.26a And the king was exceeding sorry;

Once again, we see the nature of Antipas. He did not want to put John to death.

v.26b ... yet for his oath's sake,

He felt bound by his promise (v. 22).

v.26c ... and for their sakes which sat with him

His concern for the opinion of those who attended the party weighed heavily on his decision. The fear of man always puts us in bondage (Pro. 29:25). Many have learned this the hard way. Abraham (Gen. 12:11-13), Aaron (Ex. 32:22-24), Samuel (1 Sam. 15:24), David (1 Sam. 27:11), Elijah (1 Kgs, 19:1-3), Zedekiah (Jer. 38:19), Peter (Mt. 26:69-74), and the parents of the man born blind (Jn. 9:22-23), all let the fear of man control their decisions.

v.26d ... he would not reject her.

The verse says, "he would not", it does not say, "he could not". Antipas, despite his promise, could have done the right thing. He could have swallowed his pride, admitted he had made a foolish promise, stood up to his evil wife, and released John. Instead, he gave in and did what everyone expected.

Mk 6:27-28 And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison, And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother.

Antipas did as requested and had John beheaded. He gave the head to Salome, and she took it to her mother.

I can't imagine what it was like for Salome to walk the halls carrying an open platter with the head of John the baptist fully visible.

Mk 6:29 And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.

Brokenheartedly, some of John's disciples came and buried his body. No doubt, they had been praying for their beloved friend and fellow laborer.

Once again we see the hardness of Antipas and Herodias. They did not, or would not, provide John's body with a descent burial.

6. HEROD'S WAYS CONDEMNED HIM

The evil ways of Antipas, like all who do as he did, cost him greatly.

Antipas fell out of favor with Rome and was exiled to the distant Roman province of Gaul where he died.

GOD STOPS TO REST 6:30-34

In the next four verses, we find Jesus and the disciples taking a break. They stop, they rest, and they relax.

The 1828 Webster Dictionary says rest means, "to cease from action, be quiet or still, to be calm.

1. REST IS FOR THOSE WHO ARE WORKING

Mk 6:30 And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught.

The disciples returned after their first mission trip (v. 7-13). They were excited about the results of their labor. There is nothing on earth more thrilling than to be used by God to do His will.

The disciples told Jesus all they "had done" and "taught". They had been preaching (v. 12), casting out demons, and healing the sick (v. 13). No doubt, multitudes had bombarded them, and they had exhausted themselves.

They had been "doing" for the Lord. Jesus talked about doing. He said, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (Jn 13:17). He also said, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (Jn 15:14).

The Bible talks a lot about doing. It talks about doing alms (Mt. 6:1), doing good (Lk. 6:33), doing the deeds of your father (Jn. 8:41), doing all to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31), doing heartily (Col. 3:23), and doing well (Jam. 2:8).

Work is not bad. Adam and Eve worked before the curse. God put them in the garden "to dress and keep it" (Gen. 2:15). However, sin did cause work to become laborsome. God told Adam, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" (Gen. 3:19).

The Bible condemns laziness (Pro. 6:6-11; 10:5; 12:24; 13:4; 14:23a; 19:15; 20:4; 26:15).

Lazy people don't need rest. Lazy people need a vision of God's will and a burden for those in need. Lazy people need to do something for God.

2. REST IS FOR THOSE WHO ARE WEARY

Mk 6:31 And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.

Jesus always knew what was needed. In this case, He knew His disciples were weary and needed rest.

The disciples had been so busy helping those in need that they did not have time to stop and eat. While taking care of others, they had not taken care of themselves.

Multitudes had come to them for help. Each one drained the disciples a little more, and they were exhausted.

Serving the Lord is not easy. It takes physical, emotional, and spiritual effort.

We should have a desire to serve God and a burden for those in need, but there is a limit to what we can handle.

Physically, our bodies will wear down. No one can keep going without serious consequences. The truck driver who refuses to pull over will end up wrecking himself and others. The athlete who will not rest will fail the team and lose.

Mentally, our minds will overload. That's one reason why Jesus said, "Take no thought" (Mt. 6:25). The 1828 Webster Dictionary says, "A body is at rest when it ceases to move; the mind is at rest when it ceases to be disturbed or agitated".

Spiritually, our flesh is weak (Mt. 26:41). The greatest of all burdens is the burden about eternal matters.

No matter how spiritual the person, everyone is limited. We have only so much energy. Sooner or later, even the strongest believer will break.

Notice, Jesus said "Come ye". In other words, He led His disciples to the place of rest. Even Jesus got weary. John wrote, "Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour" (Jn 4:6).

One of the blessings of heaven will be the fact that we will rest from our labors (Rev. 14:13). With glorified bodies, our labor in heaven will not be exhausting.

Mk 6:32 And they departed into a desert place by ship privately.

The disciples obeyed Jesus and "departed". The word "depart" means "to go off". They left. For a little while, they let the sick remain sick and the needy remain needy.

The word "desert" means "remote" or "deserted" place. They went to a place where there were no people expecting help.

The word "privately" means "alone". They made certain that no one else went with them.

The multitudes had come to them for help, now it was time for them to get help. They needed rest.

Every working person needs a break.

The weak believer is easy prey to the enemy. The wolf always looks for the weakest sheep. Our enemy is looking for the one he "may" devour (1 Pet. 5:8).

Those who refuse to take a break will, sooner or later, crash. We sin more when we get tired. We are more prone to say the wrong thing when we get tired. We fail more often when we get tired.

What makes it worse is that when we fail, someone else will get hurt.

3. REST IS FOR THOSE WHO ARE WATCHING

The next two verses tell us how Jesus "saw" those in need. He and the disciples were watching. While resting, they did not forget those in need. The time of rest came to an end, and Jesus and the disciples went back to work.

Mk 6:33 And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him.

As we might expect, the people saw the way Jesus and the disciples were going and ran by land to the place they were heading. They were still sick and hurting, and they needed help. The need was still great.

As long as we are in this world, there will be people who need our help.

Mk 6:34 And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things.

Jesus saw the people as "sheep not having a shepherd". The sheep without a shepherd is helpless and hopeless.

The believer who is resting realizes that the time of rest will end. They are watching for those who need help and are willing to get back to work.

HEAVENLY HAPPY MEAL 6:35-44

The previous verses tell us that a crowd came to Jesus.

In the next few verses, Jesus will take what is equivalent to a McDonald's Happy Meal and feed a multitude.

This is one of the four events in Jesus' life recorded in all four gospel accounts (Mt. 14:14-21; Mk. 6:34-44; Lk. 9:11-17; Jn. 6:5-14). The others are His baptism, His death, and His resurrection.

1. THE LORD WAS GRACIOUS

As was so often the case, Jesus had "compassion" (v. 34) on those who came to Him.

JESUS WAS WEARY

Mk 6:35-36 And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed: Send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat.

The word "desert" means "secluded". It refers to a lonesome place, not necessarily a dry or barren place. The fact that it was a desert place is mentioned 3 times (v. 31, 32, 35) and tells us there was no place to buy supplies.

This verse says the day was "far spent". Later in Mark on the same day we will be told the "even was come" (6:47). The Jewish day was divided into four watches. The first watch was 6 p.m. to 9 p.m., the second was 9 p.m. to midnight, the third was midnight to 3 a.m., the fourth was 3 a.m. to 6 a.m..

So, the day being far spent probably means it was somewhere around, or after, 3 p.m..

All the people were tired and hungry. Jesus, being human, was just as tired and just as hungry as the crowd.

Jesus has been "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (Heb. 4:15). He knows how we feel because He has felt it Himself.

JESUS WAS WATCHING

Jesus was alert to the people, and He knew their needs. God is always watching and He knows when we need help (Pro. 5:21; 15:3; Ps. 139:1-2).

The disciples' solution to the hunger problem was, "send them away". Like us, they simply wanted the problem to go away.

Amazingly, it seems that it never even crossed the minds of the disciples that Jesus might handle the problem Himself.

JESUS WAS WAITING

Jesus could have fed the multitude anytime He desired, but He waited until the disciples "came to him". He did nothing about the need until they realized there was a need. The person who thinks they are ok will never call on God. Until we admit our need, we will never get help from God.

He waited till they realized the seriousness of the situation. Realizing we cannot fix our problems is the first step to finding the solution.

The disciples came to talk to Jesus. They suggested the crowd be sent away so they could go into the nearest towns and buy food. That is what Jesus had been waiting for.

JESUS WAS WORKING

In spite of His own weariness, Jesus was compassionate and willing to exert Himself to take care of others. As usual, He put the needs of others before Himself.

Jesus already knew what He would do. He would do what was needed to supply the need. God always knows what we need and how to provide it.

Mk 6:37 He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat?

Jesus was working, but He worked on the disciples before He worked on the lunch. Why would He say "Give ye them to eat" when He knew they could not do it? Some have incorrectly said that God will never ask more of you than you can do. The fact is, He will ask more of us than we are capable of, but He will never ask more than we can do, with His help. This verse is a perfect example.

Jesus said this to make them realize they did not have what was needed, and they could not do what He asked. They were about to learn the lesson of helplessness. This is a lesson we all need to learn.

Jesus could speak the necessary food into existence. However, He saw an opportunity to do something wonderful through the disciples.

Now, the disciples asked, "Shall we go and buy". Instead of trusting Jesus, they are thinking about going into the neighboring towns. Sadly, some in the modern church are doing the same. Instead of trusting God's power, they look to the world and its ingenuity. They recommend Dr. Phil instead of the Great Physician and a pill instead of prayer.

John tells us Philip was the one who spoke of "two hundred pennyworth of bread" (Jn 6:5). Two hundred pennyworth was over a half-year's wage. Some have suggested they had two hundred pennyworth in the bag they had as a treasury, but we do not know that. He was saying they did not have enough.

I have great difficulty believing they had a half-year's wage in their bag. Jesus had to send Peter fishing to collect one coin for taxes (Mt. 17:27), He never owned a home (Mt. 8:20), and He taught His disciples to pray for their "daily bread" (Mt. 6:11).

Jesus did this to test Philip (Jn. 6:6). He was actually testing all the disciples. Had they paid attention at all to His many miracles? They had seen Him do the impossible so many times, they had no reason to doubt this time. Would they trust Him?

How often do we worry about problems and forget how God has taken care of us before?

Mk 6:38 He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes.

Jesus asked this question to make the disciples realize how desperate the situation was. As the title of this study suggests, the lunch was about the equivalent of a Happy Meal from McDonald's. It was a little boy's lunch. The loaves were probably the size of biscuits, and the fish were more like sardines. John tells us they were "small" fish (Mt. 6:9).

2. <u>THE LANDSCAPE WAS GREEN</u>

Mk 6:39 And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass.

Even though it was a secluded place (v. 35), there was "green grass". Only God would put green grass in a place not frequented by people. There are places of indescribable beauty on this earth that no man will ever see.

God does what He does for His own purpose (Gen. 50:20; Dt. 8:2-3; Rom. 8:28). I'm not sure about all the reasons why God caused the grass to grow at that exact spot. But, I do know one of the reasons was because His Son was going to lead a crowd of weary and hungry people to that place, and He wanted them to be as comfortable as possible. Grass is much more comfortable than rocks and dirt.

God gave them the wonderful blessing of soft grass in a secluded place, but I wonder, how many noticed? They were tired, hot, and hungry. Did any of them appreciate the grass?

Our God can put grass in the deserts of our lives. He can put a blessing amid trouble and "rivers in the desert" (Isa. 43:20). I wonder, how many times do we fail to appreciate these blessings? We are quick to notice the trials but miss His blessings (Ps. 43:5).

Mk 6:40 And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties.

Jesus had them sit on the grass in groups of hundreds and fifties. The word "ranks" means "arranged group". It's used to describe garden plots. They were sitting in groups with an open path between them. This checkerboard of humanity must have been a sight to behold. We are not told why, but I'll make some suggestions.

THE PEOPLE COULD SETTLE WHILE ON THE GRASS

One, He did it to keep things orderly. Can you imagine the chaos that would have transpired as this crowd stampeded towards Jesus if He simply started handing out food to whoever was closest to him? Having them sitting made it possible to feed them without a riot.

God is a God of order. The devil is the author of chaos.

THE PEOPLE COULD SIT WHILE ON THE GRASS

Two, He did it to make sure everyone got fed. Had Jesus simply told everyone to come, the crowd would have been so dense that many would not have been unable to get to the disciples and would have remained hungry.

Having them sit put the crowd below the disciples and made it easy to make sure no one was left out.

THE PEOPLE COULD SEE WHILE ON THE GRASS

Three, He did it to make sure everyone could see what was happening. Had He handed out the food to a standing crowd, only those in front would have been able to see where it came from. His way, every person could see and would know their food came from Jesus. Every time they took a bite, they remembered, this came from God.

3. <u>THE LUNCH WAS GIVEN</u>

Mk 6:41 And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all.

The word "taken" means "to receive". That means, it was given. John tells us the five loaves and two fish came from a little boy's lunch (Jn. 6:9).

Jesus used the word "lad" to describe this boy. It means "little boy". Jesus used the same word when speaking of the little children playing in the marketplace (Mt. 11:16). When we give what we have, we're never too young, or too old, to be used by the Lord.

Jesus could have snapped His fingers to provide the food needed, but He chose to use a little boy. One of the greatest privileges of being a child of God is to be used by our Father to do His will in this world.

THE BRINGING OF THE LUNCH

Jesus asked for the little boy's lunch. When we learn to give what we have to God, we have learned a valuable lesson.

The lad gave his lunch to the disciples, and the disciples brought it to Jesus. The disciples could give only what they had received.

THE BLESSING OF THE LUNCH

Jesus "looked up to heaven" and "blessed" the lunch.

This blessing means at least two things.

One, this was Jesus giving thanks for the food. He knew it had been given by a lad but it really came from God. Notice, He gave thanks for it even though there was not enough for the crowd. We need to learn how to give thanks even when there are things we lack.

Two, this was Jesus adding His divine blessing to the lunch. This blessing was going to make a difference in the lunch.

The loaves and fish didn't look different, but they were different. We are never blessed by God and remain the same. David said, "forget not all his benefits" (Ps. 103:2).

THE BREAKING OF THE LUNCH

Had Jesus not "brake" the bread, the crowd would not have been fed. God uses broken things. God cannot use us until He has broken us.

Jesus didn't pile the food in piles so the people could come and get what they wanted. He broke some off a loaf, gave it to a disciple, and broke off another piece. He continued doing this until everyone was full. Like the widow's meal (1 Kgs 17:13-16), the bread kept coming. The loaves and the fish did not diminish.

When He broke off a piece,

Jesus gave to the disciples, and they gave to the people. Believers should be funnels, not buckets. A funnel doesn't hold anything for itself; it lets what comes into it pass through. What we get from God, we should pass on to others.

THE BOUNTY OF THE LUNCH

Mk 6:42 And they did all eat, and were filled.

The lunch did more than it could and went further than it should.

They were all "filled," means they all ate all they wanted. John tells us they are "as much as the would" (Jn. 6:11). Talk about an all you can eat buffet.

Even though the supply was lacking, Jesus provided what was needed. Nothing is too big for God. The God who created the universe has no problem creating food.

That means the young lad who gave his lunch ended up eating more than he would have originally. He gave what he had, and he got more in return. We never lack when we give what God asks.

4. THE LEFTOVERS WERE GATHERED

Mk 6:43 And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes.

These were small baskets which they used, as we do our small suitcases, to carry items. The seven baskets used at the feeding of the four thousand were large baskets (Mk. 8:8).

There were 12 baskets of leftovers. John tells us Jesus told the disciples to gather these fragments. He said, "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost" (Jn. 6:12).

These leftovers bring two questions to my mind.

The first question is, why were there leftovers?

We know Jesus did not miscalculate His miracle. He was always completely in control of His power.

I believe there were leftovers to show how God's grace always provides more than what is needed. John said the fragments that remained were "over and above" (Jn. 6:13). James was right when he said, "he giveth *more* grace" (Jam. 4:6 emphasis added). The word "more" means "larger or greater".

God's grace is always more than what we need. If it were not, we would fall every time the tempter came and come unglued when real trouble invaded our lives.

I believe also, there were leftovers because some of the crowd refused to eat. That may seem unreasonable, but I know a lot of people who refuse what God offers them. Some refused the invitation to the wedding (Mt. 22:1-8). I know lost people who reject God's salvation and saved people who refuse God's blessings. As a result, they miss out on the good things they could have had.

One thing is certain: if anyone left hungry, it was their own fault. They could not blame Jesus or His disciples.

The second question is, why was Jesus interested in leftovers? Why did He not just leave them there and go on His journey? Surely, He had more important things to do than to take care of some leftovers. Surely the One who could feed a multitude with a little boy's lunch would not bother with a few scraps. But He was interested, and He did bother with these scraps.

The truth is, we do not know why Jesus kept the leftovers, but I would like to make three suggestions.

ONE, TO REWARD THOSE WHO GAVE THEM.

I believe Jesus saved the leftovers for the sake of the lad and the crowd.

First, the loaves and fish came originally from the lad. He probably thought his little lunch couldn't do much to satisfy such a large crowd.

Second, the leftovers came from the people in the crowd. I can imagine them thinking, "What good is this little fragment that I have left?"

However, there is no doubt, the lad and the crowd were thrilled when they saw what Jesus did with the little they gave. Their little did great things when placed in the hands of God.

I can imagine the smiles as they all rejoiced as they thought, "Jesus did this with the little I gave"?

All of God's children would experience this type of joy if they would give what they have to Jesus.

TWO, TO REFRESH THOSE WHO GOT THEM.

No doubt about it, someone eventually ate the leftover food.

As I have mentioned, everyone had eaten their fill (v. 42), so no one would have wanted them at the time. Had they been offered these leftovers, they would have said, "Oh no, I couldn't eat another bite".

The fact is, no one, no one, no one, wanted these leftovers ..... except Jesus. He said, "Gather up the fragments that remain, that *nothing be lost*" (Jn. 6:12 emphasis added).

Jesus had them take the leftovers because He knew the time would come when they would be hungry again. When that happened, they would be delighted to have the leftovers. Our need for food, like our need for God's grace, is never fully satisfied. We will eventually need more. And like the leftovers, when that time comes, Jesus will have what we need.

My question is, what good are a few little fragments? The word "fragment" means "broken or to break". There was not one whole piece. None was unbroken.

Allow me to run a rabbit for a moment. Do you feel like you are a bunch of worthless scraps? Many of God's children have asked themselves, "What use am I"?

To begin with, the fact that Jesus kept the leftovers proves they were valuable to Him. You are not junk to God.

There are some who do not like leftovers, but I do. A pot of homemade soup tastes a lot better the next day. According to this text, Jesus must love leftovers, too. When Jesus said to gather the fragments that "nothing be lost", He was making sure the fragments would not be lost.

Don't forget, Jesus was the One who broke these fragments (v. 41b). And, if you have been broken by the Lord, you have also been blessed by Him (v. 41a).

God does not waste that which He has blessed. God was not finished with the little boy's lunch. It may be that the leftovers were used in a more miraculous way than the lunch itself. As long as you keep yourself in the hands of the Lord, you have not reached your full potential. Your latter end may be greater than your beginning (Job 8:7; Hag. 2:9).

THREE, TO REMIND THOSE WHO GATHERED THEM.

I believe Jesus gave the leftovers to the 12 disciples who gathered them that day. Twelve baskets, twelve disciples, it makes sense to me.

They were traveling in a time when there were no McDonald's nor hotels, so having the baskets of food would be very beneficial. They could eat it themselves, or they could give it to someone along the way.

However, I believe Jesus wanted these leftovers to remind the disciples of His power. I believe that because the feeding of the five thousand is mentioned two times later. On both of those occasions, the disciples were rebuked because they did not trust Jesus.

