

A
Doctrinal
And
Devotional
Commentary
On the
Gospel of Mark

Written by Réналd Leroux Jr.

A Doctrinal and Devotional Commentary of the Gospel of Mark
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Introduction to the Gospel of Mark

1. Author

Strictly speaking this gospel is anonymous. There are no reference within the text that reveals who the author is.

Outside sources state that it was John-Mark (the cousin of Barnabas, Col. 4:10) who was the author. This is a short list of men who thought John-Mark was the author:

- Polycarp (c. 110-150)
- Hermas (c. 115-140)
- Papias (A.D. 140)
- Ireaneus (c. 130-202)
- Justin Martyr (c. 150-155)
-

2. Date

Again this is difficult to pin-point exactly but most believe that Mark was written anywhere between A.D. 64-69.

3. Place of origin and destination

The text does not give us a direct answer. The Church Fathers believed that the gospel of Mark was written in Rome for Gentile Christians.

4. The purpose of Mark

To encourage Christians who were suffering because of their faith by showing that Christ also suffered in many ways.

5. Theme of Mark

To manifest that Christ was the 'Suffering Servant'.

The Gospel of Mark
01 – Preparing the way

1:1-8

1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

² As it is written in Isaiah the prophet:

**“BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU,
WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY;**

**³ THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS,
‘MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD,
MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.’”**

⁴ John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ And all the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. ⁶ John was clothed with camel’s hair and *wore* a leather belt around his waist, and his diet was locusts and wild honey. ⁷ And he was preaching, and saying, “After me One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals. ⁸ I baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

(NASB)

1. The beginning (1:1-3)

1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

² As it is written in Isaiah the prophet:

**“BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU,
WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY;**

**³ THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS,
‘MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD,
MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.’”**

This is the beginning of what we call the Gospel of Mark but actually it is not his gospel. It is the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Mark is simply the human author. We all know that it is the Holy Spirit that gave the inspiration to Mark (2 Peter 1:19-21).

This book contains the ‘*gospel of Jesus Christ*’. The name ‘*Jesus*’ means: savior or deliverer. His name tells us why he has come to earth and what the mission was that his Father had given him – to save sinners from their just judgment (Mat. 18:11). Jesus is also called ‘*Christ*’ which means: anointed. It is the Greek version of the Hebrew word for Messiah. He is God’s anointed and as such he will perfectly fulfill the three roles that anointed people were given: priest, king and prophet. The Old Testament prophets declared that there would only be one Messiah (Christ) the one who would pay the penalty for the sins of mankind (see Isaiah 53).

The term gospel gives the idea of ‘Good News’ that is given to all who have ears to listen. This is what the American Tract Society Dictionary writes: ‘*The writings which contain the recital of our Savior's life, miracles, death, resurrection, and doctrine, are called GOSPELS, because they include the best news that could be published to mankind. We have four canonical gospels-- those of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. These have not only been generally received, but they were received very early as the standards of evangelical history, as the depositories of the doctrines and actions of Jesus.*’

¹The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

There is a bold statement given in verse one: Mark writes that Jesus is ‘*The Son of God*’. By stating that Jesus is ‘*the Son of God*’ Mark is telling his readers that he:

- Is divine
- Has authority over all
- Is worthy of worship
- Is the creator and sustainer of all things

Jesus was not simply a man filled with wisdom, an articulate preacher, or a spirit-filled rabbi – he was Emmanuel – God with us. For those who had ears to listen (like with Simeon and Anna) this was ‘Good News’ for the long-awaited Messiah had finally arrived. For those who still had a veil over their eyes (2 Cor. 3:13-16) this was ‘Bad News’ for they saw him as just another heretic trying to make a name for himself.

In verse two Mark introduces John the Baptist.

**² As it is written in Isaiah the prophet:
“BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU,
WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY;**

Mark is citing Malachi 3:1 which is a prophetic promise of the coming of the Lord himself.

Malachi 3:1

"Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming," Says the LORD of hosts.

(NKJV)

This Jesus that John the Baptist would introduce would be *'the messenger of the covenant'* – the long awaited Messiah.

As for John himself, this is what Mark writes:

Isaiah 40:3

The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the LORD; Make straight in the desert A highway for our God.

(NKJV)

This is taken directly from Isaiah 40:3. Since John is the *'voice crying in the wilderness'*, then the one he is crying out about (Jesus-Christ) has to be *'our God'*! From the very beginning Mark makes it very clear that Jesus of Nazareth is God who has come to save his people.

2. The baptism (1:4,5)

⁴ John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ And all the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.

In verse four we are told another reason why John had come. He had come to preach '*a baptism of repentance*'. The message of John was simple – you need to repent (which means to turn away or have a change of mind). His audience absolutely needed to understand that before the Lord they were all sinners (Rom. 3:23) and that all of their acts had absolutely no redemptive value before him (Isaiah 64:6).

This includes all people who were ever born and will ever be born. In other words you and I also need to repent of our sins and have a drastic change of mind concerning our self-righteousness. Repentance was needed '*for the remission of sins*' (v.4). It is undeniable that repentance unto God through the saving work of the Messiah is the **ONLY** way to secure our salvation (John 14:6). Luke wrote it this way:

Luke 24:46,47

(46) Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day,

(47) "and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

(NKJV)

The preaching of John the Baptist had quite an effect:

⁵ And all the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.

It seems that people understood the message and their hearts were touched. They confessed their sins (showing repentance) and they were baptized to manifest the seriousness of their decision. Have we understood the gospel message? Has our heart been pricked by a sense of needing to get right with God? Have we confessed to the Lord that we are sinners, unable to be the people he wants us to be? If so, have we passed through the water of baptism and following our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?

3. The messenger (1:6)

⁶ John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist, and his diet was locusts and wild honey.

John was not the typical messenger. You could point him out in the middle of a crowd. His clothing was not typical. He was not clothed in a fine robe made with the best materials. He wasn't even clothed with any type of woven material! He wore camel's hair – coarse, tough and harsh. He only had a leather belt to keep his leather camel's skin attached to his body. His food was also not typical for he ate locusts. Usually one would eat locusts if they were in the middle of a severe drought and there was nothing else to eat. On the other hand honey was tasteful and appreciated.

4. The message (v.7,8)

⁷ And he was preaching, and saying, "After me One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals. ⁸ I baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

The first message of John was a warning to repent and to be baptized for the repentance of sins (v.4) but he also had something else to say and it concerned the Messiah. In verse seven John says '*who is mightier than I*'. He is telling his listeners that the one he precedes was not his equal but rather much superior to himself. Remember that people thought that John the Baptist was a prophet (Mat. 10:41, 21:26) so by saying that the One coming was '*mightier than I*' placed Jesus of Nazareth on a higher scale than a prophet of God! We see John's humility before the Lord Jesus Christ. We all should have the same attitude towards him, understanding that he is the mighty one.

John also speaks of his unworthiness '*I am not fit*' (v.7). He sees himself not worthy enough even to stoop down and undo his sandals! Slaves would have this to do unto their masters '*stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals*' but John is calling himself not to be worthy of even that! I wonder if we keep this same humility in our hearts and mind. Do we understand that we are just a handful of dust?

This section ends with verse eight:

⁸ I baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

These are prophetic words concerning the Messiah. Yes John would baptize with water (v.4). But the Messiah would bring another, totally different type of baptism - one of the Holy Spirit. John's baptism is of this world but the baptism of Christ would be from the heavens. This will happen on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit will be given to all believers in the upper room (Acts 2). A human baptism does not affect the inner-man, does not bring a renewal of the soul. But a baptism that is from 'on high' changes the very core of the person. His spirit is born again and his mind is renewed and is now capable to understand and have spiritual insight.

CONCLUSION:

1. This is the gospel of Jesus who is the Christ (Messiah), the Son of God who has come to deliver us from the coming judgment.
2. John the Baptist was the precursor of Jesus and preached that repentance was needed for the forgiveness of our sins.
3. John also preached that he was unworthy to be connected with the Messiah and that The Messiah would come with a baptism from above.

The Gospel of Mark
02 – The baptism and temptation of Jesus

1:9-13

⁹In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him; ¹¹and a voice came out of the heavens: “You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.” ¹²Immediately the Spirit impelled Him *to go* out into the wilderness. ¹³And He was in the wilderness forty days being tempted by Satan; and He was with the wild beasts, and the angels were ministering to Him.
(NASB)

1. His baptism (1:9)

⁹In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.

This section begins with ‘*In those days*’ and gives us the setting for this segment. This is Jesus’ first public appearance, it is the opening of his ministry as: prophet, priest and king. He does not have any disciples yet, he hasn’t preached nor done any miracles. This IS the very beginning – the time had arrived (Gal. 4:4).

Please notice that it is the lesser that is baptizing the greater. It manifests the character of John who did not want to baptize Jesus (Mat. 3:13-15) but was submissive to Jesus’ will to do so. It manifests the character of Jesus who allowed himself (the creator) to be baptized by John (his creature). In both cases John and Jesus were submissive towards the will of God – the Father and both manifested a great amount of humility. This trait of character should be found in every true Disciple of Christ. Paul reminds us of this:

Rom. 12:16

Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.
(NKJV)

John did his baptizing ‘*in the Jordan*’. The Jordan River is the most important river in Israel. It flows from North to South from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea. Although there are 65 miles in a straight line between these two bodies of water, the Jordan River, because of its twists and turns is about 200 miles long.

This river also divides Israel into two distinct geographic sections called the ‘east side of the river and the west side of the river’. This river is mentioned about 180 times in the O-T and 15 times in the N-T. The first time is with Abraham and Lot, when Lot looked at the plain of the Jordan which was like a ‘garden of the Lord’ (Gen. 13:10). Still today the Jordan River separates Israel in two. Things are either on the Eastern bank or the Western Bank. The last time the Jordan River is mentioned is in John 10:40 where Jesus escapes the Pharisees and finds safety ‘beyond the Jordan’.

John 10:40

And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was baptizing at first, and there He stayed.

(NKJV)

You might ask why Jesus was baptized – since he was perfect & pure. This is what Dr. Thomas Constable wrote in his commentary on Mark:

Jesus underwent John’s baptism to identify with man and man’s sin ([2 Corinthians 5:21](#)). He did not do so because He needed to repent. He did not. He also submitted to baptism because by doing so He identified with the particular group of people that John was baptizing, namely, the Israelites. Jesus associated His baptism with His death ([Mark 10:38](#); [Luke 12:50](#)). Consequently it is probably proper to conclude that He viewed His baptism as a public acceptance of His role as Israel’s Suffering Servant, Messiah. Jesus was about 30 years old then ([Luke 3:23](#)).

2. The witness of the Holy Spirit (1:10)

¹⁰ Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him;

Here we see that the baptism of Jesus was by immersion (*coming up out of the water*), not by sprinkling or any other means. People who came to John and repented of their sins walked into the Jordan River and then John would immerse them in these waters. Christians should follow the example given by Christ and do likewise.

This is the first thing that Jesus sees coming out of the waters:

(10)...He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him;

Not only did Jesus see the dove come down on Him but John also did (John 1:32-34). Now *'He saw the heavens opening'* literally means: to tear apart. I would guess that the sky must have been filled with clouds and suddenly they all seemed to move apart as though there was a tear in the sky. Have you ever seen this on a rainy day when suddenly clouds move apart and a ray of sun shine beams down to earth? Now why would the Holy Spirit choose the form of a dove to rest upon Jesus? There are different ways of seeing this and I believe this one has its worth. When God made a covenant with Abram (Gen. 15) he told Abram to sacrifice five animals and the turtledove was one of them. The Spirit coming down as a dove could manifest that Jesus would be the ultimate sacrifice. Let's not forget that the dove (or turtledove or pigeon) was a sin offering (Lev. 12:6). This could re-inforce the picture of Christ who would be offered for the sins of others.

Could there be a link between what is written in Gen. 1:2:

Genesis 1:2

**The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep.
And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.
(NKJV)**

The Spirit is hovering over the face of the waters at creation and now he is hovering over the Lord who is in the water! What we do know is that the Holy Spirit is manifesting that He (Jesus) is the chosen one – the Messiah.

3. The witness of God the Father. (1:11)

¹¹ and a voice came out of the heavens: "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased."

Not only was the Holy Spirit present and active at Jesus' baptism but the Father also manifested Himself. The Father spoke (*a voice came out of the heavens*), I wonder what it sounded like? Sometimes the voice of God is soft as with Elijah:

1 Kings 19:12,13

(12)and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice.

**(13)So it was, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice came to him, and said,
"What are you doing here, Elijah?"
(NKJV)**

Sometimes his voice or presence is terrifying as with Moses:

Exodus 20:18,19

(18)Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off.

(19)Then they said to Moses, "You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die."

(NKJV)

The Father also bore witness concerning Jesus, he said: '*You are my beloved Son*'. Here we see the relationship between both of them – they are Father and Son. When the Father described his Son as being '*beloved*' we see the reason why he is '*beloved*'. The Father says: '*In you I am well-pleased*'. The word '*well-pleased*' (EUDOKEO) means: to think well of, to approve. This is actually the seal of approval from the Father to the Son. He is fully approving the Son at the beginning of his ministry. This must have had such an impact on the people who witnessed the hearing of the voice of God! Has the voice of God had an impact in your life? If so does it still have an impact after all these years?

4. Jesus' preparation for his ministry (1:12,13)

¹²Immediately the Spirit impelled Him to go out into the wilderness. ¹³And He was in the wilderness forty days being tempted by Satan; and He was with the wild beasts, and the angels were ministering to Him.

Please turn to Matthew 4:1-11 for a fuller explanation of his three temptations. Notice that it is the Holy Spirit who drives Jesus into the wilderness.

Matthew 4:1

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

(NKJV)

Some believe and teach that it is never God who places you in difficult situations. The Holy Scriptures tell a different story. God uses difficult situations for the testing of your faith and to refine you (1 Peter 1:6-9; James 1:12-15).

Jesus' first temptation was:

Matthew 4:3

Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."

NKJV)

This was a temptation to satisfy his flesh at all costs (he was hungry). I can imagine that Jesus was very hungry because he fasted for 40 days. The devil is patient and strikes at Jesus when he is feeble. He did not face him when he was filled with vigour and vitality. We also need to be very careful when we are physically weak for we can become an easy prey!

Now his first response was:

Matthew 4:4

But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

(NKJV)

The devil wanted Jesus to ‘over-step’ his Father’s will by making his own food but Jesus said NO! He would rather wait and depend on his Father to provide for his needs – even at the cost of suffering while waiting. Please notice that he uses his Father’s words to defend himself (Deut. 8:3). The devil is not afraid of our own words but shivers at the Lord’s. Let this be a good lesson for us. Does it not also happen to us also to over-step the Father’s will and to do things or to have things when we want instead of waiting for his supply??

His second temptation was the following:

Matthew 4:5,6

(5)Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple,

(6)and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" (NKJV)

This deals with ‘tempting God’.

Surely if you are the Son of God you can do what you want (*throw yourself down*) and He will come to your rescue. And this time the devil even speaks the words of God to Jesus or are they? He says:

'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.'"

But Psalm 91:11,12 actually says:

Psalms 91:11,12

**(11)For He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you in all your ways.
(12)In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.
(NKJV)**

The devil voluntarily OMITTS one important phrase: *'To keep you in all your ways'*. We see that the devil twists and tries to turn the word of God in his favor. He was actually turning the entire meaning of these two verses. The whole idea of the angels coming to his aid was to keep him in the right path and the devil is using this to keep Jesus from being *'in all your ways'* which was the Fathers naturally! We need to be very careful for this is still a favorite tactic of our enemy. How many false teachers & preachers use a verse here and there to come to the conclusion that they want? They pervert the word of God to ensnare you. Some of us may even twist God's word and live a life in sin. We willfully shut our eyes to certain verses and only hold on to the ones we want. This was Paul's answer to this temptation:

Romans 6:1,2

**(1)What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?
(2)Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?
(NKJV)**

Jesus' second response was:

Matthew 4:7

**Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God.'"
(NKJV)**

So Jesus refused to tempt God by an evil conduct and we should respond like him. Notice that the Lord, once more, uses the word of God to protect himself (Deut. 6:16). We can not imagine the importance of memorizing the Scripture for they will protect us and guide us far from all that is sinful.

But the devil does not stop there even after two failures he comes back again with just as much cunning. His third temptation deals with: money, glory and power.

Matthew 4:8,9

(8) Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.

(9) And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me."

(NKJV)

See what the devil is able to do, in verse 5 the devil takes Jesus from the desert to Jerusalem, and then to the highest place of that city. In verse 8 he transports him to a high mountain, and then shows him all the kingdoms of the world. He is powerful and no wonder that the Lord God does not want his children to have any sort of dealing with not only the devil but also any fallen angels. The devil offers all the different types of riches found on earth. Are we not also tempted with glory, power and riches?

- More money
- More possessions
- More influence
- More prestige
- More, better, bigger, faster

We (our flesh) are tempted to have it all and to have it right now! But there was a catch to all this – a price to pay:

“(v.9)...All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.”

The price is becoming a worshipper of Satan, his slave and reaping hell as our reward. This was Jesus’ third and final response:

Matthew 4:10

Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'" (NKJV)

Only God is worthy of worship and no one else. This time Jesus uses a quote from Deut. 6:13,14. There is something that I want you to notice. It is only AFTER the temptation and the Son’s victory that the Father provides for the needs of His Son.

Mark 1:13

And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to Him.

Instead of letting the devil fool him into believing that he is able to provide what is best, Jesus knew that this was just an illusion – a lie. He resisted the devil (James 4:7) and the victory was at hand. He resisted what was offered to him and humbly received what the Father wanted him to have.

CONCLUSION:

In relationship with our temptations:

1. The Holy Spirit sometimes ushers us into a situation where we need to take a stand and walk right.
2. Never think that because you pass through temptations that you are not loved by God. Actually it is written that the father said that Jesus was his 'beloved Son' (v.11)
3. There is always a solution in our temptations and we find it in the written Word, like Jesus did and when the temptation passes - the Father is there to refresh you.

The Gospel of Mark
03 – The calling of the first disciples
1:14-20

¹⁴Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, ¹⁵and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

¹⁶As He was going along by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen. ¹⁷And Jesus said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.”¹⁸Immediately they left their nets and followed Him. ¹⁹Going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were also in the boat mending the nets. ²⁰Immediately He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went away to follow Him.

(NASB)

1. The imprisonment of John (1:14)

¹⁴Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God,

One must wonder why good people (like John the Baptist) are often distained by the people of the world. Jesus said it this way:

John 15:18

"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you.

(NKJV)

There is a spiritual battle going on between what is right and what is wrong, between light and darkness. Those who are of the darkness will automatically battle those who are of the truth. Often these people do not even know that they are of darkness for the Prince of this world has blinded their eyes.

2 Corinthians 4:4

whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

(NKJV)

Now, *‘after John had been taken into custody’* because he told the truth concerning King Herod’s marital situation:

Mark 6:18

**For John had said to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife."
(NKJV)**

What was Jesus preaching? Perhaps that people needed to be nicer to each other, to help each other out when there is a need or maybe it was that they should go to the synagogue more often and memorize the Torah or that they need to observe every single law that was found in the Holy Scriptures (there were 613 of them!). If you think that is right then you are wrong!

(v.14)...preaching the gospel of God,

What is *'the gospel of God'* that Jesus is preaching? As we have said earlier the idea behind the word *'gospel'* is some sort of 'good news'. This is good news that cheers the heart and fortifies the soul and encourages people to rejoice. As we will see the *'gospel'* is a person rather than an event of some sort. The *'gospel'* of the Father is His only begotten Son given as a sacrifice to atone for the sins of the repentant believer.

2. The proclamation (1:15)

¹⁵ **and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."**

In the Scriptures we see different annotations concerning the *'Kingdom'*.

- The kingdom of God (Mat. 6:33)
- The kingdom of Christ (Mat. 13:41)
- The kingdom of Christ and of God (Eph. 5:5)
- The kingdom of David (Mark 11:10)
- The kingdom (Mat. 8:12)
- The kingdom of heaven (Mat. 3:2)

All of these point to the Messianic authority and rule of Christ here on earth and the blessings that flow from that rule unto believers.

The proclamation of Christ had four aspects. The first had an aspect of time (*the time is fulfilled...*) this speaks concerning the 'time-line' of the Father. The prophets of old had told over and over again of the coming Messiah.

- His pre-existence (Micah 5:2)
- He would be from the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10)
- He would be the heir of the throne of David (Isaiah 9:6,7)
- He would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2)
- He would have a messenger sent before him (Malachi 4:5,6)
- He would be called out of Egypt (Hosea 11:1)
- The slaughter of children (Jer. 31:15)
- He would ride on a colt into Jerusalem (Zachariah 11:12)
- He would be killed for the sake of others (Dan. 9:26)

It is said that there are over 350 prophecies concerning the Messiah and now the time-line of the Father had been fulfilled and the Messiah would come to his own. This is what Peter said concerning *'the time is fulfilled'*:

Acts 3:18,19

(18)"But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled.

(19)"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,

(NKJV)

The second was an aspect of rule (*Kingdom of God...*)

Every kingdom has a ruler - one who would have authority over all his subjects, uphold law and order and provide for and also protect his kingdom and its inhabitants against assailants. This authority was to be given to Christ by his Father after his resurrection.

Matthew 28:18

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

(NKJV)

As we can see the *'kingdom of God is at hand'* and not yet been established here on earth. The enemy has been defeated but he has not yet been brought to justice. He is doing all he can to try to undo *'the kingdom of God'* but his fate has been determined. He will be sentenced and locked away.

Rev. 20:10

**The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.
(NKJV)**

Having dealt with his enemies the Lord will introduce a new world where his reign, his kingdom will prevail (Rev. 21 & 22).

The third was an aspect of attitude (*repent...*)

In the kingdom of God all must repent before the Lord in order to enter, for all are sinners, enemies and blasphemers (Rom. 3:23). All must bend their knee and proclaim that Christ is the Lord, all need to repent to have a total change of heart concerning who God is and who they are. One can only enter the kingdom if he has a repenting attitude filled with thankfulness for the grace that they were offered to be freely forgiven of their debt through Christ Jesus.

Philippians 2:9-11

**(9)Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,
(10)that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,
(11)and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
(NKJV)**

One day all will have to proclaim who Jesus truly is, God – the Son. Even the enemies of the Lord – the fallen angels and the unrepentant sinners will have to openly confess that Christ is King.

The fourth aspect is one of acceptance (*believe...*)

In the kingdom of God only true believers will be invited to share their life with the Lord. These are the ones who deeply believe not out of their intellect but out of their hearts. Only those who resemble the five wise virgins who were ready and waiting for the return of the groom (Mat. 25:1-13) will be invited to share in the wedding. The foolish virgins were not prepared for his arrival while the wise virgins were waiting hopefully for his return. Only the five wise virgins came in with the groom to the wedding banquet. The door was shut and the foolish virgins (unbelievers) were left outside and could not come in.

Notice that the foolish virgins were astounded that they could not get in – they even cried out to the groom:

Matthew 25:12,13

(12)"But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.'

(13)"Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.

(NKJV)

They were not ready and the groom did not recognize them as being part of the wedding guests. How many men and women will face Christ and be told that they are not his? How many believe that by following church rules or doctrines the best they can will grant them God's favor? Countless will be turned away and be led into eternal darkness because they did not repent unto God for the salvation of their soul. Thinking that they are 'good enough' and are self-righteous. Unto which group do you belong? What have you done with Jesus?

3. The calling of Simon and Andrew (1:16-18)

¹⁶ As He was going along by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ And Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men."¹⁸ Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.

A few thoughts about Jesus' calling. First of all it could happen anywhere. Here (v.16) we find that Jesus called Simon and Andrew while they were by the sea. This is a great encouragement, one can receive his celestial calling *wherever* he might be. There is no 'special' place that you need to be to hear God's call – amen! The saving grace of God can be received anywhere.

Second it could happen any time. What we see is that the two brothers were casting their nets (v.16). They were busy with the family business. They were not at the synagogue, or participating at a religious feast. They were not in any 'spiritual setting', searching for God or repenting of anything. It happened when they were working. God met them – they didn't meet God. It was God who called them and not the opposite. Again this is very encouraging for the 'timing' of God has nothing to do with our own 'timing'.

The third is that the calling of God does not discriminate in favor of the noble, wise and rich of this world. We see that Simon and Andrew were fishermen (v.17). They were plain simple hardworking people.

Take time to read concerning all the twelve apostles and you will see that they are from diverse backgrounds. This is what Paul had to say concerning the calling of the Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 1:26-29

(26)For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.

(27)But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;

(28)and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are,

(29)that no flesh should glory in His presence.

(NKJV)

Here we see that some of the Corinthians were wise, mighty and noble but for the greater part they were foolish, shameful and weak. Yes, some are called being as rich and wise as Solomon and others with absolutely nothing, like the criminal who hung alongside Jesus.

Fourth, we see the simplicity of the calling of God. The calling of Jesus to follow him is very simple, just two words – *‘follow me’* (v.17)No special prerequisites, social status, education or profession. One doesn’t need to have a degree in theology. Notice that one does not even have to have a perfect spiritual background. The calling is simple – follow me. It is by following Jesus that the person becomes a true disciple.

Five, we see that the calling is transforming. Simon and Andrew were fishermen (v.17) but Jesus was about to change all of that. He had other plans for them. They were to leave their occupation which was their trade and become something totally different, no longer gathering fishes in their nets but gathering souls in the Lord’s harvest. Jesus wants to transform all of us from sinners to saints, from living in darkness to living in the light, from awaiting the wrath of God to having his inheritance.

Christ never saves someone to leave the person as he is. There is always transformation that is involved (2 Thes. 2:13 & 1 P.1:2). This is what Paul wrote concerning our sanctification (becoming more Christ-like):

1Th 4:3,4

(3)For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality;

**(4)that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor,
(NKJV)**

Finally the calling of God demands an answer.

¹⁸ Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.

We see in verse eighteen that both brothers leave their nets. After hearing the Lord's call they had to respond and they did. They abandoned their nets immediately and without knowing anything concerning their future they simply followed Christ. When we hear the word of God and our conscience is pierced we ALWAYS respond one way or another. Either we say: 'yes Lord' or 'no'. Some believe that by not answering to the call one way or another they are 'safe'. While actually the truth is that we do answer 'no' by not saying 'yes'. Have you answered the call of God upon your life, left everything and followed Christ?

4. The calling of James and John (1:19,20)

¹⁹ Going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were also in the boat mending the nets. ²⁰ Immediately He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went away to follow Him.

There are similarities between both callings:

- Two sets of brothers
- Both pairs of brothers were fishermen
- Both were actively working
- Both were in their boats

There is also a big difference between both callings. In these verses we see that James and John had to make a decision before their father. With Simon and Peter they had no family member with them. We need to remember how 'close-knit' Middle Eastern families were and still are today. The family or the family clan was everything to the individual. Their world was totally different than ours for the family brought:

- A sense of identification
- Care when one was sick
- Protection against other clans
- Emotional, psychological and social betterment

In other words the family was everything and everyone worked for the benefit of each member. Here we see that James and John had to openly choose Jesus and leave their father and the family business! To do this was unthinkable and brought shame not only upon themselves but also upon the family. Far too many Disciples of Christ have not yet learned that to be a follower of Christ there is a price to pay – even within our family circle. Remember what Jesus said:

Luke 14:26,27

(26)"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.

**(27)"And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.
(NKJV)**

CONCLUSION:

1. If you really follow Jesus Christ you will be persecuted one way or another because it will bother people.
2. Like John the Baptist we also must be ‘proclaimers’ to our generation.
3. Have you heard the calling of Jesus on your life and answered it?
4. Are you following Jesus in your daily walk?

The gospel of Mark
04 - Jesus drives out an evil spirit
1:21-28

²¹ They went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and *began* to teach. ²² They were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes. ²³ Just then there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, ²⁴ saying, “What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!”²⁵ And Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be quiet, and come out of him!” ²⁶ Throwing him into convulsions, the unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice and came out of him. ²⁷ They were all amazed, so that they debated among themselves, saying, “What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.” ²⁸ Immediately the news about Him spread everywhere into all the surrounding district of Galilee.
(NASB)

1. Jesus in the synagogue (1:21,22)

²¹ They went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and *began* to teach. ²² They were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes.

CAPERNAUM:

Capernaum was a chief city of Galilee in the time of Christ. It lay on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, about five miles (8 klm) from the Jordan and on the frequented route from Damascus to the Mediterranean. Capernaum, more than any other place, seems to have been the residence of Christ, during the three years of his ministry. The brothers Andrew and Peter dwelt there. It is also where Matthew had his booth for people to pay their tax. Christ often taught in the synagogue, and did mighty works there.

SABBATH:

The Sabbath was a holy day of rest for the Jewish people. Normally on that day all commercial and civil activities came to a halt.

Ex 20:8

**"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
(NKJV)**

The Sabbath was given by God to his people when they entered the desert (Ex. 16:26). It was to be a day when people would stop everything (work & activities). This would leave this day open for spiritual activities and rest for their minds and bodies and not only theirs but also those of their servants and animals.

Ex 20:11

**For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.
(NKJV)**

SYNAGOGUE:

The synagogue was the meeting place where the Jews would congregate on the Sabbath day. They would sing, pray, listen to the reading of the Word and the explanation of it. A synagogue could be established only if ten men of a certain age gathered together to learn the Torah. For a person to establish a synagogue (build one) it was a sign of great piety and an almost certain 'ticket' to go to heaven. This may be why in larger cities there were so many of them. It is believed that in Jerusalem in the days of Jesus there were between 460 to 480 synagogues. A synagogue was divided in two sections. On the western part there would be a chest (or ark) where the Book of the Law and the Book of the Prophets were placed. This section was called 'the temple'. The other section was where people gathered and sat facing 'the temple'. The 'Elders' sat between the people and 'the temple', this section was reserved for prominent 'holy men'. It was also in this section that public reading of the Word of God was done. The women sat behind in a gallery of their own separated from the men by a latticework.

Notice the importance of the Sabbath and coming to the synagogue in the life of Christ. The gathering of believers should also be important to us. We should not hesitate to be present and participate in our local church. Also notice that Jesus did His part when he came to the synagogue – '*and began to teach*'. Should we not also do our part when we congregate together?

²² They were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes.

Notice that people were amazed (EKPLESSO) meaning: to be struck with amazement.

Also notice that they were struck by his teaching and not by:

- The glitter
- How he looked
- The props he cleverly used
- The jokes he made
- The way he made them feel good
- The promise of prosperity

They were struck by his TEACHINGS. Jesus took time to speak and explain spiritual truths. There was something totally different about Jesus, something that no other Scribe or Pharisee had. His words were different, his sentences made more sense – they touched the hearts of his audience. Jesus had ‘*authority*’(EXOUSIA)and the power that authority gives. He was like an old general who had seen a great number of wars and had never lost any of them. He speaks to his troops with authority and everyone listens and believes in what he is affirming. Jesus was not like the Scribes who seemed like repeating parrots!

2. The declaration of the evil spirit (1:23,24)

²³ Just then there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit; and he cried out,²⁴ saying, “What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!”

Notice in verse 23 that in the synagogue there was a man with an unclean spirit. Unclean spirits did and still do inhabit some people. Here are some biblical examples.

- Mark 5:2 (the man who lived in the cemetery)
- Mark 7:25 (the young daughter of a woman)
- Mark 9:25 (the mute and dumb spirit in the man)

An unclean spirit is a fallen angel that rebelled along with Satan. Notice that it is not because a person is in a synagogue that he or she is safe. There is not a single place on earth that brings safety against these spirits. Here we see that a man was in a synagogue AND had an evil spirit in him. In fact safety is not found in something but in someone – the Lord. A common question often arises: ‘can a born-again Christian ever be possessed by an evil spirit’ – NO NEVER!

1John 5:18

We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him.

(NKJV)

Here we see that the wicked one *‘does not touch him’*. People are tempted or encouraged to sin. But the children of God are not ‘touched’ by Satan. Do you remember the story of Job and how Satan needed the Lord’s permission to ‘touch’ his health (Job 2)?

1John 4:4

You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

(NKJV)

Here we see that the victory is given to the *‘little children’* of God not because of their own strength or wisdom but because the Living God is within them. Another example that the demons can not possess a true believer is in the following verses.

John 10:28,29

(28)"And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

(29)"My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.

(NKJV)

Here we have a double assurance that the believer is safe and sound. The first is because of the Son: no one can *‘snatch them out of my hand’*. The second is because of the Father: *‘No one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand’*. Now notice the conversation between the unclean spirit and Jesus.

²³ Just then there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit; and he cried out,²⁴ saying, “What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!”

There are three amazing statements that reveal the hearts of these fallen angels. The first is: *‘what business do we have with each other’*. Here we see that they were afraid, scared and terrified of Jesus. We can understand that he is not their friend. They know very well that there is no *‘business’* between them. The unclean spirit knew that there was no accord between Christ and Belial. This reminds me of what Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

2 Corinthians 6:14,15

(14)Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

(15)And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?

(NKJV)

The second is: *'Did you come to destroy us?'* The word destroy is (APPOLYMI) in Greek which means: to put out of the way entirely, abolish or put an end, to ruin. The unclean spirit knew that the power of Jesus was very real. They already had felt the wrath of God when they were cast down from heaven (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). They also knew that one day they all would be cast down into the lake of fire along with the unbelievers. This is what Jesus said:

Matthew 25:41

"Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

(NKJV)

It is evident that they knew of the coming judgment and that there was no escape from it.

The third is: *'I know who you are'*. From this we see that they have superior knowledge compared to mankind. They instantly know who Jesus is. Countless numbers of people today still do not know who Jesus is. But there is no doubt in the minds of all the fallen angels who Christ truly is. They recognize that Jesus is *'theHoly One of God'*

3. The rebuke of Jesus (1:25,26)

²⁵ And Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" ²⁶ Throwing him into convulsions, the unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice and came out of him.

Notice that Jesus:

- Did not try to be nice with the unclean spirit.
- Did not try to 'deal' with it.
- Did not try to reason with it.

He *'rebuked'* (EPITIMAO) meaning: to reprove, to severely censure them. We see that Christ did not take lightly what the unclean spirit was doing to the man in the synagogue. For those who believe that Jesus is a wimp or a carpet that all can step on because 'he is

love' his encounters with evil spirits prove quite differently. He is Master, he is Lord and he expresses total authority.

In plain English Jesus told the evil spirit to 'shut up and get out of him' –*'be quiet, and come out of him!'* The unclean spirit had no choice before his creator because his name is above all names (Eph. 1:20,21). By using his authority the evil spirit had to go and leave the man alone - *'he came out of him'* (v.26). This demonstration of Jesus' power should encourage us. No one, no circumstance not even the evil spirits can withstand the authority of Christ and we are part of his body.

4. The people's reaction (1:27,28)

²⁷ They were all amazed, so that they debated among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him." ²⁸ Immediately the news about Him spread everywhere into all the surrounding district of Galilee.

Don't forget that this event takes place in a synagogue! People are amazed and astonished (v.27) – they can't believe their own eyes! People are asking questions and debating (v.27). What is this? What new doctrine is this? They had NEVER SEEN someone do something like this before! Jesus '*commands even the unclean spirits*' to get out and they do! Does the person and power of Christ still amaze you?

²⁸ Immediately the news about Him spread everywhere into all the surrounding district of Galilee.

People were so impressed by his power and authority that they spoke about him throughout all of the region. Are we still as amazed as when we were born-again? Do our lips still proclaim who Jesus is not only in our home town but wherever we are?

CONCLUSION:

1. If Jesus thought it was important to congregate together so should we.
2. If Jesus did his part in the synagogue, we should also do our part in our church.
3. Unclean spirits are terribly afraid of the Holy One and his judgment. Amen that we can be forgiven of our sins!
4. Jesus has power over all created beings. Amen that He is my protector!
5. We should also do as the people in the synagogue – speak about Jesus and tell others what he has done for us.

The gospel of Mark
05 – The healing of many

1:29-34

²⁹ And immediately after they came out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. ³⁰ Now Simon's mother-in-law was lying sick with a fever; and immediately they spoke to Jesus about her. ³¹ And He came to her and raised her up, taking her by the hand, and the fever left her, and she waited on them.

³² When evening came, after the sun had set, they *began* bringing to Him all who were ill and those who were demon-possessed. ³³ And the whole city had gathered at the door. ³⁴ And He healed many who were ill with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He was not permitting the demons to speak, because they knew who He was.

(NASB)

1. A visit to Simon and Andrew's home (1:29)

²⁹ And immediately after they came out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.

We first of all see that Jesus and his disciples did not stay at the synagogue after the service was finished – why? It may be one of the following reasons.

- People were amazed and astonished at the miracle and it may have been best for him to leave so not to create a greater 'happening'.
- He might not have wanted to center the attention on himself.
- There was a greater need to help out the man that had evil spirits in him than to congratulate Jesus.
- He might also have known that someone else needed his healing power and that he needed to leave right away.

We also see that they entered the house of Simon and Andrew.

- We see that both brothers lived in Capernaum
- It was normal for family members to live in the same house even when they were adults – it is still done today in many different cultures.
- James & John were also invited

Please notice how ‘close knit’ the disciples were. There was truly a new brotherhood created and all who became disciples were included. There was a sense of real closeness, a closeness of the heart and all of this was centered on the person of Jesus.

2. Simon’s mother-in-law (1:30,31)

³⁰ Now Simon’s mother-in-law was lying sick with a fever; and immediately they spoke to Jesus about her. ³¹ And He came to her and raised her up, taking her by the hand, and the fever left her, and she waited on them.

Some of the interesting facts who we read concerning Simonis that he had a wife and also a mother-in-law that were living at the time. There is a strong Roman Catholic tradition that teaches that Simon-Peter had never been married. Today, on the other hand, some Catholic theologians are accepting this fact. It is difficult to refuse the evidence since even Paul wrote that Peter had a wife!

1 Corinthians 9:5

**Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?
(NKJV)**

For some reason Peter’s wife and his mother-in-law are not named. What we do know (from v.30) is that this poor woman was very sick.

- She had a fever
- This fever made her sick
- She was so sick that she was bed-ridden

(30)...and immediately they spoke to Jesus about her.

When Jesus and his disciples arrive at the house we see the caring heart of the believers concerning her. I wonder who the ‘they’ are. Are ‘they’ the disciples who came back from the synagogue and seeing this poor woman instantly spoke to Jesus about her? Or are ‘they’ the people who were at the house taking care of her and seeing Jesus arrive spoke about her condition to him? Either way as soon as ‘they’ knew of her illness they spoke to Jesus about it. This is a wonderful picture of how we also should be concerned with our brethren. Look at what these people did:

- Their concern for her was real
- Their hearts interceded in her favor with Jesus

In verse 31 we see Jesus's reaction.

³¹ And He came to her and raised her up, taking her by the hand, and the fever left her, and she waited on them.

Please notice that Jesus performs miracles in different places and here it was in a private home. He's not like a magician who prepares his 'tricks' beforehand! Jesus doesn't need a special setting, special prayers, special 'laying of the hands' or anything else for that matter. He does miracles on any day, anywhere and at any time.

He performed miracles:

- In a cemetery with the possessed man (Mat. 8:28)
- On a lake when he calmed the waters (Mark 4:39)
- In a marriage with the water turned into wine (John 2:9)
- In a synagogue as we have seen last week (Mark 1:23)
- In a bedroom with the 12 year old girl (Mark 5:42)
- Out in the open with the resurrection of Lazarus (John 11:1)
- In a house with Peter's mother-in-law (Mark 1:31)

There are no tricks or gimmicks with Christ, he is God incarnate and has power over all things. He is the giver of life and also its sustainer. He is the Lord who created all things. Notice how Jesus approached Simon's mother-in-law. Some people teach that a person always has to participate with Christ to 'get his miracle'. This example proves that they are wrong. Jesus did not speak to the woman, he didn't ask her name, what her illness was, if she wanted to get better or anything else. Others say that you need 'real faith to get your miracle'. They teach that it's your lack of faith that stops you from being healed. Jesus did not ask if her faith was strong or if she had any faith at all. He did not even mention her spiritual life. Others teach that you need 'to give' or to 'plant a seed' to get your miracle. Jesus did not ask anything of her either before or afterwards. He was not interested in what she could 'give' to 'get' a miracle. So, don't allow yourself to be led astray!

The healing of this woman was out of pure grace and pure grace alone. There were absolutely no strings attached. He did not ask her to 'follow me', or to provide any type of service, or wash his feet or tunic. He did not admonish her because of her illness either. There was no 'you better watch out next time' or 'you should have known better'.

Actually ALL that Jesus does unto others is ALWAYS out of GRACE! There is no ‘make a check in my name – please’ or ‘you need to ‘smarten up’ or ‘This is the last time I do something for you’. Grace, mercy, compassion are what overflows from our Savior’s heart.

³¹ And He came to her and raised her up, taking her by the hand

She needed to be touched by Jesus to be set free from her disease. We also need to be touched to be freed from the disease of sin. I can see a parallel between Simon’s mother-in-law being touched by Christ and healed and our own spiritual healing. We both need Christ to intervene for us in our favor. If Jesus intervened in a house for her – he intervened on the cross for us! Jesus took my place, he was my substitute and he paid the cost of my iniquities.

Gal. 3:13

**Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"),
(NKJV)**

Once Jesus touched her he then ‘*raised her up*’. Isn’t that also a beautiful image of what Christ does with us? Once we are cured of our sin-disease Jesus does not leave us in the bog of sin but lifts us up and bring us out of darkness unto the light. This is what the apostle Paul wrote about this unbelievable truth.

Colossians 1:12-14

(12)giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

(13)He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,

**(14)in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.
(NKJV)**

Jesus has raised us up from:

- The bog of sin we were trapped in
- The grip of death that held us
- The devil’s chains that bound us
- The world’s desires that blinded us

He raised us and:

- Died in our stead
- Washed us from sin's stains
- Gave us eternal life
- Made us his beloved bride
- Prepared a mansion for us to live in
- One day he will introduce us to his Father.

(31)...and the fever left her, and she waited on them.

Here we see that the authority and power of Christ is not only over evil spirits like we have already seen but also over sickness! The fever simply *'left her'*. NOTHING can resist the master's will – nothing! But is it the Master's desire that all be in good health – like some teach today? The obvious answer is NO – all we need to do is to look at the life of Christ!

- Did he cure every single person who was sick?
- Did he heal every leper, blind or deaf person in Israel?
- Did he resurrect all that died in his day?

The obvious answer is – no! Sometimes it is written that all who were brought to him were healed (as we will see). Other times he chose one out of the crowd (like the man at the pool of the sheep's gate in Jerusalem). Sometimes God does not want to heal and it is FOR HIS CHILD'S BENEFIT. This may be difficult for us to understand but it is true – we see this with Paul!

2 Corinthians 12:7-9

(7)And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.

(8)Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.

(9)And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

(NKJV)

God is not a healing machine – he has a plan and sometimes it concurs with being sick. The question is not 'Will God heal me' but rather 'Will I accept God's will for my life'? Now look at what this dear woman does after being healed:

(31)... ‘and she waited on them’

She serves the Lord and not only the Lord but all who were with Him. May I ask you why has the Lord healed you from your sins? Is it not also for you to serve Him and also to serve the brethren like this woman did! If you have been born-again, you are called to do the same – to serve. Don't be like the 10 lepers who were healed and only one was grateful enough to come back to Jesus and to thank him!

Luke 17:15-19

(15)And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God,

(16)and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan.

(17)So Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?"