The first mention is recorded in Mark 6:45-52. Notice, this deals with the first, the very first, problem the disciples faced after the feeding of the five thousand. The disciples are in a storm and they are terrified. Verse 52 says, "For they considered not the miracle of the loaves". That means, if they had remembered Jesus' miracle of feeding the five thousand, they would have known they could trust Him in the storm. If Jesus can take care of a multitude, He could take care of 12 disciples. If He can multiply bread and fish, He could calm the sea. In like fashion, we could have peace in our present problem if we would remember how God took care of us in our past problems. What God did yesterday, He can do today.

The second mention is recorded in Mark 8:14-21. When Jesus warned the disciples about the leaven of the Pharisees, they misunderstood and thought He was rebuking them for forgetting to bring bread (v. 15-16). In response, Jesus reminds them of His feeding of the five thousand and four thousand (v.18-20). His point was that if they had remembered His power to multiply bread and fish, they would have known He was not upset that they had forgotten to bring bread. He could miraculously make bread if He so desired. In essence, Jesus was saying, "Fellows, I could make bread if I wanted to, why would you ever think I'm upset because you didn't bring bread".

In both the occasions above, Jesus pointed back to the bread and fish in an attempt to remind His disciples that they could trust Him. As I have mentioned, I believe that is the reason He sent the leftovers with the disciples. He wanted them to carry in their hands the proof of His power because it would not be long before they would need that power again.

Do you forget God's past power when you face another problem? How often do we worry about that which God can take care of? Jesus said, "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on" (Mt 6:25). The God who took care of yesterday can take care of today, and tomorrow, and next week.

Mk 6:44 And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men.

There were 5,000 men, not counting the women and children (cf. Mt. 14:21). Considering the average family had 4 to 8 children, it was the time of Passover, and entire families traveled together to Jerusalem, it is not unreasonable to assume there were 15 or 20 thousand gathered there. Matthew said it was a "great multitude".

What Jesus asked of His disciples, He provided. He told them to feed the multitude, but He gave them the food to do it. God never asks us to do anything without providing what is needed to do what He asks. Do you ever feel like life is too much for you to handle? Does it seem like the job is too big for you? Just remember, He still multiplies. He can make your little more than enough. Do not give up. Your God can make a way when there is no way.

Of course, the devil is not going to let this event go by without throwing his dart of doubt upon it. Some have suggested that everyone brought their own lunch and decided to share when they saw the little boy sharing. To begin with, the Bible does not say that it happened. Everyone sharing what little they had would not have been enough to fill everyone, let alone provide twelve baskets of leftovers. Also, had this happened, no one would have returned the next day seeking more food from Jesus (cf. Jn 6:22-26).

It will do us well to simply believe what the Bible says.

WHAT WE NEED IN STORMY WEATHER 6:45-53

This event was recorded in Mt 14:22-33, Mark 6:45-52, and John 6:16-21.

Jesus sent His disciples by ship to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. Little did they know, they were about to face, what was perhaps, the worst storm of their lives. They also, were about to discover that they were missing something that they needed desperately.

We, like the disciples, will endure storms in this life. Facing these storms, we will need what the disciples needed.

The world tells us we need positive thinking and a good attitude to make it through the storms of our lives. Is that the answer?

What do we need in stormy weather?

1. DURING OUR STORMS, WE NEED A FRIEND THAT WILL NOT DISAPPOINT

The next three verses tell us that Jesus, even though He knew a storm was coming, intentionally separated Himself from His disciples.

Mk 6:45 And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people.

v. 45a And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship

Jesus compelled His disciples to get in a ship and go to Bethsaida. The word "constrained" means "to compel". John gives us insight as to why Jesus insisted the disciples leave. John wrote, "When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone" (Jn 6:15).

Once again, Jesus avoided the people's attempt to make Him king. He did so for three reasons. One, He would not allow there to be a kingdom as long as the Jews continued to refuse to repent. Two, knowing the Jews would reject Him, He had come this time to give Himself as a sacrifice, not as a king. Three, He had a planned a storm to teach the disciples a lesson about faith. Of course, they being Jews, desired the kingdom and longed for Jesus to set it up (Mark 9:34; 10:35-37; Acts 1:6).

I wonder if the disciples didn't feel some relief when they got in the boat and rowed away. They were physically and mentally exhausted from the constant demands of needy people (6:32-42). More than likely, they were hoping to have a few minutes of rest and relief. They would get neither.

v. 45b ... while he sent away the people.

Dispersing such a large crowd was not an easy, or quick, task. Jesus was going to pray and He needed the seclusion.

Mk 6:46 And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray.

No doubt, Jesus was exhausted from the long and difficult day, but He still took time to pray.

Jesus, even though He was God, recognized the value of prayer and prayed often (Mt. 11:25-26; 14:19: 14:23; 15:36; 19:13-15; 26:26; 26:36-46, Lk. 3:21-22; 5:16; 6:12-13; 9:18; 9:28-29; 10:21; 11:1; 11:41-42; 22:31-32, 23:34;23:46; 24:30; 24:50-53, 27:46, Mk. 1:35-36; 7:34, Jn. 12:27-28; 17:1-26. If the Son of God prayed, surely the children of God should do the same.

Jesus "departed into a mountain" that He might be alone when He prayed. Jesus tells us to go into our "closet" (secluded place) and "shut" the door (Mt. 6:6). Having privacy when we pray is important because it helps us concentrate.

It is important to realize, there is no indication that Jesus told them where He was going or what He would be doing. It will not be long that they feel like He had deserted them.

Mk 6:47 And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land.

The "even" refers to late in the day (Please read the comments on Mark 6:35).

Jesus was on "land" and the disciples were in the "midst of the sea". They were miles from each other and they had no idea where Jesus was. He had put them on the boat and sent the multitude away before He went to pray (v. 46-47). All they knew was He was not in the boat with them.

In other words, there was a period of time when the disciples, at least felt like, Jesus didn't care. There may be times when we feel like God has left us. Job sought for God but could not find Him.

The disciples may have not known where Jesus was, but they should have known that He had not forsaken them. Our father and mother may forsake us, but the LORD never will (Ps. 27:10). David said, "I have been young, and now am old; Yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, Nor his seed begging bread" (Ps 37:25).

2. DURING OUR STORMS, WE NEED A FAITH THAT WILL NOT DOUBT

These verses show us the disciples had some problems with faith at this point.

THEY DOUBTED BECAUSE OF THE UNUSUAL STORM

Mk 6:48 And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them.

v 48a And he saw them ...

And He "saw them" are some of the most wonderful words in the Bible.

Seeing the disciples was a miracle in itself. This means He saw "them" not just the storm. The distance between Him and the disciples would have made it impossible for an ordinary man to see, but He was no ordinary man. God sees all. Solomon said, "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, Beholding the evil and the good" (Pr 15:3).

v. 48b ... them toiling in rowing:

They were in the ship, in the storm, and struggling to row to shore.

The word "toiling" carries with it the idea of torment. They had already had a difficult day with the emotional stress and the physical exertion of the feeding of the five thousand. The "fourth watch" began at 3 a.m. (3 a.m. to 6 a.m.) so they have been rowing for hours without any chance to rest.

Jesus did not just see them, He saw them struggling. He knew what they were going through. This is why He had fought against His fatigue and prayed (v. 46), and this is why He came to them while the storm was still raging. I am so glad we have a Savior who sees us when we are facing the storms of our lives and He cares (Heb. 4:15).

As I have mentioned, the word "toiling" carries with it the idea of torment. To say the least, they had had a long and difficult day, and it wasn't getting any better. They were doing their best. They longed for the safety of the shore. Little did they realize, though they were in a horrible storm, they were safe in the hands of their God. Jesus saw their travail and He was on the way to help them.

Waiting for God while the storm is raging is one of the most difficult parts of the Christian life. We wonder where He is and why He has not calmed the storm. He not only knows how to calm our storm, He knows when to calm it.

v. 48c ... for the wind was contrary unto them:

The word "contrary" means "opposite". It seemed the wind itself was fighting against them getting to the place where they were heading. It was an unusual storm.

Matthew tells us the boat was "tossed" with waves (Mt. 14:24). The word "tossed" means "torture". This was an unusual storm, and they were frightened.

John tells us (Jn. 6:19) they rowed between 25 and 30 furlongs (3 1/4 to 3 3/4 miles). Under normal conditions it would take about an hour to cover that distance. But, these were not normal conditions. The storm was violent and the winds were "contrary", which means "opposite". To row that distance while in the midst of such a violent storm would be exhausting.

There will be times when it seems we are making little, or no, progress in our walk with Christ. During those times, we should keep on, keeping on, and trust God.

THEY DOUBTED BECAUSE OF THE UNCONCERNED SAVIOR

At this point, it seemed to them that Jesus was unconcerned about them and their safety. Little did they realize, the Lord had sent the storm that a work might be done in them. So it is with us today. Every trial is a lesson from our loving Lord.

v. 48d ... about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them

What were they thinking?

I believe they were wondering, where is Jesus? We know He was "on the land" (v. 47), but they had no idea where He was.

I believe they were wondering, why has Jesus let this storm come? Like so many of God's children, they were facing a terrible storm and did not know why.

I believe they were wondering, is Jesus going to help us? They were wondering if they were going to die? The storm was that severe.

What should they have been thinking?

They should have been thinking, "Jesus saved me". They should have realized, that alone meant they were ok. "I'm one of His, I know He is going to take care of His own".

They should have been thinking, " Jesus sent me". Remembering Jesus had told them to get in the boat meant they were in the will of God and it should have given them peace.

They should have been thinking, " Jesus sees me". Even though they could not see Him, they should have known He could see them.

They could have, and should have, had peace. But, before we criticize them, how many times have we been fearful when the storms came?

Jesus may have been physically separated from His disciples, but He was very much involved with every second of the experience. Jesus is the friend who never leaves us, nor forsakes us (Heb. 13:5). The Lord "forsaketh not his saints" (Ps. 37:28). We may be "persecuted" but we will never the "forsaken" (2 Cor. 4:9)

v. 48e ... would have passed by them.

John tells us Jesus was "drawing nigh unto the ship" (Jn. 6:19). That means, He intentionally walked towards the boat to make sure the disciples could see Him.

Some try to explain these words away, but, the fact is, Jesus would have passed them by if they had not called out to Him. God will make His assistance available, but He will not force it upon us.

God often waits for the call of His children. I wonder how many wonderful blessings we forfeited simply because we did not call. James said we have not because we "ask not" (Jam. 4:2).

THEY DOUBTED BECAUSE OF THE UNFAMILIAR SPIRIT

Mk 6:49 But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out:

v. 49a But when they saw him walking upon the sea

Jesus walked on the water to go to the disciples. The tense of the word "walking" refers to a steady progress. The winds and waves were not hindering Him in the least. That which imprisons us, doesn't even slow Him down.

v. 49b ... they saw him ...

Through the darkness, the disciples could see a human-like figure but could not tell if it was Jesus, or even if it was real.

v. 49c they supposed it had been a spirit,

They, believing Jesus was still on the shore, assumed this to be some type of apparition.

In that day, there was a common superstition that said phantoms, or restless spirits, would bring disaster or misfortune to the living.

v. 49d ... and cried out:

Matthew tells us they cried out "for fear" (Mt. 14:26).

Mk 6:50 For they all saw him, and were troubled. And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.

v. 50a For they all saw him, and were troubled

Here, it was not the storm that frightened them, but the form of what they thought might be a spirit. Jesus was telling them to not be afraid, not of the storm, but of "Him".

v. 50b And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them ...

Jesus spoke "immediately". He wanted to comfort His disciples as soon as possible. God does not want His children to be troubled.

Mark dealt with the response of the disciples as a whole and mentioned nothing about any individual disciple's response. However, Matthew tells us how Peter responded. When they saw Jesus, Peter said, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water" (Mt. 14:28). This was the time that Peter walked on water (Mt. 14:27-32). He knew he was more safe close to Jesus in the storm than away from Jesus in the ship.

v. 50c Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.

Remember, while Jesus spoke these words, He was walking on water in the middle of a terrible storm. I suppose that would make a person listen to Him.

The word "cheer" carries with it the idea of being cheerful, comforted, and having courage. These words must have meant a lot to those who had for hours been thinking they could go down at any moment.

Instead of being frighten, this could have, and should have, been their attitude all along. We often live in fear and anxiety, when the Lord has peace and comfort available for us.

It "is I", it was the real Jesus, not a spook or spirit. It had to thrill them that He was literally in their presence again. However, He had really been with them all along. They had never been alone. God told Isaiah, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; Neither shall the flame kindle upon thee" (Is 43:2).

Mk 6:51 And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered.

The word "ceased" is the same word used in Mark 4:39. It means to "relax". It also means "to tire". Did you get that, the storm got tired! I'd love for the devil to get tired of fighting God's children every once in a while.

The miracle of the wind ceasing took place without Jesus uttering a word. His power was not require that He speak or touch.

John tells us the disciples "willingly" received him into the ship (Jn. 6:21). After all they had endured, they were thrilled to have Him close again. Isn't that how it is when we have gone through a period of doubt and fear? We. like the disciples, are apprehensive about calling on the Lord again, but we are thrilled when we sense His closeness again.

They were "amazed" and "wondered" at Him. Never man did what He did.

Matthew said, the disciples worshipped Him and said "Of a truth thou art the Son of God" (Mt 14:33).

3. DURING OUR STORMS, WE NEED A FOCUS THAT WILL NOT DEVIATE

Mk 6:52 For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened.

They could have, and should have, trusted the Lord during the entire experience. But they did what we do, they doubted and they feared.

v. 52a For they considered not the miracle of the loaves:

As difficult as is it to comprehend, these disciples had, not only seen, but had been a part of, a tremendous miracle only a few hours earlier, and they did not even think of it, when they found themselves in a storm. They did not trust God in their present problem because they did not remember what Jesus had done in a previous problem (cf. 6:34-44). He made fish that had never swam and bread that had never been in a field, and they didn't grasp the greatness of His power. But, how often are we guilty of the same.

They were certainly in a place of danger, but they should have trusted God anyway. He not only was in control of the storm, He had sent the storm. Nahum said, "The LORD hath his way in the whirl-wind" (Nahum 1:3).

If the world falls a part around you, you are still safe in your Father's arms. The Psalmist said, "God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea" (Ps 46:1–2). We need to ask God for grace, expect Him to help, and obey Him.

We should never, ever, get used to how God does the miraculous. But, we should get to the place, because of our faith, we are not surprised by what He does. In fact, we should come to the place to where we expect Him to do it. That, my friend, is what faith is all about.

v. 52b ... for their heart was hardened.

Their hearts being hardened does not suggest the disciples were intentionally hardening their hearts. It means they were slow to comprehend just how powerful Jesus was. Do we not have the same problem? Are we not, way too often, surprised when God does the impossible for us?

We will see this same issue arise later in the book of Mark (8:14-21).

Mk 6:53 And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore.

John tells us when they received Jesus into the boat, they were instantly at the land (Jn. 6:21). What an amazing miracle.

The words "drew to the shore" are translated from a Greek word (prŏsŏrmizō) that means they tied the boat to the shore. Interestingly, this is the only time these words are found only here in the New Testament. It is as though the Holy Spirit wanted to emphasize the fact that they had safely reached the shore.

I'm sure they tied up with more enthusiasm than usual. They were glad to be on dry ground and still unsettled from all the events they had just experienced. From the feeding of the five thousand, to the terror of the storm, to Jesus walking on water, to Him calming the sea, to instantly being brought to shore. They had, to say the least, had an eventful 24 hours.

In conclusion, if these series of events did not strengthen the faith of the disciples, I don't know it would take to do so.

It is easier to serve God when we trust Him. It is easier to face trials because we expect Him to help us. It is easier to teach, preach, witness, or serve, when we expect Him to touch us with His power.

WHO WAS THIS MAN 6:54-56

The last verses of this chapter show us just how little people really knew about Jesus. With that in mind, let's ask ourselves, Who was this man?

Mk 6:54 And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew him,

1. **JESUS WAS PRESENT**

v.54a And when they were come out of the ship,

Jesus and the disciples landed safe on shore. Jesus passed through the area where the people were. He was present.

The song writer was correct when she wrote “It always make a difference when Jesus passes by”.

Of course, this was a time that a person had to go where Jesus was if they were to get help. Many found it difficult to get to Jesus. Zacchaeus had to climb a tree (Lk. 19:1-5), a woman had to fight through the crowd (Mt. 9:20), and four men had to tear up a roof (Mk. 2:4) to get to Jesus.

No doubt, many went without help because they were not able to get to Him. They missed Him, and His help, simply because they did not make it to the front of the crowd. Imagine the heartbreak of desperately needing His help, seeing Him pass by, but not being able to get close enough to get to Him.

I am so glad we can call on the Lord and be in His presence. We simply have to look by faith. God tells us, "call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me" (Ps. 50:15). James said, "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray" (Jam. 5:13).

We understand, in our day, God is omnipresent. He is everywhere and all times. However, there vast difference between His presence & His manifested presence. We desperately need God's manifested presence. The song writer wrote, "It always make a difference when Jesus passes by".

For that reason, we, like those who heard about Jesus passing by, need to seek the Lord while He may be found (Dt. 4:29; s. 14:2; 27:8; 95:7-8; 105:4; Pro. 8:17; Jer. 29:13; 2 Chr. 15:4). Those who seek Him must believe He rewards those who "diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6).

Sadly, many heard about Jesus coming by but did not go to Him. Some were deceived, they heard He had helped others but they did not think He could help them. Some were distracted, they were too busy to seek Him. Some were disappointed, they went to find Jesus but seeing the crowd they gave up and went back home. They missed His help because they were not willing to do what it took to get to Him. All these went home without help.

Thankfully, some were delivered. These were the ones who, when they heard Jesus was coming, dropped everything and went to Him. It was difficult, but they didn't give up. Instantly, a lifetime of disease was gone. Some experiencing excruciating pain received total relief. Those with tormented minds received right thinking away in complete peace.

One thing is certain, none of them complained about the difficulty of getting to Jesus. No one fussed about it taking too long, or being too hard, or costing too much. They did however, go away rejoicing. They returned home shouting the praises of the Lord and telling everyone what Jesus did for them.

2. JESUS WAS POPULAR

v.54b straightway they knew him,

Jesus had been in this area before, so He was recognized.

The problem was, as we are about to see, they knew *of* Him but they did not really *know* Him. Those coming to Jesus were coming to get what they could get. These 3 verses tell us of multitudes who came to be healed or helped, but not one to volunteer to serve.

That proves they did not really know Him. They knew Jesus as healer and helper, but not as Lord. Even those closest to Him did not know as closely as the should have. Jesus said to Philip, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me" (Jn. 14:9). He said this late into Jesus' ministry. Philip spent 24 hours a day for 3 years with Jesus and did not really know Him.

However, it is easy to criticize these folks but we might need to take a good look at ourselves. Do we see the Lord only as our problem solver? Do we beg Him for help when problems come but ignore Him when things are going well?

As believers, we need to know our Lord better. Even the great apostle Paul said, "That I may know him" (Phil. 3:10). The Psalmist said, "But it is good for me to draw near to God" (Ps. 73:28). James wrote, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you" (Jam. 4:8).

We get to know Jesus better the same way we do anyone.

We get to know our friends better through communicating. We listen to them and we talk to them. God told Isaiah to come near and listen to Him (Isa. 48:14).

We get to know our friends better by commitment. It takes time to really know someone. Knowing our Lord will take time and commitment.

We get to know our friends better by complications. Experiencing life's problems will draw us closer to our friends. We share our feelings, our fears, and our frustrations, with those we are closest to. In like fashion, experiencing difficulties naturally draws a believer closer to the Lord.

Mk 6:55 And ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was.

v.55a And ran through that whole region round about,

As always when Jesus came close, the news of his arrival spread like wildfire.

No doubt, this was one of the most enthusiastic periods of Jesus' ministry. Everywhere Jesus went, multitudes came. They had seen enough, or heard enough, about Jesus to believe He could help them.

It also tells us how great the need was. There has never been a shortness of people having problems. This world is in bad shape.

v.55b … and began to carry about in beds those that were sick

The "beds" were like the pallet used to lower the man through the roof (Mt. 2:4).

Many had problems they could not fix.

Many brought friends and family members who could not make it to Jesus on their own.

We should do the same. We all know people who need the Lord. We should do everything we can to get them to Him.

v.55c … where they heard he was.

No doubt, they were trying to anticipate where He would go next so they could get there before Him.

Mk 6:56 And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole.

v.56a And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets

They tried to determine where Jesus would be and went there. No doubt, the streets were lined with those who were sick.

3. JESUS WAS PERSONAL

v.56b … that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment:

Touching the “border of his garment” meant one person reached out and touched Jesus. It was a personal touch. It was one-on-one. Multitudes were present but none of them were involved in this connection. God i s a personal God.

Multitudes came to Jesus, but he saw them as individuals. He knew each one and their individual problem. Matthew tells us Jesus saw the multitudes as "sheep having no shepherd" (Mt. 9:36). Jesus, like a good shepherd, did not just see the flock, he saw each individual sheep.

Sadly, we often find ourselves being lost in the crowd. The doctor sees a chart, the banker sees an account number, and the barber sees a head. That never happens with our Heavenly Father.

No individual gets lost in the crowd. Jesus dealt one-on-one with the Samaritan woman (Jn. 4:6-7), Nicodemus (Jn. 3:1-21), Zacchaeus (Lk. 19:1-10), the woman caught in adultery (Jn. 8:1-11), the man born blind (Jn. 9:1-7), and the leper (Mt. 8:2-4).

That means, God sees me, He knows me, and He loves me. I am glad God so loved the world (Jn. 3:16), but I am really glad God so loved me. In 2025, there are 8.2 billion people on earth. I'm glad, in the midst of that vast number, Jesus sees me.

Jesus not only knew each individual, he knew their individual problem. Jesus knows how to fix every problem of every person.

4. JESUS WAS POWERFUL

v.56c as many as touched him were made whole.

Jesus' power is demonstrated in this verse. His power took care of whoever, from wherever, of whatever was wrong with them.

His power dealt with availability

v.56a ... he entered, into villages, or cities, or country

Jesus made himself and his power available. No place was too big or too small for Him. Most would have avoided the small villages and the countryside where fewer people would be. He went wherever and to whomever He was needed. There was no such thing as being from the wrong side of the tracks with Jesus.

His power dealt with ability

v. 56c ... as many

The words "as many" mean his power was sufficient for all afflictions. There are times when the doctor has to tell their patient that there is nothing they can do. Their problem is beyond their ability. This is never true of our Lord. Nothing is beyond His ability.

This verse tells us that Jesus' power had no limit. All were made whole.

His power dealt with accepting

v. 56c ... as many as touched him were made whole.

The words "as many as touched him" are vitally important.

First, these words tell us that those who came had accepted the fact that they needed help. No one asks for, or receives, help until they admit they need it.

Second, these words tell us that these people were coming in faith. They had heard about Jesus and were expecting him to help them. They had to come to the one who was able to help. The world offers all sorts of "self-help" remedies, but none of them offer real and lasting help.

I am not suggesting they all had saving faith and were believers, I am saying they believed Jesus could heal.

Third, these words tell us that anyone who needed help could find it. No case was too difficult, and no sickness too severe.

In closing, our thoughts on this subject.

Sadly, many heard about Jesus coming by but did not go to Him. Some were deceived, they heard He had helped others, but they did not think He could help them. Some were distracted, they were too busy to seek Him. Some were disappointed, they went to find Jesus, but seeing the crowd, they gave up and went back home. They missed His help because they were not willing to do what it took to get to Him. All these went home without help.

Thankfully, some were delivered. These were the ones who, when they heard Jesus was coming, dropped everything and went to Him. It was difficult, but they didn't give up. They were rewarded for their effort. Instantly, a lifetime of disease was gone. Some experiencing excruciating pain received total relief. Those with tormented minds received right thinking and complete peace.

One thing is certain: none of them complained about the difficulty of getting to Jesus. No one fussed about it taking too long, or being too hard, or costing too much. They did, however, go away rejoicing. They returned home shouting the praises of the Lord and telling everyone what Jesus had done for them.

WE'VE ALWAYS DONE IT THIS WAY 7:1-13

Chapter seven shows us how the Pharisees and scribes were guilty of doing what they did because that was what they had always done. As we walk through this chapter, we may discover that we are making the same mistake.

The word "tradition" is found five times in this one chapter. We will discover that the "Pharisees, and all the Jews", were more concerned about their traditions than the Word of God. They had elevated their tradition above the Scripture.

A tradition is a custom, belief, or practice passed down from one generation to another within a group, family, or society. It is a way of thinking or behaving that has been established over a long period and often holds symbolic meaning or special significance.

1. **THE PEOPLE THAT CRITICIZE**

In this chapter, the Pharisees and scribes criticize Jesus. Criticizing the Son of God never ends well.

Mk 7:1 Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem.

Who were these who came to Jesus?

They were the Pharisees and scribes who believed themselves to be spiritual leaders of their day. They saw themselves as God's spiritual police whose job it was to protect the Word of God and expose anything they considered to be false doctrine.

Unfortunately, they were blind to spiritual truth. When the spiritual leaders walk in blindness, so do those who follow, and they both fall in the ditch (Lk. 6:39).

Where did they come from?

They came from Jerusalem, which should have been the spiritual capital of the world. Sadly, it had become a capital of spiritual blindness and confusion. When there is spiritual blindness in the house of God, there can be only confusion and disorder. Coming from Jerusalem probably means they were an official delegation sent to investigate Jesus and the disciples, attempting to discredit them among the public.

Why did they come?

Unfortunately, they did not come in love and respect, to ask for help, or to offer their assistance. They came to condemn and criticize.

They were hoping those following Jesus would see him as a transgressor of the Scripture and reject him. Of course, their plan backfired. No one can corner God. No one wins in a battle against God. If you doubt that, ask Lucifer (Isa. 14:15).

What did they believe?

The Pharisees and scribes believed the way to please God was to keep their man-made rules. As we will see, their beliefs centered on their actions, but the Bible centers on the heart of man.

Like all who are deceived, they sincerely believed they were right.

Mk 7:2 And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault.

These Pharisees and scribes "saw" some of Jesus' disciples. That means they had been watching them and looking for a chance to accuse them of something wrong.

Clearly, they came to accuse Jesus and not with open minds. Those with closed minds will never receive help from God.

The "defiled" and "unwashen" hands dealt with a religious ceremony and not hygiene. We will look further into this subject in the verses ahead.

The word "fault" means "to blame". They believed what the disciples were doing was wrong, and they deserved to be rebuked.

To their credit, the Pharisees and scribes did have good motives. They wanted to protect Israel and the truth of Scripture. However, what they believed and taught was far from the truth and was harmful to Israel.

2. <u>THE PAST THAT CONTROLS</u>

The Pharisees and scribes were controlled by the past and bound by their man-made traditions. In other words, they said, "We've always done it this way". Sadly, the modern church is doing the same thing. How much of what we do today is because we have always done it this way? How much of our spiritual routine is the result of our tradition and not because we are walking in the Spirit?

Mk 7:3 For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders.

The word "tradition" is found five times in this one chapter. We will discover that the "Pharisees, and all the Jews", were more concerned about their traditions than the Word of God. They had elevated their tradition above the Scripture.

They complained here about the disciples' failure to "wash their hands". As I mentioned (v. 2), "unwashen" hands dealt with a religious ceremony and not hygiene.

The religious ceremony of washing hands involved three steps. First, water was poured over the hands while the person held them out with their fingers pointing up. The water had to drip off the wrists. Second, they turned their hands over with their fingers pointing down, and poured water over them again. Three, then each hand was rubbed vigorously with the fist of the other hand. The word "oft" means "with the fist" and refers to this scrubbing of the hands with the fist.

They were very serious about this procedure. One of their Rabbis said, "To eat with unwashed hands is a sin as great as adultery". Another Rabbi taught, "Whosoever has his abode in the land of Israel and eats his common food with rinsed hands may rest assured that he shall obtain eternal life". This means they believed this type of washing of the hands assured them of eternal life.

The words "except they wash" mean they would not think about eating until they had washed in this fashion. In other words, they were completely dedicated to these traditions.

The Jews adopted this ritual because God required the priests to wash their hands before entering the tabernacle (Ex. 30:19-21; 40:12). They assumed that if it was good for the priests, it would be good for everyone.

Mk 7:4 And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables.

This verse deals with another tradition of the Jews. They not only washed their hands (v. 3), but also their eating and cooking utensils.

The "market" was the open city market where individuals could buy and sell their necessities. In such a public place, it would be easy to come in contact with something, or someone, ceremonially unclean.

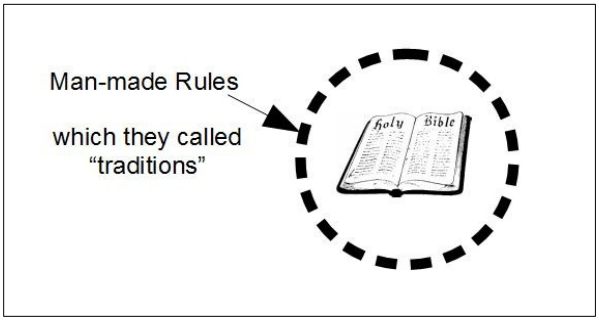
Mk 7:5 Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?

Their question was an accusation against Jesus since he was their teacher.

This question indicates, as I mentioned earlier, how the Pharisees and scribes believed they were right. Since they believed themselves to be right, they believed everyone, including Jesus and his disciples, should do as they did.

As I mentioned earlier, the scribes were trying to protect the Old Testament Scripture. This is commendable, but in their attempt to make certain the Law was not broken, they added restrictions that God never intended. They put walls of rules around the Scripture, trying to protect it. As time progressed, they had added so many rules that the Scripture was lost.

As the diagram to the right shows, when they surrounded the Word of God with their rules and traditions, the Scripture became obscured by their traditions.



LET'S TAKE A BRIEF LOOK AT THE JEWISH LAWS AND TRADITIONS

The Jews believed that God had spoken through the following sources.

THE WRITTEN LAW

The Jews believed God gave His message to them through Moses (Ex. 20). God had Moses write down what He said, and what Moses wrote became the first five books of the Old Testament.

THE ORAL LAW

The Jews believed God also gave His message to them through what God said to Moses on Mt. Sinai.

This spoken law is referred to as the "Oral Law". As the name suggests, the Oral Law was not written down at first; it was passed from father to son, and from teacher to student.

The Jews believed the Oral Law explained the written law by giving details that were not included in the written law. In other words, it explained how the commandments in the written law were to be carried out.

THE MISHNAH

The Oral Law remained oral until the second century. Around the year 200 AD, this oral law was written down in a document called the Mishnah. So, the Mishnah said on paper what the Oral Law had said orally.

THE GEMARA

The Gemara (pronounced Guh-mar-uh) is like a commentary on the Mishnah. The Mishnah was given to help explain the Old Testament Law, and the Gemara was given to explain the Mishnah.

THE TALMUD

The Gemara and the Mishnah were put together and called the Talmud. The entire Talmud, in standard print, is over 6,200 pages long. So, to say the least, it is quite exhaustive and can be quite confusing.

There are 24 chapters in the Talmud dealing with the rules relating to the Sabbath alone. For example, on the Sabbath, you could not carry an item that weighed more than a dried fig, or you could carry something that weighed half the weight of a dried fig twice.

Other rules relating to the Sabbath are as follows.

If a man were sick, you could stop him from dying, but you could not do anything to make him well. You could apply a bandage, but you could not put any medicine on his injury because that would aid his improvement.

If you threw an object in the air, you must catch it with the same hand you threw it with. If you catch it with your other hand, it was considered labor and a violation of the Sabbath. If you reached out your hand for your food at the exact moment the Sabbath began, you had to drop your food before you brought your hand back.

A tailor wasn't allowed to carry a needle lest he be tempted to sew something. A scribe wasn't allowed to carry a pen because he might write something. You couldn't examine anyone's clothing because you might find an insect and kill it.

Nothing could be bought or sold. Nothing could be washed. You couldn't take a bath because the water might spill on the floor and wash it. No fire could be lit. Cold water could be poured on warm water, but warm water could not be poured on cold. A woman couldn't look in a glass because she might see a gray hair and pull it out. You couldn't carry more grain in your hand than would fit into a lamb's mouth.

The Talmud described what could be saved if a person's house caught fire on the Sabbath. Only the clothes that were absolutely necessary could be saved. One could not put on a robe and then go back for another one. You could not ask a Gentile to extinguish the fire. However, if a Gentile put the fire out voluntarily, he was not to be stopped.

These regulations go on and on. There's no wonder the Jews were so mixed up by the time Jesus came on the scene.

The "tradition" Jesus spoke of was referring to these man-made rules the Jews had devised.

3. THE POWER THAT CONFRONTS

Jesus answered the Pharisees and scribes. He spoke, as he always did (Mk. 1:22), with power and authority.

Jesus turned the tables on the scribes and Pharisees. They had given him an example of how he broke their tradition (v. 5). So, he gave them an example of how they broke the Scriptures. We will see this in the next few verses.

Notice, Jesus will not deny breaking their traditions. He and his disciples may have broken their traditions, but they had broken God's law by their traditions.

Mk 7:6 He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

Jesus pointed to Isaiah (Isa. 29:13) to describe the problem of the Pharisees and scribes. They believed that keeping their outward rituals made them right with God. They were more concerned about their "lips" (what they said) than their "heart" (what they were).

The word "honoureth" means "to give due respect to". They talked like they had great respect for God, but they did not live it.

They talked about loving God and pleasing Him, but their hearts were far from God. The word "far" means long distance. It is easy to say we love the Lord, but our heart reveals our true condition.

The word "hypocrites" speaks of someone who is playing a part in a play. They are pretending to be someone they are not. The scribes and Pharisees acted like they were super spiritual, but their hearts were sinful. Jesus referred to them as wolves in sheep's clothing (Mt. 7:15).

On one occasion, Jesus said they were like whited sepulchres that looked good on the outside but were rotten on the inside (cf. Mt. 22:27-28). All of mankind is bad on the inside (Pro. 22:15; Ps. 51:5; 58:3; Isa. 53:6; Rom. 3:10; 3:23). The problem is not man's environment, it is his heart.

Jesus' words should have cut them to the heart, but no evidence suggests it had any effect on them at all.

Mk 7:7 Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

All they did that they claimed to be for God was "in vain" or useless. We must remember that the Pharisees and scribes were completely dedicated to what they believed. They sacrificed greatly. Imagine a lifetime of sacrifice totally wasted.

All of their efforts were useless, and all they did was in vain. All their elaborate system was a mockery of God. Their doctrine was of man, and not of God. As in Isaiah's day, I'm sure God was saying, "Bring no more vain oblations" (Isa. 1:13).

Teaching their traditions as "doctrine" means they claimed their traditions were as inspired as the Word of God.

Mk 7:8-9 For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.

The words "laying aside the commandment of God" tell us there were commands in the Bible. Jesus never said the Bible had no commands. The fact is, in the Old and New Testaments, many commands come from God.

What the Pharisees missed was the fact that God gave those commands to show how holy He is and how unholy man is. The commands were given to prove to man that he could not keep them and, therefore, he needed a Savior.

There are 30 chapters in the Mishnah just to describe the details of how they were to cleanse pots and pans. Clearly, they had abused the Word of God to such a degree that it was lost in the process.

The Pharisees had come to the place where they rejected God's commands and trusted completely in their man-made traditions.

The Talmud said, "The words of the scribes are more lovely than the words of the law". It also said, "My son, attend to the words of the scribe more than the words of the law". They believed it would be better to disobey the Scripture than their traditions. Their motives may have been right to begin with, but they ended up perverting the Scripture.

The same can be true of us. We can appear to be right with God by how we act, but our heart is the real test. God is not interested in our ritualistic religion. He wants us to worship Him from a pure heart and serve Him because we love Him.

Do you do what you do out of obligation? Do you do what you do because you are afraid of God? Or, do you serve God because you truly love Him?

Mk 7:10 For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death:

Jesus gave an example of how the scribes and Pharisees had broken the Scripture (cf. Ex 20:12 and 21:7). The Old Testament commanded children to honor their parents and gave the consequences of disobeying (Ex. 20:12; Pro. 1:8-9; 30:17). The New Testament says the same (Eph. 6:1-3).

Mk 7:11-12 But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother;

The command to honor parents included taking care of them when they reached the age where they could not take care of themselves.

However, the Jews had devised a way to side-step this command.

The word "Corban" refers to something that had been dedicated to God and set apart for His use.

The Jews distorted this practice by saying a person could dedicate their money to the Lord instead of using it to assist their parents. So, when their parents needed assistance, they would say, "I'd love to help you, but all my money is dedicated to God". To make it even more distorted, they said a person could declare all his possessions to be a gift to God but still use them in any way he pleased.

This was just one of the many ways their traditions had violated the Word of God. Is it any wonder Jesus rejected the traditions of the Jews?

Mk 7:13 Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.

Jesus repeated his comment about them rejecting the Word of God and holding to their man-made traditions.

The words "none effect" mean to make useless or invalid.

A QUICK LOOK AT TRADITIONS IN LOCAL CHURCHES OF TODAY

Before we move on I'd like to take some time to examine the traditions of the average church of our day. As I mentioned earlier, a tradition is a custom, belief, or practice passed down from one generation to another within a group, family, or society.

Simply put, traditions are those things believers do on a regular basis. One example would be how we conduct the order of the service at church.

We need to ask ourselves why we do what we do.

WE CAN DO WHAT WE DO BECAUSE OF CONVICTION

Conviction is a firmly held belief or persuasion that guides the lifestyle of an individual. It is an acceptance that certain truths are absolute and unchangeable.

Conviction means we have found Scripture that clearly reveals the desire and demands of our God. It is clear enough that we do not have to wonder about it.

True Biblical conviction, rightly understood, does not bind the believer. In fact, it actually sets them free from human effort and assists them in trusting God's grace.

WE CAN DO WHAT WE DO BECAUSE OF CONCERN

I mean, we are concerned about doing something that would offend another person. Paul said if eating meat offended his brother, he would eat no meat (1 Cor. 8:13).

That means, we are more concerned about the spiritual condition of those around us than our own comfort or pleasure. Living sacrificially is a Biblical concept. Jesus became a servant (Phil. 2:7). Jesus said if we save our lives, we will lose them (Mt. 16:25).

WE CAN DO WHAT WE DO BECAUSE OF CONSCIENCE

The Scripture determines what is right or wrong. The Holy Spirit will guide us in the right path and enable us to do the right thing. But the conscience is like a little policeman God has placed in every person to help them do right and restrain them from doing wrong.

A part of the work of the conscience is determined by how the person has been taught. The conscience of the person raised in church will be more sensitive to right and wrong than the person who was never taught Biblical principles.

The Bible talks about a "good" conscience (Acts 23:1; 1 Tim. 1:19; Heb. 13:18; 1 Pet. 3:16), pure (1 Tim. 3:9) "weak" (1 Cor 8:12), "evil" (Heb. 10:22), a"defiled" conscience (1 Cor. 8:7; Titus 1:15) and a "seared" conscience (1 Tim. 4:2).