(18)"Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?"

**(19) And He said to him, "Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well."
(NKJV)**

Peter's mother-in-law served Christ and the others and so should we – is that what you are presently doing?

3. The town gathers around Simon's house (1:32-34)

³²When evening came, after the sun had set, they *began* bringing to Him all who were ill and those who were demon-possessed. ³³And the whole city had gathered at the door. ³⁴And He healed many who were ill with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He was not permitting the demons to speak, because they knew who He was.

We can see that Jesus is having quite a busy day. In the morning he's at the synagogue where he teaches as no other has ever taught. Everyone is amazed and he casts out an evil spirit from a man which bring seven more amazement. In the afternoon he heals Peter's mother-in-law from her high fever. And now it is evening and his work is not finished yet. This can also happen to us. We have a busy day and are glad to be home and rest. Then something happens or someone needs our help. What do we do? The best answer is we do what Christ would do.

In our last study (Mark 1:21-28) we saw that the people spoke about him as soon as they left the synagogue.

His fame spread so fast that – that very evening:

³² When evening came, after the sun had set, they *began* bringing to Him all who were ill and those who were demon-possessed. ³³ And the whole city had gathered at the door.

We can not imagine the attraction that Jesus possessed, it seems that all were drawn to him. They sought him for different reasons. Some brought to him those who were ill (v.32). They knew that he could heal any type of sickness. Others brought those who were demon-possessed (v.32). They knew that he had authority over them. We also see that all the people of the city gathered at Peter's door (v.33). In a way it must have been frightening for his disciples to live such events. This reminds me that when we follow Jesus it can lead us into so many different types of events from people wanting to crown Jesus as he descended into Jerusalem (Luke 18:28-44) to being stoned to death like Stephen was. (Acts 7:54-60).

³⁴ And He healed many who were ill with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He was not permitting the demons to speak, because they knew who He was.

After such a long day, Jesus was still available for those who came to him. I wonder where he kept the energy needed to pass through a day like we have seen. We also should be available to help and care for others and we also need all the energy needed to do so. The only way to be able to do this is to remain humble before the Lord, place others before ourselves and ask the Lord for His strength.

CONCLUSION:

1. Just as Jesus entered Simon & Andrew's home he can enter your heart and make his home there.
2. If your soul has been healed by Jesus, the time has come to serve the Lord, like Peter's mother-in-law did and stop being ungrateful.
3. When there is something you can do to help another, even though night-time has come – don't refrain from helping like Jesus did with the crowd that night.
4. Jesus has authority over demons.

The gospel of Mark
06 – Prayer, pursuit & preaching
1:35-39

³⁵ In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left *the house*, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there. ³⁶ Simon and his companions searched for Him; ³⁷ they found Him, and said to Him, “Everyone is looking for You.” ³⁸ He said to them, “Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby, so that I may preach there also; for that is what I came for.” ³⁹ And He went into their synagogues throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out the demons.
(NASB)

1. Jesus leaves to pray. (1:35)

³⁵ In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left *the house*, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there.

Prayer is so vast & profound that we can only skim the subject this morning! Simply said: Jesus prayed and so should we. Our lack of praying manifests our independent spirit from the Almighty.

Here are some thoughts concerning praying:

- We can be bold in praying like Abraham was when he inquired about God destroying Sodom (Gen. 18:23-32)
- We should pray daily and as often as we are reminded to do so (1 Thes. 5:17)
- We should remember that God hates the prayers of the hypocrites (Mat. 6:5)
- We should not make any hasty prayers (Eccle. 5:2)
- We are called to pray publicly (Luke 18:10) and privately (Mat. 6:6).
- We should have a respectful posture when we pray (Gen. 24:26)
- We should be submissive to the will of the Father when we pray (Mat. 26:39)
- We should use prayer to confess our sins (Judges 10:10)
- We are commanded to pray (Phil. 4:6)
- We should persist in prayer (Ps. 28:1)
- Prayers of the wicked are not heard (Pr. 1:24-28)
- Prayers are based on God’s mercy (Ps. 69:13), God’s providence (Ps. 4:1) and God’s promises (Ex. 32:13).

(v.35)...In the early morning, while it was still dark

In our text we see when Jesus prayed which was very early in the morning - having risen a long while before daylight. Does this mean that Jesus ALWAYS prayed early in the morning – of course not! Jesus prayed any time:

- Very early in the morning (Mark 1:35)
- During the day (Luke 9:29)
- Late in the evening (Mat. 26:39)

There is no actual set time or reason given in the Bible for us to pray. In exile Daniel prayed three times a day facing Jerusalem. Moses often prayed when there was an emergency. David also prayed when there were moments of national or personal crisis. Elijah prayed when he was discouraged. Hannah prayed to have a child. Under the threat of war King Hezekiah prayed for protection.

What we see in our text is that Jesus personally set time apart to speak to his Father. This was His time and this is not a doctrine that tells us that we have to do the same. We can if we want to but it is not required of us to do so. Ideally, praying just after we get up seems to be a better time and this is why:

- We place God right away in our thoughts
- We place our day before Him
- We ask for His guidance, wisdom & protection
- We manifest that He is our source of life and that we count on Him.
- We declare our dependence to Him

On the other hand, as we have seen, we have examples of people praying: anywhere, anytime and for any reason in the Bible. The big question is this: ‘how is your prayer life?’

(35)...Jesus got up, left *the house*, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there.

As for myself, I know that my best ‘praying time’ is often when I am also away from others and speak to God alone.

- I love to pray when I’m in my car, it’s like I’m in my own ‘bubble’
- I pray when I’m on my motorcycle as I look at the beauty of God’s Creation

- I also pray when I walk by the river on our land (we live in the country) and thank the Lord for what He has allowed us to have.
- I really love to pray on the beach by the ocean when we are on vacation, with the sound of the waves crashing on the shore and the birds that cry out looking for their breakfast. I call this my 'prayer walk'!
- In church, when I am alone, I often pray walking around the central aisle.

We all need to find that special place (or places), alone, with no distractions where we can open our hearts in prayer. Where is your solitary place? If you don't have one you need to find one! One last remark: Jesus was determined to take time in prayer: He rose long before daylight (v.35). Normally prayer doesn't come easy unless we are in a crisis. Jesus got up before all the others to pray – he was determined. Prayer is truly a spiritual battlefield. Like Jesus, we also need to be very determined to approach our loving celestial Father. Jesus rose early before all the hustle and bustle that day brings. Whether early in the morning, many times during the day or late at night, one way or another, Disciples of Christ are called to pray and intercede for others.

2. The search for Jesus (1:36,37)

³⁶ Simon and his companions searched for Him; ³⁷ they found Him, and said to Him, "Everyone is looking for You."

It seems that the disciples were bothered by the fact that when they woke up, Jesus was not there with them! So they decided to pack-up and find him. I wonder how many of us are really disturbed by the absence of Christ in our lives. How many can spend hours or even days without truly thinking about Jesus? We go about our business, we do our daily chores, we go to work or school, we have our circle of friends, we have hobbies or personal interests, and time passes by. Sometimes Jesus is not really part of our life and it doesn't seem to bother us. Do you remember this story about Jesus and his disciples?

John 6:66-69

(66) From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.

(67) Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?"

(68) But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

(69) "Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

(NKJV)

Peter did not want to leave Christ, he desired Christ in his life for he was the Son of the Living God. He was determined, even if all others went away, to remain as close as possible to Jesus. It did not matter whether it was family or friends, work or the pressures of life – Peter would not forget the worth of Christ in his life. So how is your search for Jesus? Are you actively seeking to find traces of Jesus here and there?

Are you seeking to please and honor Him? Are you walking behind Him or are you asking Jesus to follow you in your steps! Is Jesus like the treasure that a man finds in the field and sells all he has to buy the plot of land.

Matthew 13:44

**"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.
(NKJV)**

Or is Jesus like the great pearl that a merchant finds and also sells everything that he has to acquire it.

Matthew 13:45,46

**(45)"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls,
(46)"who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.
(NKJV)**

In both of these parables people gave all to obtain what their hearts truly desire. I guess that's the key to it all – Jesus being the treasure of our life. Remember what Jesus said:

Mat. 6:21

**For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.
(NKJV)**

When we truly love, cherish and desire someone we instinctively want to be with him and that's what happened with the disciples.

³⁷ they found Him, and said to Him, "Everyone is looking for You."

The disciples searched until they found Him. His absence preoccupied their minds for they wanted to be with Him. Again is this the foremost of your preoccupations – to find Jesus and to be with him? Is there anything refraining you from achieving this goal? We are taught, in the word of God, how to search so that we can find:

Jeremiah 29:13

**And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.
(NKJV)**

God will be found IF we search with all our hearts. But before we search and find the Lord I believe that we first need to search elsewhere – and that's in our hearts!

Lamentations 3:40,41

**(40)Let us search out and examine our ways, And turn back to the LORD;
(41)Let us lift our hearts and hands To God in heaven.
(NKJV)**

We need to search and explore our own heart and see what lies in it then turn to the Lord and he will be found. Finding the Lord is different with each individual, there is no one path to walk on. Do you remember the prophet Elijah and how after he had his great victory against the false prophets on Mount Carmel he 'ran for his life' because Queen Jezebel wanted to kill him. He set off on a long expedition that began when he wanted to die – he had had enough (1 Kings 19). An angel from the Lord encouraged him and fed him and Elijah set off on a journey that would last forty days. He landed up on Mount Horeb '*the mountain of God*'. It was there that he met the Almighty. First there was a great strong wind that tore into the mountains. Then an earthquake suddenly shook the ground. Finally fire came to be, but in all these cases God was not to be found. All of a sudden a '*still small voice*' was heard and it was the Lord's. It was quite the life experience Elijah lived and the road to finding God was long and frightening. On the other hand if we take Saul (Paul) finding God was totally different. He actually was not looking for God (Acts 9). It was God who found out Saul and transformed his life. Saul was a Jewish terrorist (Acts 9:1,2) who lived and breathed to kill all followers of Jesus the Nazarene. The Lord unilaterally presented himself, spoke to him and blinded him until someone (Ananias) would come to his aid. Paul 'saw the light', repented and became the greatest missionary ever. In our search for God we all need to search our hearts and understand our need for redemption.

3. The task of Jesus (1:38,39)

³⁸He said to them, "Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby, so that I may preach there also; for that is what I came for." ³⁹And He went into their synagogues throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out the demons.

Notice that Jesus did not comment on Peter's exclamation that everyone was looking for him. He did not have to explain nor want to explain why he did things. There will be times that the Lord does things in OUR life that he will not explain to us either.

If often happens that disciples are ‘stuck’ on why this or that happened to them. To be honest, it’s none of our business. He is the LORD and we are but servants. Remember when Peter was not satisfied when Jesus told him what type of death he would suffer he turned around and asked ‘what about John’.

John 21:20-22

(20)Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?"

(21)Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, "But Lord, what about this man?"

(22)Jesus said to him, "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me."

(NKJV)

Jesus politely told Peter ‘It’s none of your business’. If we could understand this lesson, life would be so much easier. The one who follows is not the one who leads! As Disciples of Christ there are many mysteries that will not be revealed to us. These are mysteries which belong to God. There are other mysteries that we find in the New Testament.

- Jesus speaks of the mystery of the kingdom of God (Mat. 4:11)
- Paul speaks of the mystery of Israel becoming blind to spiritual truth (Rom. 11:25)
- The mystery of the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 2:7)
- The mystery of the raising of the dead (1 Cor. 15:50)
- The mystery of the will of God (Eph. 1:9)
- The mystery of Christ (Eph. 3:4)
- The mystery of the church (Eph. 5:32)

The Bible gives examples of other mysteries – God does not reveal what he does not want to reveal! It is as simple as that. In our present case it was none of the disciples ‘business’ why Jesus had gone out without them. He is the Shepherd and we are the sheep – not the opposite. This was Jesus’ response to Peter’s statement:

³⁸ He said to them, “Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby, so that I may preach there also; for that is what I came for.”

In other words: ‘let’s go – I’ve got work to do, I’ve got to preach’ Something very important is being said here, that we all need to understand and accept - *for that is what I came for*’(v.38)The purpose of the ministry of Christ was not:

- To establish churches
- To feed the poor & hungry
- To clothe the deprived
- To find jobs for the unemployed
- To have strong and healthy marriages for all his disciples
- To give good health to everyone
- To change stones into gold so all could be rich
- To make people feel happy

The purpose of the ministry of Christ was to ‘preach the Gospel’ from town to town. The spreading of the ‘Good News’ was the most important thing that had to be done before he sacrificed himself on the cross. Take away the preaching of the kingdom of God and all the rest of his activities and miracles have little but humanitarian value. If Jesus would have gone to the cross and died for our iniquities without us hearing the ‘Good News’ – no one would have been saved! The will of the Father was the spreading of the news that time had come, the Messiah had arrived and all should turn to him for the forgiveness of their sins. Jesus said the following:

John 4:34

**Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.
(NKJV)**

John 6:38

**"For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.
(NKJV)**

And we see that this is exactly what he does:

³⁹ And He went into their synagogues throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out the demons.

Jesus preached everywhere and manifested who he was – that was his purpose in life. Do you know the purpose of your life? And if you do, are you living it?

CONCLUSION:

1. We all need a time of solitary prayer, we need to MAKE time for solitary prayer.
2. Do we notice the absence of Christ? Are we truly searching for Christ in our life like the disciples did?
3. Should we not also be preoccupied with fulfilling the mandate that the Lord has given to all His children which is to be His ambassadors by proclaiming the Good News?

The gospel of Mark
07 – A man with leprosy
1:40-45

⁴⁰ And a leper came to Jesus, beseeching Him and falling on his knees before Him, and saying, “If You are willing, You can make me clean.” ⁴¹ Moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, “I am willing; be cleansed.” ⁴² Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed. ⁴³ And He sternly warned him and immediately sent him away, ⁴⁴ and He said to him, “See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.” ⁴⁵ But he went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the news around, to such an extent that Jesus could no longer publicly enter a city, but stayed out in unpopulated areas; and they were coming to Him from everywhere.
(NASB)

1. The plea of the man (1:40)

⁴⁰ And a leper came to Jesus, beseeching Him and falling on his knees before Him, and saying, “If You are willing, You can make me clean.”

LEPER – The Hebrew word for this sickness means to be ‘*smitten*’ because people believed this sickness was directly given by God as a punishment and sometimes it was likewith Myriam (Num. 12). If you had leprosy you could not live within a walled city but only in the open country. When people walked near them they had to cry out ‘unclean – unclean’ to warn them of their condition and to keep away. A leper could not speak to anyone and a healthy person could not return any verbal salutation. Often their clothing and even their homes were destroyed by fire. The lepers were social outcasts, unable to work, unloved and treated harshly! They were also not allowed to participate in any religious activity. This meant that they were not only cut off from family and society but also from the Lord God. No wonder leprosy is a biblical imagery of being tainted with sin!

For this leper to come near Jesus he really needed a lot of courage. He was not allowed to come near people, to walk in a crowd, to speak or socialize. Normally this man should have never come close to Jesus. His life could have been ‘on the line’ for people could have taken stones and thrown them at him. How brave and determined this man was. I can also see that this leper saw in Christ something that compelled him to come close. Jesus’ personality drew the leper to himself. What did he see in Christ that he didn’t see in other rabbis or teachers of the Law? Was he drawn to him because of the kindness, compassion, empathy and love that he saw he had on the other sick people?

No one knows but for whatever profound reason this man wanted to talk with Jesus. In the same way we can also need a lot of courage to come to Christ when we understand how infected we are by sin. How could such a person as I ever be accepted by Christ? If this is your case please remember these words from the apostle Paul.

1Tim. 1:15

This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.

(NKJV)

The man who wrote these words was a cold blooded killer, murdering as many of the followers of Christ as he could. He had absolutely no remorse in what he did (remember the stoning of Stephen Acts. 7:54-60) and this was his own testimony:

Acts 22:3-5

(3)"I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today.

(4)"I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women,

(5)"as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished.

(NKJV)

If Paul found salvation in Christ, being the man that he was, if Jesus received him and brought forgiveness to this merciless killer – will he not do the same to ALL who come to him? Now this leper did three things:

First *'he came to Jesus'*. As we have said he was attracted to Jesus and was ready to take the chance that he would be well received. In a way it was 'all or nothing'. He could no longer remain as a leper and Christ was his only answer. Must we not also deeply understand that we have this death-sickness in us called sin and also comprehend that only Jesus can cleanse us from this spiritual death living in us?

Second *'beseeching Him'*. Here we see the inner attitude of the leper– he was a broken man. The word *'beseeching' in Greek (PARAKALEO)* means: invite, invoke, implore. He literally cried out to Jesus, he called upon his name, he implored Jesus to stop and rest his eyes upon him.

Third *'Falling on His knees'*. Here we see his outward attitude. He humbled himself before Christ. He was manifesting how great Christ was and how worthless he was. Christ was the Master and he was just nobody before Him. He was not shy to do this before the crowd of people. There was absolutely no pride in this man. I wonder if we don't receive from Christ because of our pride or our thoughts of self-righteousness! We see that the leper had one desire:

"If You are willing, You can make me clean." (v.40)

He wanted so badly to be 'clean', normal & healthy – wouldn't you? Being brought back to health would change absolutely everything in his life; from returning home to being accepted in society, from celebrating the holidays to bringing an offering to the Lord for the forgiveness of sins. The leper did not know if Jesus was willing to help him (*If you are willing*) but he knew that Jesus had the power to come to his aid (*You can make me clean.*) I believe this may be one of the greatest difficulties in our Christian life. We all know that Christ can do all things for he is the creator (John 1:1-3). What we do not know is if Jesus wants to do this specific thing in our life. This we can never be certain of. Jesus gave us the perfect model of someone who asks but does not know the outcome of his prayer.

Luke 22:42

saying, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done."

(NKJV)

2. The miracle (1:41,42)

⁴¹ Moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed."⁴² Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed.

What can move a man to come to the aid of another? A rich man may give for charity receipts that he will use when income tax time comes. A proud man helps in order to show everybody how sensitive he is to the cause of the sick. A humanitarian acts because it is his duty to help his fellow man. A normal person helps because his conscience bothers him when he does not help out. There are many reasons why people help others out. We don't really know what they are but God does and He searches the hearts of everyone. King David once asked the Lord God to search his heart. He was certain that his ways were true. Could we invite God to do the same? Would he also find our hearts and intentions to be pure?

Psalms 139:23,24

**(23) Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties;
(24) And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.
(NKJV)**

What moved Jesus? It was his *compassion* (SPLAGECHNIZOMAI) meaning: to have the bowels yearn, feel sympathy, to pity. When the eyes of Jesus fell upon this man he was moved with compassion for him. No force on earth can move or oblige Jesus to act in such a way. Only his character (holy character) ushered him to do so. This was not about ‘looking good’ or a ‘publicity stunt’ to get big crowds to come and listen to him. This was simply his heart reaching out and wanting to do something for the leper. I can not but help to think about us in relation with ‘people whom others disdain’. Are we like Christ towards them? Are we also moved with compassion to help them? Do we stop when they call us? Do we listen to their plea of misery? Are we touched by their desolation? Do we stretch our hands to help them? Do we care at all? Now Jesus will do the unthinkable.

⁴¹ Moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, “I am willing; be cleansed.”

‘Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him’. Jesus broke every single social rule in the book. No one would ever touch a leper being afraid to become lepers themselves! Can you imagine how it must have felt for this man to be touched by a ‘normal’ person? Even more so when this person was known to be a ‘man of God’ and a ‘miracle worker’! When was the last time that you touched an ‘untouchable’?

‘And said to him’. This is the second thing that Christ did – he spoke to the person. Many times we do not say things to people thinking that ‘they know what I mean’. Unfortunately most of the time people don’t know what is truly in our hearts. Jesus does what we all should be doing – speaking to each other. This leper had been deeply offended so many time with people just turning away from him, not speaking or looking at him. He felt as though he was a non-person, a thing, a sub-human. But Christ stretched out his hand and he spoke to him. Jesus did not only speak to the man, he also spoke to his leprosy.

⁴² Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed.

Notice that the leprosy left him *‘immediately’*, there is no such thing as a ‘progressive healing’ in the bible. In some religious circles it is taught that Jesus also heals (does miracles) but progressively, meaning that overtime you will get better and that this is also to be considered a miracle. There is not one single miracle done by Christ (or any other

person) in the Bible who takes days or weeks or months to be fully accomplished. Every single person that met Jesus for a miracle received it.

Notice this even with the story of the cleansing of the ten lepers (Luke 17:11-19) whom Jesus sent away to the priests. They received their miracle not progressively but they were cured all of a sudden as they walked! It is written:

Luke 17:15

**And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God,
(NKJV)**

So don't be fooled, miracles are instantaneous. This miracle manifests the power of Jesus over sickness. Since leprosy is a symbol of sin does this miracle also manifest the power of Christ over sin? That He is able to clean us from this spiritual disease?

If we come to Jesus, implore him and humble ourselves before him – he will also cleanse us from our spiritual leprosy? Of course it does, remember when Jesus healed the paralytic man (Mat. 9) before he healed the person Jesus told him;

Matthew 9:2

**Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you."
(NKJV)**

This man's life would TOTALLY change because Jesus touched him. So it is with us. When we are reborn through repentance our entire life changes.

3. The warning (1:43,44)

⁴³ And He sternly warned him and immediately sent him away, ⁴⁴ and He said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

Why would Jesus tell this man to go straight and see a priest? Didn't he have better places to go? How about seeing his family and friends and showing them the grace that he had received? Maybe there was something more important to do – something that deals with having fellowship with the God of Israel.

Leviticus 14:1-3

(1) Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

(2) "This shall be the law of the leper for the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought to the priest.

(3) "And the priest shall go out of the camp, and the priest shall examine him; and indeed, if the leprosy is healed in the leper,

(NKJV)

You see it was only a priest who could pronounce him ‘clean’ and no one else. Once he was pronounced ‘clean’ – he could be re-established not only in society but he would be re-established with God. He was welcomed ‘back in the family’ and could now participate fully in all spiritual activities. This spiritual re-establishment was more important than any social event! Have you been ‘re-established’ with God? Have you become part of his family? Are you a son or daughter of the Most-High (2 Cor. 6:18)? This is the most important thing in your life, it comes before all things. Jesus tells the man ‘*See that you say nothing to anyone*’ (v.44). Don’t stop here and there not even to say ‘Hey, look at me. I’m cleansed, Jesus did a miracle for me’. There was something more important than talking with people and that was to be declared ‘clean’.

4. The disobedience & consequences (1:45)

⁴⁵ But he went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the news around, to such an extent that Jesus could no longer publicly enter a city, but stayed out in unpopulated areas; and they were coming to Him from everywhere.

You would think that after being cleansed by Jesus this man would follow his instructions – ‘don’t talk, just go to the priest’ BUT he didn’t. For some reason he could not stop telling others what Christ had done for him. Are there times that it is not proper to spread the ‘Good News’, to tell others how God did a miracle in your life? The answer is YES! When your emotions push you to do things when Christ says ‘not now’ even if it’s to evangelize – then it’s not O.K. to do so. Do you also find yourself having been ‘cleansed’ from your sins and yet NOT DOING what Christ wants you to do – even if it seems good in your eyes?

By not doing what Jesus told him to do this man actually hindered Jesus’ ministry.

(45)...Jesus could no longer publicly enter a city

Think about it, don't you think that when you also don't do what you are supposed to do, you also hinder Jesus' ministry? Jesus said:

Matthew 12:30

**"He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.
(NKJV)**

CONCLUSION:

1. If you are not 'cleansed from your sins': come to Christ and humble yourself before him.
2. There are many warnings given to us in the Scriptures – let us heed them.
3. Disobedience always has consequences on Jesus's ministry.

The gospel of Mark
08 – Jesus and the paralytic
Mark 2:1-12

**When He had come back to Capernaum several days afterward, it was heard that He was at home. ² And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room, not even near the door; and He was speaking the word to them. ³ And they came, bringing to Him a paralytic, carried by four men. ⁴ Being unable to get to Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him; and when they had dug an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic was lying. ⁵ And Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” ⁶ But some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, ⁷ “Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?” ⁸ Immediately Jesus, aware in His spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves, said to them, “Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts? ⁹ Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven’; or to say, ‘Get up, and pick up your pallet and walk’? ¹⁰ But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—He said to the paralytic, ¹¹ “I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home.” ¹² And he got up and immediately picked up the pallet and went out in the sight of everyone, so that they were all amazed and were glorifying God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this.”
(NASB)**

1. The gathering (2:1,2)

When He had come back to Capernaum several days afterward, it was heard that He was at home. ² And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room, not even near the door; and He was speaking the word to them.

We first see that Jesus returned to Capernaum. As we have already seen Capernaum is the ‘home base’ for all of his Galilean ministry. Galilee was divided in two sections (Upper and Lower Galilee). The ‘Upper Galilee’ section was inhabited with a mixed population and was called the ‘Galilee of the Gentiles’ (Mat. 4:15). This was where most of the commerce and highways passed through. The people who lived in Galilee were not refined like those who lived in Jerusalem for they were less educated and were known to be insolent. The busiest part was the Northeastern section around the Sea of Galilee especially where Capernaum stood. This city was the hub of culture and wealth.

Notice that ‘*He was at home*’ – whose home was it? We have seen in Mark 1:29 that it was Simon and Andrew’s house.

Jesus was certainly not like a wandering dog or a drifter having no home to rest in and having no particular agenda in life. His purpose was to go from village to village proclaiming the 'Good News' of the coming kingdom of God and repentance. While in Galilee Jesus always came back to 'home-base' So Jesus arrives and what happens? Does he have an opportunity to rest? Can he take a little 'time off' without being asked something?

² And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room, not even near the door; and He was speaking the word to them.

Not a chance. People from all over came to see him and not only from Capernaum. Listen to what Luke writes in his gospel concerning this:

Luke 5:17

Now it happened on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting by, who had come out of every town of Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was present to heal them.

NKJV

So many people gathered that not only the house could no longer receive them but outside and all around. The house was packed full of people. There must have been hundreds of people surrounding the house. Imagine the renown that Jesus had for people to come from Jerusalem and further down in Judea to come and listen to him. Today the distance from Jerusalem to Capernaum is 126 klm. It took a many days to go that distance on the back of a mule! Look who came to see and hear him – there were 'regular' people but also scribes (v.6). Then there were Pharisees and teachers of the Law (Luke 5:17). Intelligent people, religious people – people with authority; they all came to listen to him for it is written that *'He was speaking the word to them'*. Notice that Jesus did not change his message considering what 'type of crowd' lay before him. The message is the same for everybody for there is only one message. Paul wrote it this way:

Romans 1:16

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

(NKJV)

2. The bringing (2:3,4)

³ And they came, bringing to Him a paralytic, carried by four men. ⁴ Being unable to get to Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him; and when they had dug an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic was lying.

In v. 3 we see four men bringing a person to Jesus, notice that in v.5 this person is a man because Jesus called the person 'son'. There is a lot to be told concerning the character of these four good men. We see the compassion and pity they have for him. We see their determination and daring. We can also understand that they believed that Christ could do something for their friend. These are the type of friends that we all desire to have. I wonder if it's the type of friend that we are unto others. Are we caring, compassionate, ready to do what it takes to help out and bring people to Christ?

⁴ Being unable to get to Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him; and when they had dug an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic was lying.

In v. 4 we see that there is a first obstacle – *'the crowd'*. People will always be an obstacle when we desire to introduce someone to Christ. There is a lot of pressure out there from family and friends not to listen when the gospel is given and there is a good reason for that. People who are not regenerated by the new birth are still blinded and have a spiritual veil before their eyes (2 Cor. 3:13-16). Because they are still in spiritual darkness they actually reject the light which shines upon mankind (John 1:12,13). The context in verse 4 deals with a real crowd of people and because the crowd was so dense the four men could not get to Jesus. But I certainly see a spiritual truth about people stopping individuals from having access to Christ. What I find marvelous is that the four men didn't let this first obstacle stop them.

Then there was the second obstacle *'the roof'*. This is quite remarkable! Imagine being willing to destroy someone's property so that your friend can come to Christ hoping that he will be healed! It is written that they simply *'removed the roof'*. They actually didn't care about the implications of destroying part of the roof – they would take care of that later. What counted most was their friend. They had ONE objective and that was to bring their friend to Jesus. Once the roof was open enough to slide the friend through they slowly let him come down until he reached the floor of the house. Now that is taking someone to heart. I wonder if we have the same determination to bring someone to Christ.

3. The forgiveness (2:5)

⁵ And Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

It seems that there is something wrong that is going on. The paralytic is lowered to Jesus’ feet. I guess it was very simple to guess what they wanted Jesus to do – cure him – anyone could figure that out! But is that what Jesus does – absolutely not! Please notice that each miracle is different and they all teach various things concerning the messiah. Notice that it is *‘their faith’* (all five of them) that activated the work of Christ. These men strongly believed that Jesus was able to provide a miracle and bring a cure. Faith is so important, it is the key that opens many spiritual doors and without it we are locked outside!

Heb. 11:6

**But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.
(NKJV)**

They had faith in Jesus and he honored their faith. How big of a faith must I need for Christ to work in me or to save me?

Mat. 17:20

**So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.
(NKJV)**

A small but TRUE faith (like a mustard seed) opens the doors to unbelievable things. This man came to be physically healed but Jesus had a better plan for him!

(v.5)...said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

Here we are taught that spiritual healing is MUCH MORE important than physical healing. Back then (like today) far too many came to Christ for the wrong reasons, mostly for physical healing. But Christ had first of all come to bring spiritual healing by dying on the cross to save our souls. Notice that he calls him *‘Son’*. What a tender word for this paralysed man to hear. This manifests the loving and caring heart of the Messiah.

“Son, your sins are forgiven.”

Now this is a phrase that the paralytic never thought he would hear! He wondered if Jesus would say ‘Get up and walk’ but what he heard was never expected. Jesus said something that no man had ever dared to say because it was reserved for God only.

4. The uproar (2:6-7)

⁶But some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, ⁷“Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?”

Were the scribes wrong? Was there another person or way to be forgiven of our sins except by the God of Israel? These Jewish scholars thought Jesus was blaspheming for no one can forgive sins but God himself! Let's not be too harsh on these men and think this over. Can a man forgive sins and the obvious answer is no!

2 Chron. 7:14

"if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

(NKJV)

Jer. 31:34

"No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

(NKJV)

They were right, only God can forgive sins because when we sin we offend God. Remember when David slept with Beth-Sheba and was confronted by the prophet Nathan. When David realized that Nathan was speaking about him this is what he said:

2 Sam. 12:13

So David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die."

(NKJV)

David knew that all his sins concerning his dealings with Beth-Sheba (adultery, lying, planning evil, ordering a murder against a valiant, blameless husband) were sins against the Lord. If sins are directly against the Lord then only the Lord can forgive them and this is what we see. The scribes, when they heard Jesus say: 'Son, your sins are forgiven', thought he was a blasphemer and if Jesus was a blasphemer the Law of Moses says that he must be 'put to death'.

Lev. 24:16

'And whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall certainly stone him, the stranger as well as him who is born in the land. When he blasphemes the name of the LORD, he shall be put to death. (NKJV)

The only way that Jesus would not have blasphemed is if he was Immanuel – God with us. So is he a blasphemer or truly God?

5. Questions & answer (2:8-11)

⁸ Immediately Jesus, aware in His spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves, said to them, “Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts? ⁹ Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven’; or to say, ‘Get up, and pick up your pallet and walk’? ¹⁰ But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—He said to the paralytic, ¹¹ “I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home.”

In verse eight we see that Jesus is truly God because he knows what is going on in the minds of the scribes - *‘Why do you reason about these things in your hearts?’* As I said, he knows all things. He is omniscient! This should have struck the minds of the scribes and should have brought them to their knees – but it didn’t. How many times does the Lord do things in our own life and yet we resist to give him all the glory. Jesus stuns them with answering the question BEFORE they ask!

⁹ Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven’; or to say, ‘Get up, and pick up your pallet and walk’?

He challenges them to a theological debate! Which is easier to say (to do in reality) ‘arise and walk’ or ‘your sins are forgiven’? Here Jesus says that the proof that *‘I have power on EARTH to forgive sins’* is to tell that man to get up and walk out of here.

¹⁰ But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—He said to the paralytic, ¹¹ “I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home.”

Notice that the power to forgive sins is ‘on earth’. There is no: second chance, no reincarnation and no purgatory. Sins can only be forgiven while we are alive here on earth.

There is not a single example of someone who dies ,without having received forgiveness here on earth, who later is forgiven in the after-life. Once you die the opportunity to be forgiven is GONE forever!

Heb. 9:27

**And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment
(NKJV)**

Is the wrath of God still upon your shoulders? Has Jesus forgiven your sins? If not, now is the time to humble yourself and repent asking Christ to wash you of your sins.

¹¹ “I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home.” ¹² And he got up and immediately picked up the pallet and went out in the sight of everyone, so that they were all amazed and were glorifying God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this.”

In verse eleven we see that whatever Jesus says – happens! For he is God incarnate. No sickness can withstand his command, resist his will or repel his resolve. This man had no choice but to arise, take his makeshift bed in his hands and go back home for Jesus had given him perfect health! Just as dead Lazarus walked out of the grave alive once more, by the command of Christ, this man just rose in front of all who were there! Can you picture the reaction of the crowd and the scribes!

¹² And he got up and immediately picked up the pallet and went out in the sight of everyone, so that they were all amazed and were glorifying God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this.”

This man instantly rose and picked-up his pallet and walked away. Before it was the pallet that held the man and now the man became master of the pallet! Can you imagine the smile on the face of that man and his four friends! How thankful he must have been unto his friends for bringing him to Christ. I believe it is the same thing when we ‘bring’ someone to Christ. Still today I thank my friend who brought me to a Christian Camp for a winter week-end because that is where I had a divine appointment with God. We see that everyone was amazed and they glorified God. When we are healed (either physically or spiritually) the glory and honor always goes to the Lord and no one else. What they had witnessed was an actual proof that Jesus had the authority to forgive sins here on earth.

CONCLUSION:

1. Are you still truly interested in Jesus and want to gather together to be near him?
2. Are you bringing people to Jesus, telling the 'Good News' to those around you? Do you even care about all of those who are spiritually paralysed?
3. Has Jesus seen your faith in him and have you been cured of your sins?
4. Are you still questioning, wondering if Jesus is truly God incarnate? If so, ask Jesus to reveal himself to you by the Holy Spirit.
5. Are you still amazed at the miracle that God has done in YOUR life by forgiving your sins and delivering you from the judgment to come?

The gospel of Mark
09 – Jesus and Levi

2:13-17

¹³ And He went out again by the seashore; and all the people were coming to Him, and He was teaching them.

¹⁴ As He passed by, He saw Levi the *son* of Alphaeus sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, “Follow Me!” And he got up and followed Him.

¹⁵ And it happened that He was reclining *at the table* in his house, and many tax collectors and sinners were dining with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many of them, and they were following Him. ¹⁶ When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they said to His disciples, “Why is He eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?” ¹⁷ And hearing *this*, Jesus said to them, “*It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.*”

(NASB)

1. Jesus takes a walk (2:13)

¹³ And He went out again by the seashore; and all the people were coming to Him, and He was teaching them.

There are three things that are mentioned in our first verse: Jesus came, people came and Jesus taught. It seems that this is by far the greater part of his ministry. Many things are said concerning his healing ministry, his passion, death and resurrection but time wise this is a small part of this three and a half years of ministry. In other words if Jesus took so much care to teach should we not take time to learn from him?

Jesus and his disciples are in Capernaum which is a village by the Sea of Galilee. It would be a normal thing to be walking on its shores. There could be many reasons why Jesus would have decided to specifically walk there:

- It's a busy place with all the fishermen around
- There's lots of people to mingle with
- It's a commercial area with the merchants and passer-by's

What I first of all see is that to fulfill his calling he mostly needed to be where people are – so he went to the shore. Jesus is far from being a secluded person living in a grotto and speaking once a year to those who venture to find him. I believe that all true believers have also been commissioned by the Lord to spread the Good News – all of us without any exception.

2Cor. 5:18,19

(18) Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation,

(19) that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

(NKJV)

Jesus had received the ministry of reconciliation (Eph. 2:16) and so have we (2 Cor. 5:18,19). If Jesus needed to be with people – so do we! So, are you out there with people? Some believe that we should live secluded lives, away from the ‘sinners of this world’. As we will see, this is not the attitude Christ had and it should not be ours either. How can I be a minister of reconciliation?

- If I mostly keep to myself
- If I don't really like to be with people
- If I live for myself and not for others
- If my priority is my household or my business and not God's kingdom

How can I be committed to the word of reconciliation?

- If my mouth is sealed
- If my heart does not yearn to proclaim the gospel
- If my eyes are shut to the final destiny of those around me
- If I simply don't care about those around me

Jesus went where people are – and so should we! He was a minister of reconciliation. What about us? Brothers and sisters, we have a calling and by not answering it, are we not sinning? Not only that, but we are actually working AGAINST God by rebelling against his command to be his witnesses around the globe. It is our sacred duty to stand up and become heralds for the Lord. So a multitude came to him and it is written that *'He was teaching them'* (v.13). This is the fifth time since he began his ministry that it is written that **he taught or preached** to the people. This seemed to be a 'top-priority' for the Lord. Not only is evangelizing important but also teaching others about the Lord God. We need to teach our children and grand-children and those that the Lord places in our lives. There are many ways that we are called to be 'teachers of Jesus', here are a few of them:

- Teach by example, by our care and our patience.
- Teach by the way we act in difficult situations.
- Teach by our generosity, kindness and hope.
- Teach by our thanksgiving, pure life and spirituality.
- Teach by our words.

Teaching has two facets: one is verbal and the second is by our actions. And you know what the old proverb says: 'Actions speaks louder than words'. So how's your preaching and teaching? Do you talk and act like Christ would?

2. Jesus calls Levi (2:14)

¹⁴ As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, "Follow Me!" And he got up and followed Him.

Notice how Jesus simply and very naturally approaches a person who he has never seen before – he simply speaks to him. It's not that difficult when you think of it – simply speak to people. I've approached a lot of different people in my lifetime:

- From neighbors to co-workers
- From mothers to murderers
- From bikers to ministers
- From strangers to family

I don't think that I can count on one hand the times (in 40 years) that I have been insulted or mocked when it was on a one to one basis – so don't be afraid to 'speak to others'. That doesn't mean that people always agreed with me (most of the time they didn't). There was only once when a man threatened to kill me if I ever spoke to him or his household again about Christ, but that was very exceptional. Now Jesus saw a man called Levi and he was the son of Alphaeus. Levi was his Jewish name but he also used another name because of his business (tax collector) and that was Matthew. Levi was a tax collector (or a Publican as the Jews would say). Jews hated and disdained any fellow Jew who worked for the Roman government especially a tax collector. This is what the American Tract Society Dictionary writes about Publicans.

There were many publicans in Judea in the time of our Savior; Zaccheus, probably, was one of the principal receivers, since he is called "chief among the publicans," Lu 19:2; but Matthew was only an inferior publican, Lu 5:27. The Jews reproached Jesus with being a "friend of publicans and sinners, and eating with them," Lu 7:34; but he, knowing the self-righteousness, unbelief and hypocrisy of his accusers, replied, "The publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you," Mt 21:31. Compare also the beautiful demeanor of the penitent publican in the temple, and the self-justifying spirit of the Pharisee, Lu 18:10-14.

Since we are on the shores of the Sea of Galilee there was a tax office there! Fishermen had to pay a tax (to the Roman Government) on the fish they caught before they could sell it. As you might imagine this Levi who Jesus approached - was greatly disliked by the crowd. It is said that the Publicans were stopped from entering the synagogues or Temple of God. They could not even participate in open prayers or give testimony in a court of law. But the eyes and heart of Jesus saw Levi differently and he approached him. How do our eyes see people? Do we stop at the outer shell their clothing, hair style, speech, color, race, language, education, physical capacities and so forth? Or do we look further, deeper in a person to see the person 'inside' the outer shell – a person who needs salvation. Do we approach only the ones who are like us, look like us and think like us? You know the ones in the same Church Denomination or who have the same 'social standing' and so forth. Jesus approached everybody and so should we.

He said two words to him: *'Follow me'* (v.14) and he did! *'And he got up and followed Him'*. Levi got up and left everything behind. Imagine he left his 'job' and became 'unemployed'. It didn't matter what the Roman Government would think and the consequences of abandoning his ties with them – he just left. I wonder if there was a Mrs. Levy and what she was thinking of her husband leaving his job to follow this preacher. What a great model Levi is for all of us. When Jesus calls us to follow him we should simply be ready to do it. Far too many people hesitate and vacillate instead of just following him. Is that how we follow Jesus – ready to leave all behind. Ready to walk into the unknown. Ready to trust and obey?

3. The dinner scandal (2:15,16)

¹⁵ And it happened that He was reclining *at the table* in his house, and many tax collectors and sinners were dining with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many of them, and they were following Him. ¹⁶ When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they said to His disciples, "Why is He eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?"

I want you to notice the three attitudes that are manifest in these two verses: Matthew's attitude was of rejoicing and generosity. He invited Jesus and his disciples and his tax collector friends and all types of sinners. That was the crowd that he knew: tax collectors and sinners. He was out of a job with no more revenue so what does he do – he spends money on a great feast! Matthew (or Levi if you prefer) was so happy that Jesus would consider calling him to follow him that he celebrated. May I ask if we are in a celebrating mood? Are we still dumbfounded and astonished that Jesus would invite us to follow him? Do you still celebrate and rejoice with others at the grace that you have received in Christ Jesus? How long has it been since you have shared a meal with Christians in your home? How long has it been since you had a meal with non-believing friends, paid the bill and explained why you are so happy with life? We need to be like Matthew – rejoicing and sharing!

The second attitude is that of Jesus – he willingly sat with publicans and sinners? Not only that, he was teaching his disciples that it was O.K. to be with these people.

Remember what he had said:

Luke 14:12-14

(12)Then He also said to him who invited Him, "When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid.

(13)"But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind.

(14)"And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just."

(NKJV)

Jesus was so different from all the other teachers and scribes and Pharisees. He was with people and it was manifest that he cared for them. He took time with them and did not disdain them. All (except for the self-righteous) were attracted to him. He allowed himself to be approached, even the little children had access to him (Luke 18:16). Let's not forget those who were ill and demon-possessed – all could come to him. May we be like Christ, approachable and caring for all.

Finally there is the attitude of the self-righteous.

¹⁶When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they said to His disciples, "Why is He eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?"

They simply disdained, despised and held in contempt those who were not like them.

They were prejudiced, hypocrites and bigots. They built a wall around themselves to make certain that 'those people' would not enter their lives. How grateful I am that Christ did not build a wall around himself but rather built a bridge so that I could come closer to him. So what are you building in relationship with others a wall or a bridge?

4. Jesus' response (2:17)

¹⁷ And hearing *this*, Jesus said to them, “*It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.*”

Notice that Jesus is attentive to what these religious elite were doing and saying. Has it occurred to you that God is very interested in what you say and do? What Jesus was saying is that he came for sinners, he came for those who are sick. Jesus especially came to bring the sick and the sinners to repentance. I've not come for those who are spiritually well, he says, but for those who need healing. Should we not also have the same attitude – seek after those who need to be healed spiritually instead of always hanging around with those who are well?