Paul said he made sure to keep a conscience "void of offense toward God, and toward man" (Acts 24:16). A clear conscience means we are free from guilt. To have peace in your heart that everything is right between you and God is delightful.

We should be careful not to do something that would violate our conscience. Doing so can sear our conscience to the point where we will struggle to hear the voice of God.

WE CAN DO WHAT WE DO BECAUSE OF CHOICE

This refers to that which we like. It deals with taste, or preference. We should never determine our actions simply by what we like.

We cannot live by our choice because our flesh still longs for the things that displease the Lord. Left to our own desires, we will always choose the wrong thing. Solomon said, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, But the end thereof are the ways of death" (Pr. 14:12).

WE CAN DO WHAT WE DO BECAUSE OF CAUTION

This means we know the Lord will chasten those He loves (Heb. 12:6), so we try to avoid doing anything that would displease Him. The wise child knows a whipping hurts too much to take the forbidden cookie. In other words, we do what we do because we realize the pleasure of sin is not worth the pain of chastening.

WE CAN DO WHAT WE DO BECAUSE OF CHARACTER

By that, I mean we do what we do because we truly want to do the right thing. We know it might cause us problems, but we genuinely want to please God and do right. Luke tells us Jesus "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38). That means, we are to keep doing right even when it seems there is no benefit to doing so.

CONCLUSION

The bottom line is, we need to give our hearts, bodies, and minds (Rom. 12:1-2) to the Lord and allow Him to control our lives.

We must guard against changing our beliefs or standards. However, we can change our tradition (routine) without sacrificing our walk with God. A church, or a Christian, should be able to change without becoming different.

END HERE 11/5/25

THE HEART OF THE PROBLEM 7:14-23

In the next seven verses, Jesus gave a parable to deal with the misunderstanding of the Pharisees and scribes about washing their hands and dishes, which was discussed in verses 1-13. In this parable, Jesus showed that the problem of man is a dirty heart, not dirty hands or dishes.

The Biblical use of the word heart refers not to the organ in our chest but to the center of human personality. That would include our thinking (Pro. 23:7), our understanding (Isa. 6:10), our desires (Mt. 5:28), our ability to reason (Mk. 2:8), to believe or have faith (Mk. 11:23; Rom. 10:10; Heb. 3:12), and our emotions such as joy (Eph. 5:19), or grief (Jn. 14:1).

1. THE PROOF INVOLVED WITH OUR HEART

Jesus' words in the next seven verses tell us that what is in our hearts proves what type of person we really are. Our heart proves who, and what, we are.

As I just mentioned, in dealing with the Pharisees' man-made traditions of washing hands and dishes, Jesus will explain how their problem was dirty hearts, not dirty hands.

Mk 7:14 And when he had called all the people unto him, he said unto them, Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand:

Speaking to "all the people" means Jesus was speaking to both believers and unbelievers. What he said applied to "every one".

The word "Hearken" means "listen and obey". That means, they needed to listen closely to make sure they understood what he was saying. It means also that they were to listen and to do what he said.

The Bible says "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only" (Jam 1:22). It says also, "him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (Jam. 4:17). God's Word is not to be an encyclopedia for our enhance intellect, it is an instruction manual to control our living.

It is important that we listen when our doctor gives us life-saving instructions, when our boss gives us a career-changing assignment, or when the policeman tells us to exit our vehicle. However, there is no voice more important to listen to than the voice of Almighty God. We need to really listen when He speaks.

Mk 7:15 There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man.

It is very important to remember that, in these verses, Jesus was dealing with the Pharisees and scribes washing their hands and dishes (cf. v. 1-5). Being concerned only with that which was "without", they believed they would be pure if they stayed away from impure things.

The word "defile" means "polluted or unclean".

As we will see in the next few verses, the words "the things which come out of him" refer to that which comes from the heart of a person. Jesus will make it clear that it is what is in the heart that proves the spiritual condition of a person.

Jesus will explain this parable in more detail in verses 17-20.

Mk 7:16 If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.

Those who have "ears to hear" are those who hear, listen, and apply what God said to their lives. It means the Holy Spirit opens the perception of the listener so they understand what Jesus was saying. Without the illumination of the Holy Spirit, we cannot comprehend the Word of God (1 Cor. 2:14).

Earlier, Jesus gave a parable about soil and seeds to explain how people hear the Word differently (Mk. 4:13-20). Some hear, and some refuse, to let the Word take root in their hearts.

Mk 7:17 And when he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable.

As soon as the disciples found a private place, they asked Jesus the meaning of the parable. Even they struggled with this parable and needed an explanation.

Jesus explained the parable to his disciples in verses 18-23,

Mk 7:18-19 And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him; Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats?

Asking the disciples if they were without understanding "also" means Jesus was asking if they were as uninformed as the Pharisees and scribes.

He asked this question because before they met Christ, the disciples had been in Judaism and believed what the Pharisees taught. By accepting Christ and his teaching, they knew the truth of the New Testament, but it was not easy for them to adjust to everything Jesus was teaching. Jesus wanted his disciples to leave their past behind and never look back. Every believer should leave their old lives behind and follow Jesus.

As he did so often, Jesus used a physical example to teach a spiritual lesson. He used the digestive system of man to make his point.

God designed the body to discard that which is harmful or not nutritious. The word "draught" means "latrine" and carries with it the idea of separation. Jesus was saying, What we take in our bodies does not defile the person because it simply goes in, goes out, and is taken away, without affecting the heart.

It is what we take into our hearts, not our bodies, that affects our spiritual condition.

Certainly, Jesus did not approve of the drinking of alcoholic beverages or the eating of things that are harmful to our health. As I have already mentioned, Jesus' emphasis in these verses was on the Pharisees washing their hands and dishes and the intake of foods that were ceremonially unclean (cf. v. 1-5). He was dealing with the spiritual, not the physical, aspect of our lives.

2. THE PROBLEM INVOLVED WITH OUR HEART

Jesus' words in the next three verses tell us there is a problem in the heart of every person.

The Pharisees and scribes were concerned about what they allowed in their stomach; Jesus said they should rather be concerned about what they allowed in their hearts.

Mk 7:20 And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man.

In essence, in this verse, Jesus said that what is inside the person will reveal itself outside. What is in the heart will come out in the life. If our hearts are impure, we will think impure thoughts, which will lead to impure words and deeds. An ungodly heart always produces ungodly actions.

3. THE PERVERSION INVOLVED WITH OUR HEART

Mk 7:21-22 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:

Jesus gave some examples of the corruption that can be found inside man. This list shows us just how perverted the heart of man is.

Notice first, these things come from "out of the heart" of man. The heart is the source of who we are. As they say, what is in the well will come up in the bucket. So, from a sinful heart comes ungodly living (Ec. 7:20; Rom. 3:10; 3:23; 1 Jn. 1:8).

Somewhat surprisingly, the first thing on this list is "evil thoughts". There are at least six reasons why God put them first.

One, evil thoughts produce evil actions. The person who lies, steals, or murders always thinks about it before they do it. No one ever sins without thinking about it first.

Two, evil thoughts are sin. Jesus said the person who looks with lust is guilty of adultery (Mt. 5:28). The wicked thoughts are sin even when the act itself is not committed. If murder is wrong, so is the hate that caused the murder. If robbery is wrong, so is the greed that caused the person to rob.

Three, evil thoughts do what we might not. The person who would never steal thinks nothing of coveting a neighbor's new car. The person who would never commit murder allows hatred in their heart for the person who wronged them.

Four, evil thoughts are often more vile than actions. A person allows their thoughts to become more perverse than they would ever do literally.

Five, evil thoughts do not need an occasion to sin. Actual sin requires certain circumstances. For a person to steal, there must be an opportunity where the thief can actually take the money from the victim. However, we can think ungodly thoughts anytime and anywhere.

Six, evil thoughts make it easier to sin. As our conscience becomes seared, it gets easier to do that which we once would not do.

Jesus continued by saying adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, and foolishness come from an evil heart.

This list gives us a look into the heart of every person on earth. This leaves no room for pride in any person.

4. THE PROTECTION INVOLVED WITH OUR HEART

The next verse should cause us to see the need to protect our hearts from anything sinful or unspiritual.

As I have already said, the Pharisees and scribes were concerned about what they allowed in their stomach; Jesus said they should rather be concerned about what they allowed in their hearts.

Mk 7:23 All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

Jesus summarized the issue with this verse. A person sins when he does what God has forbidden, not when he violates some man-made rule. To eat without going through the ritual of hand washing did not defile anyone.

If that which is within our hearts is that which defiles us, we need to protect our hearts from anything that displeases God.

Solomon said, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Pro. 4:23).

The word "Keep" means "to protect" and refers to a gatekeeper who was to protect the city. While on duty, he needed to be awake and alert. He opened to the gate to those who were friends and helpful to the city (cf. Rom. 7:13, 12:2, 13:14; 1 Tim. 4:23). And, he closed the gate to those were enemies and harmful to the city (cf. Rom. 6:12; 2 Cor. 7:1; Titus 2:12; 1 Pet. 2:11). Simply put, he allowed the good in and kept the bad out.

Every believer needs to be like the gatekeeper who lets the good in and keeps the bad out of their heart.

We need to protect our hearts because of the deception

We should "Keep" (Pro. 4:23) our hearts because our hearts are "deceitful" above all things (Jer. 17:9a). The verse continues by saying we don't even know our own hearts (Jer. 17:9b).

The problem with the Pharisees and scribes was that they were deceived about their spiritual condition. John said we "deceive ourselves" when we think we haven't sinned (1 Jn. 1:8). James said we can deceive our own hearts (Jam. 1:26).

David said, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps 139:23-24). He asked God to search his heart and thoughts and show him anything He was not pleased with. Then, he asked God to lead him in the right way.

Since we can be deceived, every believer should regularly ask God to search their hearts and show them what He sees there.

We need to protect our hearts because of the desire

We are told to "Keep" (Pro. 4:23) our hearts because the heart of man naturally desires that which is selfish and sinful. Our old nature is corrupt and desires that which is corrupt (Rom. 7:18; Eph. 4:22). The Bible talks about the "lust" of the flesh (Gal. 5:17). The word "lust" means "longing" or desire.

That means, there is a part of man that desires sinful things. Things like lust, greed, envy, pride, gluttony, laziness, and anger come naturally. No parent ever had to teach their child how to do wrong.

Since every one of us has a nature that longs for that which is ungodly, we need to "Keep" ourselves from that which is wrong. We need to avoid anything that our flesh desires.

The wisest man who ever lived, other than Jesus, tells us, "Enter not into the path of the wicked, And go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, Turn from it, and pass away" (Pro. 4:14–15). No better advice has ever been given.

We need to protect our hearts because of the Devil

We need to "Keep" (Pro. 4:23) our hearts because we have an enemy who is doing everything he can to convince us to sin.

The devil wants only to "steal, and to kill, and to destroy" (Jn. 10:10). He is constantly seeking the one he can devour (1 Pet. 5:8).

Eve got in trouble when she listened to this enemy (Gen. 3:1). On one occasion, Jesus told the Pharisees they were doing that which the devil desired (Jn 8:44). When speaking to Peter, Jesus said, "Get thee behind me, Satan" (Mk. 8:33). At that moment, Peter was listening to the devil and doing his bidding.

Eve, the Pharisees, and Peter had one thing in common: they all listened to the enemy. That tells us the devil can influence our thoughts and actions. Since this is true, we need to keep a constant guard on the thoughts of our hearts.

We need to protect our hearts because of the disobedience

We are to "Keep" (Pro. 4:23) our hearts because from our hearts come the "issues" of life. The word "issues" means "outgoings", or that which comes out of. Simply put, what we allow in our hearts will, sooner or later, come out. Wrong thinking will lead to disobedience. Disobedience always leads to suffering and sorrow.

Our disobedience grieves our heavenly Father (Gen. 6:6; Isa. 63:10a; Eph. 4:30), robs us of our joy (Ps. 32:3), hinders our prayer (Ps. 66:18; Pro. 28:9; Isa. 52:90, brings chastening from God (Ps. 51:8; Heb. 12:6), and causes us to forfeit rewards (1 Cor. 3:15).

Jesus warned us that in the last days the world would be like it was in the days of Noah (Mt. 24:37-39). Certainly, our world is filled with indescribable, unrestrained wickedness. However, the ungodly condition of the world does not excuse God's people from living godly lives.

The Bible tells us God's grace teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts that we might live godly in this "present" world (Titus 2:11-12). Part of the Great Commission is to teach others to "observe all things" that Jesus commanded (Mt. 28:20). We are not to let sin reign in our bodies (Rom. 6:12). We are to set our affection on "things above" (Col. 3:2).

In other words, we are to live godly lives, even in this wicked and ungodly world.

As believers, we sin only when we allow the wickedness around us to get in us. By God's grace, we are the ones who decides to keep it out, or let it in.

WHEN GOD IS SILENT

In the following verses Jesus delivered a Gentile woman's daughter. This is an indicator that Jesus had not yet turned completely from the Jews, and He had not yet turned totally to the Gentiles. That meant, both could come to him and find help (cf. Mt. 8:5-6; 11:28; Jn. 4:9).

Have you ever felt like God was ignoring you? Have you ever called on the Lord and gotten no response, or read the Bible but it did not speak to you? You are not alone. One of Job's greatest problems was the fact that he felt like he could not find God (Job 23:8-10.

As we will see, there are two things that stand out to me in the record of this event. The first is Jesus' seclusion, the second is his silence.

Let's look at how this woman responded to both.

1. SHE WAS SEEKING WHEN JESUS WAS SECLUDED

Mark tells us Jesus traveled into Tyre and Sidon and secluded himself in a house.

Mk 7:24 And from thence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it: but he could not be hid.

Jesus traveled 50 miles into the Gentile region of "Tyre and Sidon". This was the last year of Jesus' ministry on earth and he was going into the Gentile regions.

It is important that we recognize Jesus' transition from the Jews to the Gentiles. The last verses of this chapter deal with this transition.

In respect to God's promise to make a great nation of Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3; Dt. 7:6-7), Jesus had gone to the Jew first. When he selected the twelve, he sent them to the Jew only (Mt. 10:5-6).

The gospel was to the Jew first (Rom. 1:16a), but it was not to the Jew only (Lk. 24:47; Rom. 1:16b). God wanted to reach the Jews with the gospel and then use the Jews to reach the rest of the world.

Jesus had been preaching in the Jewish territory of Galilee. Many had listened to him and believed the gospel, but many had rejected him and his message. However, those who claimed to be religious, the Pharisees, Sadducees, and the Herodians, rejected his message and wanted him dead. It was truly a national rejection.

Upon entering this area, Jesus secluded himself in a house and "would have no man know it". He desired that no one know where he was at the time. He probably needed some rest and some time alone with his Father. As we will discover, he would not have much time for either.

Jesus "could not be hid". As was so often the case, the news of his presence spread and people came.

Mk 7:25 For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet:

One of the ones who sought for Jesus was a mother who had a daughter who was possessed by a demon.

The word "came" should not be taken lightly. Jesus had secluded himself in a house and told no one where he was. For her to come to Jesus, she had to search him out and find him.

There have been other times when it seemed like God had secluded Himself. Job said, "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; And backward, but I cannot perceive him: On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: He hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him" (Job 23:8-9). Isaiah said, "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself" (Is 45:15). David said, "How long wilt thou hide thy face from me" (Ps 13:1b). He repeated this phrase three times in Psalm 13.

The problems we encounter are bad enough but when it seems like God has hidden Himself it makes them so much worse. What hope do we have if we cannot not find God? As Peter said, "to whom shall we go" (Jn. 6:68) if we don't have Him?

As God's children, we know He will never leave us nor forsake us (Heb. 13:5). However, there are times when it feels like He has withdrawn Himself from us. As He did this mother, He will try our faith by secluding Himself.

When that happens, we need to seek Him as this mother did. We are not told how long she searched but we know she searched until she found him.

Her faith caused her to seek Jesus.

Somehow, somewhere, she had "heard of him". She had heard about Jesus' compassion and his power to help those in need. She may have been one of those from Tyre and Sidon who came to Jesus earlier (cf. Mk. 3:8). However she had heard about Jesus, she believed, and because she believed, she came to find him in this house.

Her need caused her to seek Jesus.

The sad condition of her demon possessed daughter caused her to seek out the Lord. The word "young" means "little daughter". Since the Jews considered a girl to be a woman when she turned 12 years old, she was probably less than 12 years old. Her youth made the situation even more sad. It is bad for an adult to be tormented by the devil but it is much worse when it is a little child. The devil has no mercy.

In like fashion, we all have needs that only God can handle. Whether they be financial, physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual, we need help that only God can give. For this reason, we need to seek God until we find Him.

The thought crossed my mind as to why did she not bring her daughter with her when she came to Jesus? I believe the daughter was so controlled by the demon that it made it impossible for her to travel or be in the company of others. Demons had horrible affects on some of those they controlled (Mk. 5:1-20; 9:22).

The woman "fell at his feet". Matthew tells, "Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me" (Mt 15:25). She recognized the fact that Jesus was the Son of God and deserved her worship, praise, and obedience.

The religious bunch called him gluttonous, a winebibber, and a friend of sinners (Mt 11:19). But, this woman saw him as holy God.

How different was her great respect for Jesus compared to the casual mentality of our day. Songs with lyrics like "Give me hot sauce for my taco, let me witness in Morocco. Give me wax for my board, keep me surfing for the Lord" show us the disrespectful attitude about God.

Her worship of Jesus showed her faith. She realized, he was the Lord God of heaven. She knew she was coming to God.

2. **SHE WAS STEADFAST WHEN JESUS WAS SILENT**

As we will learn in the next few verses, for a few moments at least, we are not told how long, Jesus was totally silent and refused to speak to this mother.

Mk 7:26 The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.

This entire event is amazing but that which stands out to me is something the Holy Spirit did not have Mark write about. In Matthew's record of this event he wrote, "But he answered her not a word" (Mt. 15:23). For a few moments at least, we are not told how long, Jesus was totally silent.

Matthew also tells us she "cried" unto Jesus (Mt. 15:22). The word "cried" means "to scream" or "call aloud". It is the same word used when speaking of the loud midnight cry of the bridegroom coming (Mt. 25:6). She did not quietly make her request. She came in, brokenhearted, crying out loudly for help.

This had to be an indescribable scene. She was wailing loudly, possibly tugging at Jesus, begging him to help her daughter, and he was acting as though she wasn't even there. He did not even acknowledge her presence.

There will be times when it seems like God is ignoring us. We cry from a broken heart yet He remains silent.

Others have endured God's silence. Job said, "I cry unto thee, and thou dost not hear me" (Job 30:20). David said, "O LORD my rock; be not silent to me: Lest, if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit" (Ps 28:1).

However, Jesus' silence did not silence this mother. She refused to give up. When she got no response from Jesus, she must have gone to His disciples. Matthew tells us the disciples complained to Jesus because she cried unto them (Mt. 15:23). Undoubtedly, she begged them to persuade Jesus to hear her request. She was doing everything she could to get the help she so desperately needed.

The important thing to recognize is the fact that she was not seeking help from the disciples, she was seeking help from Jesus. She did not so as we so often do. She was not trying to fix the problem by man's ingenuity. She knew her only hope was God.

We, like this mother, can go to other believers and ask that they go to our Father in prayer on our behalf. They may not be able to help us, but they know the One who can.

We, like this mother, should not give up when God is silent. We should trust God by faith but we should keep asking until He speaks.

There are times when God's silence is our fault. Sin in our lives breaks our fellowship with God.