CONCLUSION:

1. Take a walk and be with people.
2. Talk to people who don't know about the Good News.
3. Be joyful and celebrate your calling with others.
4. Pay special attention to those who do not know the Lord, be the light of the world unto them.

The gospel of Mark
10 – Jesus and fasting
2:18-22

¹⁸ John’s disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and they came and said to Him, “Why do John’s disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?” ¹⁹ And Jesus said to them, “While the bridegroom is with them, the attendants of the bridegroom cannot fast, can they? So long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. ²⁰ But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day. ²¹ “No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; otherwise the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear results. ²² No one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost and the skins *as well*; but *one puts* new wine into fresh wineskins.”
(NASB)

1. Why don’t they do what we do? (2:18)

¹⁸ John’s disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and they came and said to Him, “Why do John’s disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?”

The subject of this story is FASTING. But I want you to notice that our present story comes right after the great feast that Matthew gave in honor of Jesus. Jesus ate with his disciples & Matthew’s friends which were mostly sinners. This was a big banquet and since it was well-known that tax collectors filled their pockets with money this banquet must have been filled with extravagance. After this happens (the great feast) some come to Jesus and seem unhappy with the fact that he didn’t fast as they did. I can not but wonder if they were also frustrated because they had not participated or were not allowed to participate in the gathering. Isn’t it true that most people don’t like it when other people don’t do things the way that THEY DO! We see this all the time whatever your social standing, education, nationality or religion – even in Christian churches! You should dress like me, listen to the same music as I do, sing the same hymns, celebrate the way I always have celebrated and so forth. Things haven’t changed much – have they? My way is always the BEST WAY! And since my way is the best – I’m ‘holier’ than you are.

Here two groups of people (John’s disciples and the Pharisees’) fast but a third does not! That makes two against one, so guess which one is right? The two of course! The majority is always right - well maybe not! Never believe because more people do or act in a certain way that it is automatically right!

Always remember that there is but a small portion of people that have truly come to believe that Christ is Lord and Savior and God says that they (and not the majority of people) are right (John 3:36; 4:14; 5:24; 6:40,47; 14:6).

The disciples of John were used to fast because their spiritual leader (John the Baptist) was a person that had a very strict dietary outlook. Remember that he came out of the desert eating locusts and honey (Mark 1:6) – that was real fasting.

Mark 1:6

Now John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.

(NKJV)

The disciples of the Pharisees also fasted because of the teachings of their leaders. The Pharisees fasted twice a week (Luke 18:12) so did their disciples.

Luke 18:11,12

(11)"The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men--extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector.

(12)'I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.'

(NKJV)

It seems that fasting was ordered only ONCE by the Lord God and we find this in Lev. 16:29.

Leviticus 16:29

"This shall be a statute forever for you: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether a native of your own country or a stranger who dwells among you.

(NKJV)

We often see people fast as a reaction to a particular situation that they are living but fasting like it became was not instituted by God. It became a ‘must do to be spiritual’ by the time Christ had his ministry. Let’s not forget that ‘fasting’ was a ‘spiritual process’ that was also found in neighboring countries. These pagans would fast to obtain protection, wealth, children and so many other things. Again this was not a spiritual practice ordered by the Lord. This is simply because the Lord had made a covenant with his people promising protection & well-being. So they did not need to fast to receive these things – all was given by the grace of God and grace can not be bought.

Rom. 11:6

**And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace.
But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.
(NKJV)**

I can imagine these disciples who often fasted (thinking that this was a wonderful spiritual exercise) looking at the disciples of Jesus and thinking ‘They sure are worldly – look how they live’! They probably wondered the following: Why don’t they do things the way we do things? Why doesn’t Jesus rebuke them? And why doesn’t he fast himself – he’s supposed to be a prophet of God!

2. The answer (2:19,20)

¹⁹ And Jesus said to them, “While the bridegroom is with them, the attendants of the bridegroom cannot fast, can they? So long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. ²⁰ But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.

Jesus will answer their question very candidly by telling a short story. This story is about a bridegroom - a familiar picture if there ever was one. The bridegroom is the man who will marry a woman. One needs to remember that in the Old Testament God considered Israel to be his spouse (Isaiah 54:5; Jer. 31:32) and in the New Testament the church is also considered Christ’s bride (2 Cor. 11:2). In a very real and spiritual way both were the bridegrooms. This is the key to understand what Jesus is speaking about. Jesus asks if the friends of the bridegroom (his disciples) can fast when the bridegroom (he) is with them. Have you ever gone to a party to celebrate a coming wedding? When people gather either with the future bride or the future husband. Is this an occasion for fasting? Do they abstain from eating and drinking? Do they mourn and lament? Of course not. They are rejoicing with their friend who will be getting married.

So it was with the Disciples of Christ. They are not called to mourn and fast but rather to rejoice because they are with him. Being a disciple of Christ should fill our hearts with gratitude and we should celebrate the grace of God manifested in His Son. We are even told that once the bride (the true believers) will be with her husband (Christ) in heaven there will be a great celebration (Mat. 8:11; Rev. 19:7-9). Once more the curse will be taken away and for all eternity those that have been washed by the blood of the Lamb will be with God. In verse twenty we see that there will come a time when fasting will be appropriate.

²⁰ But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.

In his story Jesus says that one day his disciples will fast – and it will be the day that the bridegroom will be taken away from his friends. But when will the bridegroom (Jesus) be taken away? Obviously this day came when Jesus died on the cross. It was then that he was taken away from his disciples. On that day all things changed, all their hopes seemed to have vanished. Their Master had been put to death. And what did the disciples do? They were terrified and locked themselves in.

John 20:19

**Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you."
(NKJV)**

My question is the following: ‘For how long was the bridegroom taken away from his friends?’ Since Jesus was raised from the dead three days later, he was away for only that period of time. When he manifested himself to his disciples they greatly rejoiced that he was truly the Messiah! The ‘time period’ for fasting was over – Christ had victory over sin and death. Since he said that he will be with us until the end of time (Mat. 28:20) there is no longer a place for fasting. There is not a single commandment from Jesus ordering his Disciples to fast. We DO SEE fasting (Acts 13:2,3; 14:23; 1 Cor.7:5) but it is never COMMANDED. It is always done on the basis of a personal decision before God. There are times where one might fast and seek the will of God but this is always on a personal basis between the person and God. What we see here is that Jesus is breaking away from the popular beliefs concerning fasting in spiritual matters – to manifest self-righteousness or to ‘get something’ from God. Beloved we must always come back to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures and let that alone be our solid foundation for Christian living. Fasting is not a ‘magical’ or ‘spiritual’ thing to do that will open the doors to our Heavenly Father. How often we forget what is written concerning our needs.

Matthew 6:6-8

(6)"But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

(7)"And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.

(8)"Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.

(NKJV)

God knows our needs even before we ask Him. And God knows how to give good things to his children (Luke 11:11-13). All he asks of them is not to be hypocrites when they knock at his door. Now I am not saying that a Christian should not fast, he certainly can if he wants to. Jesus spoke about this practice:

Matthew 6:16-18

(16)"Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

**(17)"But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face,
(18)"so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.**

(NKJV)

3. The warning (2:21,22)

²¹ "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; otherwise the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear results. ²² No one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost and the skins *as well*; but *one puts* new wine into fresh wineskins."

In verses twenty one and twenty two Jesus will explain his reasoning. Again he will teach by using a common illustration. The first has to do with clothing and patching them. With time all clothing wear and tear and what do people do when this happens? They place a 'patch' to cover the tear. Let's not forget that in Jesus' days people were very poor and did not have the luxury of having clothing like we do. I remember when I was a teenager back in the sixties. We had lots of patches on our jeans – it was fashionable in those days. People could buy different patches and we would sew them on even if there was no real need for them. No holes or tears on the jeans we just wanted patches! The problem was the following: if the jeans were fragile because of the wear of the cloth and when I would sew a patch to cover a certain area it looked great. But when I would wash my patched-up jeans the patches would shrink and tear the jeans even more! I should have first washed the patches by themselves and then sewed them on my pants so that when I would sew them there would be no tear.

The second examples is that of wine and wineskins.

²² No one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost and the skins *as well*; but *one puts* new wine into fresh wineskins.”

Again Jesus uses a very common object to bring a spiritual lesson. New wine was placed in new wineskins for one reason – expansion! The new wine would ferment and cause an expansion because of the gases created. The wineskins would stretch as the gases increase the volume of the content. The problem was the following: If new wine was poured into old wineskins it would tear the wineskins apart and one would not only lose the wineskins but also the wine that had been poured into them. You see the wineskins could not stretch a second time to accommodate the expansion of the wine. Because of this they would tear at the seams and the new wine would be lost.

So what is Jesus saying here concerning fasting and other spiritual teachings that he was bringing forth? It's very simple when you think of it. The old and the new do not mix together and they don't work together. Fasting the old way (to get from God or to manifest how spiritual we are) will get you nowhere. Actually it will – you will go down in God's favor because of your hypocrisy. Placing new wine (new teachings of Christ) into old wineskins (the old ways of doing things) will just destroy the whole thing. That is why the new wine is to be poured into new wineskins. You not only need to do this in a 'new way' (new mind) but you also personally need to be a new wineskin (born anew) for all of this to work out. Don't forget that trying to get the two to work together will only bring disaster (the tearing of the cloth and the loss of the wine).

CONCLUSION:

1. It is not because many do or act in a certain way that it is spiritually right or accepted by God. It is also not necessarily wrong when people worship the Lord in a way that you are not familiar with – the Bible is our foundation not US.
2. Fasting is never ordered by Jesus for he is with us. Fasting is a very personal spiritual activity that we do that is strictly between us and the Lord. It is never to be done to show how spiritual we are (it is quite the opposite) or to get things from God.
3. Don't try to fit old ways of doing things with true discipleship. Be certain that what you do is from Christ and not tradition or your own desires.

The gospel of Mark
11 – Jesus and the Sabbath
Mark 2:23-28

²³ And it happened that He was passing through the grain fields on the Sabbath, and His disciples began to make their way along while picking the heads of grain. ²⁴ The Pharisees were saying to Him, “Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?” ²⁵ And He said to them, “Have you never read what David did when he was in need and he and his companions became hungry; ²⁶ how he entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar *the* high priest, and ate the consecrated bread, which is not lawful for *anyone* to eat except the priests, and he also gave it to those who were with him?” ²⁷ Jesus said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. ²⁸ So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”
(NASB)

1. One Sabbath day (2:23)

²³ And it happened that He was passing through the grain fields on the Sabbath, and His disciples began to make their way along while picking the heads of grain.

Once more Jesus is going to be attacked on a theological matter – this time it has to do with the Sabbath. The word Sabbath means *REST* in Hebrew. The idea of *resting* was taken from Gen. 2:2,3 where it is written that God ‘rested’ on the seventh day.

Genesis 2:2,3

(2)And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.

(3)Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

(NKJV)

The idea is that God ‘stopped’ his work of creating on that day. God then set this day apart as a special day. Notice that it is the only day that God blessed and sanctified. If you wonder where we got a week of ‘seven’ days – now you know! This seven day week was given to Adam and Eve therefore it was meant for ALL of mankind and not only for the Jewish people.

We see with Noah (Gen. 8:1-22) that the world before the flood used a seven day week. We also see in Ex. 16:22-30 that people were to gather a double amount of manna on the sixth day so that on the seventh they did not work but rested. Yet, the fourth commandment

‘Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy’ (Ex. 20:8) as well as all the Ten Commandments had not yet been given! This proves that having the seventh day set apart was known and applied BEFORE it was legally institutionalised by God through Moses in the Ten Commandments.

As I said the Sabbath day was ‘sanctified’ – set apart for the Lord. It was a day of gathering together to celebrate God’s holiness, mercy and grace. People would sing songs of praise and give thanksgiving unto God. Personal and public prayers were said. It was also a special day where goodness, charity and alms would be manifested more openly towards people around you. Keeping the Sabbath holy was a very serious thing for the Lord and he gave this command to Moses:

Ex 31:14

‘You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people.

(NKJV)

As you will see, the Pharisees declared themselves the ‘watch dogs’ of the Sabbath and they had set their sight on Jesus. What was terribly wrong was that with time the very meaning of the ‘Sabbath rest’ had been changed by these religious ‘watch dogs’. By the time Jesus lived the true meaning of the Sabbath rest had been modified so much that it no longer contained its original ‘spirit’. Here is a list of things people could not do on a Sabbath:

- Light a fire
- Work
- You can only walk as far as the synagogue
- Sowing, plowing, reaping
- Grinding, baking, weaving
- Tying, untying, sowing two stitches
- Salting meat, writing two letters, extinguishing a fire
- Etc...

The Pharisees were constantly watching and spying on people to ‘catch’ them breaking any Sabbath Law which they had invented! One Sabbath day this is what happened:

²³ And it happened that He was passing through the grain fields on the Sabbath, and His disciples began to make their way along while picking the heads of grain.

Jesus and his disciples were walking through a field of grain and as they were walking the disciples plucked some grains in their hands. Now this was a common thing to do to (pluck and rub hands, blow away the shaft and eat the grain). By doing this were they not stealing from the farmers who worked diligently to have a reasonable harvest? Not really, for God had instituted that the corners of your fields were to be left unharvested for the poor or passer-by's (Lev. 19:10; 23:22). The problem was that the Pharisees considered the 'plucking' as work which was to them a grave sin. They didn't see the disciples need for nourishment only the fact that they used energy to make a quick snack. This sin of ever looking at others to see if they do everything by the book, by your understanding of the book, still ranks upon the highest rated sin of our modern Christianity. How easily we forget what Jesus said:

Matthew 7:3-5

- (3)"And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?**
- (4)"Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye?**
- (5)"Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.**
(NKJV)

Let us not be like these Pharisees who were constantly checking on others to see if they were at fault.

2. The accusation (2:24)

²⁴ The Pharisees were saying to Him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?"

They thought they had a perfect accusation against his disciples (plucking) and they weren't going to miss this opportunity to lay blame. By doing this, they automatically brought a blame on Jesus because he was their Rabbi, their spiritual leader. I wonder what the difference is between lifting your food to your mouth at home and lifting grain to your mouth on the field. Notice that they hid behind 'what is not lawful'. You need to remember that when the Sabbath was instituted there were no Pharisees, scribes or any religious leaders except for Moses and Aaron. Synagogues did not even exist! All of these 'prescriptions' were their own doings and not from the Lord God.

3. The example Jesus gave (2:25,26)

²⁵ And He said to them, “Have you never read what David did when he was in need and he and his companions became hungry; ²⁶ how he entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar *the* high priest, and ate the consecrated bread, which is not lawful for *anyone* to eat except the priests, and he also gave it to those who were with him?”

The story Jesus is referring to is found in 1 Sam. 21:1-6. What is consecrated bread? This is what the American Tract Society Dictionary writes:

SHOWBREAD, Heb. Bread of presence, was bread offered every Sabbath-day to God on the golden table which stood in the holy place, Ex 25:30; twelve cakes of unleavened bread, offered with salt and frankincense, Le 2:13; 24:5-9. The show-bread could be lawfully eaten by none but the priests; nevertheless, David having received some of these loaves from the high-priest Abimelech, ate of them without scruple in his necessity, 1Sa 21:1-6; and our Savior quotes his example to justify the disciples, who had bruised ears of corn, and were eating them on the Sabbath-day. Mt 12:1-4.

Jesus begins by saying: ‘Have you never read’ even in the days of Jesus reading the Holy Scriptures was exceedingly important. Jesus expected the religious people to read and study the Word of God. Does he not also expect us to read and study our celestial Father’s book? So are we reading & studying? It is wonderful that Jesus refers to stories found in the Old Testament. By doing so he establishes without a doubt that they are true and have spiritual significance. The story goes like this: David and his men were hungry and the showbread was the only food available so what do they do – suffer hunger or eat what was offered to God to keep alive? Remember that this bread was only to be eaten by the priests. So were David and his men sinning by eating what was reserved to the priests? This is a case of Law against Grace.

We can easily apply this to ourselves. How do we interact with people - Law or Grace?

- Can’t help you today it’s Sunday come back tomorrow.
- Can’t lend you any money it’s for my offering.
- Can’t give you a ride to the hospital I’ve got a prayer meeting.

The Pharisees were very legalistic and Jesus often ‘brushed’ against them concerning their lack of grace unto others, especially concerning the Sabbath Day. In Luke 13 when Jesus cured a woman who had been inflicted by Satan for 18 years this is what he said to the Pharisees:

Luke 13:14-16

(14)But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, "There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day."

(15)The Lord then answered him and said, "Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it?"

(16)"So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound--think of it--for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?"

(NKJV)

So you can help your animal on a Sabbath but not a woman that is in need! This is pure legalism.

Luke 14:3-5

(3)And Jesus, answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"

(4)But they kept silent. And He took him and healed him, and let him go.

(5)Then He answered them, saying, "Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?"

(NKJV)

So you can help your donkey or your ox but not a sick man! The Pharisees and teachers of the Law had it all wrong. How many religious leaders are so stern that they forget the most important.

Matthew 23:23

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.

(NKJV)

Justice, mercy and faith that is what they had neglected and Jesus will remind them of their faults.

4. Jesus' conclusion (2:27,28)

²⁷ Jesus said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. ²⁸ So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

Now two things of great importance are said by Jesus. The first deals with our relationship with the Sabbath day of rest.

²⁷ Jesus said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.

Jesus reminds the Pharisees that the design of the Sabbath was to liberate God’s people from a never ceasing life of constant work. It was a day that they were free to worship the Lord and rest. But the Pharisees had turned the Sabbath day into a day where the load was even heavier than the other days. Jesus brings the Sabbath back to its original Godly intent – rest, enjoy life and fellowship with God and others. Actually the Sabbath was a gift of God to stop and enjoy life.

The second point is even greater in importance.

²⁸ So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”

When you are ‘Lord’ it means that you have authority or ownership over something. Who is the Lord of the Sabbath if not God himself and only God! He created the Sabbath on the seventh day of his creating process. He can also do as he pleases with his Sabbath day since it belongs to him. All the Jews understood that God was the Lord of the Sabbath and no one else. Here Jesus states that HE *‘the Son of Man’* is the Lord of the Sabbath – so what is he telling the people? He is telling them that he is GOD and he can do whatever he wants on a Sabbath day. He is openly declaring that he is Jehovah! Again many people say that Jesus never said that he was the Lord God – well they are wrong. This is a perfect example of Christ declaring his deity.

CONCLUSION:

1. Let us not be like the Pharisees who declared themselves the ‘watchdogs of God’. Don’t we have enough with looking after our own walk before the Lord?
2. The Sabbath day is a day of rest. A day where I should enjoy my relationship with God and nothing should interfere with this.
3. Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath for he is God the Son. So let’s keep our Sabbath special.

The gospel of Mark
12 – Jesus and doing good
3:1-6

He entered again into a synagogue; and a man was there whose hand was withered. ²They were watching Him *to see* if He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. ³He said to the man with the withered hand, Get up and come forward!” ⁴And He said to them, “Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to kill?” But they kept silent. ⁵After looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, He said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored. ⁶The Pharisees went out and immediately *began* conspiring with the Herodians against Him, *as to how they might destroy Him.*

(NASB)

1. The scene (3:1)

He entered again into a synagogue; and a man was there whose hand was withered.

Today we have another account where we see Jesus taking part in a religious service in a synagogue. I have a few thoughts about this. My first thought is that this is not the first time that we see Jesus in a synagogue (this is the 4th mention of a synagogue so far). What I see is that Jesus perseveres. He already has had ‘frictions’ with the spiritual leaders but he persists. He knows the importance of being together to worship God. Unfortunately far too many people leave their church when there is friction with the leadership. We should remain in the church and try to settle the issue and make peace. Leaving without at least trying is a failure on our part. Remember what Jesus said:

Matthew 5:23,24

"Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

(NKJV)

A second point is that even though the Pharisees (who are his enemies) are present this does not stop him from being there. Many times people who have problems with people find a fast solution – just don't talk to them. Here we find people who don't like Jesus and Jesus still talks with them.

Even though they have an enemy in Jesus he doesn't look at them as his enemies. He is there to be the light unto them, to teach them and to be a witness that he is the Messiah. He is practicing what he had taught on the 'Sermon of the Mount'.

Matthew 5:43-45

(43)"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'

(44)"But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,

(45)"that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

(NKJV)

Third I see that a handicapped man is welcome in the synagogue and that is a wonderful thing. If people with disabilities are not accepted in our assemblies what are we saying about God? Fourth this handicapped man will have a life-changing experience because of Christ. He did not know but it came to him unexpectedly. This man could have been irritated at God because of his physical state. He could have rejected the God of Israel and been angry at him. But he was not, he was in the synagogue. How many people are angry at God because of this or that and they abandon their congregation and turn away from the Lord. They blame him for their misery. You see if this man had not been in the synagogue, if he would have rejected God he would not have had his miracle. How many people do not receive from the Lord because they are mad at him? Are you one of them? Think about it.

2. The atmosphere (3:2)

²They were watching Him to see if He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him.

We can see that the atmosphere in the synagogue was not as it should have been - instead of:

- Praising & singing
- Fellowshiping & encouraging
- Rejoicing & thanksgiving

we have people destroying the atmosphere by 'watching' Jesus. The aim of these people was not to be in the synagogue for the Lord's sake but to spy on Jesus of Nazareth. Does it happen to us even today? We gather together and instead of having our minds fixed on the Lord God we are acutely interested in something else.

This should never be. Now the word ‘*watching*’ (PARATEREO) means: to note insidiously, observe, inspect. The Pharisees were not just looking at Jesus – they were checking and taking note of what he was doing. How would you like it if you would come to church and others would be inspecting you? By experience I know that this happens more often than you think. People just love to put people ‘down’. How our heavenly Father must sometimes be broken hearted at our miserable behavior. I am certain that the ‘ordinary’ people in the synagogue knew and could see the Pharisees at work ‘watching’ Jesus and the atmosphere must have been tense. Now there was a reason why the Pharisees took note of Jesus’ actions:

(v.2)... if He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him.

There’s always a reason why we watch people – theirs was to see if he would do a good deed on a Sabbath day. The word ‘*accuse*’ (KATEGOREO) meaning: to be a plaintiff, to charge with some offense, to accuse. They were really seeking to find anything so that they could accuse him of sinning. We need to remember that if the Pharisees could accuse him and get him sentenced that would bring an END to his ministry – people would no longer follow him. Here are a few thoughts concerning these Pharisees:

- They didn’t really care for the man in question, quite the opposite, they were using him as a bait to trap Jesus.
- They would rather see the man continue being sick than being healed on a Sabbath day.
- They had evil thoughts and evil plans towards their fellow man.
- They were ready to do what it takes to get rid of Jesus.
- These Pharisees were looking for any reason to accuse Jesus – they were like their father, the devil.

Revelation 12:10

Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.

(NKJV)

When we gather together, may we always do our part to enrich the atmosphere and not cause it to become heavy. May our aim of being present be the Lord God and nothing else.

3. The witness (3:3)

³ He said to the man with the withered hand, Get up and come forward!”

Here we have the third party of this story – the man with a withered hand. The word ‘*withered*’ in Greek (XERAINO) means: to desiccate, to shrivel, to dry up, wither away. This man had a physical condition that made his hand become useless. Jesus’ intention was to heal that man but that man will have to do one thing and that is to co-operate with him. I believe that it is the same thing with us. As a child of God the Father wants us to co-operate with him so that he can fulfill his plans for our life. When we rebel against him the Father’s plans come to a halt and we miss out. When Christians stop co-operating with God (listening to him) the new road that they walk on never brings them closer to the Lord. Think of Mark who abandoned Paul and Barnabas in their missionary travels and Paul no longer wants him to be part of their ‘team’ (Acts 15:37-39). It is only years later that Paul recognises how precious Mark had once more become (Acts 2 Tim. 4:11). Think of Demas that forsook his calling for the lure of the things of the world (2 Tim. 4:10). Think of Hymenaeus and Alexander (1 Tim. 1:20) whom Paul handed over to Satan because they no longer walked with God but rather blasphemed his name. Never forget what Paul wrote:

Galatians 6:7,8

(7) Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

(8) For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

(NKJV)

Now this man did not know that Christ was going to do the unbelievable for him. He probably had hoped & prayed to get better. It might have been a long time since his heart was set on asking God for his grace to fall upon him. Think of the woman with a flow of blood. She had been sick for twelve years and then one day she met Jesus (Luke 8:43). Remember the woman who could not straighten-up for eighteen years, she was bound by the devil until one day she also met Jesus (Luke 13:11). This was the day this man was going to be cured but if he had not been in the synagogue he would have missed his miracle. And then out of the blue – without any notice – time had come to meet Christ and be healed. It may be just the same with us. Christ may just be ‘around the corner’ and change our lives. And if he does not change things then we should have the same attitude as the three friends of Daniel who in the face of being thrown in the furnace said these words:

Daniel 3:17,18

(17) "If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king.

(18) "But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up."

(NKJV)

Jesus asked the man to do something that might have placed him out of his comfort zone. Usually handicapped people DO NOT like to be in the spotlight! And here Jesus is saying to stand in front of everybody!

(v.3)...Get up and come forward

Have you ever thought that you may also need to get out of your comfort zone to receive what God has for you?

4. The question (3:4)

⁴ And He said to them, “Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to kill?” But they kept silent.

We can understand that the man complied with Jesus’ command. Once this is done Jesus now turns to those who desire to ensnare him and asks them this question:

(4)... “Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to kill?”

In other words when can a person do good while not breaking the Law? Can a man do good anytime – even on sacred days? The answer is in the question. For each and every one of us, it is ALWAYS good to do ‘good’ and ‘save a life’. We have seen this in Mark 2:23-28. And it is NEVER allowed to ‘do evil’ and ‘kill’. The real question is not ‘Are we allowed to do this or that’ but rather ‘are we allowed to do this or that on a Sabbath day’. The Pharisees believed that even ‘good deeds’ were not allowed because that was thought of as some type of work.

(v.4)... But they kept silent.

Why do people, even children, keep silent when they are asked to answer a question? Either because they don’t know the answer or because they do know the answer and are ashamed to answer it! As for the Pharisees they kept silent for both reasons. First because they could not find an answer in the Holy Scriptures that would support their view. This manifests that they were just using their authority as the basis of their thinking. They were spiritual ‘bullies’. Second because they had trapped themselves and were ashamed to admit it. Their spiritual standing might have scared ordinary people but not so with Christ. Remember the parents of the blind man that Jesus had healed and how they were afraid of the religious leaders!

John 9:22

**His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had agreed already that if anyone confessed that He was Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue.
(NKJV)**

One day these false teachers and blind spiritual guides will no longer be able to keep silent before Christ. There will come a time when they will have to recognize who Christ really is.

Romans 14:11

**For it is written: "As I live, says the LORD, Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God."
(NKJV)**

5. The answer (3:5)

⁵ After looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored.

Since they did not answer – Jesus did in their place. But before he did there is an exceptional description of our Savior that is before us. He looked around with *anger*: (ORGE) meaning: violent, abhorrence, anger, indignation. This is the only verse in the Gospels that describe Jesus being filled with ANGER. He does get angry. Many believe that Jesus never manifests any emotions except the ‘good ones’. They forget that the Lord does get offended and his holy anger is sometimes manifested. A quick reading of the Old Testament and you will quickly find that God does get angry at his people. He was also *grieved* (SULLUPEO) meaning: sorrow on the account of someone – not something. His heart was angry and grieved because of the attitude and lack of love of the Pharisees. They were the first ones who should have manifested pity on this poor man and praised God at the possibility of him being cured. But they were self-righteous.

(v.5)...grieved at their hardness of heart

Has the heart of Jesus changed? Does he still grieve and can he still become angry because of the hardness of our hearts? Do we understand that our actions or lack of them, can grieve his heart? Yes, Jesus gets angry when our hearts are hardened toward the needs of others.

(v.5)...He said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored.

Here we see the second command of Jesus *‘stretch out your hand’*. You may also have to do what seems impossible (stretch out your hand) to get your miracle! This man could not physically do what Jesus asked of him – it was impossible. How many times do we say to Jesus ‘I can’t do it’ or ‘I can’t go there’ or ‘I can’t evangelize’? If the man would have said: ‘I can’t do this Jesus’ then he would have remained in the state that he was. We often want to change in life or advance and follow Christ but we don’t, simply because we THINK we can’t do what Jesus asks of us! Jesus never asks us to be strong enough to follow him. He simply asks us to *‘follow him’* (Mat. 4:19; 8:22; 9:9).

6. The hardened hearts (3:6)

⁶The Pharisees went out and immediately *began* conspiring with the Herodians against Him, *as to* how they might destroy Him.

Instead of being amazed by this miracle, instead of rejoicing with the healed man, instead of giving glory to God, instead of asking themselves ‘Could this be the Christ’ like spoiled children they turned their backs on Jesus (the Pharisees went out immediately). Then they got even angrier and ‘plotted’ against Christ.

(v.6)...*began* conspiring with the Herodians against Him, *as to* how they might destroy Him.

Notice that in the beginning they ‘looked’ for an opportunity to catch Christ. Now they are ‘plotting’ to create this opportunity. They wanted to destroy Jesus so much that they leagued themselves with the Herodians to do so. The Pharisees were staunch nationalists who hated the Romans – those infidels. But they hated Jesus so much that they leagued themselves with the Herodians, who were political friends with Herod, the Roman leader in Palestine. Pharisees and Herodians were deadly enemies but their hate for Jesus made way for a very sick alliance to get rid of him. Still today some people league themselves to destroy all who belong to Christ.

CONCLUSION:

1. Be in your place of worship like Christ was.
2. Do all you can to create a holy & friendly atmosphere around you.
3. Even if you don't like the 'spotlight' be in it when Jesus asks you to.
4. Are there times when you keep silent before Christ because you are ashamed?
5. Don't harden your heart it will get the Lord angry.
6. Never league yourself with someone to undermine the Lord.
7. Do good: anyplace, anytime and anyway but do good in the name of Jesus.

The gospel of Mark
13 – Jesus and the crowd
3:7-12

⁷ Jesus withdrew to the sea with His disciples; and a great multitude from Galilee followed; and *also* from Judea, ⁸ and from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and beyond the Jordan, and the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon, a great number of people heard of all that He was doing and came to Him. ⁹ And He told His disciples that a boat should stand ready for Him because of the crowd, so that they would not crowd Him; ¹⁰ for He had healed many, with the result that all those who had afflictions pressed around Him in order to touch Him. ¹¹ Whenever the unclean spirits saw Him, they would fall down before Him and shout, “You are the Son of God!” ¹² And He earnestly warned them not to tell who He was.
(NASB)

In this section we are going to look at what we can call a ‘typical day’ in the life of Jesus.

1. The crowd (3:7,8)

⁷ Jesus withdrew to the sea with His disciples; and a great multitude from Galilee followed; and *also* from Judea, ⁸ and from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and beyond the Jordan, and the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon, a great number of people heard of all that He was doing and came to Him.

The word *withdrew* (ANACHOREO) in Greek means: to retire, turn aside and to withdraw. Jesus decided to leave where he was (in a synagogue 3:1) and go towards the sea. The synagogue is where he had healed a man with a withered hand, confronted the Pharisees and condemned them for their stone-cold hearts. The sea mentioned here is naturally the Sea of Galilee. Did you know that Jesus never did any miracles nor led his disciples towards the Dead Sea? Do you see any symbolism in the fact that Jesus didn’t go to the Dead Sea but only to the Sea of Galilee? This is what the American Tract Society Dictionary writes about this body of water:

‘The waters of the Dead Sea are clear and limpid, but exceedingly salt and bitter. Their specific gravity exceeds that of all other waters known, being one-fifth or one-fourth greater than that of pure water. They are found by repeated analyses to contain one-fourth their weight of various salts, chiefly the chlorides of magnesium and sodium. Salt also is deposited by evaporation on the shore, or on garments wet in the sea. In the bed of the sea it is found in crystals and near the shore in incrustation deposited on the bottom.

No fish can live in these acrid waters, and those which are brought down by the Jordan quickly die.'

There is nothing but death in the Dead Sea. Since Jesus is life itself and gives life is it not understandable that he would lead his Disciples and have a ministry around the Sea of Galilee (which abounded in life) and not the Dead Sea. It is said that the toxicity of the Dead Sea is so great that birds that try to fly over it (12.8 klm long) can not succeed and simply die in flight! There are no villages directly on the Dead Sea. The nearest village from its shores is the village of Qumran. It was 1.5 klm from the shore and it was inhabited by a religious sect called the Essenes. Today Qumran is known because of the hundreds of scrolls found in a few caves. Many contained sections from the Old Testament.

So Jesus retired by the Sea of Galilee and brought his disciples with him. But as always it didn't take too long for people to catch up to him. It seems that as soon as people found out where Christ was they flocked to be by his side. May I ask when was the last time that you have 'retired' somewhere with Jesus? You know, just you and Him. Now Jesus just wanted to have a bit of time alone with his Disciples but he just couldn't. Isn't it still the same today when you want to take some 'quiet time' with God?

- You find a quiet place to be with Jesus
- You read to replenish your soul
- You pray and praise Him for being in your life
- You feel that you're close to your Maker and a peaceful quietness fills your being
- And then people or things 'pop-up' and bring a stop to it all!

It's written that a GREAT multitude came to him (and his disciples) while he was near the Sea of Galilee – but where did this multitude come from?

⁷ Jesus withdrew to the sea with His disciples; and a great multitude from Galilee followed; and *also* from Judea, ⁸ and from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and beyond the Jordan, and the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon, a great number of people heard of all that He was doing and came to Him.

Some came from Galilee that would be places such as Bethsaida, Chorazin, Capernaum and Tiberius. Others from Judea, to the south, places such as Hebron, Bethlehem, Bethany. Others still from Jerusalem also to the south. People also came from Idumea with is even more south than Judea. Beyond the Jordan would be the Eastern region of the Jordan River with places such as: Garasa, Gadara and Philadelphia. Finally people came from Tyre and Sidon which is North of Galilee on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. So people were coming from the North, East and the South of the Sea of Galilee to come and see Jesus.

Notice that no one from the West came to see him – why? Simply because South-West of the Sea of Galilee is Samaria. And we know that Samaritans & Jews don't like each other. It all started with the Babylonian deportation. When some of the Jews came back (after the 70 years of exile) the Jews who had remained in Samaria had inter-married with people from other nations. The Jews who came back refused fellowship because of this. A feud began and was still aflame in the times of Jesus.

2. The crowding (3:9,10)

⁹ And He told His disciples that a boat should stand ready for Him because of the crowd, so that they would not crowd Him; ¹⁰ for He had healed many, with the result that all those who had afflictions pressed around Him in order to touch Him.

Today when there is an event that deals with large crowds we call in the experts in what is called 'crowd control'. They make sure that everything is in place so that no incident or accident occurs – everyone needs to be safe and sound. Let's just say that 'crowd control' wasn't quite the same in Jesus' day.

⁹ And He told His disciples that a boat should stand ready for Him because of the crowd, so that they would not crowd Him;

What was Jesus' plan for 'crowd control'? It seems that a small boat would do the 'trick' very simple but efficient. If things got out of hand he would go on the water and people would be on land. And everything would be taken care of and people (including Jesus) would be safe. We also see that often when there is a great multitude – things get out of hand. There was a real threat that people would lose their sense of self-control. Do you remember the event in 2015 where 4135 Muslim Pilgrims died in Saudi Arabia? Simply because there was no 'crowd control'! What a tragedy! I believe that this is what Jesus did not want to happen with the crowd that came to see him. One thing that I see is that Jesus thinks ahead and plans things out and that should be a model for us also. In some Christian circles they don't really plan things out - they say that they 'Leave it to the Spirit'. I only have one thing to say: If planning and thinking ahead was good enough for Jesus it is certainly good enough for me! This is what Paul wrote to the Corinthians concerning doing things in order.

1 Corinthians 14:33

**For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.
(NKJV)**

1 Corinthians 14:40
Let all things be done decently and in order.
(NKJV)

In verse nine we also see that Jesus was truly human. We can often forget that Jesus was truly a person like you and I are (Gal. 4:4). Because of this He had the same human fears as we all do and one of them was the following:

(v.9)...so that they would not crowd Him

The word '*crowd*' (THIBO) means: to crowd, anguish, tribulation, trouble. In other words he was afraid to be crushed to death. I would be too - wouldn't you? Like I said, Jesus had fears just like you and I have. The reason Jesus was afraid to be crushed is the following:

¹⁰ for He had healed many, with the result that all those who had afflictions pressed around Him in order to touch Him.

People go wild, they lose all sense of right and wrong and are ready to do ANYTHING – to get what they want! Jesus was healing people and instead of remaining calm and doing things in an orderly fashion like:

- Getting in line
- Waiting for their turn
- Keeping calm
- Praising the Lord

They abandoned a civil way of living and began to have a 'crowd mentality'. It is written that they began to '*press around him*' (EPIPEPTO) means to: seize with more or less violence, to press upon! Everything went out of hand, people tried to touch Jesus or to grab hold of him. Have you ever seen what desperate people are able to do either to obtain something or to get out of a situation? Things can become very ugly. Remember the old news when the Beatles came to North America (1963) and how the girls just went wild and tried to 'grab hold' of them? They would try to tear a piece of clothing off their back, cut a piece of hair, and grab hold of anything as long as it belonged to a Beatle. That's the way people are when the 'crowd rules', all is chaos. Jesus was afraid that people would just overcome him. So he had a boat ready, just in case.

3. The evil spirits (3:11,12)

¹¹ Whenever the unclean spirits saw Him, they would fall down before Him and shout, “You are the Son of God!” ¹² And He earnestly warned them not to tell who He was.

In the crowd there were not only men, women and children but also evil unclean spirits were present. For me it is plain to see that these unclean spirits were in some of the people. Notice that the text does not say that Jesus spoke to them or even confronted them BEFORE they spoke out. What is beautiful is that this text manifests the total supremacy of Jesus over these beings. Can you imagine – just because they saw him, just because their eyes fell upon God incarnate they immediately, instantaneously reacted to his presence – *‘they fell down before Him’*. They had to prostrate, to humiliate and humble themselves before the Lord of lords and King of kings. They had no choice - they did not and could not put up a fight. All they could do is to authenticate who Jesus really was:

(v.11)...You are the Son of God

Does it not astound you that the devils could identify Jesus yet the crowd could not! People were witnessing that the light of the world had come to earth. They were hearing the Logos and were witnessing the all-powerful hand of God do wonders before their very eyes. Yet the vast majority did not recognize who he was – the Son of God!

- Have you recognized who Christ is?
- Have you declared that he is the Son of God?
- Do you tell others who he is?
- Does he reign in your heart and have you ‘bent your knee’ before him?

¹² And He earnestly warned them not to tell who He was.

In the plan of His Father the time had not come for Jesus to be openly revealed as the true Messiah. The ‘Good News’ that Jesus is the Son of God must not come from evil spirits but from his disciples. The devils and unclean spirits are not to be ambassadors for Christ but his disciples were to be his heralds, messengers and his representatives.

2 Corinthians 5:20

Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

(NKJV)

Jesus shut the mouths of these demons but he encourages our mouths to evangelize around us for the Disciples of Christ are the true heirs and heralds of the 'Good News'.

CONCLUSIONS:

1. Are you like the crowd ready to be with Jesus even if it brings you far from your home?
2. Are you still a little 'crazy' about Jesus but in a good way. Does he excite, stimulate and motivate you?
3. Since you know Jesus, are you proclaiming him? Are you telling the truth about him to others?

The gospel of Mark
14 – Jesus appoints the twelve apostles
3:13-19

**¹³ And He went up on the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him. ¹⁴ And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He *could* send them out to preach, ¹⁵ and to have authority to cast out the demons. ¹⁶ And He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom He gave the name Peter), ¹⁷ and James, the *son* of Zebedee, and John the brother of James (to them He gave the name Boanerges, which means, “Sons of Thunder”); ¹⁸ and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot; ¹⁹ and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Him.
(NASB)**

At one point in his early ministry Jesus called twelve men to be set apart from all the other disciples – these would be called apostles. The word apostle in Greek means: ‘*one sent forth*’.

These twelve men were to be distinguished from all others. Here are some reasons why:

1. They were personally hand-picked and in trusted by Christ with the institution and caring of the church that would be born on the day of Pentecost.
2. The apostles would be personally filled with the Holy Spirit until He would permanently reside in believers on the day of Pentecost. (John 20:22)
3. They were his very first heralds with the specific mission to proclaim the kingdom of heaven. (Mat. 10:5-15)
4. They alone received the ‘Keys of the kingdom of Heaven’. (Mat. 16:19; 18:18)
5. They received the ‘Great Commission’ to evangelize the world. (Mat. 28:18-20)
6. They were to be witnesses of his resurrection. (Acts 1:22)
7. They needed to have accompanied Jesus throughout ALL of his ministry from his baptism to his ascension. (Acts 1:21)

As you can see there is a difference between a Disciple of Christ (which we can be) and an Apostle of Christ (which no longer exists today). So let's take a closer look at our text.

1. The calling (3:13)

¹³ And He went up on the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him.

Notice that Jesus brought his disciples up a mountain – he wanted the calling to be private. This wasn't the first time that a mountain became part of Jesus' life.

- He was tempted by Satan on a mountain top (Mat. 4:8)
- He preached the Sermon on the Mount on a mountain (Mat. 5-7)
- He prayed alone on mountains (Mat. 14:23)
- He performed miracles on a mountain (Mat. 15:29-31)
- He was transfigured on a mountain (Mat. 17:1)
- He even sometimes slept on a mountain (Luke 21:37)
- He ascended to heaven from a mountain top (Acts 1:9)

The mountain here is not named but it is believed to be the same mountain where Jesus gave his 'Sermon on the Mount'. Notice that Jesus only called '*those whom he himself wanted*' (v.13). This wasn't a popularity contest, it wasn't a raffle event, they did not even 'sign-up' to become apostles. It was Jesus' choice. There may even have been people who would have loved even more to become 'special followers' than the twelve chosen – but they were not chosen. This is God's personal choice, it is what we call sovereign election. It is just like our own election – God personally called us to be with the Son.

John 6:37

**"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.
(NKJV)**

We also see why he called the twelve:

¹³ And He went up on the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him.

In the Bible Basic English translation the idea is easier to understand.

Mark 3:13

And he went up into the mountain, and sent for those whom it was his pleasure to have with him: and they went to him.

(Bible Basic English)

It was the pleasure of Jesus to have these men along with him. In other words he was glad and very happy that they were at his side. I believe that Jesus rejoices to have his disciples by his side – even today. The proof of this is that the church is called his ‘bride’. (Rev. 19:6-8; 22:17) Also notice in v. 13 that: ‘*they came to Him*’. Those he chose came to him and it is the same today. ALL that the Father gives to Jesus will come to him for no one nor any power can stop those who have heard his voice from following him.

John 10:16

"And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.

(NKJV)

John 10:27

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

(NKJV)

2. The called ones (3:14-19)

Let's look at WHY they were called to His side.

¹⁴ And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He *could* send them out to preach, ¹⁵ and to have authority to cast out the demons.

The first reason is: ‘*that they would be with Him*’ (v.14).

To be with Jesus is the highest reason for their calling – to be with Jesus is the highest reason for our calling.

- To savour his presence
- To hear his words
- To witness his power
- To understand his thinking
- To receive his wisdom
- To observe his love and compassion
- To walk by his side

- To discern his will
- To emulate our Lord
- To be the salt and light of this world

The second reason is: *'He could send them out to preach'* (v.14).

They were to speak to others of what they had witnessed concerning Christ. This also is the mandate of all his disciples. We know this because of verses such as:

Acts 1:8

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

(NKJV)

The third is to: *'to have authority to cast out the demons'* (v.15).

This would certify their testimony concerning Christ. This miraculous power is no longer needed since the Holy Spirit was given to ALL disciples on the day of Pentecost. Notice that this general power over demons was only given to the twelve apostles and not the disciples in general! So let's look at these twelve apostles by alphabetical order – who are they? In general very little is mentioned directly in the Bible concerning them. For some, nothing at all is said except for their names. Some of the following information may come from Christian tradition and must not be taken at face value!

Andrew

Andrew was the brother of Peter, and a son of Jonas. He lived in Bethsaida and Capernaum and was a fisherman before Jesus called him. Originally he was a disciple of John the Baptist (Mark 1:16-18). Andrew brought his brother, Peter, to Jesus (John 1:40). Tradition says that Andrew was crucified on an 'X' shaped cross.

Bartholomew or Nathanael

Bartholomew / Nathanael, son of Talmai, lived in Cana of Galilee. Bartholomew's name appears with every list of the disciples (Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:14; Acts 1:13). This was not a first name, however; it was his second name. His first name probably was Nathanael, whom Jesus called "An Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile" (John 1:47). However, tradition says that he preached in India, and his death seems to have taken place there. It is said that he died as a martyr for his Lord. He was flayed alive with knives.

James the Elder

James, the Elder, Boanerges, son of Zebedee and Salome, brother of John the Apostle; was a fisherman who lived in Bethsaida, Capernaum and Jerusalem. He preached in Jerusalem and Judea and was beheaded by Herod, AD 44 (Acts 12:1,2).

He was a member of the Inner Circle, so called because they were accorded special privileges. The New Testament tells us very little about James. His name never appears apart from that of his brother, John. They were an inseparable pair (Mark 1:19-20; Matthew 4:21; Luke 5:1-11). He was the first of the twelve to become a martyr (Acts 12:2).

James the Lesser or the Younger

James, the Lesser or Younger, son of Alpheus, or Cleophas and Mary, lived in Galilee. He was the brother of the Apostle Jude. According to tradition he wrote the Epistle of James, preached in Palestine and Egypt and was crucified in Egypt. James was one of the little-known disciples. Some scholars believe he was the brother of Matthew, the tax collector. James was a man of strong character and one of the fieriest types out of the twelve. Still another tradition says that he died as a martyr and his body was sawed in pieces.

John

John Boanerges, was the son of Zebedee and Salome, brother of James, the Apostle. He was known as the 'Beloved Disciple'. A fisherman who lived in Bethsaida, Capernaum and Jerusalem, he was a member of the Inner Circle. He wrote the Gospel of John, I John, II John, III John and Revelation. He preached among the churches of Asia Minor. Banished to the isle of Patmos, he was later freed and died a natural death. John was one of the prominent Apostles. He is mentioned in many places in the New Testament. He was a man of action; he was very ambitious; and a man with an explosive temper and an intolerant heart. His second name was Boanerges, which means 'Son of Thunder'. John mellowed with time. By the latter part of his life, he had forgotten everything, including his ambition and explosive temper, except his Lord's command to love.

Judas Iscariot

Judas Iscariot, the traitor, was the son of Simon who lived in Kerieth of Judah. He betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver and afterwards hung himself (Mat. 26:14,16). Judas, the man who became the traitor, is the supreme enigma of the New Testament because it is so hard to see how anyone who was so close to Jesus, who saw so many miracles and heard so much of the Master's teaching could ever betray him into the hands of his enemies.

No one can deny that Judas was a covetous man and at times he used his position as treasurer of the band to steal from the common purse. There is no certain reason as to why Judas betrayed his master; but it is not his betrayal that put Jesus on the cross-it was our sins.

Jude or Thaddeus

Jude, Thaddeus son of Cleophas and Mary. He was a brother of James the Younger. He was one of the very little-known Apostles and lived in Galilee. Tradition says he preached in Assyria and Persia and died a martyr in Persia. In the Scriptures Jude had a few surnames. In Mark 3:18 he is called Thaddeus. In Matthew 10:3 he is called Lebbeus. In Luke 6:16 and Acts 1:13 he is called Judas the brother of James.

Matthew or Levi

Matthew, or Levi, son of Alpheus, lived in Capernaum. He was a publican and tax collector. He wrote the Gospel that bears his name. Tradition says that he died a martyr in Ethiopia. The call of Matthew to the apostolic band is mentioned in Mark 2:14, Matthew 9:9 and Luke 5:27-28. From these passages, we learn that Matthew also was called Levi. It is likely that James the lesser, who was one of the twelve Apostles, was Matthew's brother, also the son of Alpheus. Although we know little about Matthew personally, the outstanding fact about him is that he was a tax collector. Of all the nations in the world, the Jews were the most vigorous haters of tax gatherers. To the devout Jew, God was the only one to whom it was right to pay tribute in taxes. To pay it to anyone else was to infringe on the rights of God. The tax collectors were hated not on religious grounds only but because most of them were notoriously unjust. In the minds of many honest, Jewish men, these tax collectors were regarded as criminals. In New Testament times they were classified with harlots, Gentiles and sinners (Matthew 18:17; Matthew 21:31, 33; Matthew 9:10; Mark 2:15,16; Luke 5:30).

Peter

Simon Peter, son of Jonas, was a fisherman who lived in Bethsaida and Capernaum. He did evangelistic and missionary work among the Jews. He was a member of the Inner Circle and authored the two New Testament epistles which bear his name. Tradition says he was crucified, head downward, in Rome. In every apostolic list, the name Peter is mentioned first. However, Peter had other names. At the time of Christ, the common language was Greek and the family language was Hebrew. So his Greek name was Simon (Mark 1:16; John 1:40, 41).

His Hebrew name was Cephas (1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:22; 9:5 and Galatians 2:9). The Greek meaning of Simon is rock. The Arabic meaning of Cephas is also rock. By trade, Peter was a fisherman. He was a married man (1 Corinthians 9:5) and his home was Capernaum. Among the twelve, Peter was the leader. He stands out as a spokesman for all the twelve Apostles. It is he who asked the meaning of the difficult saying in Matthew 15:15. It is he who asked how often he must forgive. It is he who inquired about the reward for all of those who follow Jesus. It is he who first confessed Jesus and declared Him as the Son of the Living God. It is he who was at the Mount of Transfiguration. It is he who saw the daughter of Jairus raised to life. Yet, it is he who denied Christ before a maiden. It is true, Peter had many faults, but he had always the saving grace of the loving heart. No matter how many times he had fallen and failed, he always recovered his courage and integrity. Tradition says that Peter was martyred on a cross. Peter requested that he might be crucified head downward for he was not worthy to die like his Lord had died.

Philip

Tradition says that Philip preached in Phrygia and died a martyr at Hierapolis. Philip came from Bethsaida, the town from which Peter and Andrew came (John 1:44). The likelihood is that he, too, was a fisherman. Although the first three Gospels record his name (Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:14; Acts 1:13), it is in the Gospel of John that Philip becomes a living personality. The Gospel of John shows Philip as one of the first to whom Jesus addressed the words, "Follow Me." When Philip met Christ, he immediately found Nathanael and told him that "we have found him, of whom Moses ... and the prophets, did write." Nathanael was sceptical. But Philip did not argue with him; he simply answered, "Come and see."

Simon the Zealot

Simon, the Zealot, one of the little-known followers called the Canaanite or Zealots, lived in Galilee. *Tradition says* he was crucified. In two places in the King James Version he is called a Canaanite (Matthew 10:4; Mark 3:18). However in the other two places he is called Simon Zelotes (Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13). The New Testament gives us practically nothing on him personally except that it says he was a Zealot. The Zealots were fanatical Jewish Nationalists who had heroic disregard for the suffering involved and the struggle for what they regarded as the purity of their faith. Yet, Simon clearly emerged as a man of faith. He abandoned all his hatred and found faith. He showed it toward Jesus and by the love that he was willing to share with the rest of the disciples and especially Matthew, the Roman tax collector.

Thomas Didymus

Thomas Didymus lived in Galilee. Thomas was his Hebrew name and Didymus was his Greek name. At times he was called Judas. Matthew, Mark and Luke tell us nothing about Thomas except his name. However, John defines him more clearly in his Gospel. Thomas appeared in the raising of Lazarus (John 11:2-16) and in the Upper Room (John 14:1-6) where he wanted to know how to know the way where Jesus was going. In John 20:25, we see him saying unless he sees the nail prints in Jesus' hand and the gash of the spear in His side he will not believe. That's why Thomas became known as Doubting Thomas. When Jesus rose, he came back and invited Thomas to put his finger in the nail prints in his hands and in his side. Here, we see Thomas making the greatest confession of faith, "My Lord and my God." Thomas' doubts were transformed into faith.

CONCLUSION:

1. May all of this remind us of our calling to follow Jesus!

The gospel of Mark
15 – Jesus and the unpardonable sin
3:20-30

²⁰ And He came home, and the crowd gathered again, to such an extent that they could not even eat a meal. ²¹ When His own people heard *of this*, they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, “He has lost His senses.” ²² The scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, “He is possessed by Beelzebul,” and “He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons.” ²³ And He called them to Himself and began speaking to them in parables, “How can Satan cast out Satan? ²⁴ If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵ If a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. ²⁶ If Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but he is finished! ²⁷ But no one can enter the strong man’s house and plunder his property unless he first binds the strong man, and then he will plunder his house. ²⁸ “Truly I say to you, all sins shall be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they utter; ²⁹ but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin”— ³⁰ because they were saying, “He has an unclean spirit.”
(NASB)

What is known to be the ‘unpardonable sin’ has brought many woes, grief and distress to a number of believers. Because of their lack of knowledge their minds oppress them with thoughts of insecurity or even the loss of their salvation.

- Have I gone too far this time?
- Will God forgive me again?
- Have I lost my way and there is no turning back?
- Have I committed the ‘unpardonable’ sin?

Jesus speaks about this sin so let’s listen closely and stand upon the rock of his words. This section proves the paramount importance of biblical knowledge. Even if you are a child of God the enemy can torment you simply because you can not oppose him with the word of God. We are told over and over to be diligent, meditate and study the word of God (Ps. 119:2,4,5,6 etc.).

1. The setting (3:20)

²⁰ And He came home, and the crowd gathered again, to such an extent that they could not even eat a meal.

In the gospel of Matthew (12:22-32) we can see another side of this story.

Matthew 12:22,23

(22) Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw.

**(23) And all the multitudes were amazed and said, "Could this be the Son of David?"
(NKJV)**

The setting is VERY IMPORTANT for us to understand what the ‘unpardonable sin’ actually is. Jesus had just healed a demon-possessed man who could not see or hear. By casting out the demon Jesus made the man whole again. Notice that the Bible does not explain ‘Why’ this man had become demon-possessed. This was true not only in this case but for all the other cases also. Many people offer their thoughts on the subject but the Bible does not offer extensive explanations. So please beware when people speak as though they are experts and have all the answers.

Because of this unbelievable miracle people were so astounded that some are beginning to think the following: ‘Can this be the Son of David?’ Meaning: ‘is Jesus the long awaited Messiah?’ The miraculous healing and the word that is being spread that ‘he might be the Messiah’ causes such an uproar that a crowd gathers and surrounds the house that Jesus and his disciples were in.

(20)... to such an extent that they could not even eat a meal.

The disturbance was so great that they are literally unable to have their meal! People were flooding the house and its outskirts.

2. His family (3:21)

²¹ When His own people heard of this, they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, “He has lost His senses.”

We have read the reaction of the crowd – they wondered if he was the Messiah. The reaction of *'his own people'* which means his own family (mother, brothers & sisters) was quite different. Notice first that they wanted to *'take custody of him'*. They wanted to seize him and to get him out of there. This was not the first time that Jesus had done miracles. It never seemed to bother them before. His own mother even once intervened and asked Jesus to do something about the lack of wine at the marriage of Cana (John 2). So what is the difference with the miracle in this story? They wanted to carry him away. In fact they were afraid for his health and safety.

(v.21)...for they were saying, “He has lost His senses.”

Humanly speaking these were not ‘bad people’ who wanted to destroy his ministry. They actually cared so much about him that they wanted to ‘come to his rescue’. Unfortunately they lacked wisdom and they acted upon their own thoughts and not those of the Lord God. This is a bit like Peter when he refused what Jesus said concerning his coming death. He thought he knew better but Jesus sternly refuted him (Mat. 16:23). May we be very careful not to act too swiftly thinking that ‘we are the ones who know what is right to do or not to do’. As we can see, Jesus’ family actually thought that he was crazy, disturbed and irrational, that he ‘broke’ under the pressure of being so popular. So they rushed to what they thought was his rescue.

3. The accusation (3:22)

²² The scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, “He is possessed by Beelzebul,” and “He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons.”

So far, the crowd is wondering if he might be the Messiah, his family believes that he is crazy and now the religious leaders step in to give their ‘two cents worth’. This was their take on Jesus: ‘He was possessed by Beelzebub’. The name Beelzebub is derived from the name Baal-Zebub who was an idol of the Ekronites. Baal-Zebub was the ‘lord of the flies’ and protected his followers from the torments of gnats and flies. What these religious leaders were saying is that Jesus (who had just performed the healing of a demon-possessed man) was ACTUALLY POSSESSED by a demon! Not only that - listen to what is then said:

(22)...“He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons.”

They are saying that the power that healed the poor man was not from God but from Satan himself who is the ‘ruler of the demons’! The religious leaders believed Jesus was an instrument of the devil and was doing the will of the devil and also glorifying the devil by being his ‘puppet’.

This is VERY important to understand. As we will see in Jesus’ explanation THIS IS the ‘unpardonable sin’ - believing that Jesus is from Satan and is empowered by Satan.

4. The story (3:23-27)

Jesus confronts his accusers by reasoning with them.

²³ And He called them to Himself and began speaking to them in parables, “How can Satan cast out Satan? ²⁴ If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵ If a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. ²⁶ If Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but he is finished! ²⁷ But no one can enter the strong man’s house and plunder his property unless he first binds the strong man, and then he will plunder his house.

This is the way things ought to be settled in life. Someone opposes you so what do you do? Here we see that Jesus calls his opponents and he begins to speak to them. He will show how illogical, warped and blasphemous their thinking was. If Satan casts himself out then his kingdom is divided and his own house no longer stands and the end has come for him. (v.23-26)

He also says how can a man steal from another man UNLESS he first of all binds him.

²⁷ But no one can enter the strong man’s house and plunder his property unless he first binds the strong man, and then he will plunder his house.

In other words, you have to be stronger than the man you are about to steal from if you want to plunder his goods. You simply can not take something by force, from someone, if you are weaker than that person. You see, Satan had bound the poor man and had made him to be blind and deaf. The poor man had become the ‘plunder of Satan’. He was under his control. Now for Jesus to deliver this man from Satan (to steal him back – to rescue him) he had to be stronger than Satan and had to bind the devil to be able to ‘unbind’ the poor man. If Satan is the ruler of the demons (v.22) how then can Jesus (who was supposed to be under his influence) be greater than Satan, bind him and deliver the man? This was totally impossible – Jesus had to be greater to be able to do so.

5. The conclusion (3:28-30)

²⁸ “Truly I say to you, all sins shall be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they utter; ²⁹ but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin” — ³⁰ because they were saying, “He has an unclean spirit.”

Understanding the context, we now come to Jesus’ affirmation concerning what is called the ‘unpardonable sin’. The first thing that Jesus says is:

²⁸ “Truly I say to you, all sins shall be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they utter;

Friends, rest upon these words of Christ, all sins, whatever sin you do WILL BE forgiven. As a true believer there is not a single sin that you do that will not be forgiven – whatever sin it is. Understand that Christ has died not only for a certain amount of sins but for ALL YOUR SINS.

Colossians 1:13

**He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,
(NKJV)**

Romans 5:1

**Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
(NKJV)**

Romans 8:1,2

(1) There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

**(2) For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.
(NKJV)**

Amen! I have been delivered from the power of darkness, I have been transferred (by God) into the kingdom of his beloved Son (Col. 1:13) Amen! I have been justified and have total peace with God (Rom. 5:1) Amen! There is no condemnation because I am in Christ and I have been set free from the Law of sin and death. (Rom. 8:1,2)

Jesus now continues his conclusion:

²⁹ but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin”

Here is the mention of the ‘unpardonable sin’ – it is when you sin against the Holy Spirit. There is NO FORGIVENESS for this sin. There is only eternal condemnation – hell if you prefer. Remember the context, it’s so important. The Scribes (who were the religious elite), said that Jesus was FROM the devil and exercised his power by the ‘ruler of the demons’ (v.22). This is the ‘unpardonable sin’ and the ONLY (as Jesus said) ‘unpardonable sin’, when you say that Jesus is a demon, under the authority of Satan and empowered by the Devil himself. When you say that God himself (Emmanuel) is actually from the Devil – there is no forgiveness for you. The proof of what I just said is found in v. 30:

³⁰ because they were saying, “He has an unclean spirit.”

Saying (which means you believe) that Jesus ‘has an unclean spirit’ will bring eternal damnation upon you. God’s way of salvation is only through his beloved Son. If you take God’s affirmation concerning Jesus and say ‘no He is not holy but rather an unclean spirit’; then the wrath of God is upon you forever – simply because you have closed the door to salvation. I believe that as long as you have breath and your heart is beating you have the opportunity to repent. But if you die believing that Christ is not who he is then God’s judgment is upon you (John 3:36)

CONCLUSION:

1. There is only one ‘unpardonable sin’ and if today you are a child of God it is impossible for you to commit it. This is because you have believed that Christ is the Son of God (who came to save you from the penalty of your sins at the cross) and not believed that he is from the devil.

The gospel of Mark
16 – Jesus' mother and brothers
3:31-35

³¹ Then His mother and His brothers arrived, and standing outside they sent word to Him and called Him. ³² A crowd was sitting around Him, and they said to Him, “Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are outside looking for You.”³³ Answering them, He said, “Who are My mother and My brothers?” ³⁴ Looking about at those who were sitting around Him, He said, “Behold My mother and My brothers! ³⁵ For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother.”
(NASB)

In our last section concerning the ‘unpardonable sin’ (Mark 3:29-34), we saw that Jesus’ family came to see him. They were concerned about him, worried about what was happening in his life, all the people, all the crowds, all the hysteria because of the healings and so forth. It came to a point that this is what his family said about him:

²¹ When His own people heard of this, they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, “He has lost His senses.”
(NASB)

In our section for today we will see what Jesus had to say concerning his family. And believe me his statement should shock many religious establishments. It should also jolt our minds when we come to understand what his view of his family is!

1. The arrival (3:31)

³¹ Then His mother and His brothers arrived, and standing outside they sent word to Him and called Him.

Jesus’ family which presently turns out to be his mother and his brothers finally arrive where Jesus was. Since he is in Capernaum we can imagine that it is at Peter and Andrew’s house. Notice that His brothers as well as his mother (Mary) arrive and it is written that they stay ‘*standing outside*’. I wonder why they don’t show up at Peter’s door and ask to see Jesus? Why don’t they simply make their way right to Jesus and speak to him?

Now I know that there are a lot of people around but for some reason they just don't feel at ease to get near him. We need to remember what they were thinking - that he was '*out of his mind*' (Mark 3:21).

- They may have been somewhat afraid of him (He's crazy).
- They may have been somewhat ashamed of him.
- They may have been afraid of the crowd seeing them wanting to take away Jesus.

We don't know exactly why they stayed outside but they did. I wonder if we are sometimes like them also. We stay just outside of Jesus' door. Instead of getting close to him, do we stay on the porch with the door closed? Yet we are personally invited to go directly to Jesus and not be afraid, or ashamed or to feel unworthy of coming to his side.

Matthew 11:28-30

(28)"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

(29)"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

(30)"For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

(NKJV)

For whatever reason, his family actually preferred to send a messenger to him.

(v.31)...they sent *word* to Him and called Him.

So someone was sent and this person 'called out' for Jesus. It could have been something like:

- Jesus your family is outside and wants to see you.
- Jesus your mother and brothers want to talk with you.
- Jesus could you step outside, some important people are there for you.

We don't know what was said but it was to get Jesus' attention. When you think of it the family may have stayed outside simply because their plan was to take hold of him. Since they couldn't do that inside the house because it was packed full of people they wanted him outside where this could be done.

2. The news (3:32)

³² A crowd was sitting around Him, and they said to Him, “Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are outside looking for You.”

This verse shows us that the messenger sent by his family did a good job. He yelled out so much and so loud that everybody in the house could hear that Jesus was wanted outside by his family. I don't know why (unless Jesus wanted to make a point) but Jesus seems to shut his ears to the messenger and his message.

(v.32)...and they said to Him, “Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are outside looking for You.”

This may have taken a few moments but at one point the crowd seeing the lack of reaction from Jesus – they themselves began to carry the message *‘and they said’*. At this point it was no longer only the messenger but the crowd inside the house that was telling Jesus about his family being outside for him.

(v.32)...Your mother and Your brothers are outside looking for You.”

They might have been thinking:

- Why don't you respond?
- Why don't you go and see them?
- Don't you care that they are there?

In other words “What's wrong with you? Go and see your mother and brothers”. A bit like when parents or grand-parents speak to a child and the child does not listen to them at all – they wonder why and they get frustrated.

3. The question (3:33)

³³ Answering them, He said, “Who are My mother and My brothers?”

Now instead of doing the normal thing or having the normal reaction and going to see his family - Jesus will ask a question to his audience. Have you noticed that often Jesus does not do what is expected of him by society? This is a great lesson for all of us. Too often we comply to what others do or think instead of standing up and walking on the ‘narrow road’.

Jesus asks a very important theological question: “Who are My mother and My brothers?” There's a difference between being an “outsider” and an ‘insider’.

A difference between a family member and a 'close neighbor'. Even a difference between a cousin and being a child of someone. Your aunt is not as close as your mother and your uncle is not as close as your father. Notice that Jesus is talking about relationships – deep and profound relationships – family relationships. For his audience the obvious answer to his question was well known.

Matthew 13:55,56

(55)"Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas?

(56)"And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this Man get all these things?"

(NKJV)

Maybe some were asking themselves 'what's wrong with him, doesn't he know who his mother and brothers are?' Maybe he is out of his mind or maybe he does have a demon as the religious leaders were telling us! The people that were present had absolutely no clue to the impact of his question upon the entire human race. Jesus was actually asking: 'How is it possible for people to be part of my family?' For the living God there are only two families in this entire world and there are only two fathers of all the people on earth. One of them is the devil – he has a family and he is the head of it.

John 8:42-44

(42)Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me.

(43)"Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word.

(44)"You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do.

He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

(NKJV)

The devil was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of lies. The devil has his own family and we see that his children:

- Do not love Jesus (42)
- Do not understand Jesus when he speaks (43)
- Are not even capable of understanding (43)
- Are of the devil (44)
- Have the desires of their father the devil (44)

We see that their father:

- Is a murderer from the very beginning (44)
- Does not stand in the truth (44)
- Has no truth in himself (44)
- Speaks lies (44)
- That these lies are from his heart (44)
- Is the father of all lies (44)

The devil is the spiritual father of all who do not belong to Christ by redemption. Here is one example of a man that does his father the devil's will:

Acts 13:8-11

(8)But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.

(9)Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him

(10)and said, "O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord?

(11)"And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time." And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand.

(NKJV)

Here we see the characteristics of Elymas - who was a son of the devil (v.10)

- Was full of deceit
- Was filled with fraud
- Was the enemy of righteousness
- He perverted the straight ways of the Lord

If God is not your Father than automatically the devil is and billions upon billions of people have no clue concerning this simply because their spiritual father keeps them in a state of spiritual blindness!

2 Corinthians 3:14

**But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ.
(NKJV)**

2 Corinthians 4:4

**whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.
(NKJV)**

1 John 2:11

**But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.
(NKJV)**

Then there is the family of the heavenly Father – God himself!

- In John 2:16 Jesus says that God is his Father.
- In John 14:21 it is written that he who loves the Son is loved by the Father.
- In John 20:17 Jesus says that His Father is our Father.

One of the most touching verses concerning God being the Father of true believers is the following:

1 John 3:1

**Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.
(NKJV)**

I hope you are beginning to understand the importance of being in the family of Jesus the Messiah. Because if you are not – you are in the wrong family and for all eternity.

4. The answer (3:34,35)

³⁴ Looking about at those who were sitting around Him, He said, “Behold My mother and My brothers! ³⁵ For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother.”

Looking at the people in that crowded little house, gathered to listen to his words, he said to them that his mother, and brothers were not the ones who were outside! Only the following was his family:

³⁵ For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother.”

The real family of Jesus is a spiritual one and not one of the flesh. It is reserved only for he who ‘does the will of God’. But simply stated ‘what is the will of God?’

John 14:1

**"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.
(NKJV)**

CONCLUSION:

1. Believing in God and believing that Jesus is the Messiah will open the door to becoming part of the Family of God. So are you staying outside the house like Mary and her sons were or are you inside at Christ's feet? This will determine which family you belong to.

The gospel of Mark
17 – The parable of the sower
4:1-20

(1)He began to teach again by the sea. And such a very large crowd gathered to Him that He got into a boat in the sea and sat down; and the whole crowd was by the sea on the land. (2)And He was teaching them many things in parables, and was saying to them in His teaching, (3) “Listen to this! Behold, the sower went out to sow; (4) as he was sowing, some *seed* fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate it up.

(5)Other *seed* fell on the rocky *ground* where it did not have much soil; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of soil. (6)And after the sun had risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.

(7)Other *seed* fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. (8) Other *seeds* fell into the good soil, and as they grew up and increased, they yielded a crop and produced thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.” (9) And He was saying, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” (10)As soon as He was alone, His followers, along with the twelve, *began* asking Him *about* the parables.

(11)And He was saying to them, “To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but those who are outside get everything in parables, (12)so that WHILE “SEEING, THEY MAY SEE AND NOT PERCEIVE, AND WHILE HEARING, THEY MAY HEAR AND NOT UNDERSTAND, OTHERWISE THEY MIGHT RETURN AND BE FORGIVEN.”

(13)And He said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables? (14)The sower sows the word. (15)These are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them. (16)In a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky *places*, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; (17)and they have no *firm* root in themselves, but are *only* temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away. (18)And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, (19)but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. (20)And those are the ones on whom seed was sown on the good soil; and they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.”

(NASB)

1. The setting (4:1,2)

(1)He began to teach again by the sea. And such a very large crowd gathered to Him that He got into a boat in the sea and sat down; and the whole crowd was by the sea on the land. (2)And He was teaching them many things in parables, and was saying to them in His teaching,

In the first verse we see the importance of teaching in the ministry of Jesus (*to teach again*). Although there are many things that are not understood because of our limited understanding – there was actually very little ‘mysticism’ in his instructions. We also notice that his teachings are not for a selected few or a spiritual elite. Jesus openly preaches to anyone who desires to listen. May we also have open ears to receive from Christ.

Jesus teaches *by the sea* – that’s where the people were. This is where a lot of commerce was being done. People were coming and going, buying and selling. This is also where the ‘latest news’ traveled to. So Jesus chose a place where he could reach the greatest amount of people possible. This does not exclude the times that he spoke to one person at a time. Nicodemus, the woman at the well and others had a one-on-one conversation with him. This teaches us that we must take all possibilities at hand to spread the gospel whether with a friend or to family members around the dinner table.

There was a problem with dealing with such a large crowd – the potential pressing of the people.

(v.1)...And such a very large crowd gathered to Him that He got into a boat in the sea and sat down; and the whole crowd was by the sea on the land.

One needs to remember that the reputation of Jesus was forever growing and people gathered around him. Unfortunately when a crowd gets out of hand trouble arises. Some came to hear his sermons, others came to see miracles, while others actually wanted to be touched by him or to touch him so that they may be healed like the woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years (Luke 8:43). This situation could rapidly become chaotic. Crowd control did not exist in those days so Jesus did what was the easiest and best thing to do – he got onto a boat (*He got into a boat in the sea and sat down*). He separated himself from the crowd and therefore created a ‘safety zone’. He was on the boat and the crowd was on the seashore.

(2)And He was teaching them many things in parables, and was saying to them in His teaching,

We will see that the Lord Jesus uses a parable to teach the crowd. We need to understand what a parable is and how it works. This is what the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia writes: *'In the more usual and technical sense of the word, "parable" ordinarily signifies an imaginary story, yet one that in its details could have actually transpired, the purpose of the story being to illustrate and inculcate some higher spiritual truth.'* So a parable is a story that points to a spiritual truth. A parable is given to help people understand a main point and not to make it even more obscure.

2. The parable (4:3-9)

(3) "Listen to this! Behold, the sower went out to sow; (4) as he was sowing, some seed fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate it up. (5) Other seed fell on the rocky ground where it did not have much soil; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of soil. (6) And after the sun had risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. (7) Other seed fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. (8) Other seeds fell into the good soil, and as they grew up and increased, they yielded a crop and produced thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold." (9) And He was saying, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Jesus begins by saying: *'listen to this'*. Today we might say: 'Attention please'. Jesus wanted the crowd to stop what they were doing and to listen to his words. We also need to stop our activities and to really take time to hear what the Lord has for us. We all have busy lives, we all have far too many things to do and we all need to STOP, set aside what we are doing and calmly stay quiet. Jesus will speak about four seeds.

(3) "Listen to this! Behold, the sower went out to sow; (4) as he was sowing, some seed fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate it up.

The picture of a sower was very common in Israel, every person could easily imagine what Jesus was speaking about. As I said before, a parable is used to enlighten the mind and not to darken it. May our spiritual explanations also be easily understood! The first seed is thrown in the air and it lands beside the road. Like today there were little roads or paths that went from one field to another. People walked daily on these paths and the ground hardened under their feet, so hard that nothing grew on them. I personally live in the country and the entrance to our house is a path that has been used for decades. Nothing grows, nothing can grow because the ground is almost hard as rock. So some of the seed fell on this ground and since it just lies there the birds come and have a feast eating all the seed they can.

(5)Other *seed* fell on the rocky *ground* where it did not have much soil; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of soil. (6)And after the sun had risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.

Here we see the story of the second seed. There is soil and the seed begins to grow and grow rapidly. Unfortunately the soil was not really made for farming. You see the ground was rocky. All farmers will tell you that it is simply impossible to have a crop when the soil is filled with rocks. Farmers are constantly extracting all the rocks that are in their field. There is even special equipment that is made to be used only to remove rocks! Here we see that the depth of the soil was slight because of the rock formation underneath it. Once the sun would appear and heat the soil the plant would instantly die because '*it had no root*'. This meant that the little roots it had were not able to provide any humidity from the soil (because of the rocks) and the plant withered away. The word '*scorched*' in Greek (KAUMATIZO) means: to burn. It just withered away, dried up and died.

(7)Other *seed* fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it yielded no crop.

The third group of seed unfortunately did not fall on the right type of soil it fell among already existing plants – thorns. We know that when a farmer plants seeds he first of all gets rid of everything that is on the soil. The ground has to be cleansed of rocks, debris and existing vegetation, simply because what is on the field will damage the seeding effort. Here we see that the existing thorns '*choked*' the life out of the seeds that tried to grow. The word '*choked*' (SUMPNIGO) in Greek means: to strangle completely. The existing life in the plant was taken away – it died.

Now so far the sower is unsuccessful for all of the first three seeds are either eaten away, dried up or left lifeless. This is a somber picture but AMEN that there is a fourth seed and this should encourage us.

(8)Other *seeds* fell into the good soil, and as they grew up and increased, they yielded a crop and produced thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.” (9) And He was saying, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

The story of the fourth seed is comforting. Notice that it is the only seed that fell '*into the good soil*'. And this is a very important fact, the fourth seed is the only one that fell into '*good soil*'. This makes all the difference in the parable. Because it fell in the good soil two main things happened. The first is that: '*they grew up and increased*'. This means that they were healthy and the natural course of things went along just fine. Contrary to the first seed the soil was receiving the seed.

Contrary to the second seed this soil was not filled with rocks and had enough depth to allow its roots to firmly set in and nourish the plant. Contrary to the third seed this soil did not have any thorns to choke the life out of it. The second main thing that happened because of the soil is that: *'they yielded a crop'*. This means that this seed was brought to maturity. The full cycle had occurred. In other words the seed became what it was supposed to be - a fully grown crop. Once again this is all because of the *'good soil'* that the seed had fallen into.

Please notice something very important that is written: *'produced thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.'* Each seed did not automatically produce the same amount of fruit, as with each true Disciple of Christ. Some are more fruitful than others depending on the spiritual gifting they had received and also their willingness to follow the Lord. This reminds me of the parable of the Talents (Mat. 25:14-30) where the owner gives five talents to one, two to another servant and finally one to the last. He rewarded the one that doubled his two talents just as much as the one who doubled his five talents. But the one who bore the Master no fruit from the talent that he was given was judged and punished. It is obvious that this last servant did not have *'good soil'* in his heart since he did nothing else but hide the money he had received.

(9) And He was saying, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Jesus draws a conclusion to his parable by stating that if you have understood this parable apply it. He is also saying that it is not everyone that has *'ears to hear'*. Not everyone is able to understand what is said by Christ.

3. I don't understand (4:10-12)

(10)As soon as He was alone, His followers, along with the twelve, began asking Him about the parables. (11)And He was saying to them, "To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but those who are outside get everything in parables, (12)so that "WHILE SEEING, THEY MAY SEE AND NOT PERCEIVE, AND WHILE HEARING, THEY MAY HEAR AND NOT UNDERSTAND, OTHERWISE THEY MIGHT RETURN AND BE FORGIVEN."

In verse ten we see that His followers and the twelve (those who would become His disciples) did not really understand or only partly understood what Jesus meant by His parable.

(10)As soon as He was alone, His followers, along with the twelve, began asking Him about the parables.

Notice that the followers and the twelve did not tarry with their questions *'as soon as'*. It seems that their hearts were pricked by this parable and they absolutely wanted to understand it. What a wonderful example for all Disciples of Christ not tarrying to open the Bible and asking the Holy Spirit to open their eyes so they can understand what is written. It also manifests that even the twelve who had been with Christ day in and day out still could not grasp his every word. This comforts me because there are still many things that I can not grasp!

(11)And He was saying to them, “To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but those who are outside get everything in parables, (12)so that “WHILE SEEING, THEY MAY SEE AND NOT PERCEIVE, AND WHILE HEARING, THEY MAY HEAR AND NOT UNDERSTAND, OTHERWISE THEY MIGHT RETURN AND BE FORGIVEN.”

These two verses are difficult for our minds to comprehend and accept. It manifests both the severity of the Lord (unto those who do not have ears to hear) and the grace of the Lord for those who do.

Jesus speaks of *'the mystery of the kingdom of God'*. The word *'mystery'* (MUSTERION) means: to shut the mouth, giving the idea of something that is a secret. The secret mentioned here has to do with the kingdom of God. What is this 'Kingdom of God'? It seems that this term is an equivalent of: Kingdom of Christ (Mt 6:33; Mr 1:14,15; Lu 4:43), Kingdom of Christ and of God (Mt 13:41; 20:21), Kingdom of David (Eph 5:5), the Kingdom (Mt 8:12; 13:19), and the Kingdom of heaven (Mt 3:2; 4:17; 13:41). All these terms give the idea of the authority of God and his rule here on earth as the Sovereign King.

What we find in this parable has to do with 'how to get in the Kingdom' as we will see with Jesus' explanation. So the answer to the mystery of the Kingdom of God is given to those who have a heart to follow Christ (those who have ears to listen). But to those whose ears are not receptive to the message they remain in darkness having no true desire or interest in the Kingdom of God.

4. The explanation (4:13-20)

(13)And He said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables? (14)The sower sows the word. (15)These are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them. (16)In a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky *places*, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy;

(17)and they have no *firm* root in themselves, but are *only* temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away. (18)And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, (19)but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. (20)And those are the ones on whom seed was sown on the good soil; and they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.”

Once the disciples and followers ask questions concerning this parable Jesus makes an important point.

(13)And He said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables?”

The point he is making is the importance of understanding parables. Since this should be an easily understood parable because it was taken from an agricultural imagery seen so often in Israel – why then don't you get it? Sower, seed, soil, rocks, heat, etc. It should be easily understood. He then goes and says: '*How will you understand all the parables?*' If you don't understand a parable everybody should get how are you going to understand other parables that are more spiritual in their significance? So Jesus sets out to explain what the parable means.

(14)The sower sows the word.

The first thing he describes is what the seed is that the sower is spreading across his field – it is the '*word*'. The '*word*' mentioned is the word of God. The sower in this case can easily be Jesus himself or anyone of his disciples that spreads the Good News. Let's imagine that it's Jesus as he goes to and fro in Israel bringing the Gospel message wherever he is.

(15)These are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them.

The following verses are self-explanatory. Jesus speaks of the first seed which falls on the 'hard soil' (hard heart, ears that do not hear, spiritually blind). This person does not really care about the Kingdom of God and the seed planted is there but for a very little time. Jesus says that Satan is like a bird that rapidly comes and scoops up the word of God that had been given. Some might say: 'See how powerful Satan is'.

Actually if the soil had been good the seed would have taken root and grown. Since the heart was closed it was easy for Satan to do his work.

(16)In a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; (17)and they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away.

Jesus says that when the second seed is received it lands in rocky soil and people receive the word with joy, just like many do in our churches or Christian events. There is a lot going on, music, testimonies, and atmosphere and when they hear the word they receive it. They may answer the altar call, raise their hand, sign on the dotted line and so forth. But Jesus says that *'they have no firm root in themselves'* and this reception is *'only temporary'*. Real life happens *'affliction or persecution because of the word'*. Since they have no *'firm root in themselves'* (their reception of the word is superficial) since there was no real second birth – they fall away. I have often seen this in people who one day attend church and are active and a few months later they are never to be seen again.

(18)And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, (19)but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

The third seed is received by people who are filled with *'the worries of the world'* and *'the deceitfulness of riches'* and also *'the desires for other things'*. In other words they are drowning in longings and cravings for the things of this world, the riches of it and all types of passions. They *'want'* and they *'worry'*. Their eyes are focused on what we call materialism. They live for the NOW and they want it right NOW! All these things *'enter in and choke the word'*. The life- giving word is shut out of the heart of the person and can not bring any fruit in the person's life.

(20)And those are the ones on whom seed was sown on the good soil; and they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold."

I am so glad that the parable does not end with verse nineteen because no one could be saved. So far the seed has been useless in the life of these three different kinds of people. The first person has a heart too hard to receive the word. The second person does not have any roots in himself and the seed dies. The third person is so caught up with the things of this world that the word is choked and does not bear any fruit.

The fourth seed lands in '*good soil*' meaning that the heart of the person is ready to hear the Good News. This is the ONLY seed that falls in '*good soil*'. Also notice that there are no obstacles in the life of this person. It is written that people like this person '*hear the word and accept it*'. This is also the only seed that is accepted by the soil. And finally: '*and bear fruit*'. It is the completion of the life giving cycle.

This is the only person that enters the Kingdom of God. He hears the Good News, he has '*good soil*' (his heart), he '*accepts*' the Good News (he repents) and he '*bears fruit*' his life is transformed and glorifies the Lord God.

CONCLUSION:

1. May I ask if you have gladly received the word of God – the Good News unto salvation? Have you accepted it and repented of your sins asking Jesus to be your Savior? Has your life been dramatically transformed and are the fruits of your life evident for all to see? Only this person will enter the Kingdom of God – are you that kind of person?

The gospel of Mark
18 – Three parables

4:21-34

²¹ And He was saying to them, “A lamp is not brought to be put under a basket, is it, or under a bed? Is it not *brought* to be put on the lampstand? ²² For nothing is hidden, except to be revealed; nor has *anything* been secret, but that it would come to light. ²³ If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.”²⁴ And He was saying to them, “Take care what you listen to. By your standard of measure it will be measured to you; and more will be given you besides.²⁵ For whoever has, to him *more* shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.”

²⁶ And He was saying, “The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil; ²⁷ and he goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts and grows—how, he himself does not know. ²⁸ The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head.²⁹ But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.”

³⁰ And He said, “How shall we picture the kingdom of God, or by what parable shall we present it? ³¹ *It is* like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the soil, though it is smaller than all the seeds that are upon the soil, ³² yet when it is sown, it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and forms large branches; so that THE BIRDS OF THE air can NEST UNDER ITS SHADE.”

³³ With many such parables He was speaking the word to them, so far as they were able to hear it; ³⁴ and He did not speak to them without a parable; but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples.

(NASB)

In this section the Lord will tell his listeners three parables and they are given like ‘a bundle’. Are these three parables going in the same direction? In a way they can, depending on how you look at them. Some might reflect on them long enough to find factors that link them one to another. One might say that the first parable speaks of receiving the seed (light) and being responsible for it. The second can speak about the seed (light) entering a person and growing in an unknown fashion. The third parable could speak about once the seed (light) is grounded in a person it transforms that person into someone totally different. Notice that this ‘bunch’ of parables follow the famous parable of the sower. Could it be that in some way they all have the same theme – ‘The word of God and its effect on a human being?’

1. A lamp on a stand (4:21-25)

²¹ And He was saying to them, “A lamp is not brought to be put under a basket, is it, or under a bed? Is it not *brought* to be put on the lampstand? ²² For nothing is hidden, except to be revealed; nor has *anything* been secret, but that it would come to light. ²³ If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.”²⁴ And He was saying to them, “Take care what you listen to. By your standard of measure it will be measured to you; and more will be given you besides.²⁵ For whoever has, to him *more* shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.”

In this first parable the Lord speaks of a lamp. Now a lamp is made to light a room, just as we ‘flick’ the switch when it is dark in our home. Jesus is speaking about light (let’s not forget that he IS the light - John 8:12; 9:5). The first thing we see is that light is not made to be hidden.

²¹ And He was saying to them, “A lamp is not brought to be put under a basket, is it, or under a bed? Is it not *brought* to be put on the lampstand?”

In reality the only way to hide light is to place something over it to cover it. Jesus was not hiding from anyone or anything. His “light” radiated wherever he went and it was there for all to see. His disciples were able to see the master’s light day in and day out. As a child of God we should do the same - shine on others the light that is living in us.

²² For nothing is hidden, except to be revealed; nor has *anything* been secret, but that it would come to light.

Here we see that the Lord Jesus had not hidden any part of the light. He does not keep in secret the light that is needed for mankind to receive salvation. Jesus did not give ALL THE LIGHT. It would be absolutely impossible for man to be able to receive all the light – we are not capable of this.

It is one thing to look at a 15 watt bulb but one can not look at the sun it would destroy his eyesight! When we look at the light there is something that happens – we see our sins and that is why people do not like the light in general (John 3:19-21).

²³ If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.”²⁴ And He was saying to them, “Take care what you listen to. By your standard of measure it will be measured to you; and more will be given you besides.²⁵ For whoever has, to him *more* shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.”

In these verses Jesus is giving a warning to all who listen to what he says – this would include you and me. We need to be attentive to what we hear coming from the Lord. Jesus says: *‘Take care to what you listen’*. The Greek word for *‘take care’* (BLEPO) means: to behold, to beware, to perceive. In other words ‘watch-out’ what you are hearing – pay close attention. There are two reasons for this.

²⁴ And He was saying to them, “Take care what you listen to. By your standard of measure it will be measured to you; and more will be given you besides.