If this teaches us anything it should teach us to listen closely when God does speak. The writer of Hebrews tells us to not harden our hearts as the people of Israel did (Heb 3:7-8). Israel refused to listen to God and He made them wander in the wilderness for forty years. More importantly, they missed the land that God had promised them. How many believers are missing the victory God has for them and are wandering in a spiritual wilderness because they have failed to listen?

Has God stopped speaking to you. While He was speaking, did you listen?

3. <u>SHE WAS SENSITIVE WHEN JESUS WAS SCOLDING</u>

Jesus scolded her but she remained tenderhearted and sensitive to his words. He reminded her how she, being a Gentile, did not deserve his help. Every believer needs to learn how to take the Lord's rebuke without getting angry or bitter.

Mk 7:27 But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs.

Jesus finally spoke but his response offered her little hope.

Matthew tells us, at this point, she came and "worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me" (Mt. 15:25). She came with an open heart, recognizing that Jesus was God and deserved her worship and her obedience. There were no signs of anger or bitterness. She did not argue or accuse Jesus of doing wrong.

There are two words in the Greek language for "dogs". One is the mangy, dirty, viscous type of dog. The other is a small pet that might sit at the table while the family is eating. This is the word Jesus used. He meant no parent would take food from their children and give it to the dog. He meant, the time for the children (Jews) hadn't finished yet, so the dogs (Gentiles) shouldn't expect anything.

Let "the children first be filled" means Jesus came first to the Jews. In essence, he was saying to her, "You are not of Israel, so I can't help you".

This seems terribly harsh considering this woman's agony but Jesus was testing her faith. Like Israel at the Red Sea (Ex. 14), Abraham when God told him to offer Isaac (Gen 22:2) and Mary and Martha' when Jesus delayed two days (Jn. 11:6), the Lord was testing her faith. The Lord will test our faith. If He seems to say "no" the first time you pray, don't stop, ask again. Jesus taught to ask, and ask again, to knock, and knock again, to seek, and keep seeking (Mt. 7:7). You don't deserve His help, but ask Him anyway.

Mk 7:28 And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs.

Most people would have given up at this point. But, this woman simply refused to quit. Like the dogs that grab the crumbs that drop from the table, she was willing to take whatever the Lord would give her.

Jesus had called her a dog and she didn't get mad. She didn't get mad because her need was more important than her feelings. When our desire gets bigger than our feelings, we will get help from God.

Instead of getting angry, she accepted Jesus' words as to her benefit on behalf of her needy daughter. She was saying, "Lord, I know I don't deserve your help, but do you have a little mercy for me anyway". She was saying, If the dogs get some crumbs, surely you will drop a crumb for me".

She spoke in humility and called him "Lord".

She did not deny what she was and knew she was undeserving of God's mercy. But, deserve it or not, she desperately needed help from the Lord. She knew she did not deserve it and could not provide it, so she asked. She knew Jesus was able, so she asked. Like the widow who persistently made her request (Lk. 18:1-8), this mother did not give up.

She spoke with faith.

Humility and faith is a combination that always gets God's attention. Humility is the fertile soil that gives faith a place to grow. God gives grace to the humble (Jam. 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5)b.

Humility is us saying "I can't" (Jn. 3:27; 1 Cor. 4:7) and faith is us saying "God can" (Lk. 1:38; 2 Cor. 9:8).

God allows us to come to the end of ourselves so we must rely on Him. This is a difficult experience but a good one. When we finally recognize our weakness then we can enjoy His strength. We don't have to understand, we just have to know he is doing right.

One note of interest, the "crumbs" that falls from the table is the exact same bread that is being eaten by those at the table. That tells us, the message given to the Jews was the exact same massage given to the Gentiles. There is only one gospel.

4. SHE WAS SURE WHEN JESUS WAS SPEAKING

Mk 7:29 And he said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter.

Her "saying" refers to her comment about the dogs eating the crumbs from the children's table (cf. v. 28).

Those words revealed her faith in Jesus.

Jesus told her to go home for the demon had left her daughter and she believed him. That means, she believed her daughter was healed long before she saw that she was.

It that not what faith is? It is believing without seeing. It is knowing before you have proof.

Matthew tells us Jesus said, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt" (Mt 15:28). Jesus commended this Gentile woman for her "great" faith. Even though her knowledge of Jesus was limited, she believed He had power over the devil.

Jesus told Thomas, "blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (Jn 20:29).

Mk 7:30 And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.

Her daughter was in the bed because she was exhausted. The demon had mistreated her and do not leave a body without causing as much havoc as the Lord will allow. She was exhausted physically and emotionally.

She was in bed because she was at rest. God's healing power had touched her and given her peace of mind, spirit, and body. She was delivered.

I would love to have been there and seen the joy of this mother. It must have been a delight for her and her daughter to have a normal relationship.

Jesus did heal her daughter. Her faith paid off. Her persistence was worth it. The children may have eaten first, but the dogs did get the crumbs. But, she got more than a few crumbs. Jesus granted her request.

This mother is a perfect picture of what true faith is. She believed, she bowed, she received.

Whatever problem you are dealing with, whatever attack you are facing, bow before the Lord and worship, give it to Him, and trust His for your deliverance. Those who come to God in faith, will never be disappointed.

ONE MAN CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Verses 31-37 describe Jesus' encounter with a man and a multitude. Both were important and both have a part to play in this story.

1. WE SEE SOME PEOPLE WHO WERE WRONG

Mk 7:31 And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis.

Jesus left the "coasts of Tyre and Sidon" and went to "Decapolis". Decapolis was a ten-city region located on the southeast side of the Sea of Galilee. This was an area that was almost entirely Gentile.

The word "again" can be taken two ways.

First, it is simply a word that transitions from what Jesus had done to what he was doing. It's like we would say, "Then John left Walmart and went home".

Second, it is a word that speaks of something Jesus had done before. This is the emphasis I believe is too important to overlook. Jesus had been in this location before. Mark records the time Jesus had visited this area earlier (Mk. 5:1-20).

When Jesus was there earlier, he was met by a man possessed by many demons. He cast the demons out, and the man experienced total deliverance (Mk. 5:15).

Sadly, instead of thanking Jesus for delivering the man, the people in the city asked Jesus to leave (Mk. 5:17). In fact, Matthew tells us the "whole city" came out to Jesus and told him to leave their area (Mt. 8:34). The entire city rejected Jesus and his message.

To say the least, asking the only one who can help you is the wrong thing to do. Rejecting the good God of heaven isn't smart.

2. WE SEE SOME PEOPLE WHO WERE WILLING

Mk 7:32 And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him.

Interestingly, even though there were multitudes who needed Jesus' help (7:33), the Holy Spirit centered the attention on one man and one need.

As I have mentioned, these were some of the same people who had told Jesus to leave and never come back. They may have been the ones who had cared more for their pigs than for the demon-possessed man.

But, now they are approaching Jesus, recognizing his power, and asking for his help. They went from asking him to leave to begging him for help. They were now willing to admit their need and acknowledge his Lordship.

Coming to such a place is not usually an easy road. Most suffer a lot before they accept Jesus and acknowledge who he is.

What made the difference? How could they be so different? I will save my answer until the end of this message.

3. WE SEE SOME PEOPLE WHO WERE WAITING

Mk 7:33 And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue;

Jesus took "him aside from the multitude". He took the man away from those who had brought him. They could have easily been offended.

The word "took" means "to receive". It is the same word used when the Bible tells us the prodigal's father "received" him safely home (Lk. 15:27). Both were obviously acts of love and compassion. Jesus cared about this man.

The word "aside" speaks of them being separated from the crowd, including the ones who cared enough to bring him to Jesus. It would have been easy for them to say they had done their part and simply go to home. However, they waited to see what would become of their friend. Not many care enough to put forth that much effort. Most are barely willing to do what they absolutely must do, and that is it.

Jesus used different methods to heal. Here, it seems that he "spit" in his hands, put his fingers in the man's "ears" and then "touched his tongue". The healing came from the power of God, not in any method Jesus used. Jesus did not use gimmicks, he did what he did by the power of God alone. Peter said, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him" (Acts 10:3).

Mk 7:34 And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.

Jesus, "looking up to heaven," was an indication that he was depending on his Father to do what was needed. If he did, certainly, we should (Ps. 46:1; Mt. 7:7; Jam. 4:2b; Phil 4:19).

The fact that Jesus "sighed" has caused much discussion in the family of God. The Bible records two times when Jesus sighed (Mk. 7:34; 8:12). Sighing speaks of weariness, sorrow, or frustration. It is a nonverbal expression of emotion. It expresses what words can not say.

This sigh was not fake or put on; it was real. But why would the God of heaven and earth sigh? I can think of four possible reasons.

One, this man's condition caused him to see the results of sin. What he had created had been "very good" (Gen. 1:31), but sin had made it very bad. His wonderful creation was broken.

Two, even though he knew he was about to heal this man, he was touched by his sad condition. He was truly "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Isa. 53:3). Jesus was not a robot; he genuinely cared about people (Heb. 2:17-18).

Three, it made him think of the many others around the world who were also in difficult circumstances. He knew he was about to heal this man, but it was just a drop in the ocean compared to what needed to be done.

Fourth, it may have made him think of his future agony on the cross.

The Bible tells us that creation itself "groaneth" to be delivered from the effects of sin (Rom. 8:22). It says believers "groan" within themselves, longing to be delivered (Rom. 8:23).

The word "Ephphatha" was Aramaic and meant "Be opened". When Jesus spoke all of creation had to obey. The disciples said, "What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him" (Lk 8:25).

Mk 7:35 And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.

Immediately, the man's ears and tongue were fixed, and he could hear and speak clearly.

4. WE SEE SOME PEOPLE WHO WERE WITNESSING

Mk 7:36 And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it;

Jesus' instructions here were the complete opposite of what they were the last time he was in this area. He told the demonic to go and tell his family and friends what had happened to him. Here, Jesus told them all, including the man he had just healed, to tell no one.

However, as was often the case (Mt. 9:26; Mk. 1:43-45), those he told to be quiet ended up telling everyone.

Seeing Jesus do something so wonderful was almost impossible to keep to themselves.

No doubt, Jesus told them not tell because he did not want to be known only as a miracle worker. He was more concerned about the spiritual need than the physical need of man. He also knew the more popular he became, the more some would try to force him to set up his kingdom (Jn. 6:15).

5. WE SEE SOME PEOPLE WHO WERE WORSHIPING

Mk 7:37 And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.

They were "astonished" (amazed) at what they saw Jesus do.

They enthusiastically proclaimed that Jesus had "done all things well". Jesus never does anything halfway. All that he does is very good.

They emphasized the fact that Jesus had caused the "deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak". Both were works of selfless compassion. He wasn't doing tricks to make a name for himself; he was doing that which helped the helpless and hurting.

The question I have and the purpose for much of this lesson is this, how did these people go from rejecting Jesus and asking him to leave (Mk. 5:17), to people who welcomed him with open arms and begged him for his help?

6. WE SEE SOME PEOPLE WHO WERE WATCHING

I believe the answer is found in what Jesus told the man who had been demon-possessed. He said, "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." (Mk 5:19).

Mark tells us, "he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel" (Mk 5:20).

Jesus told the man to go and tell what had happened to him. The Lord says the same thing to us (Mt. 10:7; Mk. 16:15; 28:19-20; Lk. 9:60; Acts 1:8; 10:42; 2 Tim. 4:2),

It seems obvious that the man did what Jesus told him to do. He did go and tell. And they listened.

Of course, there may have been other factors that caused this dramatic, city-wide, change, but the only one the Bible tells us about is this one man.

It certainly seems that this change began with one man. From the life of one man, multitudes believed. Those in the city of the demonic man watched him to see if what he had was real. They were watching. By the way, every believe has people watching them. It matters how we live.

Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Mt. 5:16). He was saying we should live in a way to where those who are watching us will want what we have. That is what happened to those who were watching the man who had been demon possessed.

- His change convinced them Jesus was who he claimed to be

They saw a man who had lived in the mountains and graveyards, who cut himself with stones, cried out constantly in agony, and could not be bound, even with chains, to a man who was sitting, clothed, and in his right mind (Mk. 5:15).

True conversion brings a real change (2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 5:8).

- His conversation convinced them Jesus was who he claimed to be

They saw a man who was constantly screaming and cursing to a man who was in his right mind and telling everyone about how good God had been to him (Mk. 5:15). There is no doubt, he talked differently after his conversion. The man who had been harsh and critical spoke tenderly and lovingly. Probably, if you are saved, so did you.

He told everyone what Jesus had done for him (Mk. 5:19). Every true believer has a testimony. One of the greatest ways for a believer to witness is to simply tell what Jesus did for them.

He told them that the Lord "had compassion" on him. Every lost and hopeless person needs to know that God really does love them (Jn. 3:16).

- His conduct convinced them Jesus was who he claimed to be

They saw a man who did not do what he did before Jesus changed him. True conversion takes the person to church and keeps them out of the bars, pool halls, and tattoo parlors.

- His consistency convinced them Jesus was who he claimed to be

They saw a man who did not change for a day or two and then go back to same old man he had been earlier. Days, weeks, and months later, he was still living right and talking about the goodness of God. I believe the thing that changed the cities' viewpoint about Jesus was this man's consistency.

Almost anyone can change for a day or two, but before long, they will go back to doing what they did before. The old nature will reveal itself. But a true believer is changed for life. God works in them and gives them the desire to do His will (Phil. 2:13). The Spirit of God enables them to do the will of God (1 Cor. 15:10a; 2 Cor. 3:5; Heb. 13:21). When they fail, the Lord will convict and chasten them and get them right (Job 5:17; Pro. 3:11; Heb. 12:5, 11).

One man can make a difference. You can be that one person.

CAN GOD DO IT AGAIN

or "Here we go again"

The first nine verses of chapter 8 tell us about Jesus miraculously feeding over 4,000 people with seven loaves and a few fish. Matthew records this event (Mt. 15:32-39).

This was not the first time He had done such a thing. Approximately six months earlier, the same type of problem had arisen, and Jesus fed over 5,000 with a little boy's lunch (Mk. 6:30-44).

Some believe the feeding of the 5,000 and 4,000 were the same event. While it is true that there are similarities between the two, there are more differences than similarities. The location, amount of time fasting, amount of food, total fed, size of baskets, and amount of leftovers were all different. These differences prove there were two separate events.

The question the disciples and the multitude had to ask was, could Jesus do it again? We, as modern-day believers, need to ask the same question. Is God able to do what He has done in the past? And, if He is able, is He willing, to what He has done before?

I wonder, did the disciples think, "Oh no, here we go again"? Most of us would have to confess the fact that we have said those words. Maybe you feel like you are going through the same problem over and over. I want to assure you, your God is able to handle it. Keep walking with Him and obey His word.

1. THE SAME PROBLEM

Mk 8:1 In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples unto him, and saith unto them,

Notice, there was a "multitude," and they had "nothing to eat". This multitude had been so concerned about getting to Jesus that they had neglected to bring anything to eat. That will be an important fact later.

The problem here was the same problem they had earlier (Mt. 15:32-34), there were too many people and too little food.

Such is our life. Life consists pretty much of us having the same type of problems, over and over again.

Job tells us, "Man that is born of a woman Is of few days, and full of trouble" (Job 14:1). He said also, "Yet man is born unto trouble, As the sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7). The troubles of this life are as numerous as the sparks that ascend from a campfire. Jesus said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation" (Jn 16:33).

If our lives are certain for troubles and problems, we need to find a way to handle them with victory.

The good news is, Jesus said also, "but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (Jn 16:33).

2. THE SAME PEOPLE

Mk 8:1b ... Jesus called his disciples unto him

The disciples of Christ, as they had done before (6:42), played a vital part in this event.

God uses His people to do His work on earth. Humanly speaking, this miracle would have never happened had it not been for the disciples.

God uses His people to do His work on earth. Believers are created "unto good works" (Eph. 2:10). God uses those who are "weak" to do great things (1 Cor. 1:27). He is still seeking someone to "make up the hedge, and stand in the gap" (Ezk. 22:30).

Unfortunately, the "labourers are few" (Mt. 9:37). How many wonderful works go undone because no one is willing to let God use them? Could it be that God is not doing what He used to do because we are not doing what we used to do?

3. THE SAME PERSON

Mk 8:1c ... Jesus called his disciples unto him, and saith unto them,

The same person (Jesus) was involved in this event as was in the feeding of the 5,000. He had not changed. What was true about him then is true about him now.

Since Jesus had not changed, the disciples should have gained enough faith from the first problem not worry at all about the second problem. So should we. If Jesus did it once, certainly He would have no difficulty in doing it again.

JESUS WAS STILL COMPASSIONATE

Mk 8:2a I have compassion on the multitude

The word "compassion", which means "to feel sympathy", is found 12 times in the New Testament and always speaks of Jesus (Mt. 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 20:34; Mk. 1:41; 6:34; 8:2; 9:22; Lk. 7:13). When it is not speaking of Jesus directly, it giving an illustration of God's love for others. It is used when describing the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:33), the prodigal's father (Lk. 15:20), and the man who forgave the great debt (Mt. 18:27).

The truth is, Jesus did not have to feed them, he wanted to feed them. He fed them because he loved them. In like fashion, God didn't have to save you if you are saved. He did not have to let you get up this morning, or feed you yesterday, or do any of the thousands of things He has done. But God did it because He wanted to, and He wanted to because He loves you. He still has compassion.

JESUS WAS STILL CONCERNED

Mk 8:2b ... because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat:

Jesus was concerned enough to know the condition of the people. He was observant of their condition.

When speaking of the people of Israel, God said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows" (Ex 3:7). Job said, "But he knoweth the way that I take" (Job 23:10).

God was observant enough about us to know about our hardships. He cares enough to watch closely.

Mk 8:3 And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far.

Jesus was concerned enough to know the limits of the people. He knew that if he sent them away, they would not have enough strength to make it home.

The Psalmist said God remembers that we are "but flesh" (Ps 78:39). He knows we are frail and flawed creatures who need His help. He knows, He must do for us what we cannot do ourselves. However, powerless does not mean hopeless. With God, all things are possible (Mt. 19:26; Mk. 9:21; 14:36).

Jesus talked about sending the people back to their "own houses". They had left their homes and come to where Jesus was. That means, they had homes with food and shelter, but they chose to stay with Jesus. Had they not come so "far" and stayed so long, they would have been strong enough to make it home. They knew they were coming too far and staying too long, but they refused to leave Jesus.

Very few have such a commitment in our day. Many, if not most, want the comforts of "home" rather than the closeness of Jesus. Those who want comfort more than Jesus don't get the loaves and fishes.

JESUS WAS STILL COMMUNICATING

Mk 8:4-5 And his disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness? And he asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven.

Their question was legitimate. How do you feed such a multitude "in the wilderness"? There were no restaurants, convenience stores, fields to glean, nor cupboards to go to.

Jesus spoke to his disciples. No matter what our problem, as long as we can hear God speak, we will be ok. He knows what we are facing, He knows the solution, and He will lead us through our problems. We just need to keep listening to Him and doing what He says. Trust and obey is always the answer.

4. **THE SAME PROCEDURE**

Mk 8:5 And he asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven.

Jesus' procedure, or motive of operation, was the same this time as it was the other time (cf. Mt. 14:18-20). On both occasions, Jesus used people to solve the problem.

The difference was that the first time he used a little boy with his lunch. This time, he was asking his disciples how much they had. Remember, the multitude had "nothing" (cf. v1).

This time, there was more faith required on the disciple's part. Before, they simply gave out what the little boy had given. This time, they were giving what belonged to them, and what they gave was all they had.