The first deals with the way you use what you have heard. Because the measure you use for others will be the same measure that is used for you! The person who hears ‘love one another’, then tells it to others or maybe even teaches it BUT does not practice it will land up being measured more severely by the Lord. That is why James wrote the following:

James 3:1

My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.

(NKJV)

The second reason is found in verse twenty five.

²⁵ For whoever has, to him *more* shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.”

Now a quick look at this verse and it seems to be unfair - giving more to the one who has and less to the one who does not. But in its context it makes perfect sense. If one has a ‘*good measure*’ (understands well and uses well what he has heard from Christ) he will receive even more from the Lord. But the one who does not have a ‘*good measure*’ (uses unwisely or foolishly what he has heard from the Lord) he will receive very little. Think of the parable of the three servants who receive the talents from their Master before he goes on a voyage (Mat. 25:14-30), this is the conclusion of this parable:

Matthew 25:28,29

(28)'Therefore take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents.

(29)'For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.

(NKJV)

The servant, in his Master’s absence, who did more with his money received more to invest while the one who did nothing with his Master’s money has even the little he had taken away from him.

2. The growing seed (4:26-29)

²⁶ And He was saying, “The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil; ²⁷ and he goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts and grows—how, he himself does not know. ²⁸ The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head.²⁹ But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.”

The second parable continues to speak about *'receiving the seed'* (or the light from the Lord). The image given by Christ is that of a farmer and what he does - casting his seed on the soil. Jesus had just told the parable of the 'four soils' but now he will reveal another feature of what goes on, an aspect that the sower (person who shares the gospel) does not understand.

²⁷ and he goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts and grows— how, he himself does not know.²⁸ The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head. ²⁹ But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

This is what he does not understand – how his seeds grow to become a good crop. He does what he should do and the soil takes care of the rest. Just as the person who shares the gospel leaves the Lord to do the rest. It happens that Christians carry a burden that is not theirs. We are not the ones who bring people to the Lord. We do not open their minds so they can understand. We do not convict them of their sins. It is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to do this (John 16:7-11). All of this is done in the spiritual realm and none of us truly understand how the Holy Spirit accomplishes this. What we do know is that one day harvest will come.

3. The mustard seed (4:30-32)

³⁰ And He said, "How shall we picture the kingdom of God, or by what parable shall we present it? ³¹ It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the soil, though it is smaller than all the seeds that are upon the soil, ³² yet when it is sown, it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and forms large branches; so that THE BIRDS OF THE air can NEST UNDER ITS SHADE."

If the first parable speaks of receiving the seed (light) and the second the seed (light) growing to maturity. The third parable speaks of the difference between the seed and the mature plant. Here Jesus uses another seed – a mustard seed. The illustration that is used is that of a mustard seed which is a very small round seed (1-2 millimetre). This tiny seed is TOTALLY transformed into a HUGE plant (up to two meters tall).

As I said the transformation is unbelievable from a seed just a little bigger than the dot at the end of this sentence, to the height of a tall person. This is what God does to those who receive the seed (light of the Lord), and matures to its fullest! We become something new:

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

(NKJV)

A believer has become so different that he can become shade for others. As a simple seed he could not do this but as a mature plant his shade is welcomed by the birds that flock under its leaves. May all true believers be so transformed that they become a blessing for others.

4. The conclusion (4:33,34)

³³ With many such parables He was speaking the word to them, so far as they were able to hear it; ³⁴ and He did not speak to them without a parable; but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples.

Here we see how Jesus ministered to the crowds. Sometimes it was very plain and easy to understand other times he spoke in parables. He spoke in a way that people could normally understand.

³³ With many such parables He was speaking the word to them, so far as they were able to hear it;

This should teach us a lesson concerning talking, preaching, teaching or evangelizing. We should speak in a way that people can understand the language we use. Unfortunately some use a language (theological words) and people have no clue.

We may think we impress but actually we serve for no good reason. Have you ever been to a doctor and he tells you what you have and you have no clue about what he is saying? He says that you have 'Otitis media with effusion'. So you ask him to tell you in simpler terms. He then tells you that your middle ear is swelling – that you can understand. Jesus could have talked in a way that would have 'blown' every body's mind (He is God) but he spoke with the simple man's language. What we also see is that his Disciples had a special privilege:

³⁴and He did not speak to them without a parable; but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples.

Jesus made certain that his Disciple would understand what he was saying. Now I know that sometimes 'time' had not come for them to understand certain things but in general Jesus explained parables to his Disciples. What I see is that if you are a Disciple of Christ and if you take time to draw close to Jesus, read and study his word you will be enlightened. Will you understand everything – NO! We are only human but what is important for you to understand Christ will reveal when the time has come.

CONCLUSION:

1. Have you received the light of the Lord? If so, do you hide it from others? The light that you have should shine for all to see. Don't forget that the measure you use to measure others will be used for yourself!
2. Are you maturing in the Lord – a seed grows and so should all of us!
3. Are you so transformed in such a way that you are not recognizable? Are others coming to you to be in your 'shade'?

The gospel of Mark
19 – Jesus calms the storm
4:35-41

³⁵ On that day, when evening came, He said to them, “Let us go over to the other side.” ³⁶ Leaving the crowd, they took Him along with them in the boat, just as He was; and other boats were with Him. ³⁷ And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. ³⁸ Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke Him and said to Him, “Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?” ³⁹ And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Hush, be still.” And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm. ⁴⁰ And He said to them, “Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?” ⁴¹ They became very much afraid and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?”
(NASB)

1. Getting on board (4:35,36)

³⁵ On that day, when evening came, He said to them, “Let us go over to the other side.” ³⁶ Leaving the crowd, they took Him along with them in the boat, just as He was; and other boats were with Him.

Getting on board a train or an airplane is always quite an experience. I wonder what it was like to ‘get on board’ a fishing boat with Jesus. Notice that it is Jesus who invites his disciples to ‘get on board’ with him. I believe that this invitation still stands today. When Jesus says ‘Follow me’, he’s practically asking us to ‘get on board’ and go where he goes and live a life of following him. Have you noticed at what time Jesus told his disciples to get in the boat ‘*when evening came*’? It would be unusual to begin a journey in a small boat when it was dark – navigating in daylight is so much easier and pleasant. This tells me that sometimes when we follow Jesus he can bring us out with him when things are not so bright. We all wish we could follow Jesus when things are just perfect but that’s not true in a disciple’s life. We follow when we are called – even when it is night! Still in verse thirty five we see that Jesus had a goal set for his disciples ‘*over to the other side*’. From one point to another point. From one shore to another shore. He did not mention ‘where’ on the other side. What we do see is that the disciples willingly follow him even if they are not certain of their destination. Are we not to be like them? Following Jesus just because he wants us to be with him. Notice that in verse thirty six they separated themselves from the crowd:

³⁶ Leaving the crowd, they took Him along with them in the boat, just as He was; and other boats were with Him.

In life if we desire to follow Jesus and be ‘in his boat’ we must then separate ourselves from the crowd (2 Cor. 6:17,18) and follow him. The crowd will always keep us at a distance from the Lord for they do not live in spiritual light. So they joined Jesus in the boat that he was in and let him be their captain, giving his directions and following his goals. Notice that there were others that also followed. These were people who were not in the same boat nor did they get an invitation to follow to the other side. You see they wanted to follow Jesus but ‘in their own boat’, doing things their own way, being their own captain. Many are like this, following Jesus from afar but not in ‘his boat’. They might like Jesus as a person (he’s so good), or church (people are so nice) or ministries (they help so much) but they have not repented of their sins and really have nothing to do with him.

2. The storm (4:37,38)

³⁷ And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. ³⁸ Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke Him and said to Him, “Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?”

Then out of nowhere a ‘*fierce gale of wind*’ came. The word ‘*fierce*’ (MEGAS) means: exceedingly great. This wasn’t just a strong wind – it was sudden and very big. Because of the mountain range near the Sea of Galilee winds sweep down and come full blown over the waters. It didn’t take long before things got out of hand. Waves were taller than the small boat, water was flooding the ship and filling it up. In other words they were going down like the Titanic! I can imagine the disciples working frantically to keep the boat afloat, doing all they can, each doing their part but with no avail. All this didn’t seem to bother Jesus at all he was sleeping in the stern – at the back of the boat! How could he sleep when everyone is frantically and desperately trying to keep from sinking? I wonder how the disciples felt when they saw Jesus sleeping like a baby?

(v.38)... and they woke Him and said to Him, “Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?”

They actually did one good thing and two bad things, let’s look at them. The good thing that they did was to wake Jesus up. We see that they spoke to him. It was a bit late don’t you think? They spoke to Jesus after working so hard and doing what they thought was best to get this situation fixed. Things haven’t changed much, most of us will try to get things under control and only after we see that it’s not working do we call upon Jesus. I believe they should have called upon Christ right away then they would not have gotten into this situation!

One of the two bad things that they did was to foretell the future: *'we are perishing'*. They thought that they would die, now how did they know that – they didn't! Like many of us in difficult situations we make up scenarios as though we were God and could see the future. They thought the worst would happen (and they were wrong). We also should stop imagining the future and leave that for God. The second bad thing they did was to say: *'do you not care'*? They actually did not believe that Jesus cared for them and why? Because they thought that certainly if Jesus cared for us we would not be in this precarious situation! Is this the way you think? Do you believe that if Jesus really cared or loved you that you would never have any storms in your life? If you do you need to know that you are wrong. We need to always come back to verses such as Rom. 5:8: *'But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.'*

3. The statement (4:39)

³⁹ And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush, be still." And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm.

This is one of the most unbelievable verses in the New Testament! Notice that when Jesus decides to stand and 'fix' a situation nothing is out of his reach and power – he does the human impossible! May we also remember that in our own storms it only takes Jesus to stand up to fix things! It is written that he *'rebuked the wind'*. The word *rebuke* (EPITIMAO) means: to censure or admonish, to forbid. Have you ever seen someone tell the winds to STOP blowing? Of course not, no one can do that – except God himself! Then he told the sea *'hush, be still'*. In Greek *hush* (SIOPAO) means: to be silent, mute. Figuratively it means: to calm down or to hold your peace. So he told the sea to be quiet, to be still. When you face a great storm on the ocean and finally it quiets down it is said that it take 2-3 days for the ocean to be totally calm (still). Everything instantly came to a halt when Jesus spoke! This miracle of controlling nature is beyond most of all his other miracles and that is why, as we will see, it had such a great impact on his disciples. If Jesus can do such a miracle can he not intervene successfully in our own difficulties?

4. The question (4:40)

⁴⁰ And He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

Jesus addresses his disciples with two very important questions. The first is: *'Why are you afraid?'* They were so afraid that they thought they were going to die but where did this feeling come from?

They worked but their hands did not suffice – they were panicking but why? This is because with their human eyes they could not see any other future for them but death! They thought with the flesh instead of thinking and reasoning spiritually. Are we not like them, situations frighten us and all of a sudden we fear for the worst! The answer comes in the form of the second question: *'Do you still have no faith?'* They had lost all faith in the person who was in the boat with them. In other words their faith was only 'skin deep' it was not yet rooted deep down in their hearts. This tragic event simply manifested to them how their faith was shallow and superficial! Sometimes the Disciples of Christ need a reality check. We often think too much of ourselves but 'under pressure' manifest how deep our faith really is.

5. The reaction (4:41)

⁴¹ They became very much afraid and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"

This verse manifests why Jesus took them out on a 'boat ride' in the middle of the night. It is also one of the reasons why Jesus places his followers in difficult situations. The disciples could not believe what they had seen which brought them to question between themselves concerning Jesus. Because of this adventure the disciples were able to see another side of Jesus. They saw Jesus being master of the waves and the wind. He showed them his omnipotence. I believe that we may sometimes be placed in 'dire straits' only so that Jesus can manifest himself to us in a way that we have never seen. And this brings us to a deeper understand of who our Lord and Savior is.

CONCLUSION:

1. When you are facing your storms in life do not hesitate to cry out to Jesus before they become too big. Also never doubt that Jesus care and loves you – you're in the storm for a good reason. Let him manifest it to you.

The gospel of Mark
20 – The demon possessed man

5:1-20

¹ They came to the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gerasenes.² When He got out of the boat, immediately a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met Him,³ and he had his dwelling among the tombs. And no one was able to bind him anymore, even with a chain;⁴ because he had often been bound with shackles and chains, and the chains had been torn apart by him and the shackles broken in pieces, and no one was strong enough to subdue him.⁵ Constantly, night and day, he was screaming among the tombs and in the mountains, and gashing himself with stones.⁶ Seeing Jesus from a distance, he ran up and bowed down before Him;⁷ and shouting with a loud voice, he said, “What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God, do not torment me!”⁸ For He had been saying to him, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!”⁹ And He was asking him, “What is your name?” And he said to Him, “My name is Legion; for we are many.”¹⁰ And he *began* to implore Him earnestly not to send them out of the country.¹¹ Now there was a large herd of swine feeding nearby on the mountain.¹² *The demons* implored Him, saying, “Send us into the swine so that we may enter them.”¹³ Jesus gave them permission. And coming out, the unclean spirits entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, about two thousand *of them*; and they were drowned in the sea.

¹⁴ Their herdsmen ran away and reported it in the city and in the country. And *the people* came to see what it was that had happened.¹⁵ They came to Jesus and observed the man who had been demon-possessed sitting down, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had had the “legion”; and they became frightened.¹⁶ Those who had seen it described to them how it had happened to the demon-possessed man, and *all* about the swine.¹⁷ And they began to implore Him to leave their region.¹⁸ As He was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed was imploring Him that he might accompany Him.¹⁹ And He did not let him, but He said to him, “Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and *how* He had mercy on you.”²⁰ And he went away and began to proclaim in Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed.

(NASB)

1. The surprise (5:1-5)

¹ They came to the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gerasenes.² When He got out of the boat, immediately a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met Him, ³ and he had his dwelling among the tombs. And no one was able to bind him anymore, even with a chain; ⁴ because he had often been bound with shackles and chains, and the chains had been torn apart by him and the shackles broken in pieces, and no one was strong enough to subdue him.⁵ Constantly, night and day, he was screaming among the tombs and in the mountains, and gashing himself with stones.

This is the continuation of our last section where Jesus calmed the sea. He and his disciples have just arrived on *'the other side'* as Jesus called it. The country of the Gerasenes is located on the South East portion of the Southern end of the Sea of Galilee. It is one of the cities that was part of the Decapolis. Is it not interesting that as soon as Jesus arrives there is a demon-possessed man that comes to meet him! How did he know that he had arrived? How did he know that he was Jesus? Why did he come to see him since they have nothing in common? Some questions are not readily answered in the Scriptures. It seems that this man dwelt in the tombs (v.2,3,5) and also in the region of the mountains. Let's not believe that demon-possessed people always live apart or in some sinister place. The little Syrophenician girl lived at home (Mk. 7:24-30), the little epileptic boy lived with his father (Mat. 17:14-21), the mute possessed man lived with other people (Mat. 9:32-34), The mute person also seemed to live among his peers (Luke 11:14,15), There was also a demon-possessed man in a synagogue (Mark 1:21-28).

What does it mean to have *'an unclean spirit'*? It means that somehow (the Bible does not explain how this occurs) a person is *'taken over'* by a fallen angel (evil spirit, demon, devil, etc.). These were angels that abandoned their original state and rebelled against God. Jude wrote the following:

Jude 1:6

And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day.

(NKJV)

Peter gives us another insight concerning these evil spirits:

2 Peter 2:4

For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment.

(NKJV)

Verses three and four paints for us a portrait of this man and as you will see it is very surprising.

³ and he had his dwelling among the tombs. And no one was able to bind him anymore, even with a chain; ⁴ because he had often been bound with shackles and chains, and the chains had been torn apart by him and the shackles broken in pieces, and no one was strong enough to subdue him.

On three occasions (v.2,3,5) it is written that he dwelt among the tombs. Why is it that in this case he '*dwelt among the tombs*' and not, as we have seen, lived among other people? It just might be it was because of the depth of this demon-possession. We also see that he had super-human strength. He had been bound by shackles and chains and they could not resist him, he would simply tear them apart. As we will see this poor man had a great number of demons inside of him. This would answer the question 'where did he get such strength'? It seems that the power of the demons somehow is transmitted to the person who they inhabit. How this is done – again the Bible does not explain it, it just confirms it.

People had tried to subdue him, to chain him, to control him but *'no one was strong enough'*.

⁵ Constantly, night and day, he was screaming among the tombs and in the mountains, and gashing himself with stones.

There was no rest for this man: *'constantly, night and day'*. This poor soul was never given any relief or tranquility. There are two other things mentioned that the demons pushed this man to do. The first *'he was screaming'*. We don't know why he screamed but we can understand that it was not out of pleasure. His poor soul was so tormented that he just screamed his pain as loud as he could. The second is *'gashing himself with stones'*. Here we see that the demons did not care at all for their host. They were physically hurting the person. We can see the character of these evil spirits. That is why we are told never to have any dealing with these spirit beings, to have nothing to do with them (2 Cor. 6:14-16). Do not approach any deeds of darkness even if they seem harmless or done 'just for fun'. They will ensnare you like Satan did with our first parents!

2. The meeting (6-10)

⁶ Seeing Jesus from a distance, he ran up and bowed down before Him; ⁷ and shouting with a loud voice, he said, "What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God, do not torment me!" ⁸ For He had been saying to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" ⁹ And He was asking him, "What is your name?" And he said to Him, "My name is Legion; for we are many."¹⁰ And he *began* to implore Him earnestly not to send them out of the country.

Reading verse six I need to ask myself a question: 'How did he know he was Jesus?' Again our text does not explain. Could it be that angels and demons are able to see things that we can not? Since Jesus is the light of the world, does this light 'shine' in the spiritual world in a spectrum that our earthly eyes are not capable of capturing? Notice that this demon-possessed man *'ran up'* to Jesus.

Why was he in a hurry to come face-to-face with him? Are they not totally at the opposite of the spiritual spectrum? They are beings of darkness and Jesus is pure light. Why were they rushing to be by his side? Have you noticed that in all occurrences of the meeting of Jesus with demons that they never ‘run away’! Is it possible that they can’t flee from him! We also see that they *‘bowed down before him’*. They acknowledge his supremacy over them. They toyed with the poor man, hurting him and made him scream and live among the tombs. But when it came to Christ – they bowed down before him! Amen that Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the Lord of lords and the King of kings, the creator and sustainer of all things.

⁶ Seeing Jesus from a distance, he ran up and bowed down before Him; ⁷ and shouting with a loud voice, he said, “What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God, do not torment me!”

The demon-possessed man says something like: ‘what are you doing here we have nothing to do with each other’? Was the demon surprised to see Jesus in ‘their territory’ – the tombs, where the atmosphere of death, gloom and doom abound? There is an astounding phrase that comes out of this poor man’s mouth *‘Jesus, Son of the Most High God’*. The demons in the possessed man knew exactly who Jesus was – the Son of the Most High God. They already had knelt before him now they declare verbally who he was – deity! Is it not astounding that demons declare openly who Jesus truly is and so few of Adam’s children do the same? The apostle James was so right when he wrote in James 2:19 ‘You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe--and tremble!’

(v.7)...I implore You by God, do not torment me!”

These unclean spirits were afraid of Jesus and they express their fear: *‘do not torment me’*. They know far too well that God – the Son has power over all things, including themselves. They also know that there is a judgment that awaits them. They fear that Jesus might even, right now, do something to them. They fear him because they know him. Are we not to love him because we know him?

⁸For He had been saying to him, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!” ⁹And He was asking him, “What is your name?” And he said to Him, “My name is Legion; for we are many.”¹⁰ And he *began* to implore Him earnestly not to send them out of the country.

There was no hesitation on the part of Jesus, his command was clear: ‘*Come out of the man, you unclean spirit*’. The unclean spirit had no business being in that person for this was not its abode. The will of God is that man be free from the binding of the spirits. Then Jesus does something that is never recorded elsewhere, he asks ‘*What is your name?*’ This is the only place that such a conversation is ever recorded. We never see this before nor after Pentecost. Apostles, evangelists or Disciples of Christ never speak to fallen angels – and we should also never speak to them.

(v.9)... And he said to Him, “My name is Legion; for we are many.”¹⁰ And he *began* to implore Him earnestly not to send them out of the country.

Here we find that many demons can ‘possess’ a person. His name was Legion: ‘*for we are many*’. A Roman legion in the first century had about 5000 men, you can imagine how many demons were in this poor man. Now what did these impure spirits do? It seems that they ‘*began to implore Him*’. The word ‘*implore*’ (PARAKALEO): to beseech, entreat, pray. They literally begged him to respond positively to their request. Notice that Mark writes as though Jesus is speaking only to one demon. His name is Legion ‘*for we are many*’. Yet these many demons are spoken of as ‘he’: ‘*he said to Him*’ or ‘*he began to implore Him*’ – why is this so? It seems that the leader of these demons is the one who speaks for the ‘Legion of impure spirits’. What did they implore Jesus about?

¹⁰And he *began* to implore Him earnestly not to send them out of the country.

What did he mean by: ‘*send them out of the country*’? It could easily mean not to send them out of the man who was their ‘country’, where they lived. It could also mean not to send them to the abode that some other demons were in until judgment day came for them (2 Peter 2:4).

Just as this poor man could not go anywhere UNLESS the demons allowed him we see that they were just as chained up by Christ because they could not go anywhere unless Christ permitted them! Once again we see the total sovereignty of Christ over evil spirits.

3. The pleading of the demons (5:11-13)

¹¹ Now there was a large herd of swine feeding nearby on the mountain.¹² *The demons* implored Him, saying, “Send us into the swine so that we may enter them.” ¹³ Jesus gave them permission. And coming out, the unclean spirits entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, about two thousand of them; and they were drowned in the sea.

It may sound strange that there was ‘*a large herd of swine feeding*’. As you know pigs were unclean animals and could not be eaten. Why then were there pigs in this story? We need to remember that we are in the region of the Decapolis (ten cities). These ten cities were not of Hebrew origin but were settled by people of Greek descent. They were a group of independent cities that enjoyed great freedom under the Roman rule. They were not part of the Jewish territory and that is why pigs were farmed in that region. Now the demons see the herd of pigs and they once again make a plea for themselves: ‘*Send us into the swine so that we may enter them*’. Notice that there was no plea for mercy or grace to Jesus for they knew that there was none for them. They have been condemned for a long time and they were simply waiting for judgment day to come. What a great mystery: God has granted redemption unto mankind but not unto the fallen angels!

In v.13 Jesus gives them permission and instantly they came out of the man and enter the 2000 thousand pigs. Here we see that unclean spirits are able not only to inhabit certain people but also animals. But something happened:

(v.13)... and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, about two thousand of them; and they were drowned in the sea.

The pigs literally went wild, out of their (pigs) minds! They ran straight over a cliff and plunged into the Sea of Galilee (remember we are still on the shores). There are a few thoughts concerning this. First it seems that animals are not on the same plain as humans. What I mean is that this verse manifests that they are not of the same creational order. There is an order of creation: angels, mankind, animals, plants & finally minerals. It was just too much for these 2000 pigs to be the hosts for the demons yet a single man could host all of them! Is it because man is created in the image of God that this man could do this? A second thought is that Jesus knew that these pigs were going to plunge to their deaths – yet he allowed it. This teaches me (again) that there is a great difference between animals and mankind. We may be made of the same type of living organisms but the line stops there. There is NO spiritual aspect in an animal – they are not in the image of God. The death of 2000 pigs is no match in relationship to the betterment of one single person. May we always care and worry more for our fellow man than for animals. A third thoughts is where did the unclean spirits go? They did not die like the pigs did so where did they go? It is simply not told.

4. The pleading of the people (5:14-17)

¹⁴ Their herdsmen ran away and reported it in the city and in the country. And *the people* came to see what it was that had happened. ¹⁵ They came to Jesus and observed the man who had been demon-possessed sitting down, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had had the “legion”; and they became frightened. ¹⁶ Those who had seen it described to them how it had happened to the demon-possessed man, and *all* about the swine. ¹⁷ And they began to implore Him to leave their region.

If the herdsmen ran away it is because they were witnesses to the scene. If they ran away it is because they were frightened. If they ran away it is also because they misunderstood Jesus. So they spread out and told the people who were around. It was actually a BIG thing that had just happened. Imagine losing the entire herd of 2000 pigs and all the money that was involved! After hearing, people came to see for themselves – it was just too unbelievable to be true.

¹⁵ They came to Jesus and observed the man who had been demon-possessed sitting down, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had had the “legion”; and they became frightened.

I wonder why they (the herdsmen) didn't come to Jesus in the first place. They (the crowd) only came to see him later. If the herdsmen would have talked to Jesus then they could have brought a different message to the people. Are we not like them also going to see people, friends & family first instead of coming right away to Jesus? They came and they saw the demon-possessed man and he had completely changed. He was *'sitting down'* instead of running around in the tombs and mountain side. He was *'clothed'*, I can only guess that he wasn't before. Finally he was *'in his right mind'* – he was no longer possessed. He was once more a normal person. I would like to say that what happened to the possessed man Christ has also done for all true believers. First the man was seated and so are believers. They are in Christ seated at the heavenly places (Eph. 2:6). We also have been clothed but by Christ's righteousness (Rev. 3:5,18; 6:11). Finally we also have come to be in our right mind because it has been renewed (Rom. 12:1,2). Their reaction to what they had seen is bizarre – *'they became frightened'*. You see when you don't understand what is happening you normally become frightened. Is it not true in our lives? When we don't understand why such a thing is happening or why God allows this to happen we generally become frightened!

¹⁶ Those who had seen it described to them how it had happened to the demon-possessed man, and *all* about the swine. ¹⁷ And they began to implore Him to leave their region.

Notice that the crowd DOES NOT speak to Jesus. They just believe what the herdsmen were telling them. Because of this they did not 'get the full picture' and remained in their state of fright. This should teach us a good spiritual lesson – speak to Jesus when you are frightened and don't just get your information or facts from people no matter how spiritual they are! They asked Jesus to leave their region. They told Jesus to get out and to go away. How many people, because they just don't understand why Jesus came – want to have no dealings with him. May this never be true of any of us!

5. The pleading of the cured man (5:18-20)

¹⁸ As He was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed was imploring Him that he might accompany Him. ¹⁹ And He did not let him, but He said to him, “Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and *how* He had mercy on you.” ²⁰ And he went away and began to proclaim in Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed.

As Jesus and his disciples are preparing to go away and approaching the boat, the man made well by Christ has to take a decision. Do I follow the crowd and live a normal life with my family and friends OR do I follow the person who changed my life who delivered me? I don't believe that it took too long for the man to make the right decision – he wanted to be with Jesus. Are we not also to make the right choice and choose Jesus over everything else! So he asks Jesus if he could '*accompany Him*'. But strangely Jesus said no!

This might have hurt the man who wanted to manifest his love for him. But Jesus had something very personal for him to do. Something that is asked of ALL who have become his disciples.

(v.19)... “Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and *how* He had mercy on you.”

Since the people had told Jesus to go away they did not receive the 'Good News' concerning the kingdom of God. So Jesus instead of abandoning these people sent them someone who they would accept – one of their own. So Jesus gave this man a personal commission that he gives to all (Mat. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). He told the man to go home and tell them about the grace he had received, what the Lord had done for him. May I ask if you been telling others? Have you forgotten what the Lord has done for you? Are you failing to recall the mercies that were showered upon you at the cross?

²⁰ And he went away and began to proclaim in Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed.

This unnamed man loved Christ so much that he did what was asked of him – he told all who would listen what Jesus had done for him. The people who knew of him (of what had happened to him) were all surprised. They were surprised because he had changed so much. Are people surprised by your change? Can they see that the hand of God is upon your life?

CONCLUSION:

1. Jesus might surprise you with something unbelievable that's just around the bend.
2. Demons recognize who Jesus is and are under his complete authority.
3. Humans must ALWAYS have priority over animals.
4. Always be ready to be a witness to your own people and those around you.

The gospel of Mark
21 – The raising of the dead girl
5:21-24 and 35-43

²¹ When Jesus had crossed over again in the boat to the other side, a large crowd gathered around Him; and so He stayed by the seashore. ²² One of the synagogue officials named Jairus came up, and on seeing Him, fell at His feet ²³ and implored Him earnestly, saying, “My little daughter is at the point of death; *please* come and lay Your hands on her, so that she will get well and live.” ²⁴ And He went off with him; and a large crowd was following Him and pressing in on Him. ³⁵ While He was still speaking, they came from the *house of* the synagogue official, saying, “Your daughter has died; why trouble the Teacher anymore?”³⁶ But Jesus, overhearing what was being spoken, said to the synagogue official, “Do not be afraid *any longer*, only believe.” ³⁷ And He allowed no one to accompany Him, except Peter and James and John the brother of James.³⁸ They came to the house of the synagogue official; and He saw a commotion, and *people* loudly weeping and wailing. ³⁹ And entering in, He said to them, “Why make a commotion and weep? The child has not died, but is asleep.” ⁴⁰ They *began* laughing at Him. But putting them all out, He took along the child’s father and mother and His own companions, and entered *the room* where the child was. ⁴¹ Taking the child by the hand, He said to her, “Talitha kum!” (which translated means, “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”).⁴² Immediately the girl got up and *began* to walk, for she was twelve years old. And immediately they were completely astounded. ⁴³ And He gave them strict orders that no one should know about this, and He said that *something* should be given her to eat.
(NASB)

1. The pleading of the father (5:21-24)

This story is different because it is ‘cut in two’ sections. As you can see verses 25 to 34 tells another story. In other words someone ‘butted in’ and took Jesus’ attention away from the father and his plea for his little girl. Don’t you get frustrated when people do that?

²¹ When Jesus had crossed over again in the boat to the other side, a large crowd gathered around Him; and so He stayed by the seashore. ²² One of the synagogue officials named Jairus came up, and on seeing Him, fell at His feet ²³ and implored Him earnestly, saying, “My little daughter is at the point of death; *please* come and lay Your hands on her, so that she will get well and live.” ²⁴ And He went off with him; and a large crowd was following Him and pressing in on Him.

The disciple's 'boat ride' continues and they once more '*cross over again*'. Although it is not stated where they landed it is believed that it is probably Capernaum. As usual we see that a '*large crowd*' gathered to be with him. It seems that Jesus' reputation is beyond everything that had ever been seen before. This might be a reason why the religious establishment despised him. They saw in him a 'rival' who was taking away their power over the common population, who was constantly gaining fame and admiration? In other words they were jealous of Jesus! We see that '*he stayed by the seashore*'. Jesus did not run away from the crowd. He did not loathe them for taking his time or demanding miracles of healing. This should be a good lesson for the believer. People may crowd us, ask us favors or take our time away from us but our response should be like Christ's – love and care for them.

²² One of the synagogue officials named Jairo came up, and on seeing Him, fell at His feet ²³ and implored Him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death; please come and lay Your hands on her, so that she will get well and live."

Synagogues were never instituted by the Lord God! They came to be when the Jewish people went into exile in the Babylonia captivity. Since they no longer had any 'official' place of worship they gathered in small groups on the Sabbath day. For a synagogue to be formed there would need to be at least ten men who gathered together. In a service there would be prayers, reading of the Scriptures, interpretations of the prophets and singing. The synagogues were also used as a 'courthouse' presided over by three men who would settle judiciary accounts. Jairo was a '*synagogue official*' which meant that he was looked upon as a man of God and one of the spiritual leaders.

We see that Jairo did three things. He first '*came up*' to Jesus. By this we can understand that there was no restraint in his spirit to come and meet him. It also means that Jairo knew that Jesus was accessible. I wonder if people around us also feel comfortable to come to us and know that we are open to receive them. The second thing he did is that he '*fell at his feet*'. Prostrating ourselves before someone manifests our hearts. We show that we acknowledge that the person is greater than we are and manifest homage and honor by bowing down. So Jairo accepted that Jesus was worthy. In his mind he was a man of God – a prophet who had come into his town. The third and final thing Jairo did was to speak to Jesus. Here the words '*implored him*' and '*earnestly saying*' are used to show his desperate conversation. The word '*implore*' (PARAKALEO) means: to call near, intreat, pray. By this we can see that Jairo really, really wanted Jesus to hear his cause. His attitude was pressing, it was urgent and he manifested it by '*implored*' him. The word '*earnestly*' (POLUS) means: many, abundantly, plentiful. We can understand that Jairo did not only ask Jesus once to come to the aid of his daughter but many, many times. It seems that he wasn't going to let Jesus go without receiving what he had come for.

(v.23)... “My little daughter is at the point of death; *please* come and lay Your hands on her, so that she will get well and live.”

Here we see the manifestation of Jäirus’ faith. He explains what was wrong with his daughter ‘*at the point of death*’. This is no small matter. She absolutely needed a miracle to get her health back. He also knew and believed that Jesus had the power to restore her health: ‘*come and lay your hands on her, so that she will get well and live*’. We can only guess that Jäirus had seen the power of Christ through miracles that Jesus has already done in the past or that he had heard from others the wonders that Jesus had done. If this event is actually in Capernaum then Jäirus might even have seen for himself what Christ could do. He knew that just one touch of his hand was sufficient to heal his daughter. This man is a wonderful example of true faith in Christ.

²⁴ And He went off with him; and a large crowd was following Him and pressing in on Him.

It did not take too long before Jesus, seeing this poor father and hearing his plea, decided to follow this man. What an encouraging phrase ‘*He went off with him*’. Very simply done, Jesus just follows the man. May we also remember that Jesus simply needs our honest pleading and he will follow us and be with us in our difficulties for did he not say in Mat. 28:20 ‘*...I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*’ Amen! But as he left with Jäirus there was an obstacle – the crowd. There were a lot of people and all wanted to get their ‘piece’ of Jesus. I guess Jäirus wasn’t the only one who had pressing problems to be resolved. People will always be in our way when we ask Jesus to intervene in our life. This is mostly because they will be against us following or desiring Christ.

2. The sad news (5:35)

³⁵ While He was still speaking, they came from the *house of* the synagogue official, saying, “Your daughter has died; why trouble the Teacher anymore?”

We begin the second section of this story with very sad news – the death of his daughter! I can only imagine that the crowd that was pressing Jesus and also the healing of the woman took a certain amount of time and since the young daughter was at death’s door she slipped into eternity. How many times have I seen people create a dramatic situation simply by being in the lives of others! I can imagine Jäirus wanting Jesus to ‘hurry up’ and come to his house.

The people who came to give the sad news the *'THEY'* thought that it was all finished – after all the child is dead what could you do? Too often we can also look at things with our human eyes forgetting that in the spiritual realm things are different.

Mark 10:27

**But Jesus looked at them and said, "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible."
(NKJV)**

Since the child has died: *'why trouble the Teacher anymore'* they told the father. The situation is beyond human understanding and human accomplishment – so forget Christ and stop bothering him! The answer to their question *'why trouble the Teacher anymore'* is easy to answer because nothing is impossible with God. We are told never to stop asking (Luke 18:3-8). Not only was the crowd in the way of Jairus getting his miracle but also those who were close to him. Never underestimate what God can do for your situation.

3. Ignoring the facts (5:36)

³⁶ But Jesus, overhearing what was being spoken, said to the synagogue official, "Do not be afraid *any longer*, only believe."

I love the way Jesus straightens-up the situation. He intervenes in the conversation they were having. What do you mean she's dead and there is nothing to be done! Now Jesus does not scold the messengers – they didn't know any better and by the way the daughter WAS DEAD! Jesus brings these encouraging words:

(v.36)...“Do not be afraid *any longer*, only believe.”

Faith in God dispels fright! We need only to believe that God is capable of changing a situation – if he desires! God can do all things but the Lord does not do something that is against his holy character or his perfect will. Paul asked three times to be rid of 'a thorn in the flesh' but God said in 2 Cor. 12:9: *"My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."* God didn't want to. We also have to understand that there are things that we ask for but God simply says 'NO' because he has other plans for us. And if that is the case it simply means that his plans for us are even better than what we desire. Here we see that Jesus ignores the human facts – he's on an entirely other level!

4. The people's scepticism (5:37-40a)

³⁷ And He allowed no one to accompany Him, except Peter and James and John the brother of James.³⁸ They came to the house of the synagogue official; and He saw a commotion, and *people* loudly weeping and wailing. ³⁹ And entering in, He said to them, “Why make a commotion and weep? The child has not died, but is asleep.” ⁴⁰ They *began laughing at Him*.

We can understand by the text that Jairo believed what Jesus told him because this scene opens up at his house. Have you noticed that only Peter, James and John are allowed to follow Jesus and be witnesses to the coming miracle? Have you ever thought why only Peter, James and John? This is not the only instance where these three disciples are chosen to observe while others are not. It happened on three occasions: here with the daughter of Jairo, at the Mount of transfiguration (Mat. 17:1) and in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:33). The only reason that I can see for ‘why them’ is answered in Gal. 2:9 where Peter, James and John are called the ‘pillars of the church’ by Paul. To become what they were meant to be they needed to be ‘closer’ to Jesus than the others. Shouldn't that teach us a lesson? To become who we are called to be we also need to be very close to our Savior!

When Jesus arrived it is written that there was ‘*commotion*’ (THORUBOS) meaning: a disturbance, an uproar. This commotion is described as ‘*people loudly weeping and wailing*’. In Middle-Eastern culture it was customary for the women to cry out loud to manifest the pain of human loss. Sometimes women were even paid to be ‘official wailers’. Grief was not kept inside, it was manifested. Still today in many cultures we can see women wail and beat their breast or their heads as a sign of grieving. So there's a lot going on in and around the house of Jairo. Jesus enters the house and asks a question to those who were there:

³⁹ And entering in, He said to them, “Why make a commotion and weep? The child has not died, but is asleep.” ⁴⁰ They *began laughing at Him*.

Either Jesus is out of his mind saying something like this or he is God incarnate knowing the truth that people can not see. How could you be mistaken and believe that a dead person is actually just asleep? When was the last time you went to a funeral home to pay your respects and told the grieving people: ‘The person in the coffin is not dead – he's just asleep’. No wonder it is written that ‘*They began laughing at him*’. How many people still laugh at Jesus when his name is mentioned in a conversation?

5. Jesus takes charge (5:40b-43)

But putting them all out, He took along the child's father and mother and His own companions, and entered *the room* where the child was. ⁴¹ Taking the child by the hand, He said to her, "Talitha kum!" (which translated means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!").⁴² Immediately the girl got up and *began* to walk, for she was twelve years old. And immediately they were completely astounded. ⁴³ And He gave them strict orders that no one should know about this, and He said that *something* should be given her to eat.

Jesus put everyone outside! Since they laughed at who he was and what he was saying they had no business with him – so out they went! How many will one day at the judgment of the Great White Throne, weep and wail? How many will regret having laughed at the person of Christ? How many will feel the guilt of having mocked Christ? But it will be too late (Mat. 8:12;13:42,49; 22:13; 24:51; 25:32). If you are alive it is not too late to repent and ask Christ to save you from this coming judgment.

Jesus took the little girl's mother and father and his three disciples (Peter, James & John) and they enter '*the room where the child was*'. By only using his will manifested by a few words: '*Talitha Kum*' the child was raised from the dead. He actually ordered the child to rise from Hades! Notice that Jesus did not do this in the name of his Father – he did it with his own power for he is LIFE (John 14:6) and he gives life to whom he desires. If the calming of the sea and of the wind was an unbelievable miracle, imagine giving life to a dead person! Have you noticed that by telling his disciples to follow him to the other side Jesus has manifested his sovereignty first over nature (wind & sea), then over demons (Legion) and here over death! Following Jesus will also make you see things that you never thought you could see!

⁴² Immediately the girl got up and *began* to walk, for she was twelve years old. And immediately they were completely astounded. ⁴³ And He gave them strict orders that no one should know about this, and He said that *something* should be given her to eat.

Even death can not stand up to Christ. It had to abandon the little girl! The grip of death instantly loosened for it was commanded to do so. Jesus said in Rev. 1:18: "*I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.*" That is why he could say that he was the resurrection and the life (John 11:25). People were '*completely astounded*', they couldn't believe their eyes!

I can only imagine the gratitude that the parents had towards Christ! May we have the same type of gratitude for God for he has also brought believers out of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of light (Col. 1:13). Why did he order the parents not to say anything – I really don't know for this would be known instantly (people were outside the house).

CONCLUSION:

1. Let us never be afraid to plead our cause to Christ.
2. Let us never despair when we hear of bad news.
3. Sometimes we need to ignore what our human eyes see.
4. Don't be affected by the sceptics.
5. Let Jesus take charge.

The gospel of Mark
22- The sick woman

5:25-34

²⁵ A woman who had had a hemorrhage for twelve years, ²⁶ and had endured much at the hands of many physicians, and had spent all that she had and was not helped at all, but rather had grown worse— ²⁷ after hearing about Jesus, she came up in the crowd behind *Him* and touched His cloak. ²⁸ For she thought, “If I just touch His garments, I will get well.” ²⁹ Immediately the flow of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction. ³⁰ Immediately Jesus, perceiving in Himself that the power *proceeding* from Him had gone forth, turned around in the crowd and said, “Who touched My garments?” ³¹ And His disciples said to Him, “You see the crowd pressing in on You, and You say, ‘Who touched Me?’” ³² And He looked around to see the woman who had done this. ³³ But the woman fearing and trembling, aware of what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth. ³⁴ And He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your affliction.”

(NASB)

1. The woman (5:25-29)

This is the story within the story. As I said in our last section concerning the raising of the young girl, the father was interrupted in his attempt to get Jesus to come to his house. And this is what happened.

²⁵ A woman who had had a hemorrhage for twelve years, ²⁶ and had endured much at the hands of many physicians, and had spent all that she had and was not helped at all, but rather had grown worse— ²⁷ after hearing about Jesus, she came up in the crowd behind *Him* and touched His cloak. ²⁸ For she thought, “If I just touch His garments, I will get well.” ²⁹ Immediately the flow of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction.

In verse twenty five we are told what type of illness the woman was suffering from – a ‘hemorrhage’ (RHUSIS): a flux of blood, issue. For some unknown reason this woman was hemorrhaging. We all know how dangerous this can be if it is intensive. But it is also very dangerous if it continues for a long time even though it is slight. Hemorrhaging is not a malady on its own, it is a symptom of an illness that one has. Now this hemorrhage had been afflicting her for an enormous amount of time – twelve years to be exact. Because she lost blood on a daily basis, this, as you can imagine, brought to her many social inconveniences. But what was even greater and much more important is that this poor woman suffered spiritually. I say this because the Law forbade a woman who had an issue of blood to partake in spiritual matters (Lev. 12:1-8; 15:19-24). Lev. 15:25 would apply perfectly to this poor woman’s case:

If a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, other than at the time of her customary impurity, or if it runs beyond her usual time of impurity, all the days of her unclean discharge shall be as the days of her customary impurity. She shall be unclean.

(NKJV)

As you can see, the distress of this woman went further than her physical discomfort, it actually kept her apart, separated her, from all spiritual activities. She could not approach the Lord God because of her continuous blood loss. In verse twenty six we see that this woman had done all she could to regain her health. First of all we see that she *‘had endured much at the hands of many physicians’*. This means that she never gave up (here we see her character). She saw many physicians but NONE could help her. This is an important fact in this story. She was impure before God but there was NOTHING that man could do about it. So for twelve years she goes from one physician to another and her health did not recover but had gotten worse. Imagine her state of mind! She suffered one failed hope after another. The second thing that she had done is: *‘had spent all that she had’*. No matter the amount of money she had spent it was for a total loss. In a way many believe that what they do or what they spend will bring them spiritual healing – but it never does! The poor woman not only remained ill but she had lost a great amount of money in the process of getting better. To give you an idea of what ‘type of medicine’ a doctor of her day would have given her for her loss of blood here is a prescription found in the Talmud.