No doubt, Jesus wanted the disciples to quickly, and without hesitation, give that which he had asked of them. They should have. They should have known him well enough by now to know that they could trust him. Certainly, he could, and would, do it again.

What will you do with that which God has given you? He has given us life, intelligence, finances, and time. We will use those things for ourselves or for Him.

Either way, Jesus did what God does: he worked through people to get the job done. As frail and flawed as we are, God will work through us to accomplish what needs to be done. God uses ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary things.

God used a stuttering Moses, a teenage shepherd boy named David, and a frightened and uncertain Gideon. Paul said, "God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty" (1 Co 1:27).

Mk 8:6-7 And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people. And they had a few small fishes: and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before them.

Jesus' procedure was the same as before. He had the people sit down, took the food, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to the disciples so they could give it to the people.

The lesson is, we do not need a new procedure. So many in the modern church are searching for some new way to see God work. Why should God look for something new when the old way works? We don't need something different; we need more of that which worked before.

A note of interest. The wording of verses 6 and 7 might be misunderstood to say the fish were served after the loaves. However, Matthew makes it clear that both were served together (Mt. 15:34).

5. THE SAME POWER

Mk 8:8-9 So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets. And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and he sent them away.

From seven loaves and a few fish, 4,000, not counting women and children (cf. Mt. 15:38), ate all they could eat and had leftovers also. As with the feeding of the 5,000 (Mt. 14:21), we are not told the exact number of how many ate. If we add one mother and just one child, there would have been 12,000 present.

When the disciples "did" what Jesus said, everyone was "filled".

Jesus used this word when he said, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Mt 5:6).

By nothing more than the power of God, the food was multiplied in the hands of Jesus. It was a creative miracle. He, as he did with creation itself, made something from nothing.

They not only had enough to fill the multitude, but they had leftovers. After all had eaten to their fill, they ended up with more leftovers than they had in the beginning.

The word "baskets" used here was not the small baskets mentioned when Jesus fed the 5,000 (Mt. 14:20). This word refers to a basket large enough to hold a man's body. It is the type of basket used to lower Paul down the wall (Acts 9:25).

The disciples not only gave out the food, but they also ate of the food.

It is God's power that can use us and provide for us. He is able.

6. THE SAME PURPOSE

Mk 8:9b ... and he sent them away.

This event ended with Jesus sending the people away. He sent them to tell others what he had done for them.

Jesus intended to do more than feed this multitude; he intended to change their lives forever. He sent them into the world to tell what Jesus had done for them.

What was Jesus' purpose for this miracle, like every miracle he ever performed, was to reach the world with God's forgiveness. He came to "seek and to save" those who were lost (Lk. 19:10).

He fed the 5,000 in a Jewish area near Bethsaida (6:30-44). Here, he fed the 4,000 in the predominantly Gentile region of Decapolis (7:31). So, whether Jew or Gentile, Jesus was dealing with the sin problem of the world.

Jesus' every word, every question, every deed, every miracle, was that people might believe he was God in flesh and turn to him for the forgiveness of their sin (Mk. 2:5-7).

That purpose has not changed. God is still seeking those who are lost (1 Tim. 2:4; Titus 2:11; 2 Pet. 3:9). If it is His purpose, it should be ours also (Mt. 28:19-20; Mk. 16:15).

This thought seems to be amplified in the fact that there seems to be an emphasis on the loaves, with the fish being briefly mentioned (8:7). I can't help but think this is because God wanted to emphasize the fact that Jesus is the bread of life (cf. Jn. 6:35, 48).

In concluding this section of Mark's record, I want ask again, can God do it again? Of course, He can, but if He does, and when He does, He will use people, He will use us, to do it.

Are you available? Are you willing?

WHEN GOD WON'T

In the next four verses, the Pharisees and Sadducees unite to confront Jesus in an attempt to expose him as a fraud. It is heartbreaking that the worst opposition against Jesus came from the religious crowd.

1. AN UNREASONABLE DEMAND

The Pharisees and Sadducees demanded that Jesus give them a sign from heaven. Considering all the miracles he had already done, their demand was unreasonable.

Mk 8:10 And straightway he entered into a ship with his disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha.

Jesus and his disciples boarded a ship and went to Dalmanutha. Archaeologists have discovered a small village, which they believe to be Dalmanutha, on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Mk 8:11 And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him.

Matthew tells us the Sadducees came with the Pharisees (Mt. 16:1). This was the first time in the New Testament where we find these two groups, who disagreed on pretty much everything, united together against Jesus. All it takes for enemies to become friends is a common enemy. They were like the two dogs who stopped fighting when a rabbit ran by. They hated Jesus more than they hated each other.

The Pharisees and Sadducees demanded that Jesus give them a sign to prove he was who he claimed to be. They were trying to force him to attempt something they thought he could not do. This is not the first time they had tried this tactic (Mt 12:38).

The word "question" speaks of disputing through argument. In other words, they came to argue with Jesus, not to have a sincere conversation.

The word "tempting", which means "to test or entice" is found 15 times in the gospels and always deals with Jesus being tempted to do wrong.

The word "from" has the idea of "being out of". They were asking him to show them a sign out of heaven. They wanted him to make the sun go backward like in Hezekiah's day (2 Kgs. 20:11), or the sun stand still as Joshua did (Josh. 10:13), or call fire from heaven as Elijah did (1 Kgs. 18:38). If he was from God, surely he could do such a thing.

Their demand for a sign was unreasonable. Jesus had already done many indescribable miracles. He had been born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14; Lk. 1:27, 34-35), demonstrated His power over the devil (Mt. 15:28; Mk. 5:15), controlled the wind and the sea (Mt. 8:27), opened blinded eyes (Mk. 8:22-26; Jn. 9:1-7), healed the paralyzed (Mk. 2:10-12), restored missing limbs (Mt. 15:31), fed multitudes (Mk. 6:44; 8:9), raised the dead (Mk. 8:54; Lk. 7:14; Jn. 11:43-44) and spoke like no other man (Mt. 7:28-29; Jn. 7:46).

What else could Jesus do? They had already rejected all the signs He had given.

They were so hard that they would later pay the soldiers to lie after Jesus rose from the dead (Mt. 28:11-15). You are in trouble when your heart is so hard that you are willing to accept a lie, when you know it is a lie.

They were not willing to hear. They were blind to the truth and glad to stay that way. They loved darkness. A dark heart is not changed by proof. Like Pharaoh, who saw the many signs from God but hardened his heart anyway. A dark heart always curses the light.

These are those of whom John spoke when he said, "And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not" (Jn. 1:5).

Of course, these verses refer to those who are unsaved, but the same can be true of believers. Unbelievers are not the only ones who make unreasonable demands of God. Sadly, quite often, those who are saved are discontent when God does not do what they desire. Saved or lost, human nature wants its way.

One of the major problems with the children of Israel was their complaining about what God was doing. While God was at work delivering them from Pharaoh, taking care of them in the wilderness, and leading them to the Promised Land, they complained.

There were at least fourteen times when they complained. They complained about Pharaoh's treatment (Ex. 5:20-21), at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:11-14), when the water was bitter (Ex. 15:22), when they were hungry (Ex. 16:1-12), when they were thirsty (Ex. 17:1-7), about the strength of the enemy (Num. 14:1-4), again when there was no water (Num. 20:1-5), and when they were discouraged (Num. 21:1-6).

Moses summarized the problem when he told them, "your murmurings are not against us, but against the LORD" (Ex 16:8).

There is no doubt about it, the people of Israel were experiencing some truly difficult circumstances. However, their circumstances, as harsh as they were, did not give them an excuse to complain. God judged them severely for their complaints. He sent fire at Taberah (Num. 11:1-3), sickness from quail (Num. 11:31-35), and poisonous snakes (Num. 21:6-9). The fact is, much of the reason why God sent Israel through forty years of wilderness misery was because of their discontented attitude.

Discontentment says more about us than it does about our circumstances.

Oh, that God would help His people to be content with His will and His way. Paul said, "But godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Tim. 6:6). He also said, "Do all things without murmurings and disputings" (Phil. 2:14).

A heart content with God's will is truly a little bit of heaven on earth. It pleases God and brings joy to the believer.

2. <u>AN UNDERSTANDABLE DENIAL</u>

Considering the facts above, it is understandable that Jesus denied their demand for a sign. Jesus refused to cast his pearls before the swine (cf. Mt. 7:6).

Mk 8:12 And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation.

In the context of this verse, the word "generation" refers to those who were living at that particular time.

They claimed to be godly, but Jesus said they were "wicked and adulterous" (cf. Mt. 16:4).

We think of "wicked" as some type of vile sin, but wickedness is anything that displeases God. Cain brought his best, but it displeased God. The Pharisees and Sadducees lived moral lives, but Jesus said would not make it to heaven (Mt. 23:13).

Jesus called them "wicked" because they were a faithless, stubborn, corrupt group who demanded miraculous signs while they ignored the spiritual truth right before their eyes. Accepting the truth meant they would have to admit their own fault. They absolutely, positively, refused to do that.

Jesus called them "adulterous" because, like an unfaithful spouse, they had committed spiritual adultery against their God. They forsook the God who loved them (Mt. 21:38; Lk. 19:14).

They were well aware of Jesus' supernatural power, but they refused to accept the fact that his power came from God. They went so far as to accuse Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub (Mk. 3:22). They would rather say he had the power of the devil than admit he came from God.

Jesus "sighed deeply in his spirit". Why did the Son of God sigh?

- Jesus sighed because he was human

His human emotions were being revealed. His sighing was a sign of mental, emotional, and spiritual exhaustion.

- Jesus sighed because he loved the Pharisees and Sadducees

We often miss the fact that God really does love everyone. He is brokenhearted when those He created turn away from Him.

- Jesus sighed because he saw the consequences of sin

Their rejection was one more consequence of Adam's sin. Jesus, like no other man who ever lived, could see the horrible results of sin, and it broke his heart.

- Jesus sighed because he had exhausted every means of reaching them

They had seen dozens of his miracles, but they demanded something more. He had done everything possible to get through to them, and they had rejected it all. There comes a time when, even God, gives up (Rom. 1:24, 26, 28; 2 Th. 2:10-12). Seeing the facts will not produce faith in the heart of the person who refuses to believe.

- Jesus sighed because he saw there was no hope for them

They were rejecting the only means of forgiveness. He knew he was about to walk away, leaving them doomed forever.

Why did Jesus deny their demand for a sign?

One, Jesus denied their request because they had already rejected the truth

It was not that they had never heard the truth. The Pharisees and Sadducees had been exposed to the Old Testament Scripture since their childhood.

Two, Jesus denied their request because, as mentioned in the previous verse, he had already given them many signs.

Three, Jesus denied their request because of WHY they asked. They demanded a sign because they were trying to prove Jesus was a fraud.

Four, Jesus denied their request because they had the Scriptures. Matthew tells us Jesus said there shall no sign be given "but" the sign of the prophet Jonas/Jonah (Mt. 16:4).

Jonah was an amazing picture of Jesus.

Jonah (Jonah 1:12), like Jesus (Jn. 10:18), was willing to perish to save others.

Jonah spent 3 days and nights in the center of the whale (Jonah 1:17). Jesus spent 3 days and nights in the heart of the earth (Mt. 12:40)

The Ninevites (Jonah 3:6-10), like many during Jesus' day (Jn. 2:23; 9:38; 11:45), repented.

God delivered Jonah from the whale (Jonah 2:10), and Jesus from the grave (Mt. 28:5).

3. **AN UNEXPECTED DEPARTURE**

To the shock of the Pharisees and Sadducees, Jesus departed abruptly.

Mk 8:13 And he left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side.

When Jesus spoke the words above, he "left them, and departed". He left them. Jesus doesn't stay where he is not wanted.

No doubt, they did not expect him to do such a thing. Amazingly, those who treat God the worst expect to continue to receive His blessings and are surprised when bad things happen. God is long-suffering, but His patience will run out. When His patience runs out, there is nothing left but His judgment.

The word "left" means "to abandon". As far as offering forgiveness, Jesus left them for good. This would be the last time he offered them any type of invitation. From this point on, any time he met them, it was with condemnation.

From this point on, instead of reaching out to those who rejected him, Jesus poured himself into his disciples and spent more and more time with them. He was preparing them for what was ahead. There would be no more signs to those who rejected him, only instructions to those who received him.

God still "leaves" people. Those who refuse to believe are sealing their eternal destiny.

Jesus departed, and with him went their opportunity for forgiveness. It is likely that every one of these died and went to hell. And, the sad part is, they did not have to. Like Judas, who kissed the door to heaven and went to hell, these Pharisees and Sadducees determined their eternal destiny at this point.

No one has to go to hell. God is willing to save whosoever (Rom. 2:4; 10:11, 13; Acts 2:21; 1 Tim. 2:4; Tit. 2:11; 2 Pet. 3;9).

The conclusion to the matter is the fact that no one can force God to do their bidding. After all, why would we want to? Why would finite man try to control an infinite God?

Why would inept, incompetent, insufficient, ineffective people try to tell an omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient God how to run His business? A better question is, why would that God let those people control Him? The fact is, He will not. God will be God.

MISSING THE POINT THE LESSON IN THE LUMP /// OF LEAVEN

DIMWITTED / DENSE DUMB DISCIPLES

DON'T FORGET YOUR DOGGY BAG

In verses 13-21, Jesus tried to teach the disciples the importance of learning from the past so that they might be prepared for the future. Like filling a doggy bag, we should take something from today that we can use tomorrow.

1. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF OUR LIVES v. 13-14

In verses 13-14, we will see how God wants to use the every day circumstances of our lives to accomplish good things.

Whether sinner or saint, God is working in the lives of every person on earth. Jesus said, "for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Mt. 5:45).

We have jobs to work, bills to pay, people to deal with, and problems to handle. And every circumstance in our lives, no matter how big or small, is meant to be a lesson to us. That means nothing that happens is without reason, and everything matters to God.

How we handle our everyday circumstances determines who, and what, we are. A believer should not be controlled by their outside conditions. Like Joseph (Gen. 50:20), Daniel (Dan. 6:22), and Paul (Acts 16:25), we should let God, not circumstances, control us.

Mk 8:13 And he left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side.

Jesus' ministry in this section of the book of Mark took Him back and forth across the Sea of Galilee. After he was confronted by the Pharisees (8:11), he and the disciples got in a boat and went back to the other shore.

Mk 8:14 Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf.

In the hustle and bustle of travel, the disciples forgot to bring bread. Taking bread with you as you traveled was important in that day because there were no restaurants along the road.

What makes this oversight even more important is the fact that the bread they forgot may have been the seven baskets of leftovers from the feeding of the 4,000 (8:8). Leftovers or not, they had forgotten to bring bread and the one loaf they had was not enough for the group.

So, there were more people than there was food. Doesn't this situation sound a little bit familiar? It sounds an awful lot like the situation they had been in earlier when Jesus fed 4,000.

The Bible tells us repeatedly about remembering (Ex. 13:3; 20:8; Num. 15:40; Dt. 5:15; 7:18; 8:2; 8:18; 9:7; 15:15; 16:3; 16:12; 24:18; 32:7; Josh. 1:13; 1 Chr. 16:12; Ec. 12:1; Jn. 14:26; Lk. 22:19). As humans, we are so prone to forget (Gen. 40:23: Judges 3:7; 1 Sam. 12:9;Ps. 78:11; 106:13; 106:21; Hos. 2:13).

As we are about to discover, even something as simple as collecting leftovers can be important and have unexpected consequences.

By the way, there is no doubt about it, Jesus knew they were forgetting the bread. But he allowed them to forget. There will be times when God will allow us to do that which leads us to trouble.

2. **THE CONCERN OF OUR LORD** v. 15

Jesus used the simple fact that they forgot bread to make an important spiritual point.

Jesus' concern was about more than how they were going to be able to eat lunch.

Mk 8:15 And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod.

Jesus used this opportunity to warn His disciples about the wickedness of false doctrine. A good teacher knows how to use the circumstances of life to impart truth to their students. Jesus took everyday circumstances and taught the disciples how to live. In the process of living, God wants us to learn how to live.

Clearly, Jesus was concerned about something, and he was quick to speak to the disciples about it.

Three words in this verse show us how Jesus was deeply concerned that the disciples learn a lesson.

The first word is "charged", which means he confronted them seriously. Jesus meant business because he realized how serious the situation was.

The second word is "heed", which means "to discern clearly" and speaks of paying attention to something that we may have missed. The devil does much of his work without believers realizing it. The words "take heed" are found 55 times in the Bible for a reason.

The third word is "beware", which means to see the danger involved. The same word is used when describing how Peter "saw" the boisterous wind (Mt. 14:30). As we will see, the leaven of the Pharisees and Herod was not to be taken lightly.

Jesus warned his disciples about "leaven". Simply put, leaven refers to influence. Leaven, when placed in a lump of dough, would eventually affect the entire lump.

First, Jesus was warning the disciples about the influence of the Pharisees. As seen in the previous events recorded in verses 10-13, the Pharisees were an ultra-religious group who were obsessed with outward appearance instead of inward experience and refused to believe in spite of the miracles Jesus had performed.

Second, Jesus was warning the disciples about the influence of Herod. The New Testament mentions six different men named Herod. All of them were wicked and despised Jesus.

Jesus wanted His disciples to see the danger of allowing themselves to be influenced by anything or anyone other than God. Believers must guard against the many influences in this world. We can be led astray before we realize what is happening (Gen. 3:4; Ex. 32:1; Isa. 53:6; Ps. 119:67; Mt. 7:15; 15:14; 24:24; 2 Tim. 4:10; 2 Pet. 2:15; 1 Jn. 4:1).

Eve was led by a piece of fruit, Achan by a few trinkets, Demas by his love for the world, and the Galatians by false teachers. If it can happen to them, it can happen to us.

Mk 8:16 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread.

Of course, the disciples missed Jesus' point entirely. When Jesus mentioned leaven, they thought He was talking about how they had forgotten to bring bread. They were totally confused about what was happening.

The word "reasoned" means "deliberate". They were seriously discussing what Jesus meant when He warned them about the leaven of the Pharisees and Herod.

Mk 8:17 And when Jesus knew it, he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened?

The word "understand" means "to comprehend" or "to grasp the meaning of". Simply put, the disciples were totally confused.

Unfortunately, this was not the first time Jesus had tried to teach the disciples this lesson (cf. 6:52)

Their hearts being "hardened" does not mean they were intentionally hardening their hearts. It means they were slow to comprehend. Do we not have the same problem?

Mk 8:18 Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?

Jesus asked questions that were meant to cause the disciples to search their hearts.

Since the disciples were saved, they had the Holy Spirit to show them spiritual truths. They had the "eyes" to see and the "ears" to hear, but they were not seeing nor hearing.

The real problem was the fact that they did not "remember". In the next verse, Jesus reminded them of what he had done in the past.

3. **THE CARE OF OUR LOAVES** v. 19-21

In verses 19-20, Jesus used the experience with the loaves of bread to teach the disciples an important lesson.

No work of God is meant to stand on its own. I mean, like using a doggy bag, God wants us to take something from our last experience and apply it to our next experience. We need to learn to learn from the experiences of our lives.

In other words, we need to learn how to take care of the "loaves" in our lives.

Mk 8:19-20 When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve. And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven.

Jesus pointed to the past when he, on two occasions, miraculously provided bread for multitudes. He described the greatness of his miracles by pointing to the amount of bread left over after the multitudes had eaten to their full.

These disciples had not only seen, but had been a part of a tremendous miracle only hours earlier. They had handled the bread and fish themselves. And they did not even think of it when they were in need themselves. They did not trust God with the present problem because they did not remember what Jesus had done in a previous problem.

Jesus compelled the disciples to answer his question. It forced them to speak the facts that it might stimulate their faith.