'Take of the gum of Alexandria the weight of a zuzee (a fraction of a silver coin); of alum the same; of crocus the same. Let them be bruised together, and given in wine to the woman that has an issue of blood. If this does not benefit, take of Persian onions three logs (pints); boil them in wine and give her to drink, and say, 'Arise from thy flux'.'

²⁷ after hearing about Jesus, she came up in the crowd behind *Him* and touched His cloak. ²⁸ For she thought, "If I just touch His garments, I will get well." ²⁹ Immediately the flow of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction.

'After hearing about Jesus', this is a wonderful phrase. It manifests the importance of speaking about Jesus. If she had never heard about Jesus she never would have been cured! If true believers do not speak about Jesus how then can people be cured of their spiritual illness? The words of Paul spoken in Romans 10:15 resound perfectly:

And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!

(NKJV)

Have you ever wondered why *'she came up in the crowd behind him'*? So many come to Jesus 'face to face', bow down, and ask for his help. Why would she come from behind, as if she was invisible and not even speak to Jesus? The answer lies with her physical problem (issue of blood). Since she was impure, she was not allowed to touch someone because that person would also become impure (Lev.15:19). This verse also tells us that she needed to be set apart from the other people. In her mind she would automatically be rejected by Jesus if he knew her state of impurity. So she secretly crept up behind him *'and touched his cloak'*.

²⁸ For she thought, "If I just touch His garments, I will get well."

Her faith was unbelievable! In her mind there was no mistake about it. If she just touched his clothing then all would be fine – she would finally be healed after those long twelve years. I wonder if our faith comes close to this woman's. Is Jesus truly sufficient for our redemption? Do we need to add a little something to what he has done at the cross? Have we placed our total confidence in his righteousness before the Lord God?

²⁹ Immediately the flow of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction.

She was right, she was completely healed. There was no more blood flow – Christ had made her pure and given her health back. Notice the word '*immediately*' (EUTHEOS) means: directly, at once. There was no waiting period or trial period. She was cured instantaneously. She actually felt right away that she was cured! The benefits of her healing could be seen and felt by her! Her '*affliction*' (MASTIX) meaning: a whip, scourging (hence plague) had gone. In a sense her body was made new again – perfect health! Isn't that what Jesus does to all who come to him spiritually for redemption? Does he not heal totally and eternally that person from his sin-sickness (Heb. 10:10-14)?

2. The reaction of Jesus (5:30)

³⁰ Immediately Jesus, perceiving in Himself that the power *proceeding* from Him had gone forth, turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched My garments?"

It is the same Greek word that is used for '*immediately*' (EUTHEOS) in both verses (29 & 30). Just as she was healed immediately – Jesus immediately felt a power '*proceeding from Him*'. The word '*proceeding*' (EXECHOMAI) means: depart, escape, to get out". And the word '*power*' (DUNAMIS) means: a force especially a miraculous force. Out of Christ came a miraculous power that cured this woman's body. The power of God is immeasurable. It is infinite! By his spoken word he created the entire universe and sustains it! What is unbelievable is that it took no greater will to cure that woman than to create the cosmos!

Jesus asks: *'who touched my garments?'* We all know that he knew who had touched him so why did he ask? As we will see, Jesus wanted to give more than physical healing to this lady full of faith. But to do so he needed to 'have a talk' with her. I believe that we sometimes receive less than what Christ wants to give his disciples simply because we satisfy ourselves with little. Or we do not take real time to share our hearts with Christ. Does Jesus want to speak with you? I believe so. Did he not give his life to be able to offer you redemption?

3. The reaction of his disciples (5:31,32)

³¹ And His disciples said to Him, "You see the crowd pressing in on You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?'" ³² And He looked around to see the woman who had done this.

Now the disciples did not understand why Jesus was asking *'who touched me?'* They thought that he was over doing it. Look at the big crowd, it could be anyone who touched you? Lots of people are *'pressing'* (SUNTHLIBO) meaning: to compress. The crowd was so intense that people were shoulder to shoulder. It could be anybody that touched you. But there was only ONE PERSON who touched Jesus like the sick woman did and the disciples did not know this yet. This teaches me that sometimes even good disciples of Jesus do not know exactly what Christ is doing in relationship with others. So let's not pretend that we know everything that Jesus does!

4. The truth is revealed (5:33)

³³ But the woman fearing and trembling, aware of what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth.

The first phrase describes how the woman felt – after all didn't she get her miracle by 'cheating' (touching Jesus from behind, not speaking to him and hiding in a crowd)? She first felt *'fear'* (PHOBEO) meaning: to be frightened, alarmed.

She was probably terrified by what this man of God might say or do to her. She felt that her life was in his hands. She also felt '*trembling*' (TREMO) meaning: to tremble of fear, being afraid. Her body was shaking because of this great fear she had. You see this woman did not know the person of Jesus. She did not know his love, mercy, care, grace, kindness and so forth – so she was terrified. How many people are afraid to come to Christ simply because they see him differently than he truly is? May we never refrain from coming to Jesus with our burdens! Never forget that we are personally invited to do so.

Mat. 11:28

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

(NKJV)

She gathered enough strength to manifest herself. She '*fell down before him and told him the whole truth*'. She did not keep anything from Christ. She became an open book. No matter what would happen she just had to confess to Jesus. You see she told him '*the whole truth*'. All who come to Jesus also need to talk to him and tell him the whole truth; not hiding anything, not only telling the good things. Are we ready to do this to receive our 'spiritual cleansing'?

5. The blessing (5:34)

³⁴ And He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your affliction."

Notice that Jesus calls her '*daughter*' which is a kind calling of someone. How long had it been since she had been called 'daughter' in this tender fashion? Could it be at least twelve years? Do not forget that most often people believed that when you were sick it was a curse from God who was punishing you for not being a 'good' person. When Jesus called her 'daughter' it was wrapped in love and compassion.

He commends her for her faith '*your faith has made you well*'. Once more we see the importance of the role of faith in our relationship with the Lord. It was her faith (and the manifestation of it) that brought her healing.

Jesus blesses her '*go in peace*'. How many curses, profanities had she heard men and women address her with. How many harsh words had broken her heart? How many times had she been rejected and verbally insulted during her sickness? But now she hears blessings and was approved by Christ before the entire crowd. This man of God, this prophet had just blessed her. May Christians never forget the blessings they have received by having been blessed by the death of Christ which made them become righteous before the Father!

You see, Jesus wanted to talk to her. He wanted to give her his personal blessing and approval before everyone. She could now walk among her peers with her head high and no longer see herself as being as a 'reject'.

CONCLUSION:

1. No matter what state you are in come to Jesus.
2. Don't hide from Jesus.
3. Sometimes people may not understand how Christ is working.
4. Always be honest with Christ, don't hide or play games with him.
5. Jesus wants to bless you.

The gospel of Mark
23 – A prophet without honour

6:1-6

Jesus went out from there and came into His hometown; and His disciples followed Him. ² When the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue; and the many listeners were astonished, saying, “Where did this man *get* these things, and what is *this* wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands? ³ Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?” And they took offense at Him. ⁴ Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his *own* relatives and in his *own* household.” ⁵ And He could do no miracle there except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. ⁶ And He wondered at their unbelief. And He was going around the villages teaching.
(NASB)

1. Jesus and the synagogue (6:1,2)

Jesus went out from there and came into His hometown; and His disciples followed Him. ² When the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue; and the many listeners were astonished, saying, “Where did this man *get* these things, and what is *this* wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands?

This is the end of the journey that the disciples had taken with Jesus in the boat. We have seen that Jesus manifested his deity through the calming of the sea, the authority over demons, the total restoration of a very sick body and finally even over death by the resurrection of the 12 year old girl. But now time has come for Jesus to return home.

It is written ‘*and came into His hometown*’. Where would this be if not Nazareth where he had grown up? It is worthy of mention that the town of Nazareth is not named in the O-T! Nathanael said that it was a city of ill-repute (John 1:46). This can mean two things. Either the people living there (Nazareth is situated in Galilee) were not outwardly living as ‘good Jews’ because there were many Gentiles in the region, or the moral character of the people of Nazareth was not to be followed.

Nazareth was the hometown of both Joseph and Mary and that is where they settled once the fear of losing their child at the hands of evil doers had gone. Finally, it is said that during the life time of Jesus there were probably 15,000 to 20,000 people living there. So Nazareth was not a small town or a village.

(v.1)... **and His disciples followed Him.**

This is the one thing that all disciples are called to do – *‘follow Him’*. But what does ‘following Jesus’ mean? In a few words it means: receiving his teachings and applying them in our life. In his gospel, John gave a perfect example of what it meant to ‘follow Jesus’.

John 6:67-69

(67)Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?"

(68)But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

(69)"Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

(NKJV)

So the disciples followed Jesus to his hometown of Nazareth. In verse two we see that Jesus does a familiar thing on the Sabbath day – he goes to the synagogue. Once again we see the importance of gathering together (as a group of believers) to sing, pray and be exhorted by the word of God. I hope that you are following the model that Christ has given. If you are not, then you are failing to follow Jesus the way that you should. We also see that Jesus *‘began to teach in the synagogue’*. This is something that he does over and over again. In Mark 1:38 Jesus says that teaching was one of the reasons why he had come forth. But this time it was different, it was in his hometown. How would people react to this?

(v.2)... and the many listeners were astonished, saying, “Where did this man get these things, and what is *this* wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands?”

As we can see there were ‘*many listeners*’. It seems that this synagogue held quite a large number of people. All had come to sing and pray but also to receive from the Word of God. In a traditional synagogue a man could speak and edify those who were listening. While there were certain people who ‘professionally’ would, other men would simply come and speak what the Lord had placed on their hearts. For Jesus to come and teach would be an accepted thing to do. These ‘*listeners*’ (AKOUO) meaning: to hear, to understand were very attentive to what Jesus was saying. After all was he not the miracle worker, the one who told the sea and wind to be quiet – and it did! Was he not the one who effortlessly cast out demons, the one who cured all those brought to him and the one who even gave life back to a little girl! Of course they were very attentive to his very words and so should all true disciples be. We should be at his very feet and literally be drinking every word that comes from his mouth, like Mary did (Luke 10:38-42).

It is written that these listeners were ‘*astonished*’ (EKPLESSO) meaning: to be amazed. We do not know what the words of Jesus were but we do know the impact that they had on the people’s hearts. If we would end our thoughts here we could think that they were good thoughts, that they were immensely blessed by his words. But is this true? Let’s take a closer look. It seems that these listeners were very impressed NOT BY HIS TEACHINGS but rather whose mouth they came from. Three thoughts were brought up.

- Where did this man get these things
- What is this wisdom given to him
- And such miracles as these performed by his hands

They were not spiritual people and they did not receive any spiritual blessing from the Lord Jesus. When we listen to sermons are we more attentive to the person who gives the message or the message itself? They first wondered ‘*where did this man get these things*’? They could not conceive that Jesus was either a prophet or maybe the Messiah. Their eyes were spiritually shut. They also admitted that Jesus was speaking words of wisdom – *what is this wisdom given to him*’.

Yet they did not retain them! Finally they wondered about where his power came from, *'such miracles as these performed by his hands'*. But these did not attract them to the person of Christ. Christ had manifested over and over again that he was the Messiah BUT they did not have ears to listen or eyes to see. They were astounded but this astonishment did not resound in their hearts – so they were left in the dark. Does your heart burn when you read the gospels? Does the Word of God have a permanent effect on your soul? Or do these emotions and wonders cease after a little while? Are you like the ones who saw and heard but did not understand?

2. Some were offended (6:3)

³ Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?" And they took offense at Him.

To the people present it seems that the only things that they could think of was what they had known of Jesus – after all he had grown up in their midst. He can't be a prophet – he's a carpenter. He's not a man of God – his mother, brothers and sisters are among us. He's just the 'little Jesus' that we saw grow up with us. He's not special, he's just an ordinary guy – like the rest of us.

(v.3)... And they took offense at Him.

Who does he think he is coming to our synagogue like that? He teaches as though he studied all of his life. He speaks as though he knows God personally? He acts as though he can do anything? It is written that what Jesus taught and did in the synagogue *'offended them'*. This word *'offended'* (SKANDALIZO) means: to entrap, to entice to sin, displeasure. Whatever Jesus did, it brought great displeasure to the people in the synagogue. It seems that the words of Jesus offended them. This is very normal because the words of Jesus shine on the darkness within the hearts of man.

John 1:4,5

(4)In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

(5)And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

(NKJV)

John 1:11

He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.

(NKJV)

May we also remember that the words that we present when we evangelize will probably offend people! No one likes to hear that they are sinners and that all that they do has absolutely no worth before the Lord as a means of redemption. No one likes to hear that they have to repent of their sins and ask Jesus to wash them by his blood. No one likes to hear that they need to turn around, follow Jesus and leave everything behind. So some people will probably do like these listeners did – reject the Christ that you are proclaiming.

3. Prophet without honour (6:4)

⁴ Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his *own* relatives and in his *own* household.”

We have seen that people had been unjustly ‘offended’ by Christ. But how did Christ react to their offense? This declaration has been understood by countless millions that have become a disciple of Jesus in an unwelcoming environment. Still today, true Christians are being jailed, tortured and murdered on a daily basis. The honor that was due to Christ was withheld. Why was he received and welcomed with open arms in other places in Israel and even abroad yet not in his hometown? Simply because, in their eyes, he was a ‘common man’.

There is a great warning for modern believers in this passage. Has Jesus become so common to you that you have lost sight of who he is? Has he become your ‘buddy’ or your ‘BFF’ instead of your Lord and Savior? Have you made him so human that you have forgotten his divinity? Have you lost your godly respect for him? Because he has become your ‘spiritual brother’ are you downgrading him? This sin is at your door but you can overcome it (Gen. 4:7).

4. Lack of faith (6:5,6)

⁵ And He could do no miracle there except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. ⁶ And He wondered at their unbelief. And He was going around the villages teaching.

This is a sad ending for the section that we are studying. Here we are in the town that Jesus grew up in, with people, who knew him since he was a young child – rejecting him. They did not reject him because of having no evidence of who he was, for his reputation ran across all of Israel. They rejected him because they rejected even the idea that the Messiah could be right in front of their own eyes.

He ‘*could do no miracle*’ except for a few here and there. It is written that he ‘*laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them*’. Out of the crowd that rejected him there were ‘*a few*’ who did believe, a few who had faith in him and they were the ones who received their miracle. Amen that there will always be ‘*a few*’ here and there who truly believe, a few who will come to him, a few who will ask for his work in their lives. But what a tragedy for the majority of the Nazarenes! They get nothing from Christ. Is our world not like the city of Nazareth? The vast majority is rejecting the Lord Jesus and by doing so they receive nothing from him!

⁶ And He wondered at their unbelief. And He was going around the villages teaching.

This verse means that Jesus ‘couldn’t believe his eyes’ at what he was seeing. For us it would be like seeing something totally unexpected or out of place. They were supposed to believe, the miracles were there to prove that he was the Messiah. But they said ‘NO’ to him! Their *‘unbelief’ (APISTIA)* meaning: faithlessness or disbelief was – unbelievable! Because of this they failed to receive what Christ had intended for them. So he went away, leaving them to themselves – in the dark! He went elsewhere to places where he would be better received.

Could it be that, as true believers, we also miss out on countless blessings simply because we lack faith in Christ?

CONCLUSION:

1. Once again we see the importance of gathering together for spiritual nourishment. Let’s remember that a disciple ‘follows’ his Master.
2. As you spread the ‘Good News’ or speak of the Lord many will be offended. So don’t be surprised or discouraged.
3. You probably will be dishonored in your home and within your circle of friends if you stand up as a Christian.
4. Lack of faith will separate you from God’s blessings.

The gospel of Mark
24 - The sending of the twelve
6:7-13

⁷ And He summoned the twelve and began to send them out in pairs, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits; ⁸ and He instructed them that they should take nothing for *their* journey, except a mere staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belt—⁹ but to wear sandals; and *He added*, “Do not put on two tunics.” ¹⁰ And He said to them, “Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave town. ¹¹ Any place that does not receive you or listen to you, as you go out from there, shake the dust off the soles of your feet for a testimony against them.” ¹² They went out and preached that *men* should repent. ¹³ And they were casting out many demons and were anointing with oil many sick people and healing them.
(NASB)

1. The sending (6:7)

⁷ And He summoned the twelve and began to send them out in pairs, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits;

After being rejected by his own in Nazareth and able only to do a few miracles because of the people's lack of faith, Jesus set out to send his apostles on their first official mission.

The first thing that Jesus does is: *'summoned the twelve'*. The word *'summoned'* (PROSKALEOMAI) means: to call to oneself. I like the personal touch that Jesus had. There was no messenger sent to tell the 'twelve' that Jesus was sending them off. He wanted them to be with Him. He personally conferred unto them this first-time mission event. Jesus is always personal with his disciples. He is also personal with his modern disciples for remember what he said in Mat. 28:20 *'... I am with you always even to the end of times'*. Once they 'huddled' around Jesus he personally set them apart from his other disciples *'to send them'* (APOSTELLO) meaning: to send out. This is the first time that there is a great distinction between the 'twelve' and the other disciples who followed Christ. He sent them on a mission, a mission that would later be conferred to the group of 'seventy' and finally to all of his disciples.

He sent them off but made certain that they would be encouraged by working alongside another disciple. He sent *'them out in pairs'*, two by two and not alone. Once more we see the care that Christ had for his own. He knew how difficult it would be and how feeble our flesh is (Mat. 26:41). When we are two one can sometimes rest upon the strength of the other, or the encouragement of the other. We can pray together, plan together and travel together. But Christ did not send them off without granting them power and protection.

(v.7)...and gave them authority over the unclean spirits;

Notice that it is Christ who gave them authority. They did not have it until it was given unto them. No one can have this kind of authority unless it is given by God himself! The word *'authority'* (EXOUSIA) means: a privilege or capacity. Since angels and unclean spirits are mightier than men (Heb. 2:7-9) these 'twelve men' received the *privilege* and the *capacity* to overcome these evil spirits. I believe this was done for two reasons. The first was to manifest that their message (Good News) was from God and power over evil spirits would be the proof of this. Second it would be for their own protection against the plotting of the evil one against them.

2. The instructions (6:8-11)

⁸ and He instructed them that they should take nothing for *their* journey, except a mere staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belt—⁹ but to wear sandals; and He added, “Do not put on two tunics.”¹⁰ And He said to them, “Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave town.¹¹ Any place that does not receive you or listen to you, as you go out from there, shake the dust off the soles of your feet for a testimony against them.”

Jesus instructed them in what they should do. This certainly is a good lesson for all Christians especially those who desire to be in 'ministry'. Far too many ministries go off in the name of Jesus and yet do not reflect the heart of Christ. This is not what servants are called to do. They are called to listen to their Master's wishes and then act upon them.

There is no place for ‘doing things my way’ in ministry. So let’s take a look at Jesus’ instructions for their first mission.

The BIG headline is *‘take nothing... except’*. This is quite a statement! He is sending his disciples off (also read Mat. 10:1-43 and Luke 9:2-6) on a journey that will take them from town to town and Jesus says *‘take nothing... except’*. This will test the disciple’s faith. Do you believe enough to go forward and trust me completely for your actual needs? Jesus allows them to take with them *‘a mere staff’*. I don’t believe that this has any spiritual significance – not like Moses and his staff and the great works God did through it! The staff was used for two main things. First it was used as an aid while you walked, something that you could lean on and help you keep your balance and so forth and second to fight off animals if ever they came along. So he was thinking of their well-being.

On the other hand he said not to bring any bread, any bag and any money. This was mainly to manifest that he was going to provide for all of their needs. He would provide for their food (no bread), for their lodging (no bag) and for their expenses (no money). In verse nine Jesus adds: *‘do not put on two tunics’* – yet another item they were not supposed to bring with them. As though Jesus was saying: ‘Don’t bring anything extra with you, don’t worry about anything – all will go fine you will not be in want’. The only other thing besides *‘a mere staff’* that Jesus tells them to bring is: *‘to wear sandals’*. Not everybody wore sandals. It seems that they were going to travel extensively on their mission and Jesus wanted them to have protection for their feet. This reminds me of what Paul wrote in Romans:

Rom. 10:15

And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!"

(NKJV)

Are we ready to go ahead with what we know that the Lord wants of us? Do we need everything to be perfect before we act? Have we lost the truth that the Lord will provide since it is his mission and we are his messengers? Are we counting more on what we have than on what the Lord will provide for us?

¹⁰ And He said to them, “Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave town. ¹¹ Any place that does not receive you or listen to you, as you go out from there, shake the dust off the soles of your feet for a testimony against them.”

We enter a new section of his directives for his disciples. This time he tells them what to do with the people who they will minister to. Jesus tells them that he will provide for their lodging. He tells them *‘Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave town’*. He doesn’t seem to want his disciples to roam around every night, looking for a place to stay. When you find a place ‘stay there’. Stay there until you have finished with that town. Then he speaks concerning how to react to people in relation with their evangelism. As always there will be two different ‘camps’ of people: the ones who will receive them and the ones who will not receive them. We have seen that for the people who will receive them they are to stay in their homes. But there is another camp, those who will oppose them.

¹¹ Any place that does not receive you or listen to you, as you go out from there, shake the dust off the soles of your feet for a testimony against them.”

What are they to do with the ones who DO NOT RECEIVE THEIR MESSAGE? Are they to force it upon them? Are they to use any verbal language against them? Are they to hunt them down? What are they to do? Jesus tells them simply to: *‘shake the dust off the soles of your feet for a testimony against them’*. True Christianity NEVER uses any type of violence to force people to convert to Christ. This has been a great mistake that has been used throughout the centuries. There is absolutely no reason whatsoever for using violence or trickery or anything of the sort.

Then what are the disciples to do? *'shake the dust off the soles of your feet for a testimony against them'*. One simple thing – *'shake the dust off your feet'* – that's all! They were not to bring judgment upon them but rather leave all judgment unto the Lord himself. For Jesus will be the one who determines their fate. He also is the only one who knows the secrets of their hearts.

Matthew 25:31-33

(31)"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.

(32)"All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.

(33)"And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.

(NKJV)

The disciples were to bring the message given to them by Christ and the consequences of that is to be left between the Lord and the people themselves. I believe that we have forgotten the role of the Holy Spirit in conversion and we often try to take his divine ministry.

John 16:8

"And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

(NKJV)

There is a tendency to keep on harassing people with the gospel because they do not react with the acceptance of it. Like a dog with a bone some Christians just 'don't let go' of people. They believe that their mandate is to 'bring people to Christ'. This is false. The mandate Jesus gave his disciples was to share the Good News with others. The consequence of this is not in their hands. The proof of this is that Jesus tells them *'for a testimony against them'*. He is the judge and the Holy Spirit is the one who produces the new birth in the individual. So don't get mixed up – you don't convict people and you certainly don't judge them.

This is wonderful because by understanding that our ministry is to bring the Good News unto others and not to convert them there is an immense weight that is off our shoulders.

3. The ministries (6:12,13)

¹² They went out and preached that *men* should repent. ¹³ And they were casting out many demons and were anointing with oil many sick people and healing them.

We see that the disciples listened to Jesus: *'They went out'*. They went where people were. They didn't wait to preach on Sabbaths in the synagogue (they could have) but they didn't. They went where the people were and talked about Christ. This is exactly what ALL disciples are called to do – *'preach that men should repent'*. The message has not changed. It is still the same for us. I fear that in many cases we do not preach the gospel of Christ any longer. We first try to bring people to our meetings (to church) – Christ said to go out and talk out there. We have all sorts of 'attractions' given in these evenings instead of simply telling people the good news of Jesus Christ. Church is basically not for unbelievers but for the family of God. We try to win them with stories of 'health and wealth', better marriages, a great future, perfect families and so forth. But this is wrong and many are not truly saved because they have not repented of their sins but have 'come to Christ' for themselves, for something they want. So go out, preach the gospel and when people are saved bring them to the church meetings.

¹³ And they were casting out many demons and were anointing with oil many sick people and healing them.

Here we see that the disciples used the 'tools' that the Lord Jesus had given them in verse seven. These were miraculous powers over the spiritual enemies. This was the seal of their testimonies, a spiritual proof of some sort unto those who heard the gospel message. In Luke ten, when Jesus sends out the group of seventy for their mission he also gave them power over sicknesses. Does this still exist today? Do all the true Disciples of Christ have power over evil spirits? Are they able to cure any sicknesses? Obviously the answer is NO! Does that mean that there are no real miracles done today? Again the answer is NO!

God still miraculously cures people – mostly through prayer. We must never place God in our little ‘theological box’. Unfortunately there are a great deal of ‘false healers’ out there and one day they will have to give an account to the Lord himself.

CONCLUSION:

1. God has sent his disciples unto the world and he does the same with his disciples today.
2. His instructions are simple: Share the ‘Good News’ and leave the rest to me. Don’t be afraid, I will provide for your needs.

The gospel of Mark
25 – The beheading of John the Baptist

6:14-29

¹⁴ And King Herod heard *of it*, for His name had become well known; and *people* were saying, “John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and that is why these miraculous powers are at work in Him.” ¹⁵ But others were saying, “He is Elijah.” And others were saying, “*He is* a prophet, like one of the prophets *of old*.” ¹⁶ But when Herod heard *of it*, he kept saying, “John, whom I beheaded, has risen!” ¹⁷ For Herod himself had sent and had John arrested and bound in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, because he had married her. ¹⁸ For John had been saying to Herod, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.” ¹⁹ Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death and could not *do so*; ²⁰ for Herod was afraid of John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. And when he heard him, he was very perplexed; but he used to enjoy listening to him. ²¹ A strategic day came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his lords and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee; ²² and when the daughter of Herodias herself came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests; and the king said to the girl, “Ask me for whatever you want and I will give it to you.” ²³ And he swore to her, “Whatever you ask of me, I will give it to you; up to half of my kingdom.” ²⁴ And she went out and said to her mother, “What shall I ask for?” And she said, “The head of John the Baptist.” ²⁵ Immediately she came in a hurry to the king and asked, saying, “I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter.” ²⁶ And although the king was very sorry, *yet* because of his oaths and because of his dinner guests, he was unwilling to refuse her. ²⁷ Immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded *him* to bring *back* his head. And he went and had him beheaded in the prison, ²⁸ and brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother. ²⁹ When his disciples heard *about this*, they came and took away his body and laid it in a tomb.

(NASB)

1. Who people thought Jesus was (6:14-16)

¹⁴ And King Herod heard *of it*, for His name had become well known; and *people* were saying, “John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and that is why these miraculous powers are at work in Him.” ¹⁵ But others were saying, “He is Elijah.” And others were saying, “*He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old.*” ¹⁶ But when Herod heard *of it*, he kept saying, “John, whom I beheaded, has risen!”

This is the sad story of the ending of the life of John the Baptist. As with many of the Old Testament prophets and saints it did not end well (Heb. 11:35-40). Jesus even spoke of Jerusalem as being tainted with the blood of the prophets that it had killed.

Mat. 23:37

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!

(NKJV)

May we never think that believers in Christ are safe and sound from the hands of their spiritual enemies! Quite the opposite. They are prime targets (1 Peter 5:8). Examples of this ranges from Saul of Tarsus who wished to destroy all the followers of the Nazarene (Acts 8:1-3) to crowds filled with hatred such as we find with the riot in Ephesus (Acts 19:21-41).

King Herod is mentioned as hearing about the person of Jesus Christ (v.14). His ministry had made him into a ‘super star’ and his fame preceded him. We have already seen that on many instances large crowds of people gathered to hear him and also brought their sick so they might be cured. We also see that this crowd was divided concerning whom they believed Jesus to be. There were three different thoughts on who he was. Even today things have not changed, the vast majority of people are still trying to figure out who Jesus is.

The first group thought he was '*John the Baptist*' (v.14). We see by this that John had quite an influence on the people. Although he had never done a single miracle or healed the sick or cleansed anyone from an unclean spirit – John had an impact on those surrounding him. This is very encouraging, for many of us never do anything extra-ordinary and believe that our lives have no true meaning! Let us never forget the impact that we can have when we simply are witnesses of Christ. Notice that even though John had never done any miracles it is written '*that is why these miraculous powers are at work in him.*' Still today people have a tendency to ascribe miraculous powers to the dead! Somehow and in some way unknown to us, suddenly the dead: watch over us, protect us and guide us! This is as though they had become some type of deity!

The second group thought he was '*Elijah*' (v.15). This was probably because of the prophecy found in Malachi 4:4,5:

Malachi 4:4,5

(4)"Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, Which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, With the statutes and judgments.

(5)Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.

(NKJV)

I find it particular that the people did not recognize John the Baptist as the one who was to come before that '*great and dreadful day*'. Remember Jesus said that John was actually (Mat. 11:13-15) Elijah! People have so much difficulty in recognizing the spiritual signs of their day (Mat. 16:2,3)

The third group thought he was '*like one of the prophets of old*'. Were they referring to the prophet Moses who said that another prophet like him would come from their midst (Deut. 18:15) or other prophets who (like Jesus) preached and exhorted people to repent and walk in God's ways?

In verse sixteen we see who Herod thought Jesus was: “*John, whom I beheaded, has risen!*” Why would he think that? It’s obvious that his conscience was bothering him – had he not killed John the Baptist, knowing he was innocent, and had his head given on a platter to his step-daughter? How many consciences have eaten away at the souls of men and even driving them to insanity? Dear friend, avoid at all costs, to be mastered by an unclean conscience. Think before you act, for your decisions may cost you a price too difficult to bear. May I also ask who you think Jesus is? For if he is not truly the Messiah, the son of the Living God, then he is of no use for you except to bring condemnation.

2. Why John was killed (6:17-25)

¹⁷ For Herod himself had sent and had John arrested and bound in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, because he had married her.¹⁸ For John had been saying to Herod, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.” ¹⁹ Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death and could not *do so*; ²⁰ for Herod was afraid of John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. And when he heard him, he was very perplexed; but he used to enjoy listening to him. ²¹ A strategic day came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his lords and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee; ²² and when the daughter of Herodias herself came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests; and the king said to the girl, “Ask me for whatever you want and I will give it to you.” ²³ And he swore to her, “Whatever you ask of me, I will give it to you; up to half of my kingdom.” ²⁴ And she went out and said to her mother, “What shall I ask for?” And she said, “The head of John the Baptist.”²⁵ Immediately she came in a hurry to the king and asked, saying, “I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter.”

These verses explain the story concerning the death of John the Baptist. It all begins with John who proclaims God’s truth to Herod”

¹⁷ For Herod himself had sent and had John arrested and bound in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, because he had married her.¹⁸ For John had been saying to Herod, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.”

Herod the Tetrarch (this Herod) was a grandson of Herod the Great. Herodias was also a granddaughter of Herod the Great through another wife he had called Bernice. Bernice was the full sister of Herod V, king of Chalkis. Aristobulus (son of Herod the Great) was the name of her father. Herodias had married her uncle Philip, who had no claim to any political power. On one occasion Herod the Tetrarch went to Rome and lived at his brother’s (Philip) home. He fell in love with his wife Herodias and offered her to become his wife. She willingly left her husband and Herod the Tetrarch abandoned his wife. By doing so and marrying, they both committed incest and adultery. Herodias left Philip for Herod because Herod the Tetrarch was considered a ‘king’ in Palestine, had power, great wealth and glory – none of which Philip had. John had been imprisoned because he was openly speaking against and condemning Herod for his sinning against God.

¹⁹ Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death and could not *do so*; ²⁰ for Herod was afraid of John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. And when he heard him, he was very perplexed; but he used to enjoy listening to him.

Herodias, who had no scruples (as Herod did) was enflamed by the open declarations of the man of God. She did not accept that God or man would ever bring any condemnation on her – after all was she not the wife of Herod the Tetrarch! So she held a grudge against John. The word ‘*grudge*’ (ENECHO) means: to hold against, ensnare, therefore to have a quarrel against someone. She hated John and wanted him dead. But Herod ‘*was afraid of John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man*’ (v.20). There was something in Herod that was telling him that John was right and that he should be very careful in his dealings with John. It seems that his conscience was bothering him. We see here that even though men act as if God does not exist and they can do what they want – their conscience sometimes bothers them. It is written that Herod ‘*kept him safe*’ (v.20). Herod had actually imprisoned John and by doing so he was keeping John safe from the wrath of his wife Herodias!

Here we see the providence of God. John was imprisoned and was 'safe' there. We would not think that being imprisoned would be a good thing but in this case it was. This teaches me that sometimes we believe that great adversities are always from our enemy. But in reality being in prison was God-sent for his safety. May we never be hasty to react to a difficult situation that we may be living. It just might be the best thing happening for us at the present time.

(v.20)...And when he heard him, he was very perplexed; but he-used to enjoy listening to him.

Herod enjoyed listening to John. What he said concerning the Lord may have sometimes irritated him (especially when the truth pierced him with God's arrow) but he was somehow attracted by what he heard. How many people listen to the gospel and are intrigued and yet never come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

²¹ A strategic day came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his lords and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee; ²² and when the daughter of Herodias herself came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests; and the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you want and I will give it to you." ²³ And he swore to her, "Whatever you ask of me, I will give it to you; up to half of my kingdom."

Here we see where vanity and the influence of alcohol may bring you. Herod has a great celebration because it is his birthday. He invites all the important people of his court who had military and civic significance. At one point his step-daughter (daughter of Herodias) came and danced for the guests. Dancing was left to the 'professional' women who did many things for money. For Herodias' daughter to do this was very uncommon for she was seen as 'royalty' and would never expose herself to the coveting eyes of drunken men! Salome was her name and she was the daughter of Philip and Herodias. She '*pleased Herod and his dinner guests*', she danced in a way that '*pleased Herod...*'. The word '*pleased*' (ARESKO) means: emotional excitement. What the men saw stirred up coveting excitement in them. You can imagine what type of lascivious dancing she offered!

(v.22)... and the king said to the girl, “Ask me for whatever you want and I will give it to you.”²³ And he swore to her, “Whatever you ask of me, I will give it to you; up to half of my kingdom.”

This is where sin prevails and bites like a snake! Herod and his guests are filled with wine and Herod make a deadly mistake by declaring: “Ask me for whatever you want and I will give it to you.”²³ And he swore to her, “Whatever you ask of me, I will give it to you; up to half of my kingdom.” His lust for his step-daughter enticed him to foolishly promise to fill her greatest wish! We must understand that when Herod said that he would give her up to half of his kingdom it is a figure of speech for he did not have the power to do so. He never really had a kingdom of his own – the land and everything in it belonged to the Roman Empire! What was meant was that he was ready to give her something of great worth – whatever it was.

²⁴ And she went out and said to her mother, “What shall I ask for?” And she said, “The head of John the Baptist.”²⁵ Immediately she came in a hurry to the king and asked, saying, “I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter.”

The poor girl did not even know what to ask so she ran to her mother for her advice. I have never seen a child or teen-ager (which Salome must have been by now) run to their mother when asked what they wanted as a gift! The enemy used this moment to get rid of God’s mouth-piece. Herodias’ answer was: *‘The head of John the Baptist’*. She could finally satisfy her anger and have revenge for what John had publicly said that had brought humiliation upon her. So Salome went back to Herod and told him she wanted John’s head *‘on a platter’*.

3. Herod is trapped (6:26-29)

²⁶ And although the king was very sorry, yet because of his oaths and because of his dinner guests, he was unwilling to refuse her.²⁷ Immediately the king sent an

executioner and commanded *him* to bring *back* his head. And he went and had him beheaded in the prison,²⁸ and brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother.²⁹ When his disciples heard *about this*, they came and took away his body and laid it in a tomb.

Here we see that Herod is '*very sorry*' (PERILUPOS): intensely sad, exceedingly sorry. This is the same word that is used of Jesus when he was in the Garden of Gethsemane when it is written that he was '*greatly distressed*' (Mark 14:34). But there was nothing that Herod could do since he had given an '*oath*'. He had to keep his word because it was given before all of his guests. May we always be very careful with the way we use our words for they also will bring destruction in our life!

Prov. 10:14

Wise people store up knowledge, But the mouth of the foolish is near destruction.

(NKJV)

So he sent his soldiers to execute John by beheading him. He then gave the platter to Salome who in turn gave it to her mother. I can imagine Herodias and how she gloated over her final victory against John! Let us remember that although evil might seem to have authority on earth there will come a time when God will have the final word. At the 'judgment of the great white throne' God will bring all actions done during one's lifetime (even fallen angels) for judgment and hell will be the eternal sentence given (Rev. 20:11-15).

²⁹ When his disciples heard *about this*, they came and took away his body and laid it in a tomb.

Here we see that caring for the dead (their body) was a concern for John's disciples. They did what was appropriate for John. He was given a proper funeral. This should always be done in respect to the beloved people in our lives. It is sometimes impossible to do this because of certain circumstances but the remembering (through a service) of people who died is an honorable thing to do.

CONCLUSION:

1. Each person has his destiny in the plan of God.
2. It is not because you are an evil person that evil things happen to you.

The gospel of Mark
26 – Jesus feeds the 5000

6:30-44

³⁰ The apostles gathered together with Jesus; and they reported to Him all that they had done and taught. ³¹ And He said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while.” (For there were many *people* coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.) ³² They went away in the boat to a secluded place by themselves. ³³ *The people* saw them going, and many recognized *them* and ran there together on foot from all the cities, and got there ahead of them. ³⁴ When Jesus went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things. ³⁵ When it was already quite late, His disciples came to Him and said, “This place is desolate and it is already quite late; ³⁶ send them away so that they may go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.” ³⁷ But He answered them, “You give them *something* to eat!” And they said to Him, “Shall we go and spend two hundred denarii on bread and give them *something* to eat?” ³⁸ And He said to them, “How many loaves do you have? Go look!” And when they found out, they said, “Five, and two fish.” ³⁹ And He commanded them all to sit down by groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰ They sat down in groups of hundreds and of fifties. ⁴¹ And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, He blessed *the food* and broke the loaves and He kept giving *them* to the disciples to set before them; and He divided up the two fish among them all. ⁴² They all ate and were satisfied, ⁴³ and they picked up twelve full baskets of the broken pieces, and also of the fish. ⁴⁴ There were five thousand men who ate the loaves.

(NASB)

The beginning of this text seems to be out of context but actually it's not! It is the explanation of the beheading of John which is inserted within the story of the sending of the twelve disciples which begins in Mark 6:7-13. So this text is the continuation of the sending of the twelve. It is actually the coming back to Jesus that is given.

1. Let's take a rest (6:30,31)

³⁰ The apostles gathered together with Jesus; and they reported to Him all that they had done and taught. ³¹ And He said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a

secluded place and rest a while.” (For there were many *people* coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.)

There is an important fact that needs to be noticed in verse thirty. It is the first time that the twelve disciples are called apostles. The word *apostle* (*APOSTOLOS*) means: one sent forth. Before Jesus sent them on their first official mission they were the disciples. Now that they had officially been sent forth in the name of Jesus (Mark 6:7) they had become *apostles*. It is the same thing in both Matthew (10:2) and Luke (9:10). As for the gospel of John the twelve are never called *apostles*. The word does not occur in this gospel. So what did the apostles do when they came back?

³⁰ The apostles gathered together with Jesus; and they reported to Him all that they had done and taught.

In all three gospels which have this story we are not told the details of their report was so let us leave it at that.

³¹ And He said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while.” (For there were many *people* coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.)

We can see that Jesus was watchful and he noticed that his apostles needed rest. We can only imagine that their mission had taken quite a toll on them. Let’s not forget that this was the first time that they were sent off by Christ, the first time that they were alone and doing ‘ministry’ for the kingdom of God. It is always nerve-racking when we do our first ‘outings’ for Christ! This is true whether it is a Sunday school class, a Bible lesson, evangelizing a friend or anything else for that matter. So Jesus sees their need to rest and he takes the initiative and calls them to come and rest in a secluded place. May we also learn to analyze the needs of others and do what is possible to encourage them. An explanation of this setting is given: a lot of people, a lot of needs and no time for yourself even to take a bite of food.

Another important point we see is that although there are people with needs, disciples are called to separate themselves and refresh themselves. When Jesus took his disciples away for a rest what logically happened? The people who were there NO LONGER had any help! Friend if you are in some type of ministry, whatever it may be, there is no shame in leaving all behind (even people in need) to refresh your body, spirit and soul. We are not God and we need to trust that God will do His work even if we are not there!

2. The large crowd (6:32-34)

³² They went away in the boat to a secluded place by themselves. ³³ *The people saw them going, and many recognized them and ran there together on foot from all the cities, and got there ahead of them.* ³⁴ When Jesus went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things.

Jesus planned a ‘getaway’ by boat to a secluded place. There they could rest and refresh themselves. But sometimes, plans, even the best of them, can be hindered!

³³ *The people saw them going, and many recognized them and ran there together on foot from all the cities, and got there ahead of them.*

Here we see that the people did not accept that the disciples and Jesus would simply take a ‘day off’. People had their own agendas and that was to be with Jesus! So they took off and ran ahead to where they thought they were going. I can only guess that the ‘secluded place’ Jesus was talking about was not very far! We can also see that it was not only the ‘local’ people who formed this crowd but also these: *‘from all the cities’*. It may happen that when a time of rest is planned, other people may disturb it and even bring it to a halt!

³⁴ When Jesus went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things.

This verse brings out a hidden aspect of Jesus' heart – he truly is a shepherd! Arriving to where he wanted to rest with his disciples a surprise awaits him – ‘*a large crowd*’! Instead of being irritated because his plans melted like ice on a summer day a different emotion rose from his heart: ‘*he felt compassion*’ SPLAGEHNIZOMAI): to feel sympathy, to pity, to be moved. And why was his heart touched so deeply – *because they were like sheep without a shepherd*’.

People need spiritual leadership, someone who teaches and inspires them and Jesus was the greatest of all shepherds. However shepherding is not only in the spiritual realm. Fathers should be the shepherd of their family, mothers of their children, with big brothers or sisters shepherding their siblings. In different ways we can all be shepherds of others if we simply manifest care and protection of them. Jesus knew what they needed and that is why ‘*he began to teach them many things*’. We see that the spiritual aspect always has priority in Jesus' relationship with others. Let us never neglect spirituality in our dealing with others.

3. The problem (6:35-37)

³⁵ When it was already quite late, His disciples came to Him and said, “This place is desolate and it is already quite late; ³⁶ send them away so that they may go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.” ³⁷ But He answered them, “You give them *something* to eat!” And they said to Him, “Shall we go and spend two hundred denarii on bread and give them *something* to eat?”

This section is a perfect example of human thinking and how we generally ‘get rid’ of problems. This is quite a large crowd. It is written in verse forty that ‘*there were five thousand men who ate the loaves*’. Normally there are just as many women as men plus the children who came along with their parents. I would not be surprised if this crowd neared fifteen thousand people! That’s over six times the population of the village that I live in!

³⁵ When it was already quite late, His disciples came to Him and said, “This place is desolate and it is already quite late;

Here we see the two fundamental problems. The first comes from the disciples themselves and the second is out of their hands. ‘*When it was quite late*’. The word POLUS (*quite late*) means: many, much, plenteous. Here we are speaking about time - it was very late in the day. The disciples should have thought about the emerging problem of the food shortage – but they didn’t! It seems that they were ‘short sighted’ and were not very strong in planning ahead! Friends, problems will occur when you are not vigilant concerning upcoming event or needs. Our life needs planning. The entire universe is orderly and functions systematically because God is a God of order (1 Cor. 14:33) and wants things to be orderly (1 Cor. 11:30; 14:40; 15:23, 2 Thes. 3:6,7; Titus 1:5). It just may be that this ‘situation’ would not have occurred if it was thought through. On the other hand one can say that this ‘situation’ occurred by surprise since they thought they were going to a *secluded place*. Let us take heed and be as prepared as possible in life. The second problem was really ‘out of their hands’ because the place where they were was ‘*desolate*’ (EREMOS): lonesome, desert, wilderness. There was no village market in proximity, they were out there in the wilderness, and therefore there was no way to buy any food. Some problems are caused by us and some problems have nothing to do with us. What is for sure is that the solution is always there – Jesus!

³⁶ send them away so that they may go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.”

Seeing the crowd and knowing that time was late and that there was no food to feed the people who had come, the disciples came up with a great solution – get rid of the people! They wanted Jesus to ‘*send them away*’. Now this might seem noble (so they can buy food), but by actually telling them to ‘go away’ they will also get rid of their problem! People are sometimes like that – just get rid of people and the problem will go away. The problem was not the people but the lack of food to feed them. Let us not be too quick to ‘get rid of people’ instead of looking for the real reason behind the problem before us.

³⁷ But He answered them, “You give them *something* to eat!” And they said to Him, “Shall we go and spend two hundred denarii on bread and give them *something* to eat?”

I just love how Jesus switches the problem and places it in its right place. As I said, the problem was not the crowd but rather the unwillingness of the disciples to really deal with the situation. So Jesus says ‘*You give them something to eat*’. This ‘hot potato’ was once more in the disciples’ corner. I wonder what they were thinking. After all, had they not already explained ‘why’ Jesus ought to send them away? So they came up with another reason why the crowd should be dispersed – money!

(37)...And they said to Him, “Shall we go and spend two hundred denarii on bread and give them *something* to eat?”

Now two hundred denarii, would be what we would consider to be almost a year’s wages! Even today, to be able to feed ten to twelve thousand people it would take a great deal of money! Are they actually saying that it is not worth spending that money for them ‘*Shall we go and spend...*’ or rather asking Christ for his permission to do this? I don’t really think that they have that kind of money available! So it may be that they are somewhat sarcastic in their answer to Jesus’ order to take the matter into their own hands. If this is true then I should understand that being sarcastic is not very wise when Christ asks us to do something that we believe is impossible for us.

4. The solution (6:38-44)

³⁸ And He said to them, “How many loaves do you have? Go look!” And when they found out, they said, “Five, and two fish.” ³⁹ And He commanded them all to sit down by groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰ They sat down in groups of hundreds and of fifties. ⁴¹ And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, He blessed *the food* and broke the loaves and He kept giving *them* to the disciples to set before them; and He divided up the two fish among them all. ⁴² They all ate and were satisfied, ⁴³ and they picked up twelve full baskets of the broken pieces, and also of the fish. ⁴⁴ There were five thousand men who ate the loaves.

As we have seen, the disciples brought no real solution to the problem and thought it would be best just to get rid of the crowd. But Jesus had the solution and his solution will manifest that nothing is impossible if you place things in his hands.

³⁸ And He said to them, “How many loaves do you have? Go look!” And when they found out, they said, “Five, and two fish.”

He asks a question and then gives them a command. He first wants the disciples to know what they actually have that they can work with. We often don't look at all the possibilities and all of what we have at hand to do God's work. It's easy to say: 'I just can't do this or I don't have the means necessary' without really assessing what we do have. So the next time you are asked to do something, before you say 'no' make sure you actually looked to really see if you can or can't. Notice that Jesus says 'Go look'! He was serious and wanted his disciples to do this right. Now what they found was little: *'five, and two fish'* but it was going to suffice in his hands. We need to bring what we have and use it for his glory and we may be surprised at what it can become.

³⁹ And He commanded them all to sit down by groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰ They sat down in groups of hundreds and of fifties.

Once again we see that God is a God of order. The bread and the fish will not just be thrown into the crowd and create chaos – the need of discipline is necessary. So Jesus orders that the crowd be separated into groups of fifty and one hundred. This will make it easier for the handing out of the food. How great is that! You are hungry, groups are made and you are sitting on the grass. This makes me think of a huge picnic. It also makes me think of the verse in Psalm 23:2 that says: 'He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.'

⁴¹ And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, He blessed *the food* and broke the loaves and He kept giving *them* to the disciples to set before them; and He divided up the two fish among them all.

Notice that the disciples took what they found and brought it to Jesus and in turn Jesus brings what was given to him and brings it to the Father. Then '*looking up toward heaven*' Jesus is thanking his Father for supplying what is needed and in this case it is food. We should do the same in relationship with the Father.

Philippians 4:6

**Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;
(NKJV)**

Also notice that Jesus *'kept giving them to the disciples'*. Jesus provided as long as the need was present. In other words he provided for everyone who was there. There was abundant food for everyone. Jesus can never 'run dry' in providing for others. So don't worry! He also has provisions for you or the work you do in his name.

⁴² They all ate and were satisfied, ⁴³ and they picked up twelve full baskets of the broken pieces, and also of the fish. ⁴⁴ There were five thousand men who ate the loaves.

We see that the people *'were satisfied'*. What we spiritually receive from God will always satisfy our inner most being. Jesus once said:

John 7:37,38

(37) On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.

(38) "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

(NKJV)

We also see that there were left-overs, *'twelve full baskets of broken pieces (bread) and also of fish'*. Jesus not only made certain that everybody got his fill but also that they had bread and fish ready for his disciple's next meal! Finally we are told that there were five thousand men (without counting the women and the children) that took part in this miracle meal!

CONCLUSION:

1. There are times when we need to rest and take a leave from others to be with Jesus. This is true even when people 'count on you' like the crowd counted on Jesus and his disciples for some serious needs.
2. We should also have compassion for people, do what we can and try to shepherd the ones close to us.
3. Often people are not the problem (although they can be). Look deeper to find a solution. Don't be too hasty to dismiss problems by dismissing people.
4. The solution to our problems is found in Jesus, bring him what you have to work with and watch him work.

The gospel of Mark
27 – Jesus walks on water
6:45-56

⁴⁵ Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go ahead of *Him* to the other side to Bethsaida, while He Himself was sending the crowd away.⁴⁶ After bidding them farewell, He left for the mountain to pray.⁴⁷ When it was evening, the boat was in the middle of the sea, and He was alone on the land.⁴⁸ Seeing them straining at the oars, for the wind was against them, at about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea; and He intended to pass by them.⁴⁹ But when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed that it was a ghost, and cried out; ⁵⁰ for they all saw Him and were terrified. But immediately He spoke with them and said to them, “Take courage; it is I, do not be afraid.” ⁵¹ Then He got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped; and they were utterly astonished, ⁵² for they had not gained any insight from the *incident of the loaves*, but their heart was hardened.⁵³ When they had crossed over they came to land at Gennesaret, and moored to the shore. ⁵⁴ When they got out of the boat, immediately *the people* recognized Him, ⁵⁵ and ran about that whole country and began to carry here and there on their pallets those who were sick, to the place they heard He was.⁵⁶ Wherever He entered villages, or cities, or countryside, they were laying the sick in the market places, and imploring Him that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak; and as many as touched it were being cured.

(NASB)

1. Jesus sends his disciples away (6:45,46)

⁴⁵ Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go ahead of *Him* to the other side to Bethsaida, while He Himself was sending the crowd away.⁴⁶ After bidding them farewell, He left for the mountain to pray.

After the crowd had eaten to their fill it was time to move forward. Jesus did not waste time ‘*immediately*’ (EUTHEOS) meaning: directly or at once. Jesus also ‘*made*’ (ANAGKAZO): to necessitate, compel, constrain – his disciples to leave. There are occasions when the Lord allows time to favor us as we decide to move forward. But there are also occasions when the Lord precipitates us to move ahead. Here the disciples had no choice, like a mother bird sometimes pushes out its young from the nest so they can learn that they can fly, here Jesus pushes his disciples forward. It may happen that you may feel that the Lord is moving you ahead so fast that it is scary – so it is for little birds before they find out that their wings are made to carry them through the air! Notice that Jesus points to

their destination – Bethsaida. He gives them a reference to which they can move forward, a goal, an objective to reach. So it is with all who belong to him. A disciple who walks closely with his Lord will know in his heart what the Lord desires for him to do.

After sending the disciples on their journey to Bethsaida Jesus now turns to the crowd and also sends them away. Having been fed they were now capable of returning home. We can notice that there is a separation or a different direction given to his disciples and the crowd of people. So it is in the spiritual realm – a separation is always needed:

2 Cor. 6:17

**Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you."
(NKJV)**

While the crowd goes on its way, the disciples are on another path. May I ask if you are on the right path? If you are not a true disciple of Christ and are trying to walk on the ‘narrow road’ then you are on the wrong road for it will only lead you to eternal judgment. What you first need to do is to repent of your sins, ask Christ to save you and be your Lord THEN walk with him. On the other hand if you are a disciple of Christ and are walking on the ‘wide road’ you are also on the wrong path – the path of sin. You also need to repent and begin once more to walk on the right road.

⁴⁶ After bidding them farewell, He left for the mountain to pray.

Jesus takes time, ‘*After bidding them farewell*’, to do things right. He cares for the crowd until they depart. Our goodness and hospitality should also reach its conclusion only after our guests are gone!

Here we discover the reason why he left the disciples on their own and why he sent the crowd away – he wanted to pray. I can only think of a handful of occasions when Jesus prayed alone. Luke 6:12-16 was before choosing the 12 apostles, Luke 9:18-20 was right before Peter’s confession and Luke 22:4 was in the Garden of Gethsemane. We are not told on this occasion why he set out to pray alone. It may be that Jesus simply needed to be alone with his Father.

2. Boat problems (6:47-50a)

⁴⁷ When it was evening, the boat was in the middle of the sea, and He was alone on the land. ⁴⁸ Seeing them straining at the oars, for the wind was against them, at about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea; and He

intended to pass by them. ⁴⁹ But when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed that it was a ghost, and cried out; ⁵⁰ for they all saw Him and were terrified.

The sea that is referred to is the Sea of Galilee since Bethsaida was on its shores. (By the way we have no information concerning Jesus ever doing ministry on the shores of the Dead Sea). The Sea of Galilee is approximately 21 km long and 13 km wide and since we do not know exactly where this ‘deserted place’ is we can not tell how far from the shore is *‘the middle of the sea’*. We can only imagine it is kilometers from shore.

Here we are given another proof that Jesus is God. It is said that *‘He was alone on the land’*. But at the same time Jesus saw that *‘the boat was in the middle of the sea’* that was kilometers away (John 6:19)! Plus it is written that it was *‘about the fourth watch’*. The fourth watch begins at 3 a.m. and ends at 6 a.m. It is also written that he saw *‘them straining at the oars’*. How can one see so far and so clearly especially if it is at the dead of night or very near dawn? Yes, Jesus is God.

At one point, after he had finished praying his eyes turn upon his disciples – where are they exactly and how is it going for them?

⁴⁸ Seeing them straining at the oars, for the wind was against them, at about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea; and He intended to pass by them.

This is what he saw:

- They were straining at the oars
- The wind was against them

Although they had worked so hard and for such a long time they were not reaching the other side. Most of these men were well prepared for traveling on water. Some of them had done so all of their lives. The wind opposed them and with wind comes waves and with waves comes water in the boat and because of this the boat gets heavier and even more difficult to maneuver! In other words they were going ‘nowhere fast’ and their lives were in danger. But what they didn’t know was that Jesus was looking at them and seeing all that was happening. May we remember that in all of our bouts with trouble and the harsh winds that life sometimes strikes us with – Jesus sees and knows. More than that, as we will see, he cares.

(v.48)... at about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea; and He intended to pass by them.

Seeing that they were in such difficulty and that they could not do anything on their own Jesus came to their rescue. Once again we can see that he is God for '*He came to them, walking on the sea*'. Unbelievers will come up with the wildest answers to 'how could Jesus walk on water?' The best one I have seen is that the Sea of Galilee must have been frozen at the time and Jesus just walked on frozen water! My answer to that is: if the water is frozen how then can a boat travel on it and how can people be 'straining at the oars'? Again the Scriptures are declaring that Jesus is God.

What intrigues me is that '*He intended to pass by them*' – why? The word for '*pass by*' (PARERCHOMAI) means: to come near, to come aside or to approach. When we understand this we can see what was really happening. Jesus was approaching them: he had not decided to walk towards them just to pass them by and let them perish! So Jesus comes to their rescue. We can always count on him for he is with us for all times (Mat. 28:20).

3. Jesus to the rescue (6:50b-52)

But immediately He spoke with them and said to them, “Take courage; it is I, do not be afraid.” ⁵¹ **Then He got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped; and they were utterly astonished,** ⁵² **for they had not gained any insight from the *incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened.***

We know from the other gospels that the apostles were terrified at what they saw (Mat. 14:26; John 6:19). Imagine seeing a figure (in the night) walking on water in the midst of a raging storm. No wonder they thought he was a ghost!

(v.50b)... But immediately He spoke with them and said to them, “Take courage; it is I, do not be afraid.”

We see that Jesus didn't waste any time to calm their fears for it is written: '*But immediately*'. Jesus takes no pleasure in seeing his disciples being frightened or discouraged. Notice what he says: '*Take courage; it is I, do not be afraid*'. Courage (THARSEO) means: to exercise courage, to have courage, be confident. Now this is what the presence of Christ will bring to real believers. Notice that this Greek word gives the idea 'to exercise courage'. As though courage is there because Jesus is there and our part is to exercise the fact that we CAN DO IT because of the presence of Christ. Please notice that we never see someone pray for courage in the New Testament – it is already there because Christ is with us.

⁵¹ Then He got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped; and they were utterly astonished, ⁵² for they had not gained any insight from the *incident of the loaves*, but their heart was hardened.

Notice that as soon as Jesus gets into the boat with them – the storm does not subside, it literally stops all together! Here the Lord is again manifesting his deity! Even nature, in its full fury, is under the command of the Lord Jesus Christ. No wonder Jesus told them to exercise courage! Don't be afraid! Just use your faith. How true it is that when the storms of life hit us they seem so different when we consider that Christ is all powerful and watches over us. Unfortunately so many Christians desperately 'keep rowing' and go nowhere instead of allowing Jesus (by faith) to take over the helm of their life.

The disciples were '*utterly astonished*'. These are two Greek words (EXISTEMI and PERISSOS). Together they give the idea of being superabundantly beside ourselves. The disciples just couldn't believe what their eyes were showing them! Jesus can do unbelievable things in our lives also. Wonders and miracles, implausible circumstances that come together just at the right time and so forth. Millions of Christians can witness that Christ turned their lives around in one way or another.

There were two reasons why they were '*utterly astonished*'. The first is '*for they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves*'. They had forgotten just how powerful Jesus was. He had just miraculously fed at least 12,000 people! How amazing is our lack of memory! This had not been done 'in days of old' but just a few hours before! Are we not also like them? Do we not also easily forget all the great things that the Lord has done for us? This manifests just how important it is to strengthen our courage through remembering. The second is that '*their heart was hardened*'. The word '*hardened*' (POROS) which is a kind of stone figuratively means: to render stupid or callous, blind. It seems that their hearts had become insensitive or blinded to the truth. I believe that the immense stress of the storm, fear of dying and seeing what they thought was a ghostly figure just overwhelmed their minds – they lost faith. This human tragedy faces every believer. We also can become overwhelmed because of what we are living. Overflowing with fear we can also lose sight of what Jesus can do for us. Beloved may we never come to a place of total dismay where even Christ seems to be unable to save us.

4. Jesus' fame (6:53-56)

⁵³ When they had crossed over they came to land at Gennesaret, and moored to the shore. ⁵⁴ When they got out of the boat, immediately *the people* recognized Him, ⁵⁵ and ran about that whole country and began to carry here and there on their pallets those who were sick, to the place they heard He was. ⁵⁶ Wherever He entered

villages, or cities, or countryside, they were laying the sick in the market places, and imploring Him that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak; and as many as touched it were being cured.

Notice that the disciples were to land in Bethsaida but that's not where they landed! We can only imagine that the storm, winds and waves offset their course and they landed '*at Gennesaret*'. It seems that Gennesaret was not a village but a strip of very fertile land on the North-Western shore of the Sea of Galilee. This is where Capernaum stood. There is a distance of 8 km between Capernaum and Bethsaida so they missed their target by a few kilometers.

⁵⁴ When they got out of the boat, immediately *the people* recognized Him,

Like almost all the places Jesus arrived at it seems that it was impossible to keep this a secret. Now remember that Jesus wanted his disciples to go with him to a restful place (6:31) and it never happened! First they land up in a '*deserted place*' and find themselves with at least 12,000 people. Then they were sent off to Bethsaida and land up in a fierce storm. Finally they arrive at the wrong place and again they will be smothered with people! Sometimes it's very difficult to find real rest when you follow Jesus!

⁵⁵ and ran about that whole country and began to carry here and there on their pallets those who were sick, to the place they heard He was.

The news of Jesus being in their midst spreads like wild fire. People came to Jesus with their sick placing them everywhere they thought he would pass by. This was mainly why they came to him. Not for the kingdom of God but to get their sick healed. May we never follow Jesus for any personal gain but for who he is – the Son of God, the promised Messiah!

⁵⁶ Wherever He entered villages, or cities, or countryside, they were laying the sick in the market places, and imploring Him that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak; and as many as touched it were being cured.

On some occasions, like with the blind man in the temple or the man by the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem, Jesus cures only one person but here we see totally the opposite. Whether in villages, cities or the countryside – all who Jesus touched were cured! No wonder his fame resounded throughout all of Israel and even beyond. It is the same today for ALL whom Jesus touches will be cured of their sin sickness. Freedom and forgiveness are always given to those who are touched by Christ.

CONCLUSION:

1. It may just be that Jesus will send you off and alone with a specific mandate. Never forget that he is always with you.
2. As your life unfolds there will be many instances where ‘storms’ will arise.
3. Don’t forget that Christ is watching and will come to your rescue.
4. When Jesus touches a person he completely heals them – he never misses.

The gospel of Mark
28 – Clean and unclean

7:1-23

The Pharisees and some of the scribes gathered around Him when they had come from Jerusalem, ² and had seen that some of His disciples were eating their bread with impure hands, that is, unwashed. ³ (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands, *thus* observing the traditions of the elders; ⁴ and *when they come* from the market place, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves; and there are many other things which they have received in order to observe, such as the washing of cups and pitchers and copper pots.) ⁵ The Pharisees and the scribes asked Him, “Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with impure hands?” ⁶ And He said to them, “Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written:

‘THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS,
BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME.

⁷ ‘BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME,

TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.’

⁸ Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men.”

⁹ He was also saying to them, “You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition. ¹⁰ For Moses said, ‘HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER’; and, ‘HE WHO SPEAKS EVIL OF FATHER OR MOTHER, IS TO BE PUT TO DEATH’; ¹¹ but you say, ‘If a man says to *his* father or *his* mother, whatever I have that would help you is Corban (that is to say, given *to God*),’ ¹² you no longer permit him to do anything for *his* father or *his* mother; ¹³ *thus* invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that.”

¹⁴ After He called the crowd to Him again, He *began* saying to them, “Listen to Me, all of you, and understand: ¹⁵ there is nothing outside the man which can defile him if it goes into him; but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man. ¹⁶ [If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.]”

¹⁷ When he had left the crowd *and* entered the house, His disciples questioned Him about the parable. ¹⁸ And He said to them, “Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him, ¹⁹ because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?” (*Thus He* declared all foods clean.)

²⁰ And He was saying, “That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man.²¹ For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries,²² deeds of coveting *and* wickedness, *as well as* deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride *and* foolishness.²³ All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.”
(NASB)

1. Unclean (7:1-5)

The Pharisees and some of the scribes gathered around Him when they had come from Jerusalem,² and had seen that some of His disciples were eating their bread with impure hands, that is, unwashed.³ (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands, *thus* observing the traditions of the elders;⁴ and *when they come* from the market place, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves; and there are many other things which they have received in order to observe, such as the washing of cups and pitchers and copper pots.)⁵ The Pharisees and the scribes asked Him, “Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with impure hands?”

In verse one we see two important groups of religious people which we can find everywhere in the four gospels, they are the Pharisees and the scribes. The Pharisees were a dominant religious sect of the Jews. Their name (Pharisee) meant to be separate. They thought too much of themselves and saw themselves as being separate from the ‘normal’ people because of their religious insight, wisdom and sanctity. The Pharisees placed the ‘Writings of the prophets’ as having authority but also the Jewish traditions of the Elders. As with many modern Christian ‘religions’ the Holy Bible had its place and authority but so does the writings of ‘great minds of the past’ and tradition that has been building up for centuries. The Pharisees were superstitious, formal and self-righteous. They were the leading and ruling party in all the civil and religious affairs in Israel (notwithstanding the laws of the Roman Empire). The Scribes were people who were skilled in the Jewish Law and teachers and interpreters of this Law (Torah). They also were skilled with the traditions of the Elders and interpreting them alongside the Law of Moses.

They taught the Jewish people and by doing so had a great influence on them. Some of them were members of the Sanhedrin and like the Pharisees they hated Jesus. In the New Testament they are also sometimes called: doctors of the Law and also lawyers. They also thought too much of themselves and were self-righteous.

² and had seen that some of His disciples were eating their bread with impure hands, that is, unwashed. ³ (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands, *thus* observing the traditions of the elders; ⁴ and *when they come* from the market place, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves; and there are many other things which they have received in order to observe, such as the washing of cups and pitchers and copper pots.

In verses two through four we can see the character of the Pharisees and the scribes. They were a type of people that scrutinized, inspected and examined others. It seemed that they thought themselves to be some type of 'religious police'. Here we find them finding fault with the disciples of Jesus. If they could blame his disciples surely that would also blemish his reputation! Now what did the disciples do that was so terrible? How did they break the Law of Moses? Actually they ate bread without washing their hands. Now verse three tells us that the Pharisees and the scribes always washed their hands. They could not stand people not doing exactly like they thought was right. Does this ring a bell? Are there not many 'religious people' that you know that will put down and accuse others because others don't think precisely like they do?

It is also written that when they came back from the market place '*they cleanse themselves*' before they ate. It seems that being with ordinary people made them so ill at ease that they needed to wash themselves! This manifests disdain of others. What a difference with Jesus who even touched those who were sick!

These verses teach us that the Pharisees and the scribes placed '*the traditions of the Elders*' as having just as much authority as the Holy Scriptures themselves! The Disciples of Jesus were not breaking any Law from Moses but they were not abiding by the traditions of the Elders and that is what they disliked about them.

⁵ The Pharisees and the scribes asked Him, “Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with impure hands?”

Being irritated at the disciples the Pharisees and the scribes could no longer hold back! How dare they not do as we were taught by the Elders! Notice that they asked Jesus and did not go directly to the disciples. The reason is simply that the Rabbi was responsible for his disciples’ actions for he was their authority. Their question was straight forward: “Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with impure hands?” This was their accusation.

2. First reply (7:6,7)

⁶ And He said to them, “Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written:

**‘THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS,
BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME.**

**⁷ ‘BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME,
TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.’**

In his first reply, Jesus does not answer their question. What he does is show them the reality, the depth of their own hearts. These religious people were saying the Disciples of Christ did not have a pure heart before God because they did not wash their hands before eating. Jesus will reveal their own hearts with a spoken word from the prophet Isaiah.

**‘THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS,
BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME.**

**⁷ ‘BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME,
TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.’**

Jesus is applying these words to those who were accusing his disciples. He tells them straightforward that they were spiritual hypocrites. There were three factors that he applied to them. The first is that they honored the Lord God only *‘with their lips.’* They were smooth talkers but their attachment to God was only with words and not with true intents. In other words they were spiritual liars, deceivers and fabricators of falseness!

The second is that *'their heart is far away from me'*. They really looked as though they loved God. They had the right words, even sometimes did the right thing but their hearts were not in what they did. It was done with self-righteousness and pride. They loved religion, status and the social rewards but not God himself. The third accusation was that *'in vain do they worship me'*. Because of what they did and their attitude, their worship meant absolutely nothing to God because they were hypocrites. They played the 'religious game'. This reminds me of the first chapter of the book of Isaiah:

Isaiah 1:11-16

**(11)"To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?" Says the LORD.
"I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams And the fat of fed cattle. I do not
delight in the blood of bulls, Or of lambs or goats.**

**(12)"When you come to appear before Me, Who has required this from your hand,
To trample My courts?**

**(13)Bring no more futile sacrifices; Incense is an abomination to Me. The New
Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies-I cannot endure iniquity and the
sacred meeting.**

**(14)Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; They are a trouble
to Me, I am weary of bearing them.**

**(15)When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; Even though
you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood.**

**(16)"Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Put away the evil of your doings
from before My eyes. Cease to do evil,**

(NKJV)

The Lord was irritated with the priests in the days of Isaiah and it was the same in relation to the spiritual leaders in Jesus' days. God was irritated because these men who were supposed to lead His people were actually *'teaching as doctrines the precepts of men'*. How many are still under God's wrath, teaching falsehoods as though they were the very words of God?

3. Second reply (7:8-13)

⁸ Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men.”

⁹ He was also saying to them, “You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition. ¹⁰ For Moses said, ‘HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER’; and, ‘HE WHO SPEAKS EVIL OF FATHER OR MOTHER, IS TO BE PUT TO DEATH’; ¹¹ but you say, ‘If a man says to *his* father or *his* mother, whatever I have that would help you is Corban (that is to say, given to God),’ ¹² you no longer permit him to do anything for *his* father or *his* mother; ¹³ thus invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that.”

In his second reply, Jesus now talks about their attachment to their traditions. He openly tells them that they neglect *‘the commandment of God’*. When you neglect one thing it is because your attention is on something else because it has a greater value for you. They neglected the commandment of God in favor of *‘the tradition of men’*. If his first argument (spiritual hypocrisy and the lack of true love for God) is still a contemporary factor his second argument can also be used today! Tradition has equal or greater value in religion than the Sacred Scriptures. Jesus gives the example of their teachings. People were taught that if a person has money to come to the aid of his parent but does not do this because he says that it is for the Lord – then it is permissible to do so! Now who would receive the money that the person would give to the Temple treasury instead of their parents – the very ones who were teaching these lies! These religious hypocrites were really saying: ‘Don’t help your parents – give it to us’. In fact it is the opposite. God does not need our money and he prefers that we help and respect our old parents rather than putting our savings in the treasury of the Temple. This was his accusation:

¹³ thus invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that.”

Teachers of the Law were invalidating the Word of God and replacing it with *‘your tradition’*. The place of church tradition in most established churches is appalling! They assert that it is godly to do such a thing when it is forbidden in the Bible. It is our responsibility to discern what is from God and what is from man.

4. Third reply (7:14-16)

¹⁴ After He called the crowd to Him again, He *began* saying to them, “Listen to Me, all of you, and understand: ¹⁵ there is nothing outside the man which can defile him if it goes into him; but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man.

Notice that the accusers keep quiet. They have nothing to say. They were condemned by their own actions. It was their hearts that were not pure before the Lord not Jesus’ disciples. Now Jesus turn to the crowd to speak to them, he wants them to understand what had just happened.

¹⁵ there is nothing outside the man which can defile him if it goes into him; but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man.

There is a spiritual principle which we must all understand – nothing from the outside has an effect on our status before God. NOTHING outside of me can ‘defile’ (KOINOO): to make profane, pollute or unclean. Most religions have ‘cleansing ceremonies’. This was used in relation to the accusation of his disciples because they had not washed their hand so the food that they had eaten had ‘defiled’ them – made them unclean. This was a TRADITION and not a biblical fact. What truly ‘defiled’ a person was the following:

(v.15)...but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man.

It is what comes OUT of a person that makes him unacceptable before the Lord God.

5. Final explanations (7:17-23)

¹⁷ When he had left the crowd *and* entered the house, His disciples questioned Him about the parable. ¹⁸ And He said to them, “Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot

defile him, ¹⁹ because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?” (*Thus He* declared all foods clean.) ²⁰ And He was saying, “That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man.²¹ For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil

thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, ²² deeds of coveting *and* wickedness, *as well as* deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride *and* foolishness. ²³ All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.”

In this final section Jesus will extend his explanation. It seems that his disciples did not quite understand the meaning behind Jesus’ account. In one way this encourages me for in certain circumstances I also do not fully comprehend what Jesus teaches! How I sometimes would love to be able to sit and talk with Christ and ask him to reveal to me what he meant.

¹⁸ And He said to them, “Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him, ¹⁹ because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?”

It seems by the tone of his voice that Jesus was expecting his disciples to understand this very simple statement he had given. I wonder if, still today, he wonders why we don’t understand some very basic theology. The writer of Hebrews had this to say concerning the believers that lacked basic understanding:

Hebrews 5:11-14

(11)of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.

(12)For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

(13) For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.

(14) But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

(NKJV)

The disciples seemed not to be able to *'discern both good and evil'*. I have noticed a drastic loss of interest in the study of the Bible and the teaching of systematic theology from the pulpit. Christians that have been in churches for thirty – forty years know next to nothing about God! If Jesus would ask us simple questions concerning the character of his Father would we be able to answer? Do we know what the gospel really is except for the fact that 'God loves you'? What Jesus says is that:

(v.18)...whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him,¹⁹ because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?

Food does not defile you because it is digested and eliminated naturally by the body. In no way does food have an effect on the *'heart'* of a person. Jesus goes on to explain what does have an effect on your heart, what does defile you.

²⁰ And He was saying, "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man.²¹ For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries,²² deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness.²³ All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."

It is not what comes in but what *'proceeds'* (EKPOREUOMAI): to depart, come out of – a person that defiles him! Jesus comes back to the *heart* of a person. The hearts of the religious accusers were not right with God. But the hearts of ordinary people can also be impure before the Lord.

There lies in the heart of men such things as: *evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness.*

These are the things that separate you from God, not unwashed hands when you eat a meal. The Pharisees and the scribes were adamant concerning the OUTWARD form of religion. Do this, do that, don't do this and so forth. They neglected the most important thing – the heart! You can outwardly do ALL YOU WANT but if your heart is not right with God it has absolutely no impact on your relationship with God. Actually it pushes you further away from him! Paul wrote:

1 Corinthians 13:1-3

(1)Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.

(2)And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

(3)And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

(NKJV)

Without the true love of God living in me I am absolutely nothing.

Isaiah 64:6

**But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags;
We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away.**

(NKJV)

Without a heart that has been cleansed by the blood of Christ – all that I do '*are like filthy rags*'!

CONCLUSION:

1. Don't be like the Pharisees and the scribes who constantly accused people of being unclean, while neglecting their own lives.
2. Do not only honor God with your lips and follow church traditions instead of the teachings of the Lord.
3. Your heart is not defiled by what you eat but by what comes out of it. So keep your heart clean by repenting before God.

The gospel of Mark
29 – Jesus and the Syrophenician woman

7:24-30

²⁴ Jesus got up and went away from there to the region of Tyre. And when He had entered a house, He wanted no one to know *of it*; yet He could not escape notice. ²⁵ But after hearing of Him, a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately came and fell at His feet. ²⁶ Now the woman was a Gentile, of the Syrophenician race. And she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter. ²⁷ And He was saying to her, “Let the children be satisfied first, for it is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.” ²⁸ But she answered and said to Him, “Yes, Lord, *but* even the dogs under the table feed on the children’s crumbs.” ²⁹ And He said to her, “Because of this answer go; the demon has gone out of your daughter.” ³⁰ And going back to her home, she found the child lying on the bed, the demon having left.
(NASB)

1. Jesus arrives (7:24)

²⁴ Jesus got up and went away from there to the region of Tyre. And when He had entered a house, He wanted no one to know *of it*; yet He could not escape notice.

This is the only gospel story in which Jesus went personally to the region of Tyre. Although he speaks of this region on different occasions this is the only recording we have of him having set foot there. This story is also told in Mat. 15:21-28. To get a broader picture of this unique occasion we will take information from both gospels.

The scribes and the Pharisees had attacked Jesus and rejected Him because he did not accept the tradition of the elders as having any bearing on religious life. On the other hand Jesus sternly warns them that only the Holy Scriptures are to be respected. So Jesus leaves the area and moves on to the region of Tyre. This region is outside of Israel, it is at the northern tip of Phoenicia which is north of Galilee. Today it stands 12 km north of the Israel-Lebanon border. Tyre had a rich history and is often named in the Old Testament. It still was a major port of the Mediterranean Sea. No one knows why Jesus decided to go to the region of Tyre, we only have speculation concerning this.

We may be able to see part of his plan because it is written that ‘*And when He had entered a house, He wanted no one to know of it*’. It may just be that Jesus just wanted some peace and quiet – to be away from accusations and people that always searched to find fault in him. He entered a house and again we have no clue who the owner was and if he knew Jesus to be ‘a man of God’. Unfortunately his desire to remain unnoticed failed. It is written that ‘*He could not escape notice*’.

2. A woman speaks to Jesus (7:25,26)

²⁵ But after hearing of Him, a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately came and fell at His feet. ²⁶ Now the woman was a Gentile, of the Syrophenician race. And she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter.

Once more it amazes me to see how rapidly ‘news gets around’ concerning the presence of Jesus. We have to keep in mind that we are outside the borders of Israel. The region of Tyre is normally not a welcome place for the Jews for in the past they had been enemies. There is something about Jesus that transcends all human factors and people simply flock to him. This is a story of a woman who desperately wants Jesus to cure her little daughter and as we will see she will do what it takes.

We first see what was the matter with her child ‘*whose little daughter had an unclean spirit*’. The Bible does not explain how such a thing can happen it only exposes it as being a fact. This child was possessed by an evil spirit. An ‘*unclean spirit*’ is a fallen angel who awaits its final judgment. The word ‘*unclean*’ (AKATHARTOS) means: impure, foul, unclean and ‘*spirit*’ (PNEUMA) meaning: a current of air, breath, by analogy a spirit. So here we are dealing with a spirit that has become impure. These are the ones that, alongside with Lucifer, have rebelled against the Lord God and hate everything that he stands for. We see the character of this unclean spirit – attacking a little child who has absolutely no defense against such a being. May we never think that we can stand against them without God’s help or think that they are our ‘friends’ who can confer unto us all that we desire!

We see in verse twenty-six that this mother was not from Jewish descent, she was '*of Syrophenician race*'. Notice that contrary to most Jewish people Jesus will take time with this woman. All races have one creator, all races have the same first parents (Adam & Eve) and all races are from one blood (Acts 17:26). May we remember this in all of our dealings – people are people.

In the event explained in Matthew we first see the woman speaking to Jesus and begin to plead with him: '*Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed*' (Mat. 15:22). She is looking for '*mercy*' (ELEEO) meaning: to have pity on, show mercy on, have compassion. In other words she desires Jesus to look at her situation and caringly do something about it. If she has come to Jesus it is natural to understand that nothing that she had tried in the past had any effect on this unclean spirit. It is also obvious that if she comes to Jesus for help she had heard of his great deeds.

She calls him '*O Lord, Son of David*'. For a Syrophenician person this is a rare and revealing exclamation. As I said there is enmity between these two peoples and for her to profess that Jesus was Lord and Son of David is unbelievable! Somehow she realized that Christ was not just a 'miracle worker' but truly someone who was utterly unique – the Jewish Messiah. It is amazing to see that this Syrophenician woman knew who Christ was and yet the Pharisees and the scribes were blinded to this fact! Also notice that Matthew writes that the girl was '*severely*' demon-possessed. The word '*severely*' (KAKOS) meaning: badly, grievously, and miserably. As though this unclean spirit relentlessly persisted in its attack against this poor little girl.

In Mat.15:23 we see that: '*But he answered her not a word*'. One might say: 'how rude of Jesus' others might think: 'this is totally contrary to his character' and they would be right. What we need to understand is that Jesus wants to bring this woman from point 'A' to point 'B' and to do this he must act this way. He does this on a few occasions such as in Mark 6:48 when he was walking on water and '*would have passed them by*' or with the two walking with him on the way to Emmaus in Luke 24:28 '*He indicated that he would have gone further*'. For her sake Jesus had to act like he did.

At this point there are facts that Matthew brings to light (that we do not find in Mark) which are very revealing.

Mat. 15:23

And His disciples came and urged Him, saying,

“Send her away, for she cries out after us”

(NKJV)

Here we can see the true character of the Disciples. They didn't care much about her plea. They were insensitive in regards to the little girl. In their minds this woman was just 'trouble' and they wanted to get rid of her. It seems that this mother just kept on asking and asking Jesus to do something for her child. She did not take Jesus' silence as an answer to her cries for help. For the Disciples she was a non-Jew. More than that she was a woman. Still today in the Middle-East there are countries where men do not speak to women that are not in their families. May I ask how often we can reflect these Disciples by just wanting to 'get rid' of a problem instead of actually doing something to help out!

Again in Matthew we find another occurrence that is not mentioned in Mark.

Mat. 15:24

But He answered and said, “I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

(NKJV)

The first time this mother spoke to Christ he did not answer – not even a word. But she persisted and called out to him again. This is an example of what we all should do – never cease to call out to God to come to our aid. Even if he does not seem to hear us (as with Jesus and the woman) we need to persevere. On this second occasion Jesus speaks to her. It must have been very encouraging for the woman to hear his voice. She may even have thought that all would be well.

But when she heard the substance of his words her world once more fell apart! Jesus tells her that she is not of the right race *'except for the lost sheep of the house of Israel'*. She was Syrophenician and not a Jew and therefore eliminated from all he could do for her. We could call Jesus a racist and it seems that way. But remember that Jesus wants her to go from point 'A' to point 'B' and this is the road that she needs to walk on to get there. Some of us are spiritually more docile. Others like Saul of Tarse (Paul) need a drastic meeting with Christ to become a true Christian.

3. Jesus' answer (7:27)

²⁷ And He was saying to her, "Let the children be satisfied first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."

If we take in the account in Matthew this is actually the second time Jesus speaks to her. The first time he tells her that she is not a Jew and he will have nothing to do with her. This second time he tells her that she's like a dog! That the children (of Israel) are to be satisfied and not the non-Jews. This absolutely seems cruel for anyone to say! How could our loving Savior ever say such a thing? Once again remember that Jesus is bringing her to a point where she will come to him not only for a cure for her daughter but also as her Lord and Savior.

4. She speaks to Jesus (7:28)

²⁸ But she answered and said to Him, "Yes, Lord, *but* even the dogs under the table feed on the children's crumbs."

Just before this happens it is written in Matthew that *'Then she came and worshipped Him'* (Mat. 15:25). We need to understand that all of this takes just a few seconds in time. Jesus did not leave her stranded for hours or days in anguish! This is the turning point in this story. Before she had called him *'O Lord, Son of David'* but now she was broken and *'worshipped Him'*. The two are very different! How many say that Jesus is Lord and yet do not really know him at all. Remember what Christ said:

Matthew 7:21-23

(21)"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

(22)"Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'

(23)"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

(NKJV)

We see in verse 28 that for the first time the woman humbles herself before the Lord. Yes, I am not a Jew, yes I am like a dog but even the dogs get crumbs that fall from the table. What she was saying is that she understood and accepted that he had come for the Jews and was hoping to get what falls from their table *'the children's crumbs'*. It is the same for all true believers of today. Paul explains that we (Gentiles) are from a wild olive tree and have been grafted on a cultivated olive tree (Jewish). We also came in after Jesus had come for the Jewish people (Read Romans 11:11-27).

5. Jesus' second answer (7:29)

²⁹ And He said to her, "Because of this answer go; the demon has gone out of your daughter."

Seeing that his mission had been accomplished and that the mother had come to a true understanding of who he was (for she worshipped him) Jesus grants her desire.

Mat. 15:28

Then Jesus answered and said to her, 'O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.'" And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

(NKJV)

This is the first time that the Scriptures speaks of her faith '*great is your faith*'. Was this the reason why Jesus had come to the region of Tyre? Just for this woman? I believe that it could be for Jesus said that a shepherd will leave ninety-nine sheep that are safe and go look for the lost one. If you are a lost sheep, far from its shepherd, Jesus will come just for you, place you on his shoulders and take you with him. He is waiting to hear you cry out to him as this mother did!

Luke 15:4,5

(4)"What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?

(5)"And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

(NKJV)

Her daughter was freed from the demon. All is done by his very desire. The daughter is not present and he did not even speak to the demon. He said and it was simply so. The words that created this cosmos spoke and the demon had to leave. Glory be to God that the Son has all authority (Mat. 28:18)! Amen that Jesus is Savior, healer and also protector of his brethren.

6. The miracle is granted (7:30)

³⁰ And going back to her home, she found the child lying on the bed, the demon having left.

I can imagine the mother-daughter reunion when she arrived home. How her pace must have been rapid to see her daughter, the embrace they had and the tears of joy that trickled from their eyes.

CONCLUSION:

1. Persevere and do not let events defer you from calling out to Christ.

The gospel of Mark
30 – The deaf and mute man

7:31-37

³¹ Again He went out from the region of Tyre, and came through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, within the region of Decapolis. ³² They brought to Him one who was deaf and spoke with difficulty, and they implored Him to lay His hand on him. ³³ Jesus took him aside from the crowd, by himself, and put His fingers into his ears, and after spitting, He touched his tongue *with the saliva*; ³⁴ and looking up to heaven with a deep sigh, He said to him, “Ephphatha!” that is, “Be opened!” ³⁵ And his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was removed, and he *began* speaking plainly. ³⁶ And He gave them orders not to tell anyone; but the more He ordered them, the more widely they continued to proclaim it. ³⁷ They were utterly astonished, saying, “He has done all things well; He makes even the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.”

(NASB)

1. Jesus is on the move (7:31)

³¹ Again He went out from the region of Tyre, and came through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, within the region of Decapolis. ³²

The cities of Tyre and Sidon are in the region called Syro-Phoenicia. Once Jesus healed the little girl from demon possession (7:24-30) it is written that he went south-west to the region of the Sea of Galilee. He passed through that region continued south-west and arrived ‘*within the region of Decapolis*’. The name ‘*Decapolis*’ means: ‘ten cities’. Here are the names of these ten cities: Hippos, Abila, Konata, Capitolias, Philadelphia, Garasa, Pella, Scythopolis, Gadara and Philoterio. As I have written before, this region is not part of the nation of Israel and it is inhabited mainly by non-Jews. This would not have been a region where Jewish people would extend their stay. This is not the first time that Jesus goes outside of his homeland.

2. A man needs help (7:32)

³² They brought to Him one who was deaf and spoke with difficulty, and they implored Him to lay His hand on him.

We can see that, as with the lady living in Syro-Phoenicia, people, even though they live outside of Israel, know about Jesus. They have heard of him and may have even witnessed people that have been cured by him. People systematically bring their sick to Jesus in hope that he will cure them. If I may spiritualize this I would say that as believers we also need to bring the spiritually sick to Christ. We know that He is the only answer to their deepest need – the healing of their sick heart! Let's not forget what Christ said:

John 14:6

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

(NKJV)

Why did the people '*and they implored Him to lay His hand on him*'? Why did they want Jesus to touch their sick? I can only conclude that for men touching someone is a point of contact necessary (in their minds) for Jesus to bring healing. Is it a 'bad' thing to ask Jesus to 'touch' someone and bring healing? The answer is 'no'. Jesus never rebuked anyone for asking him to 'touch' a sick person. But I would like to remind you that with the story of the Centurion's servant who was sick the Centurion did not even want Jesus to come into his house for he knew that just by speaking a word he could cure him from a distance.