Why would they worry about bread when the One who multiplied bread was with them?

Matthew tells us Jesus said, "O ye of little faith" (Mt. 16:8). Their faith was still small when it should have been great. If anyone on earth should have trusted Jesus without reservation, it should have been these men. They had seen and heard more than anyone. Yet, they still struggled with faith.

Mk 8:21 And he said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?

Jesus rebuked them for their ignorance in that they did not perceive his point about the leaven.

His point was that if he could provide for multitudes, he certainly could provide for the disciples when the need arose.

Jesus wanted the disciples, and us, to recognize.

We need to recognize the fact that there is more to life than the physical and there is a spiritual lesson in every circumstance of life. God uses earthly experiences to teach us spiritual lessons. Life is God's classroom, and we are His students.

Jesus wanted the disciples, and us, to realize.

We need to realize that God is able to provide what we need when we need it.

Jesus also wanted the disciples, and us, to remember.

God wants us to remember how He fed us with a few loaves and fishes so we won't doubt Him the next time we have a need.

One of the greatest failures of those who know the Lord is how they forget what God has done. The people of Israel constantly forgot the past works of God. They panicked at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:11-12), complained about water (Ex. 15:23-24; 17:2-3), and food (Ex. 16:2-3), and doubted at Kadesh Barnea (Num. 14), all because they forgot how God miraculously brought them out of Egypt (Ex. 12:51).

That same God does mighty works for us every day, and we, just like Israel, forget. So often, we also have little faith. We forget our leftovers and don't take our doggy bags.

In the end, they finally understood.

Thankfully, Matthew tells us, "Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees" (Mt 16:12).

What we don't comprehend can harm us. If we don't see how powerful our foe is, he will easily defeat us. If we don't see how powerful our flesh is, we will give in to it every time we are tempted. If we don't see how powerful our Father is, we won't trust Him when the battles come.

We should never, ever, get used to how God does the miraculous. However, our faith should develop to the point where we are not surprised by what God does. We should come to the place where we expect Him to do it. After all, isn't that what faith is all about?

So, when you face the circumstances of life, don't forget your doggy bag; you will need it later.

I SEE MEN AS TREES WALKING

Mk. 8:22-26

Verses 22-26 tell us of a blind man healed by Jesus. Certainly the record of this healing is meant to show the need of the man. However, the man's partial sight is also a picture of the New Testament disciples. In verses 13-22, Jesus rebuked them for their misunderstanding. The greatest problem of the disciples was the fact that, even though Jesus told them repeatedly that he would die on the cross, they still expected him to overthrow the Roman government and set up the kingdom. They had their eyes opened, but there was so much that they still were not seeing clearly.

This is the first of two miracles recorded only by Mark (cf. 10:46-52). Interestingly, both deal with someone who was blind.

This miracle is unique in that it is the only time Jesus healed in stages.

1. THIS EVENT REVEALS THE LOVE OF JESUS

Mk 8:22 And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him.

v. 22a And he cometh to Bethsaida;

The simple fact that Jesus would enter the city of Bethsaida at all reveals his love for those in need. As we will see, the city of Bethsaida had rejected Jesus even though he had done many mighty works there. In spite of their rejection, Jesus returned because he knew there was a man there who needed his help.

v. 22b ... they bring a blind man unto him

Jesus goes where the need is. His love moved him to come into this sin-cursed world (Jn. 3:16; 16:28; 1 Tim. 1:15; 1 Jn. 4:9) because mankind needed a Savior.

v. 22c ... and besought him to touch him.

I am glad God still comes to those who do not deserve his help. Thank the Lord; his love moved him to come to me when I was living a life of sin and rebellion against him.

As we will see, his love for this man moved him to "touch him". When He comes, He comes to change lives.

2. THIS EVENT REVEALS THE LIMITS OF JESUS

Mk 8:23 And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought.

This verse shows us there are some limits to what Jesus was willing to do.

Those in the city of Bethsaida had seen God's power at work, for Jesus had done many mighty works there. He had healed many (Lk. 9:10-11) and fed the 5,000 (Lk. 9.11-17) while in, or near, Bethsaida.

Sadly, having been exposed to the presence and power of God, those living in this city had rejected Jesus' miracles, ministry, and message. The light had come, but they loved the darkness (cf. Jn. 3:19; 1 Jn 1:5).

For this reason, Jesus had rejected Bethsaida (Mt. 11:21; Lk.10:13). The city, as a whole, had gone past God's deadline. He would not cast his pearls before swine (cf. Mt. 7:6).

God's mercy runs out. He withheld His judgment for 120 years while Noah was building the ark, but the day came when He shut the door (Gen. 7:16). God loves with an indescribable love, but He will not force His love on anyone. He knocks, but He will not force the door open (Song. 5:6).

Recognizing this will be a very important factor in understanding the circumstances of the next few verses.

Their request to "touch him" presented a problem for Jesus. How could he heal a man who came from a city that he had rejected? How does a needy man, from a cursed city, get help from a holy God?

All of mankind has the same type of problem spiritually. The fall of Adam (Gen. 3:8-10) alienated man from God (Eph. 2:12; 4:18; Col. 1:21). How can an unholy person get help from a holy God?

v. 23a And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town;

Jesus handled the situation by removing the man from the cursed city before he helped him. This is the only time Jesus took a person "out of town" before he healed them. Jesus' rejection of the city is also seen later when he told this man not to go back into, or tell anyone in, the city what he had done for him (v. 26).

Thankfully, even though the city as a whole had been rejected, individuals from Bethsaida could still come to Jesus for help. This blind man did just that.

I am so glad that God deals with every person as an individual. A person from the most perverted family on earth will be accepted by God if they come to Him in faith and repentance. And that individual, though living in the same household with those who despise God, will have the potential to be the most godly person on earth.

Dear friend, do not let what others do stop you from walking with God. Daniel, while in the midst of a wicked environment, refused to defile himself (Dan. 1:8). As a result, God used him mightily and blessed him richly (Dan. 1:17, 1:20; 2:19; 2:48; 6:28).

You can walk with God no matter what others do. God will help you. By His power, you can do it.

3. **THIS EVENT REVEALS THE LORDSHIP OF JESUS**

Jesus' healing of this man shows his Lordship over the needs of mankind. Jesus, as he always does, took control of the situation.

The miracle described in these verses is unique in at least two ways. First, this is one of three times Jesus used his saliva in the process of healing. Second, this is the only time Jesus healed in stages. All his other miracles were done in a single action and with complete results.

Jesus was dealing with more than the man's blindness. God is concerned about the whole of man, not just the physical issues.

AS LORD, JESUS WAS CONCERNED ABOUT HIS HUMILITY

Jesus handled this problem in a truly unique manner. He spit on the man's eyes.

v. 23b ... and when he had spit on his eyes ...

The Jews, like everyone else on earth, saw spitting as highly offensive (Dt. 29:5; Num. 12:14; Job 17:6; 30:10; Isa. 50:6). To be spit upon was one of the most disrespectful and despicable acts imaginable. Yet, this man showed no sign of resentment or anger. Most people would have, at the very least, stomped off in anger, but he remained and did not utter a word of objection.

He recognized the Lordship of Christ. If getting healed meant Jesus would spit on him, he was willing to be spit on.

His reaction reveals his overwhelming desire for healing. He was tired of being blind. One of the greatest requirements of getting help from God is being tired of where we are. The person who is content in their condition will not get help from God.

As a matter of interest, Jesus used spit in his miracles on three occasions. The deaf and mute man (Mk. 7:33), the man born blind (Jn. 9:6), and this man.

Mk 8:23c ... and put his hands upon him ...

Some attribute this healing to the medicinal power of spittle. While there are some minor medicinal properties in saliva, there are none that will instantly give sight to the blind. This man's healing came, not by saliva, but by the touch of Jesus.

Jesus used all sorts of methods to heal. He spoke (Mt. 8:3; 8:16; Jn. 4:50), he touched (Mt.9:29; Lk. 4:40; 22:51), he used clay (Jn. 9:6), and he simply willed it so (Mt. 9:20-22; 14:36; Mk. 5:31). It wasn't the method he used; it was the power of God that did the work.

AS LORD, JESUS WAS CONCERNED ABOUT HIS HONESTY

Jesus asked a question that tested the man's honesty.

Mk 8:23d ... he asked him if he saw ought.

Jesus asked if he could see anything. God often asks questions to force a person to see their need. He asked Adam, "Where art thou" (Gen. 3:9), Elijah, "What doest thou here" (1 Kgs. 19:9), and Jonah, "Doest thou well to be angry" (Jonah 4:4).

Mk 8:24 And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking.

The man's answer reveals his honesty about his condition.

He was honest enough to admit that, even though he had been helped, he still needed help. As we will see, this is a major factor in this event.

After Jesus spit on him, he could see, but he could not see clearly. He had received help, but he needed more help.

The fact is, all believers, like this man, have received help from God, but need more help. We need more help because getting saved does not fix all of our problems.

Getting saved brings forgiveness for our sin, but we still have the flesh to deal with (Gal. 5:17). Salvation causes us to love the brethren, but there is still friction in the family (Mt. 10:35-36; Col. 3:13). Salvation gives us victory, but our enemy is still seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8).

That is why God tells His children to come boldly to the throne of grace that they might "find grace to help in time of need" (Heb 4:16). We are to come to Him for grace because we need help.

We need more help because the Bible tells us to pray without ceasing (1 Th. 5:17), study the Word (2 Tim. 2:15), deny ourselves (Lk. 9:23), love one another (Jn. 13:34), forgive one another (Col. 3:13), walk in the spirit (Gal. 5:16), speak the truth (Eph. 4:25), and to not worry (Mt. 6:34).

Every honest believer would have to admit that they need help from God to do these things.

God wants to help us with the problems we have after our salvation experience.

A word of interest. The fact that Jesus healed partially and then completely, proves he was in complete control of his power. God is in total control of His power and He does with it precisely what He desires.

That means, God is never out of control. We may need the gentle breeze of His mercy or the mighty tornado of His chastening. Either way, He will never do more than what it takes to do what is needed.

That also means, there are absolutely no accidents with God. As one preacher has said, "Things happen but they do not just happen". God has a purpose for every circumstance in our lives (Rom. 8:28).

A God who is in such control is a God who can be trusted.

AS LORD, JESUS WAS CONCERNED ABOUT HIS HEALING

Mk 8:25 After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly.

v. 25a After that he put his hands again upon his eyes ...

Jesus continued to work with this man. He was not satisfied with merely helping him; he wanted to heal him. He wanted him to see clearly.

v. 25a ... and made him look up:

No doubt, his looking up caused him to look straight into the face of Jesus. He was looking into the eyes of the one who loved him.

This speaks of the importance of us depending on our Lord for that which we need. Like a little child looking to their daddy, we can, and must, trust our heavenly Father. We are admonished the "Trust the LORD with all" our hearts (Pro. 3:5). The Psalmist said, "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee (Ps 56:3).

v. 25c ... he was restored, and saw every man clearly.

Jesus healed him totally, and he saw every man clearly. His life would never be the same. He would experience what he had not been able to experience before. Jesus wasn't interested in giving him something temporary. He had the man's future in mind.

It is a good thing that the man did not settle for partial vision. He could have walked away and lived the rest of his life only half-seeing. After all, he was certainly much better off than he had been before Jesus came. Thankfully, he stayed and let Jesus continue his work.

Sadly, many believers live their lives being satisfied with partial vision. For instance, they see well enough to know they need to come to church on Sunday morning, but not well enough to see the need to come back Sunday night and Wednesday. They are forgiven but not faithful. The Spirit indwells them, but the flesh still controls them.

As a result, they never experience true victory, full joy, or absolute peace.

As I have mentioned, this is the only time Jesus healed in stages. Notice, however, that before Jesus left, this man could see perfectly. By no means does this event teach the type of "healing" seen at many health and wealth meetings where a person stumbles around and claims to be healed. Jesus never left a person half healed.

AS LORD, JESUS WAS CONCERNED ABOUT HIS HOME

Mk 8:26 And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.

v. 26a And he sent him away to his house ...

Notice, Jesus sent this man home. He wanted this man to show his family what he had done for him. Those who knew him best saw him able to see. They saw the difference in him. The difference is what made the difference.

v. 26b ... saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.

Jesus ended his conversation by telling this man to not go into the city of Bethsaida or to tell any one in the city about what he had done for him. The city's rejection of Christ would cost them.

That meant, if anyone from this city got any help from Jesus, they would have to do as this man had done, and come to Jesus personally.

There is little doubt, even though he did not go into the city, the news of his miracle spread far and wide. As with all news, someone told someone who told someone else.

In verse 26, Jesus told this man what he was to do, and what he was not to do. On those two commands hang all the will of God for those He has helped. He asks us to use His blessings, not for ourselves, but for Him. That is not asking too much. We should gladly do so.

Unlike the others (1:45; 7:36), it seems this man obeyed Jesus' instruction to not tell anyone.

JESUS' GREATEST QUESTION

1. A PUBLIC QUESTION

Jesus asked his disciples about the public's opinion of himself. I believe this is the greatest question Jesus ever asked.

Mk 8:27 And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am?

v. 27a And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi

Caesarea Philippi, a city 25 miles on the north-east side of the Sea of Galilee, was in Gentile territory. Many Gentiles had believed on Jesus.

Jesus was withdrawing into a more obscure place that he might deal more directly with his disciples. He knew he would be returning to heaven soon, and he wanted to make sure they were ready to take up his ministry when he was gone.

Luke tells us Jesus stopped along the way to spend some time with his Father (Lk. 9:18). Jesus had more on his plate than any man who ever lived, but he took time to be alone with his Father. If he did, surely, we should also.

Afterward, Jesus asked his disciples one of the most searching questions he would ever ask.

v. 27b ...Whom do men say that I am?

Of course, Jesus knew the answer. He asked over 100 questions of which he already had the answers (Jn. 2:4; 7:19; 7:46; 8:43; 18:4; 18:21; 18:23; Mk. 14:6; Lk. 7:25; 8:45; 18:7; Jn. 11:40).

Why did Jesus ask this question? Why did it matter what people thought about Jesus? After all, man's opinion did not change the truth about Jesus.

That leads me to my second point.

2. A POWERFUL QUESTION

v. 27c ...men say that I am?

Jesus' question is one of the most powerful questions ever asked.

It was a powerful question because what a person thinks about Jesus will tell us who and what they are.

It was a powerful question because what a person thinks about Jesus will affect their life and determine their eternity.

It was a powerful question because our answer will determine whether we live for self or for the Savior.

Jesus summarized it when he said, "And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this" (Jn. 11:26).

There were many opinions about Jesus.

However, before we look at what men were saying about Jesus, let's look at what he was saying about himself. Jesus said quite a lot about himself. He did so, not out of pride, but out of the desire to show the world who he was.

Contrary to the opinion of some, Jesus did claim to be God (Mk 14:61-62; Lk 5:20; Jn 4:26, 5:17-18; 8:58, 10:33; 17:5,15). If he said he was God when he knew he was not, he was a liar. If he thought he was God when he was not, he was a lunatic.

He also said he was the bread of life (Jn. 6:35), the light of the world (Jn. 9:5), the door (Jn. 10:9), and the way, the truth, and the life (Jn. 14:6). He said, "no man cometh to the Father, but by me (Jn. 14:6). "he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness" (Jn. 8:12), "without me ye can do nothing" (Jn. 15:5), "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life" (Jn. 6:47), "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (Jn. 2:19), "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (Jn. 11:25), and "whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (Jn. 11:26). He said, to the unbelievers you "shall die in your sin" (Jn. 8:21), and " whether I go, ye cannot come" (Jn. 8:22). He said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Mt. 24:35) and "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Mt. 28:18).

Perhaps the greatest thing Jesus ever said was, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee" (Mk 2:5). Jesus, being God, had the power to forgive sin.

Jesus said these things, and many more, in an effort to get mankind to realize he was who he claimed to be.

Considering all that Jesus did and said, everyone should have accepted him as Savior and Lord. Thankfully, many did, but sadly, many did not.

Now, let's look at the disciples' reply to Jesus' question about men's opinion of him.

Mk 8:28 And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets.

The disciples told Jesus of some of the most common opinions that people had about him. All of these opinions fall short of fully describing Jesus. He was human, but he was much more than a man.

v. 28a And they answered, John the Baptist ...

Some believed Jesus was John the Baptist returned from the dead. Herod was one who believed this (Mt. 14:1-2).

It was ridiculous, since Jesus and John lived at the same time. John was Jesus' earthly cousin (Lk. 1:36). John even baptized Jesus (Mt. 3:13-17).

Perhaps Jesus preaching "Repent" and the coming kingdom (Mt. 3:1-2 cf. Mt. 4:17) as John had caused them to have this opinion.

v. 28b ... but some say, Elias;

Some thought Jesus was "Elias" (Elijah). Perhaps it was because Jesus preached fiery messages and did many miracles as Elijah had done.

Also, since Malachi had prophesied that Elijah would come (Mal. 4:5) the Jews believed Elijah would return to the earth before the Messiah would come. Even today, some Jews sit an extra chair at the table for Elijah at their Passover meal.

v. 28c ... *and others, One of the prophets.*

Matthew records that the disciples included Jeremiah in this list (Mt. 16:14). Perhaps they believed Jesus to be Jeremiah because of his broken heart (Lk. 19:41; Jn. 11:33, 35). Jeremiah was known as the weeping prophet because of his many tears over the condition of his people.

It is interesting to note what the disciples did not say.

They did not say anything about those who were calling Jesus Beelzebub (Mt 12:24), deceiver (Mt. 27:63), thief (Lk. 23:2), or demon-possessed (Jn. 8:48).

They did not say anything about the scribes, and Pharisees thought he was a liar and a lunatic (Mt. 11:19; 12:24; 27:63; Lk. 7:39). On many occasions, they tried to trick Jesus (Mt. 22:15; Mk. 10:2; 12:13; Lk. 20:20; Jn. 8:3-6).

The one thing in common about all these opinions of Jesus is the fact that Jesus was not an ordinary man. They could not deny his supernatural power, but they still refused to accept the fact that he was the Messiah. They came so close to the truth, and yet were so far away.

Many today will admit that Jesus was a unique man, yet refuse to turn to him to be forgiven.

Sadly, none of them got it right. Many believed Jesus was a good man, but relatively few believed he was God.

Jesus asked this question in Caesarea Philippi, which was a place of much idolatry. They were always open to adding another god to their list. Yet, they soundly rejected Jesus.

3. **THE PERSONAL QUESTION**

Jesus turned the conversation towards the disciples and asked for their personal opinion of him.

This is a personal question because our answer reveals who and what we are.

Mk 8:29 And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ.

As usual, Peter was the spokesman for the disciples. It seems like he often spoke without thinking, but he got this one right. He blundered often, but he did not this time.

v. 29a But whom say ye that I am?

It's easy when the conversation is about others. It is quite another thing when it becomes personal. It's easy to be honest and open about someone else. Being honest about ourselves can be very difficult.

Jesus' question would reveal whether the disciples could ignore the opinion of others, form their own conclusion, and in faith walk with Jesus.

This was the disciples' final quiz before the big test. They had experienced enough with Jesus to where they should have been settled about who he was and why he had come. They had been in the school of the Messiah for approximately two years. Had they learned the lesson he had tried to teach them?

But what about us? What we think about Jesus tells us who and what we are. What do you think of Jesus? What does he mean to you?

Peter responded to Jesus' question in verse 29.

v. 29b And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ.

The word "Christ" is the Greek word for the Hebrew word "Messiah" and means "Anointed One". Peter believed Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah who would sit on David's throne.

Matthew tells us Peter also said Jesus was the Son of the "living" God (Mt. 16:16). The pagan beliefs of that day had many gods. Those gods were dead gods that could not see or hear (Dan. 5:23). Their gods could not see their problems, hear their cries, nor answer their prayers.

However, Jesus was, and is, the true and living God. Many were willing to say that he was a good man, but they refused to believe he was God. He was more than a good man. In fact, if he was not who he claimed to be, he was not a good man, and he was the worst deceiver this world has ever seen.

Matthew also recorded Jesus' response. He said to Peter, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Mt 16:17).

Simon was the name Peter used before he met Jesus (Jn. 1:42). No doubt Jesus used this name to emphasize the human nature of Peter. Peter had to be constantly reminded that he was human and prone to failure.

Peter was "blessed" because he did not receive this information through his intellect or from simply listening to Jesus speak. Many had heard the same words Peter heard, but did not understand what Peter did.

Jesus told Peter his "Father" had revealed this truth to him. Simply put, the heavenly Father opened Peter's eyes to this truth. The word "revealed" means "to take the cover off". That is what God did for Peter. All men are blind until the Holy Spirit opens their eyes to divine truth (2 Cor 4:4).

Peter had caused Jesus much heartache, but at that moment, Jesus was pleased with Peter.

What is your response to Jesus? Do you, like Peter, believe Jesus was the holy Son of God sent from heaven to pay the price for the sin of the world and to teach us how to live godly in an ungodly world?

WE SHOULD BE CONVICTED BY JESUS' PURITY

Jesus, being God, was absolutely holy and preached about the importance of living a holy life (Mt. 4:17; 5:8, 5:48; 6:33; 22:37-40). He does so now through the Scriptures and the Spirit. That means those who know the Lord will be convicted for any unholy deeds. David said, "I acknowledge my transgression" (Ps. 51:3).

Realizing this fact should cause us to be sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit and walk a good and godly life. A godly life brings God's blessings but it also shows the lost world there is something better than sin.

WE SHOULD BE COMFORTED BY JESUS' PEACE

On many occasions, Jesus' presence brought peace to the disciples (Mk. 4:39; Lk. 7:50; Jn. 6:20; 14:27; 16:33; 20:19).

After Jesus ascended, the Father sent the other comforter (Jn. 14:16) so that believers might experience peace in a troubled world.

Talking about God, Paul wrote, "Who comforteth us in all our tribulation" (2 Co 1:4). He said also, "I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation" (2 Co 7:4).

Knowing God is present with us should give us comfort in the midst of trials (Jn. 14:27; Phil. 4:7; Ps. 4:8; Ps. 23:4). We do not face our problems alone.

WE SHOULD BE CHALLENGED BY JESUS' POWER

Peter's response about Jesus should remind us of the power Jesus displayed while on earth. He turned water to wine (Jn. 2:3), walked on water (Jn. 6:19), calmed storms (Mt. 8:26), multiplied lunches (Mt. 14:18-20), cast out demons (Mk. 1:27; 5:1-13), healed all types of sickness (Jn. 5:5-9), raised the dead (Jn. 11:43-44; Lk. 7:11-15) and forgave sin (Mt. 9:2).

Jesus' power dealt with any type of problem we can face. The One who can do what Jesus did is able to take care of us.

Recognizing the power of God should challenge us to trust Him (Pro. 3:5; Ps. 37:5; 56:3, 91:2; Mt. 6:25; Mk. 5:36).

Recognizing the power of God should challenge us to step out in faith and serve Him. Like Peter, we should step out of the boat (Mt. 14:29).

WE SHOULD BE CONVERTED BY JESUS' PARDON

Judas listened to this entire conversation but never believed on Christ. He believed Jesus was a good man, but did not accept him as his Savior and Lord and went to hell as a result. He is, right now, in torment in hell. Do not let that happen to you.

If Jesus was God, as he claimed to be, every person on earth should accept him as Savior and make him the Lord of their lives.

Jesus' great question was about himself. But a second question must also be asked: what will I do with him? How we answer the first question will determine how we answer the second. And how we answer both questions will determine where we spend eternity.

Our view of Jesus makes us what we are. Do you see him as only a good man? Do you believe he was a liar and a fraud? Or do you see him as the God who is, at this moment, in control of the universe (Col. 1:17)?

DON'T TELL THEM

Mk 8:30 And he charged them that they should tell no man of him.

This is one of the most serious of all the statements of Jesus. He is saying, "Don't tell them". Don't tell them what I have said. Don't tell them who I am.

No doubt one of the reasons he said this was because there were so many who wanted him to overthrow Rome and set up the kingdom. They wanted him to make their lives easier.

However, another reason, and I believe the most predominate reason, was the fact that Jesus had spoken but they had ignored him. They had ignored his words and his works, so he was going to let them suffer the consequences.

Has God been speaking to you? Is there something He wants you to do? Is there something He wants you to stop doing?

As we are about to discover, ignoring God is the most serious thing we could ever do. There are horrible consequences for doing so.

1. THE SOURCE OF JESUS' STATEMENT

The importance of any message is the fact of who is speaking. Ignoring the words of a co-worker is one thing; ignoring the words of your boss is quite another.

God is God; anything He says is important.

When we choose to ignore the words of Almighty God, we have entered into a world of ignorance that cannot be comprehended.

To begin with, to have God speak to us is the greatest honor on earth. People swoon if their favorite ball player or movie star would speak to them but think nothing about shunning the God of heaven.

To make matters worse, there are many voices in this world. It is easy to listen to the wrong one. Eve listened to Satan and ignored God (Gen. 3:1).

2. THE SUBJECT OF JESUS' STATEMENT

The source deals with who is speaking; the subject deals with what is being said.

Jesus told his disciples not to tell those who had already been spoken to and refused to listen. That means, they did not hear what they needed to hear.

What God says is always right. Good or bad, like it or not, God is right, all the time. More importantly, we desperately need to hear what God says to us.

Many words are spoken in this world that are relatively unimportant. The conversation of children talking about their favorite cartoon can be ignored with little or no consequences.

However, that which Jesus had spoken while on earth was a subject too important to ignore. Jesus spent much of his life making himself known by his words and his works. He had said, "I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple" (Jn. 18:20). He had told the world who he was. He said, "Before Abraham was, I am" (Jn. 8:5). He said, "no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (Jn. 14:6). These are not words that can be ignored.

He had encouraged his disciples to tell everything about him. He wanted the world to know who he was and what he was doing.

Now, because of the rejection of his words, he told the disciples to keep quiet. God had quit speaking to those who had heard and rejected.

God's message has not changed. What He said before, He says now.

God still says, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Lk 14:26). That means we are to love our families, but we are to love God more.

God still says, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Lk 9:23). That means we are to die out to our own desires and do that which God desires.

God still says, "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully" (2 Cor. 9:6). That means we are rewarded according to our works. If we serve God half-heartedly, we will gain few rewards. This applies to rewards both here on earth and in eternity.

Jesus still says, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Mt 10:28). That means every person on earth needs to recognize the danger of going to hell because of their sin and turn to Christ in faith and repentance for forgiveness.

With that in mind, what has God been saying to you? Are you one of the ones who are guilty of ignoring the voice of God?

3. THE SUBJECTS OF JESUS' STATEMENT

The source is who is speaking, the subject is what is being said, the "subjects" are those who are being spoken to.

This message was directed towards those who were guilty of ignoring God. It was a specific message directed toward specific people.

The fact is, God is a personal God, and He speaks to individuals. If He is speaking to an individual, that means there is something that person needs to hear, and they need to hear it right then.

Has God been speaking to you? What has He been saying? Are you listening? Please do not do what those in this verse did and resist His voice.

4. THE SERIOUSNESS OF JESUS' STATEMENT

This statement is serious because it tells us there were some whom God had stopped speaking to because they had not listened when He had spoken before.

There are some subjects spoken by some people that have little consequence. I can ignore the newscaster who announces the upcoming marriage of a Hollywood actor and suffer no consequences whatsoever. The fact is, I could not care less. However, if that same newscaster is telling me there is a tornado in my neighborhood, I had better listen.

There are serious consequences for ignoring God.

First, we put ourselves under God's judgment.

Second, we will make wrong decisions.

Third, we will miss the blessing that comes through obedience.

Forth, our hearts will grow hard.

That being said, everything God says to me is vitally important and the consequences of ignoring Him are severe.

CONCLUSION

With all this being said, as I say often, SO WHAT, what does all this mean to you? What is God trying to say to you right now?

I believe God is saying....

WE NEED TO BE CAUTIOUS

Signs like "High Voltage", "Bridge Out Ahead", and "Railroad Crossing", are messages we should be careful to acknowledge because of the devastating consequences of not doing so.

As I have mentioned, because of the serious consequences, we need to listen to the voice of God and obey immediately.

Refusing to listen to God opens us up to other voices. When we listen to those voices, we will make wrong decisions that will lead us away from God and His will. The world and the devil are constantly battling for control of our lives. Both tell us to live for ourselves and do as we please.

One wrong move on our part can be catastrophic.

Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:1-6), Jonah (Jon. 2:17), Cain (Gen. 4:13), Moses (Num. 20:12), David (2 Sam. 12:18), Solomon (1 Kgs. 11:1-4), Peter (Lk. 22:31), and the rich man (Lk. 16:24), are just a few of those who refused to give heed to God's words and lived to regret it.

WE NEED TO BE CAPTIVE

We should not just listen when God speaks; we should listen intently. Half-listening to important instructions can cause serious problems. We need to know exactly what God said. The pre-flight instructions of a flight attendant, though ignored by the majority of the passengers, are vitally important when the plane is going down.

What He is saying is always for our good. He is not trying to harm us or restrict our lives in any way. He is trying to get us in the center of His will, which is the very best place we can be.

WE NEED TO BE CHANGED

Jesus spoke to change lives, not to educate or entertain.

Listening means more than just hearing; it means we do what we heard. God tells us to be "doers of the word, and not hearers only" (Jam. 1:22).

The churches of our day are full of people who know what the Bible says, but are not doing what the Bible says. Oh, for a revival of dedicated believers who love God and are willing to do whatever He says.

In 1872, Preacher Henry Varley said "The world has yet to see what God can do with a man fully consecrated to him"

D.L. Moody said, "By the grace of God, I will be that man".

What has God been saying to you? Are you listening?

AN ARGUMENT YOU CAN'T WIN

1. THE SHOCKING ANNOUNCEMENT

The following verses tell us about the first time Jesus spoke about his coming death and the disciples' reaction. The news would be difficult for them to accept, but they had to be told sooner or later.

We will find from this that after many months of teaching his disciples, there were still things they needed to learn. The same is true of the modern believer. When we think we know all there is to know, we are in trouble.

Mk 8:31 And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

v. 31a "he began to teach them"

Jesus "began" to teach the disciples. As I mentioned above, this was the first time he had told them about his crucifixion.

Jesus told them a lot. He told them he was going to suffer, by whom he would suffer, that he would be killed, and that he would rise from the dead.

However, Jesus did not tell them why these things would be happening. Had he told them that this was God's predetermined plan for the salvation of lost humanity, they may have accepted the news better than they did.

The same is true of the modern believer. There are some things that God does not tell us. As far as I can tell, God never told Job why He allowed him to suffer so terribly.

As we are about to discover, whether we understand why God is doing what He is doing or not, He is always right. Trying to argue with God is unwise and useless. It is one argument we will never win.

v. 31b "the Son of man must"

What Jesus was about to do "must" be done.

The suffering of the cross was always God's plan. It was not a second option or a last-minute decision.

Jesus did what he did to fulfil Scriptures (Mt. 1:22-23; 2:15; 2:23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 26:54; 26:56; 27:35). The Old Testament foretold of his sorrow and suffering (Is. 50:6; 52:14-15; 53:3:7; Ps. 22:1, 7-8, 16-18; 34:20; 41:9; 69:21; Zech. 11:12-13; 12:10). There are at least 28 Old Testament Scriptures that tie to the events of the crucifixion. The entire Old Testament sacrificial system pointed to Jesus and the cross.

Had Jesus not done what he did, Scripture would not have been fulfilled, sin would not have been dealt with, salvation would not be available, and sinners would have no hope.

In other words, Jesus did what he did, for you.

v. 31c "be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes"

Surprisingly, the ones to reject Jesus would not be the wicked sinners in the gutter, but the self-proclaimed religious giants of that day.

By no means does this mean those who opposed Jesus had no choice in the matter. They, like all mankind, willingly made the decisions they made, and were, therefore, accountable for their actions.

It is vitally important to recognize that these groups rejected Jesus because he did not do what they thought he should be doing. And that is the same problem Peter and the disciples were having, and that is what these verses are dealing with.

Jesus speaking about the rejection of the religious groups should have caused the disciples to realize God was expecting it all along. After all, they had already seen these religious groups openly stand against Jesus (Mk 2:12).

v. 31b "and be killed"

Jesus did not come to earth to be a good example. He came to die. But not just to die, to die the death of the cross (Phil 2:8).

The bystanders at the cross said, "himself he cannot save" (Mt 27:40). They did not realize how true their statement was, for had he saved himself, he would not be able to save anyone else.

The Jews expected a Messiah who would come and set up a kingdom. However, God would never give His kingdom to a people who were not living according to His Word. Sadly, at that time, the Jews, for the most part, were far from God's Word and will.

Their sin had to be dealt with, and that could be done only by Jesus' suffering and death on the cross. That is why John the baptist (Mt. 3:1-2), and Jesus (Mt. 4:17), came preaching "Repent". Unfortunately, instead of repenting and turning to Jesus, they killed him.

v. 31b "and after three days rise again"

Jesus did not tell them only of his suffering and death; he told them of his resurrection.

His death would not be the end. He would be arrested, tried unjustly, and "be killed", but He would "be raised again the third day". Neither death nor the devil would prevail over Jesus. He would die, but He would not stay dead. Thank the Lord, the story has a happy ending.

As with all of the works of God, the end result was for the good of those He loved. God told Jeremiah His thoughts toward him were thoughts of peace, and not of evil, that He might give him "an expected end" (Je 29:11). God's goal is always for our good and His glory.

Had the disciples simply listened to all Jesus had said, their attitude would have been totally different. And so it is with us. We need to listen to the whole story. When the storm is raging, we seldom think of the rainbow that is coming.

The disciples failed to see the cross as it was, a place of victory and deliverance. They saw only suffering, shame, sadness.

2. THE SATANIC ATTACK

We are not told until verse 33, but Peter's remarks were inspired by Satan himself. Once again, he was trying his best to stop Jesus from going to the cross.

As we will see, even though the Old Testament spoke often about the death of the One who would come, none of the disciples were prepared for Jesus' message.

Mk 8:32 And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him.

v. 32a "And he spake that saying openly"

Jesus plainly said He would "be killed" and his death would be caused by the elders, chief priests, and scribes. In other words, Jesus spoke clearly and without parables or figures of speech. He did so to make certain he would not be misunderstood.

v. 32b "And Peter took him"

Peter "took him" like a teacher would take a disobedient student from the classroom. In his confusion and ignorance, Peter intended to straighten Jesus out. He was about to discover that no one straightens God out.

Any time there is a disagreement between man and God, God is always right. As I have said, we never win in an argument with God.

It amazes me that Jesus went with Peter. Being God, he knew what Peter intended, yet he followed. Peter was about to learn a vital lesson.

v. 32c "and began to rebuke him"

Peter rebuked Jesus for saying he would die. Anytime we resist or reject God's Word, we are asking for trouble.

This is the same Peter who had just said, "Thou art the Christ" (8:29). Then, he had spoken for God, but now, for Satan. Both are much easier to do than we realize.

No doubt, Peter's words were from a heart of love. He truly loved Jesus and did not want to hear about him having to suffer, let alone die. Whatever his reasoning, he was wrong in what he was thinking and what he was saying.

3. THE SIMPLE ANSWER

Jesus' response to Peter's rebuke tells us the answer to their discussion was simple. In essence, Jesus told Peter that God was always right and never did anything wrong.

Every believer needs to face that fact. God is right, all the time (Ps. 145:17). The Psalmist wrote, "Thou art good, and doest good" (Ps 119:68).

This should be a lesson to every believer who struggles with what God is doing in their life. He may not have given us all the details or explained why, but God is always right, and we should trust and obey Him.

The simple answer to our every problem is to believe what God has told us and to trust Him with what He has not.

Mk 8:33 But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.

v. 33a "But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples"

While still speaking to Peter, Jesus turned so all the disciples could hear. He knew they all had the same mindset as Peter, so they all needed what he was about to say.

The twelve disciples and all the Jews should have been aware of what Jesus was talking about. As I mentioned earlier, the Old Testament spoke of the One sent from God who would experience sorrow and suffering (Is. 50:6; 52:14-15; 53:3:7; Ps. 22:1, 7-8, 16-18; 34:20; 41:9; 69:21; Zech. 11:12-13; 12:10).

So much of our stress would be taken care of if we would simply look at the Word of God and listen to what it says. God has already given us what we need if we would pay attention.

v. 33b "he rebuked Peter"

Jesus did not hesitate to speak up when one of his disciples needed correcting. In this case, and in every case, Jesus wasn't the one mistaken.

v. 33c Get thee behind me, Satan"

The same Satan who tempted Jesus (Mt 4:1-11) spoke to, and through, Peter. He will do the same with anyone who will allow it.

Jesus was not implying that Satan had possessed Peter. Peter was, however, letting the devil control his thoughts and speech. He had become a spokesman for the devil.

This is one of the perplexing events in the Bible. Here is a disciple who loves Jesus and wants to please him, yet he is allowing the devil not just to influence, but to control, his thinking and words. What makes it worse, Peter had no idea it was happening.

The modern believer better not think this could not happen to them. If it happened to the mighty Peter, it could happen to any person on earth today.

It is amazing how easy it is to go from the spiritual to the carnal.

I wonder how many times we have done the same thing. We should guard our thoughts and resist the devil's lies (Ge 3:4).

Anytime we think or speak contrary to that which God has said, the devil is most certainly involved. Realize it or not, we are under his influence. Certainly, anyone who rejects the truth of Calvary is being influenced by the devil.

When Jesus told Satan to get "behind" Him, he was telling the devil to get out of his way. Jesus had set his face like a flint toward the cross (Isa 50:7). He would not be sidetracked. May the Lord place in our hearts the same resolve to do His will.

v. 33d "thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men"

The word "savourest" means to have our minds set on that which we desire. It is the same word translated "affection" when Paul wrote, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col 3:2).

What we love matters a great deal. Paul talked about how Demas had loved this "present world" (2 Tim 4:10). God warns us that in the last days men would be lovers of their own selves (2 Tim 3:2).

Peter had his mind set on the "things that be of men", instead of the "things that be of God". In this context, the things of men refer to the kingdom the disciples expected Jesus to set up, and the things of God refer to the cross that God had planned. The things of God are always totally opposite to the things of men.

In other words, Peter and all the disciples had their minds set on Jesus as the mighty Messiah. They wanted their part of the kingdom. They wanted to be on the winning side. They wanted to follow a leader who would lead them to victory.

However, the will of God was that Jesus go to die on the cross to provide forgiveness to sinful man (Mt 20:28; Jn 3:16; 1 Cor 15:3-4; 1 Pet 3:18).

Sadly, they must not have learned much from this conversation, for James and John would later ask to have predominant positions in the kingdom (10:35-41).

CONCLUSION:

As I have said before, every believer needs to remember that God is always right and we should trust and obey Him. We need to believe what God has told us and to trust Him with what He has not. Life will be much simpler if we do.

We need to, as Paul did (Phil 4:11), learn to be content with God's will.

We need to believe what God has told us and trust Him with what He has not.

We need to obey the Lord without fear or hesitation.

And most important of all, we need to remember that we never win when we argue with God.