Luke 7:6-9

(6) Then Jesus went with them. And when He was already not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to Him, saying to Him, "Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof.

(7)"Therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to You. But say the word, and my servant will be healed.

(8)"For I also am a man placed under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

(9)When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him, and turned around and said to the crowd that followed Him, "I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!"

(NKJV)

In this Centurion (who was a pagan) Jesus said that he had never seen such a great faith – not even in Israel! The point I am making is that in our life we often desire some kind of ‘touch’ from our Maker, some type of ‘sign’. Outstanding faith does not require a sign from the Lord but rather a deep sense of simple belief in his power to intervene in our life.

So this man *‘was deaf and spoke with difficulty’*. Still today we often see the same symptoms with deaf people who try to speak. We can understand them but their speech is not as clear as with people who can hear.

3. The miracle needed (7:33-36)

³³ Jesus took him aside from the crowd, by himself, and put His fingers into his ears, and after spitting, He touched his tongue *with the saliva*; ³⁴ and looking up to heaven with a deep sigh, He said to him, “Ephphatha!” that is, “Be opened!” ³⁵ And his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was removed, and he *began* speaking plainly. ³⁶ And He gave them orders not to tell anyone; but the more He ordered them, the more widely they continued to proclaim it.

One can wonder why Jesus took the man and brought him apart from the others that were there. We have no textual explanation and we should leave it as it is plainly told. It is never good hermeneutics to ‘fill in the blanks’ with our own thoughts!

For a reason that we do not know Jesus took this man aside to perform his miracle. This is the only miracle where Jesus placed his fingers into a person's ears to cure them. This is not his normal '*modes vivendi*'. Again we will leave it as it is. We can not fathom the heart of Christ. Jesus also used another particular approach by using his saliva and touching the tongue of the man. The only thing I can say is that if I were the man I would wonder what Jesus is doing! This brings me to realize that in a disciple's life Jesus can also use methods of doing things that I simply do not understand and I should accept them. If this man would have pushed Jesus away because of his unorthodox approach he never would have been healed!

³⁴ and looking up to heaven with a deep sigh, He said to him, "Ephphatha!" that is, "Be opened!" ³⁵ And his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was removed, and he *began* speaking plainly.

To perform this miracle we see that Christ was '*looking up to heaven*'. He directed his sight towards the Father who was the source of all that he did.

John 5:30

"I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.

(NKJV)

May we also do the same, looking towards our heavenly Father in all that we do. We can see that Christ was emotional because he had '*a deep sigh*' (STENAZO) meaning to murmur, to pray inaudibly. It seems that the Son asked the Father to perform this miracle through him. This is exactly what we all should do – ask the Father to live through us for his glory! His command to his speech and hearing was very short – '*be opened*'! We never see Christ 'put on a show' when he does miracles. He certainly was not like the prophets of Baal who spent the greater part of the day 'performing' to get Baal's attention (1 Kings 18)! I often wonder why Christians in general are always looking for 'OUTSTANDING' things, signs and wonders – when Christ did things very simply and without making any trumpets resound!

³⁵ And his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was removed, and he *began* speaking plainly.

Miracles done by Jesus never fail. One hundred percent of his miracles conclude in perfect accomplishment and restoration – that is a sure sign of a true man of God. The world is presently filled to the brim with pseudo miracle workers. The spiritual realm is polluted with false prophets and teachers. It seems that people in general are totally blind and revere these men and women who ‘perform’ in the name of God. The Lord has standards and anyone who does not have a 100% average on his prophesying and healing is a fraud (Deut. 18:15-22).

Here we see that Jesus ‘*opened*’ his ears and removed ‘*the impediment of his tongue*’. The word *impediment* (DESMOS) means: a band, a shackle, fig. a disability. Jesus simply took away what was stopping this man from hearing and speaking well. Amen that our Lord can do all things and come to the aid of all.

4. People don’t listen (7:36,37)

³⁶ And He gave them orders not to tell anyone; but the more He ordered them, the more widely they continued to proclaim it. ³⁷ They were utterly astonished, saying, “He has done all things well; He makes even the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.”

By what we read in verse thirty six we can imagine that the Lord has brought the man back to the crowd (v.33). Here we see that the Lord speaks to ‘*them*’ (the people of the crowd). He gave them orders ‘*not to tell anyone*’. Jesus is never looking for publicity or making his ministry into a public side show! He is always humble – like we should be.

But the people did not listen to him – they proclaimed his miracles far and wide. I can understand that they were so excited and had a difficult time to conceal what they had witnessed. But doing the opposite of what is ordered is another thing. Yet are we not the same? Do we not also go directly against the will of our Lord and Savior?

³⁷ They were utterly astonished, saying, “He has done all things well; He makes even the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.”

The crowd could not believe what they had witnessed. A deaf and mute man was instantly cured and could function as well as all the others! The aim of his miracles was to glorify the Father and also astonish people so that they could realize that he was the Christ – the long awaited Messiah. May I ask if you have understood who Christ really is and if you have made him your Lord and Savior? For those who have been saved for a long time are you still astonished by what Christ has done in your life and in the lives of others?

CONCLUSION:

1. Don't be afraid to be 'on the move' to help someone out.
2. Bring people to Christ – in prayer and in speech.
3. Christ might have to 'bring you apart' so you can get what he wants to give to you.
4. People are not naturally inclined to hear the 'Good News' or the things concerning their salvation. Be ready to be rejected.

The gospel of Mark
31 – Jesus and the four thousand

8:1-13

In those days, when there was again a large crowd and they had nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples and said to them, ²“I feel compassion for the people because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat. ³If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way; and some of them have come from a great distance.” ⁴And His disciples answered Him, “Where will anyone be able to *find enough* bread here in *this* desolate place to satisfy these people?” ⁵And He was asking them, “How many loaves do you have?” And they said, “Seven.” ⁶And He directed the people to sit down on the ground; and taking the seven loaves, He gave thanks and broke them, and started giving them to His disciples to serve to them, and they served them to the people. ⁷They also had a few small fish; and after He had blessed them, He ordered these to be served as well. ⁸And they ate and were satisfied; and they picked up seven large baskets full of what was left over of the broken pieces. ⁹About four thousand were *there*; and He sent them away. ¹⁰And immediately He entered the boat with His disciples and came to the district of Dalmanutha.

¹¹The Pharisees came out and began to argue with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, to test Him. ¹²Sighing deeply in His spirit, He said, “Why does this generation seek for a sign? Truly I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation.” ¹³Leaving them, He again embarked and went away to the other side.

(NASB)

There are some who believe that this story is actually the re-telling of the feeding of the 5000 as though it was a slightly different version of the same event. But when we analyse both stories we can see that the ‘feeding of the 4000’ is a complete different story than the ‘feeding of the 5000’. There are many differences between both stories that proves that they are not the same. Here are a few of them.

1. There is no mention of traveling by boat to arrive where they were on the second feeding.
2. In the second event it is Jesus that first speaks of feeding the crowd.
3. In the first event it seems that the crowd was with Christ for one day, while on the second event they were with him for three days.

4. There is no question of spending any money to buy food in the second event.
5. Jesus does not challenge his disciples to find food for the crowd in the second event.
6. The disciples ask Jesus to send the crowd away in the first event, not so in the second.
7. In the first event they have five loaves and two fish. In the second they had seven loaves and a few fish.
8. In the first event there were twelve baskets of loaves left over and in the second only seven of them.
9. In the first event there were about five thousand men and in the second about four thousand men.
10. In the first event his disciples leave on a boat without Christ and in the second they all leave together.

1. Jesus opens his heart (8:1-3)

In those days, when there was again a large crowd and they had nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples and said to them, ²“I feel compassion for the people because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat. ³If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way; and some of them have come from a great distance.”

What strikes me in the first verse is the great poverty of the crowd. We see that they leave their homes to see and hear Jesus but they bring no food with them! They seem to be living from day to day, not having enough to bring any sustenance for their journey. How different was this generation compared with our modern pampered society. Many won't even go to church because of the slightest misfortune. They may 'follow' Jesus as long as it is not too demanding. Should we not imitate this group who desired intensely to be with Christ even at the expense of hunger!

²“I feel compassion for the people because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat.

In both stories of Jesus feeding the crowd the same word is used to describe the emotion that at one point he felt concerning them – compassion. This Greek word (SPLAGCHNIZOMAI) means: to feel sympathy, to pity. Far too many believe that ‘if there is a God he doesn’t care about us at all’. By reading the gospels we see differently. He is a God of proximity and Paul writes that the ultimate proof that God does love us is found in the following verse:

Romans 5:8

**But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners,
Christ died for us.**

(NKJV)

We also see that *‘they have remained with me’* (PROSMENO) meaning: to remain in a place, abide. Even though they lacked food they remained with Jesus. They would just not go away. They stayed with him in great adversity (hunger). What a wonderful lesson about persevering. How quickly some depart from Christ when adversity from outside or inside the church occurs. At the slightest offense, hardship or misfortune some will abandon the presence of Christ.

³ If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way; and some of them have come from a great distance.”

Here we see both the caring heart of Jesus and also his thought process. He can see the consequence of sending the crowd away (hunger and fainting). As followers of Christ we also should always think of the consequences of our actions towards others. Paul reminds the brothers and sisters of the importance of doing things for the edification of others (Rom. 15:2; 1 Cor. 14:5,12,26; 2 Cor. 13:10; Eph. 4:12,29).

Romans 14:19

Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.

(NKJV)

So don't send anybody away when they are in need and you know that it is possible for you to help out.

2. The disciples' reaction (8:4)

⁴ And His disciples answered Him, "Where will anyone be able to find enough bread here in *this* desolate place to satisfy these people?"

This is a striking verse! It shows how his disciples are so forgetful or spiritually blind. In Mark 6:30-44 Jesus feeds 5000 men (without counting the women and the children). Out of a few breads and fish he creates enough food to feed all who were there including the disciples. More than that there are plenty of leftovers. After seeing this astounding miracle then seeing Jesus walk on water and calming the storm (6:45-52), then being witnesses to Jesus healing every one that was brought to him (6:53-56), the healing of the demon-possessed little girl (7:24-30) and finally the healing of the deaf-mute man (7:31-37) the only thing they come up with is: "*Where will anyone be able to find enough bread here in this desolate place to satisfy these people?*" How blind can you be? Why were they not confident that Jesus would feed this crowd like he had done with the other crowd? Why search elsewhere for an answer? Are we not also sometimes blind? Do we not also forget what Christ has done for us in the past and 'panic' or search for solutions while Christ is right there – next to us!

3. Jesus' miracle (8:5-9)

⁵ And He was asking them, “How many loaves do you have?” And they said, “Seven.” ⁶ And He directed the people to sit down on the ground; and taking the seven loaves, He gave thanks and broke them, and started giving them to His disciples to serve to them, and they served them to the people. ⁷ They also had a few small fish; and after He had blessed them, He ordered these to be served as well. ⁸ And they ate and were satisfied; and they picked up seven large baskets full of what was left over of the broken pieces. ⁹ About four thousand were *there*; and He sent them away.

Notice that Jesus asks the same question as he did with the crowd of 5000: “*how many loaves do you have*”? This is the second time that Jesus will use what his disciples bring to him. This is a wonderful example of the sufficiency of Christ. How often we do not believe that we can move ahead for God’s kingdom because of the little we have. We actually rely on what WE have – no wonder we often remain still instead of moving forward. We need to bring to Jesus the little that we have and believe that he will do great things with it. We also see that Jesus is consistent with his wanting things to be done in an orderly way: ‘*He directed the people to sit down on the ground*’. The people were going to be served once they were all sitting down. I remember my mother always wanting us to eat around the kitchen table for our family meals and not one in his room, the other in the basement while a third would be in the living-room with the T.V. on – everything was done in order. Also notice that the Lord: ‘*He gave thanks and broke them*’. If Jesus saw it necessary to be thankful unto the Father for the provision of the food how much more should we! After all eat to their fill, seven baskets of left-overs were gathered and finally ‘*He sent them away*’. They could now go home because they were ready for their long journey back home.

4. The Pharisees' opposition (8:10,11)

¹⁰ And immediately He entered the boat with His disciples and came to the district of Dalmanutha.

¹¹ The Pharisees came out and began to argue with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, to test Him.

Once the crowd was satisfied and sent back to their homes it is written *'immediately'*, Jesus did not waste any time to move ahead. He was busy with his Father's business. This was nothing new to Christ, actually he began to be attentive to his Father's business when he was twelve years old.

Luke 2:49

And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"

NKJV

Jesus and his disciples went to the district of Dalmanutha. This sector is near the city of Magdala on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, north of Tiberius. In other words he is now heading back home to Israel. It seems that the Pharisees did not waste any time to, once again, rise up against Jesus, they *'began to argue with Him'*. The word *argue* (SUZETEO) means: to investigate jointly, dispute. The evidence is piling up and the Pharisees should have been able to recognize who Jesus was. This was the second great crowd that he had fed with just a few loaves of bread and a few fish – now who could do that if not the Messiah! But their eyes, ears and hearts were shut tight. May it never be the same with us.

They were seeking *'a sign from heaven'*! What more could Jesus have done to prove he was the Messiah. If what he had done so far was not sufficient enough – nothing will ever be to their eyes.

5. Jesus' discouragement (8:12,13)

¹² Sighing deeply in His spirit, He said, "Why does this generation seek for a sign? Truly I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation." ¹³ Leaving them, He again embarked and went away to the other side.

Jesus seems to be literally discouraged by the blindness and hard hearts of the Pharisees. It is written *'sighing deeply'*. This is the only place in the New Testament where the Greek word ANASTENAZO is used. When this happens it is a hapax. The word means: *a deep drawn groan*. He then asks a question: *'Why does this generation seek for a sign?'* Why not simply believe? Why another sign? Have I not given you countless signs? What more do you need? It is not signs that are missing but faith in your hearts to receive the signs that I am giving.

Did Jesus say that he will never give another sign in verse twelve? The answer lies in verse thirteen when it is written that *'Leaving them...'* As we will see Jesus will give people many other signs but for the Pharisees there were no more signs for them that night. Jesus leaves them and embarks once more to another place.

CONCLUSION:

1. Like Jesus did, we must also have pity towards people around us.
2. Let us not be forgetful towards the miraculous powers that Jesus has.
3. May we bring the little that we have and place it in Jesus' hands and see what he will do.
4. Let's stop asking for more and more signs but rather humbly receive at face value what Christ is able to do.

The gospel of Mark
32 – The yeast of the Pharisees

8:14-21

¹⁴ And they had forgotten to take bread, and did not have more than one loaf in the boat with them. ¹⁵ And He was giving orders to them, saying, “Watch out! Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.” ¹⁶ They *began* to discuss with one another *the fact* that they had no bread. ¹⁷ And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why do you discuss *the fact* that you have no bread? Do you not yet see or understand? Do you have a hardened heart?¹⁸ HAVING EYES, DO YOU NOT SEE? AND HAVING EARS, DO YOU NOT HEAR? And do you not remember, ¹⁹ when I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces you picked up?” They said to Him, “Twelve.” ²⁰ “When *I broke* the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of broken pieces did you pick up?” And they said to Him, “Seven.”²¹ And He was saying to them, “Do you not yet understand?”
(NASB)

1. Jesus’ warning (8:14,15)

¹⁴ And they had forgotten to take bread, and did not have more than one loaf in the boat with them. ¹⁵ And He was giving orders to them, saying, “Watch out! Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.”

In our previous section entitled ‘Jesus and the four thousand’ we see that it ended with the Pharisees once again arguing with the Lord and trying to ensnare him one way or another. They rejected his teachings, that he could be the Messiah and secretly desired to ‘eliminate’ him by finding some fault in him. If they could do this then they could openly assert that certainly the Messiah would not have done this or said this. This is the setting for our present section.

¹⁴ And they had forgotten to take bread, and did not have more than one loaf in the boat with them.

This verse once more manifests the humanity of the apostles. In many churches they have become some sort of ‘super-humans’ with all sorts of powers. They have become ‘saints’ whom we pray to, ask favors of and place our trust in. This is blasphemous! All of mankind is marked with a sinful nature, all have come short of the glory of God, all have failed and all are God’s enemies (Rom. 3:9-18). It is only by God’s grace that redemption is given to those who repent and believe that Christ has become their Savior. This is wonderfully explained by Paul’s pen:

Titus 3:3-7

(3)For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.

(4)But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared,

(5)not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,

(6)whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior,

(7)that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

(NKJV)

We see that the apostles *'had forgotten to take bread'*. The Greek word *forgotten* (EPILANTHANOMAI) means: to lose out of mind, to neglect, forgetful. Whether they neglected or had forgotten to take the extra bread with them we do not exactly know. But the fact is that they should have taken the bread with them and they did not. It seems that forgetfulness has made its home in the majority of our hearts also. That is why we are told to remember the Lord in Deut 8:18 *"And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day."* How easily we forget the grace and mercy that the Lord has bestowed upon us. How easily we forget his mighty interventions in our favor. May we be a people of remembrance and filled with thankfulness.

¹⁵ And He was giving orders to them, saying, "Watch out! Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod."

Here we see Jesus *'giving orders'*. He does not suggest, recommend or propose his thoughts – he *'orders'*. This might be an aspect of our Lord that we neglect. He is LORD and we are his sheep! It is not the other way around. We are called to be attentive to his will and as good servants respond to him. Jesus said in Luke 6:46 *"But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?"*.

His command was to *'watch out'*. This Greek word (HORAIO) means: to stare at, to discern clearly. What Jesus was demanding of his disciples was that they notice the actions and teachings of both the Pharisees and Herod. We must not take for granted that what they say and do is in line with the Word of God. But why name the Pharisees and Herod? I believe Jesus mentions the Pharisees because of their false religious teachings and their dishonest way of leading their spiritual lives. As for Herod, I believe that it is because he represented the *'world political system'* of their day.

In other words watch out for the false spiritual teachings and the false political teachings surrounding you. You can only be certain of one thing and that is the eternal teachings of God.

Notice that Jesus uses the word '*leaven*'. It is used as a metaphor as something that is corrupt which in turns corrupts what it comes in contact with (1 Cor. 5:6-8 and also Gal. 5:7-10). Jesus is simply saying that you will be corrupted when you come in contact and accept the teachings of the Pharisees and the world government. May we also have ears to hear what our Lord teaches!

2. The discussion that lead nowhere (8:16)

¹⁶ They *began* to discuss with one another *the fact* that they had no bread.

As it often happens the apostles did not understand the meaning of Jesus' words. They were unable to discern the thoughts of Christ. In one way we can not blame them for they had not yet received the gift of the Holy Spirit whose ministry was to guide the true disciples of Christ (John 13:16). It's as though they totally bi-passed the fact that Jesus also spoke of the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod. I guess we also bi-pass certain teachings of the Lord, not really wanting to 'hear' them because it's demanding of us.

3. A series of questions from Jesus (8:17-21)

¹⁷ And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you discuss *the fact* that you have no bread? Do you not yet see or understand? Do you have a hardened heart?"¹⁸ **HAVING EYES, DO YOU NOT SEE? AND HAVING EARS, DO YOU NOT HEAR? And do you not remember, ¹⁹ when I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces you picked up?" They said to Him, "Twelve."²⁰ "When *I broke* the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of broken pieces did you pick up?" And they said to Him, "Seven."²¹ And He was saying to them, "Do you not yet understand?"**

In our present text we can see that Jesus is not only '*aware of this*' but also that they are on a false route and because of this they will never understand what Jesus meant concerning the yeast of the Pharisees and Herod. To guide them to understand he asks a series of SERIOUS questions. As for myself I know that sometimes I don't want to hear serious questions concerning my life, where I am at and what on earth I am doing. People don't like to face certain aspects of themselves.

BUT it is the only way for us to grow and move forward in our life as a disciple of Christ. We don't generally like to 'ruffle feathers' but there are times (like with the disciples) that Jesus needs to do it for our own good.

1. *Why do you discuss the fact that you have no bread?* Here they were discussing the wrong thing. It's not the bread but the leaven that you should be talking about. Would we be ashamed if Christ would ask us '*What were you talking about?*' The right things or the wrong things.

2. *Do you not yet see or understand?* This refers to the fact that they should have understood what Christ was speaking about but failed to do so. They have been with him for a long time, heard many sermons and witnessed countless miracles. YET after all of that they were still unable to perceive the meanings of Christ's words. Are we still (after all those years) unable to figure out the meaning of our Master's words? Are we still lacking spiritual maturity?

3. *Do you have a hardened heart?* Meaning that their hearts were not truly wanting to be opened to Christ's teachings. Just as the hard soil could not receive the seed and produce fruits so a hardened heart does not allow the word of God to penetrate it and produce its fruits. What was causing this 'hardness'?

4. *Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear?* It's not that they were lacking the physical organs that allow sight and hearing. They had all that they needed so they had no excuse for not understanding. It was something else that was lacking. Yes, a hardened heart but something else was lacking. The next comment will give us the answer.

5. *And do you not remember?* It seemed that they suffered from a spiritual memory loss! They had forgotten, in such a short time, the miracle of the feeding of the four thousand. Do we not also have a tendency to forget the miracles and provisions of God in our life making us spiritually blind and deaf!

Jesus asks them how many baskets of bread were left when he fed the five thousand and they correctly answered – twelve. He asked the same question concerning the feeding of the four thousand and they also correctly answered – seven. Is it possible that we also might have the correct answers but our hearts are still unable to 'see' the truth behind them?

6. *Do you not yet understand?* This was his final question. If you can answer all the questions correctly, why then are you not understanding what I am talking about? Jesus asks simple yet profound questions, not to humiliate his disciples but to try to make them understand that even though they are with him and hear him they seem to not comprehend

the meaning of his words. We should also ask ourselves serious questions concerning our faith and walk with the Lord. Why may we still be 'babes' in the faith after years of being Christians. Why are we not growing, why is it so hard for us to 'catch' what we read in the Holy Scriptures.

CONCLUSION:

1. Jesus warns us to be very careful concerning the leaven of religious leaders and also political leaders.
2. We should be very careful concerning our discussions, are they right ones or wrong ones?
3. Ask yourself questions concerning why you have such difficulty in understanding what your Savior is teaching.

The gospel of Mark
33 – The blind man

8:22-26

²² And they came to Bethsaida. And they brought a blind man to Jesus and implored Him to touch him. ²³ Taking the blind man by the hand, He brought him out of the village; and after spitting on his eyes and laying His hands on him, He asked him, “Do you see anything?” ²⁴ And he looked up and said, “I see men, for I see *them* like trees, walking around.” ²⁵ Then again He laid His hands on his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and *began* to see everything clearly. ²⁶ And He sent him to his home, saying, “Do not even enter the village.”

1. The people’s request (8:22)

²² And they came to Bethsaida. And they brought a blind man to Jesus and implored Him to touch him.

This miracle is only recorded in the gospel of Mark and in some way it is very particular as we will see. Jesus and his apostles arrive at Bethsaida. This city is in Galilee on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. It is situated just north of Capernaum. It was the birth place of Philip, Andrew and Peter. Bethsaida was a village that was on *both sides of the Jordan River* where it empties in the Sea of Galilee.

Once more we see that the reputation of Jesus seems to have flourished everywhere in Israel. It does not take long before people ‘*brought a blind man to Jesus*’. Jesus was the ultimate opportunity – a God sent opportunity – a hope to receive a cure for all illnesses. This is the story of a blind man that was brought to Jesus.

Blindness was very common in the Middle-East. There were many natural causes for this illness: The glaring sun, in the atmosphere floated a very fine dust which enters the frets of the eyes and brings irritation. There was also the lack of hygiene and contagious diseases. We do not know what caused this man’s blindness. It might have also been a genetic defect.

The fact that he was blind destroyed his life. He was a social outcast – a beggar at best! Life was not to be enjoyed but rather was a daily burden. If he was a descendant of Aaron, because he was blind he could not serve the Lord as a priest (Lev. 21:16-23). He could eat of the table of the Lord but could not offer any sacrifice. In Israel the blind were to be taken care of (Lev. 19:14; Deut. 27:19) but unfortunately this was not always the case. In our segment we see that friends brought him to Jesus, thus manifesting care and pity for him. How much more we need to introduce the spiritually blind to the Lord! They *‘implored him to touch him’*. The word *implored* (PARAKALEO) means: to call near, to invite. By this we understand that the people talked to Jesus about the man, introducing him and asking him to bring healing.

2. Jesus’ question (8:23)

²³ Taking the blind man by the hand, He brought him out of the village; and after spitting on his eyes and laying His hands on him, He asked him, “Do you see anything?”

What a beautiful picture we are presented with. Jesus kindly taking a blind man by the hand and leading him elsewhere. Isn’t that what Jesus does to all who receive spiritual sight? Does he not lead us from spiritual darkness unto his kingdom (Col. 1:13)! Jesus is truly the light of the world.

John 8:12

Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

(NKJV)

One wonders why Jesus did not cure the man right ‘there and then’, in front of the crowd where he could be seen? No one really knows why and all answers would simply be speculation.

For his own reasons he chose to bring this man away from the others and give him sight on a one on one basis. Jesus is not to be placed in the small box of our understanding – he does as he wills for he is the Lord.

It is not clear if Jesus spat directly on the man's face or if he used his spit and placed it on the man's eyes. The Greek word for '*spitting on*' (PTUO) means: to spit. So it may be that he did just what is understood in its simplest form. Why would he do that? People who had blindness caused by sickness had 'crusty eyes' formed by dried secretions that leaked from the eyes and gummed the eye lids shut tight. Jesus may have wanted to clear the eyes and allow them to be able to open naturally once the miracle was done.

After he laid his hands on the man he asks him the following question: '*Do you see anything?*' Why would he say that? Was he uncertain that he could do this miracle? Is this proof that Jesus could fail and therefore might not be the Messiah? This is the only miracle where Jesus asks such a question. It may simply be because of the person he was healing. Each person is different and Jesus' approach may vary from one person to another.

3. The blind man's answer (8:24)

²⁴ And he looked up and said, "I see men, for I see *them* like trees, walking around."

What the man saw and what the man should be seeing were two different things. This 'progressive healing' (although it took only a few seconds between the two 'events') might have a spiritual significance for those who would read of this event later on. The significance might be that for some much is given and revealed in one occurrence (as with Paul) and with others seeing well spiritually comes with time. But again the Biblical text does not explain why Jesus acted this way with the blind man.

The man explains that *'I see men, for I see them like tress, walking around'*. This gives us two clues. The first that there were other people (probably the apostles) with Jesus as he cured this man for he said: *'I see men'*. The second is that this man had not been blind from birth because he was able to identify men just by looking and not by touching them.

4. The miracle and command (8:25,26)

²⁵ Then again He laid His hands on his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and *began to see everything clearly.* ²⁶ And He sent him to his home, saying, "Do not even enter the village."

Because the man was not able to see correctly Jesus places his hands on his eyes (Remember the people had *'implored him to touch him in v.22'*). Not a word was said, not a prayer given – just the laying of his hands. As for the man he *'looked intently'* His eyes were fixed on Jesus and only on Jesus and that is when he *'began to see everything clearly'*. Could this be a clue to why this miracle was done in two parts? Could it be that Jesus wanted this man to understand that to be healed he really needed to fixate on him and no one or nothing else? If so, this is a clear lesson for all Disciples of Christ. We also need to fix our eyes on Christ so that we can see clearly in life!

²⁶ And He sent him to his home, saying, "Do not even enter the village."

As we have seen in other occurrences Jesus is not looking for glory nor the excitement of a cheering crowd. Jesus says: Go home and *'do not even enter the village'*.

CONCLUSION:

1. Jesus listens to people's sincere requests.
2. Jesus speaks to people even in the very depth of their darkness.
3. Honestly answer to Jesus when he speaks to you.
4. Fixate on Jesus and you will see the light.

The gospel of Mark
34 – Peter's confession

8:27-30

²⁷ Jesus went out, along with His disciples, to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way He questioned His disciples, saying to them, “Who do people say that I am?” ²⁸ They told Him, saying, “John the Baptist; and others say Elijah; but others, one of the prophets.” ²⁹ And He *continued* by questioning them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered and said to Him, “You are the Christ.” ³⁰ And He warned them to tell no one about Him.
(NASB)

1. The first question (8:27)

This section may be one of the single most important parts of the Gospel of Mark. Your eternal destination rests on the answer you would give if Jesus would have asked it to you personally.

²⁷ Jesus went out, along with His disciples, to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way He questioned His disciples, saying to them, “Who do people say that I am?”

The city of Caesarea Philippi is about 192 kilometers north of Jerusalem. His visit to this region is known to be the highest northern point Jesus ever traveled. It is said that in the past this city was called Baal-Gad (Jos. 11:17) and it was a Canaanite sanctuary city dedicated to their idol Baal. Also notice that this city was presently named after Caesar who was worshipped as a demi-god in the Roman Empire. I believe that this is very important to know because Jesus will confirm who he really is and therefore manifest to all that he is the true God incarnate.

As Jesus was walking with his disciples he asks two questions. The first being: *‘Who do people say that I am?’* Still today this question resounds across the globe – ‘Who is Jesus of Nazareth? Have you wondered why Jesus would ask such a question?’

I believe that it manifests the importance of knowing who Jesus really is. It matters very little to know (for the people's eternal salvation) who Napoleon Bonaparte or Albert Einstein were. On the other hand understanding and humbly accepting who Christ is will have an everlasting effect. Have you ever personally wondered who Jesus really is?

2. The many answers (8:28)

28 They told Him, saying, "John the Baptist; and others say Elijah; but others, one of the prophets."

The disciples responded to his question and they come up with three examples of who people in general thought he might be. The first was very surprising – John the Baptist. Now John had been killed and was buried (Mat. 14:3-12). I believe that people thought that Jesus could have been the resurrected John the Baptist simply because Herod the tetrarch thought that Jesus was actually John who had come back to life (Mat. 14:1,2). This manifests the fact that often people will believe what important people (Politicians, spiritual leaders, family elders...) believe simply because they say so! It is also surprising how the identity of Jesus had eroded so quickly. He had been known as:

Mark 6:3

"Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?" And they were offended at Him.

(NKJV)

Now he has become the resurrected John the Baptist! Jesus warns not to blindly follow others – especially in the spiritual realm. It is not because a person is known to be religious that he truly is and has perfect insight on spiritual matters!

Matthew 15:12-14

(12)Then His disciples came and said to Him, "Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?"

(13)But He answered and said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted.

(14)"Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch."

(NKJV)

So don't accept what someone says simply because he or she is 'important' socially, politically or religiously. God is the ultimate source of truth and no one else.

The second example of who people thought Jesus was is Elijah. Now what was so particular about Jesus that people would think he was Elijah? I believe that people thought that Jesus might be Elijah for two reasons. The first is that Elijah never died – he was taken away by God in a fiery chariot (2 Kings 2:11). It could be plausible for God to send Elijah back to continue his mission on earth. My second thought is that Elijah was the prophet (except for Moses) who had done the most unbelievable of miracles - sixteen in all. His servant Elisha did thirty-two but they were not as breath-taking and spectacular. Since Jesus did so many incredible miracles some thought that he was Elijah. This teaches me that I must not believe that just because someone does 'miracles' and says he is of God or even the Christ that he is. Miracles are very deceiving.

Matthew 7:22,23

(22)"Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'

(23)"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

(NKJV)

The third thought that was brought up was that he was '*one of the prophets*'. The people in general hungered for prophets. The Lord had been quiet since Malachi (about 400 years) and there was a spiritual drought in Israel. So when John the Baptist came along great crowds followed him and listened to his message and they even thought the following:

Luke 3:15

Now as the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not,

(NKJV)

People were thirsty for hearing from God and when Jesus came along and John told the crowds that 'he was the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world', many actually turned to Jesus accepting that he was like '*one of the prophets*'.

3. The great question (8:29a)

²⁹ And He *continued* by questioning them, "But who do you say that I am?"

Here we see that Jesus shifts from 'who do people say I am' to 'who do YOU say that I am'. Knowledge of who Jesus truly is must never be based on what people believe but only on what YOU personally believe. In other words it does not matter to Jesus what those around you think, it is what YOU believe that will have an eternal impact. I know that in all the main line religions it is important that someone in the family is dedicated to their god(s). It makes the entire family 'special' and it is believed that the family will be blessed through this religious uncle, cousin or sister of theirs. Not so with the living God. One's faith is not 'transferred' into another's 'spiritual bank account'. So who do YOU say Jesus is? Before looking at what Peter said listen to what Jesus said about himself:

- I am the bread of life (John 6:35)
- I am from above (John 8:23)
- Before Abraham was, I am (John 8:58)
- I am the door of the sheep (John 10:7)
- I am the Good Shepherd (John 10:11)
- I am the Son of God' (John 10:36)
- I am the resurrection and the life (John 11:25)

- I am the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6)
- I am in the Father (John 14:10)
- I am the true vine (John 15:1)
- I am not of the world (John 17:14)
- I am a king' (John 18:37)
- I am ascending to my Father (John 20:17)

4. Peter's confession (8:29b)

Peter answered and said to Him, "You are the Christ."

Here Peter is confessing who he believed Jesus was – the Christ. The word *Christ* is the Hebrew equivalent of their word *Messiah* (the Anointed One). Peter declares that he believes that Jesus was the long awaited Jewish Messiah, a promise given by the God of Abraham unto his descendants. This declaration is stating that Jesus was the designated Prophet, Priest and King that Israel was waiting for. In other words he is declaring the deity of Jesus.

This is who Jesus is. If Jesus is a sage, a wise man of the orient, a spiritual teacher or guide and even if he is a martyr – it will do you no good at all! And your final destiny will be in hell forever. Believing that Jesus is a good man, a social activist, a moral reformer even the greatest man who ever lived will have no avail whatsoever in your eternal destination except to bind you in your everlasting prison where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mat: 8:12; 13:42,50; 22:13; 25:30).

Is Jesus YOUR MESSIAH? Is he YOUR Savior? Have you repented from your sin- filled life and asked him to save you? This is the million dollar question that one day will be asked of you. This is the MOST IMPORTANT question that you will ever need to answer. So who is Jesus? Who do YOU say Jesus is?

5. The warning (8:30)

³⁰ And He warned them to tell no one about Him.

Here again we see that the time for Jesus to be fully known has not arrived. This is not the first time that he asks that what is known of him is to be kept silent. But a time will come when he will be known – by all!

CONCLUSION:

1. If Jesus would ask you today ‘Who do you think that I am?’, what would be your answer?
2. Jesus accepts Peter's answer that he is the Christ.

The gospel of Mark

35 – Jesus announces his death

8:31-38

³¹ And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³² And He was stating the matter plainly. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. ³³ But turning around and seeing His disciples, He rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.”

³⁴ And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. ³⁵ For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it. ³⁶ For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? ³⁷ For what will a man give in exchange for his soul? ³⁸ For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”

(NASB)

1. Jesus speaks plainly (8:31)

³¹ And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

In our last section we were left with Peter’s solemn declaration: ‘You are the Christ’ (8:29). This present section is the natural ‘overflow’ of what Peter had just announced. If our last section was meant for the apostles alone ‘*But who do you say that I am*’ (8:29) we see that this section is for everyone for it is written: ‘*And He summoned the crowd with His disciples and said to them*’. The following teachings of Jesus are meant for everyone to hear. In a nutshell Jesus will give the Gospel message that every person needs to hear.

Jesus begins with giving himself the name (or title) of '*Son of Man*'. In the Gospel of Mark the name or title '*Son of Man*' is used thirteen times and ONLY by Jesus. Each time he speaks of himself and some event that will accompany him. This is the third occurrence of Jesus taking on this title. The first time he spoke of the '*Son of Man*' was in Mark.

Mark 2:10

**"But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" -
He said to the paralytic,**

(NKJV)

Here we see that he declares himself God since only God has the power to forgive sins. This same story is told in Luke 5 and this is what is written in verse 21:

**And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, "Who is this who speaks
blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"**

(NKJV)

No doubt about it we see that the scribes and the Pharisees knew that only God could forgive sins (Ps. 103:1-4; Isaiah 43:24,25). The second time that Jesus spoke of the '*Son of Man*' was in Mark 2:28:

"Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath."

(NKJV)

Jesus again manifests his deity for only YHWH was the '*Lord of the Sabbath*' (Ex. 16:19; 20:10). In his third declaration as being the '*Son of Man*' Jesus will prophecy four things concerning the future of the '*Son of Man*'. The first is that he '*must suffer many things*'. This is a general statement concerning what awaits him. The Gospels testify that Jesus did '*suffer many things*' especially during the last week of his life. The second statement is that he will '*be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes*'. We know that they have always rejected Jesus and had tried to get rid of him during his ministry.

The third is that he will *'be killed'*. This speaks of his death on the cross. The fourth prophecy is that the *'Son of Man'* *'after three days rise again'*. His resurrection is one of the cornerstones that proves that Jesus was truly the Messiah.

2. Peter has other thoughts (8:32)

³² And He was stating the matter plainly. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him.

It appears that what Jesus had prophesied did not please everyone. Peter seems to have been disturbed and rejected the idea that such a fate awaited his Master. So Peter, being Peter, took things in his own hands. Can you imagine Peter placing his arm on Jesus' shoulders and saying 'Jesus I have something to tell you – come with me'? It is said that Peter *'took him aside and began to rebuke him'*. The word rebuke (EPITIMAO) means: to censure, to admonish, to forbid. In other words Peter is really scolding, reprimanding and chastising Jesus for having said these four prophecies! I believe that Peter did not want to hear that Jesus would suffer and die. He loved him too much. Is this not also a picture of you and me? Not wanting to accept certain aspects of Jesus such as: being Lord over everything, asking for total devotion and one day being the judge of all our actions. Do we not prefer to imagine Jesus as only being: kind, loving, patient and so forth? We ALL have a little bit of Peter in us and we ALL need to be very careful about that.

3. Jesus rebukes Peter (8:33)

³³ But turning around and seeing His disciples, He rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."

Notice that Peter took Jesus aside (v.32) to speak to him – it was meant to be just between the two of them. But not so with Christ! It is written: *'but turning around and seeing His disciples'*. What Jesus was going to say to Peter he desired ALL to hear! One may wonder why? Simply because the lesson that would come out of Peter's failure should be learned by all of his disciples.

The tables have turned and Jesus rebukes Peter. It is the same Greek word that is used when Peter *rebukes* Jesus as when Jesus *rebukes* Peter. Jesus' reaction is very severe.

“Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.”

Jesus is speaking to Peter and not (as some would like to believe) to Satan that was in Peter. When Peter rebuked Jesus it was from his own heart and no one else's. There is only ONE recorded event when Satan personally inhabited a person in the New Testament and that is with Judas (Luke 22:3).

The word '*Satan*' (SATANAS) means: an adversary and that is why Jesus called Peter – Satan. He had become his adversary – but how? Jesus give us the answer: '*for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's.*' Because Peter has his own thoughts and interests at heart when he rebuked Jesus he automatically became his adversary. What a severe warning for all of us who declare ourselves his disciples! Each time that our own desires rule over the sovereignty of Christ over us we then also become SATANAS – an adversary to Christ. May our hearts tremble of ever doing this!

4. The cost of following Jesus (8:34-38)

³⁴ And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. ³⁵ For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. ³⁶ For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? ³⁷ For what will a man give in exchange for his soul? ³⁸ For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”

These five verses could be a section of its own but since it was born out of Peter becoming an enemy of Christ it is reasonable that it is included in its proper context.

What will be taught is so important that Jesus ‘*summoned the crowd with his disciples and said to them*’. It seems that Peter’s open rebuke by Jesus was only to be seen by the disciples (v.33) but the teaching flowing from it was for all to hear since Jesus ‘*summoned the crowd*’. This teaches me that when we discipline someone great care should be taken not to humiliate him before people that have nothing to do with what has happened.

“If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. ³⁵ For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it.

He begins his teachings with ‘*If anyone wishes to come after me*’. The invitation is for all who were part of the crowd. We see that it is for those who have a hidden desire to follow Christ. If that desire is in YOUR heart here are three things that must be understood.

- He must deny himself
- Take up his cross
- Follow me (Christ)

The first thing one must understand and practice is the denial of oneself. The Greek word for deny (SPARNEOMAI) means: to deny *utterly*, to disown. To be a true disciple of Christ there must be a desire to transfer our volition and place it in the hands of the Lord. It is no longer the ‘I’ that rules our life but rather the Lord. Without this first step of abandonment one can never become a mature disciple.

The second thing is to ‘*take up his cross*’. The word ‘*take up*’ (AIRO) means: to raise, to carry, to lift up. Notice that Jesus does not want his disciples to carry His cross but their own cross. No one can carry the cross of Christ and do what he did. It would be blasphemous to believe that one can ever do this. Each disciple has a future that is determined by the Lord. We all have different ministries and activities to do for the benefit of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:11).

If we are called to do this or that (as we are taught in Rom. 12:3-8) we need to do what is asked. This is what *'take up his cross'* is all about. Being the person that the Lord wants you to be and doing what he has called you to do.

The third thing is *'follow me'*. One can not be a disciple of Christ if he is not following him. The word *'follow'* (AKOLOUTHEO) means: to be in the same way with, giving the idea that one follows another as if walking in a narrow path. When I was a child I used to play *'follow the leader'*. We would all be in a row and not only follow but also mimic all that the leader did. When a disciple follows Christ he imitates his Master therefore becoming the light and salt of the earth.

These three directives are NOT CONDITIONAL – Jesus does not give us a choice. This is what my disciple does: he denies himself, he picks up his cross and he follows me. That is what we are called to do.

³⁵ For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it.

I believe that this verse can be taken in both the earthly and heavenly sense. If we deny ourselves, pick up our cross and follow Jesus two things will happen. The first is that we will *'lose'* our earthly life. In the sense that we will accomplish the desires of Christ and not our own, thus setting aside the requests of the flesh. And secondly we will gain eternal life because we have said *'no'* to ourselves and *'yes'* to repentance unto Jesus. So we have a choice as a disciple of Christ. We either keep on living the way we want (in the flesh) and lose the good life that we are able to have here on earth or say yes (to the Spirit) and gain what God has intended for us to have here on earth and in the afterlife.

³⁶ For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? ³⁷ For what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

What a crushing warning Jesus has for the crowd and for all of us today! This is the bottom line of the consequence of following our own desires. Jesus speaks of *'profit'* (OPHELEO) meaning: to be useful, to be of advantage. He wants the people to think, to reason about life. He is saying what advantage do you have even when you *'gain the whole world'* – in other words have everything you ever dreamed or desired to have IF you *'forfeit'* (ZEMIOO) meaning: to in jure, damage or lose your *'soul'* (SPUCHE): breath, life, soul? Imagine a balance. On one side are the things you dream of having and on the other is Jesus. One will damage your soul while the other benefits it. What do you choose? He also says: *'For what will a man give in exchange for his soul?'* Jesus is saying that there is nothing ABSOLUTELY NOTHING that you can give in exchange for the welfare of your soul. If you choose the things of the flesh and the treasures of this world you are selling your soul and nothing can bring it back to you. It is either ME or the WORLD.

³⁸ For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

A choice is placed before the crowd (and things have not changed). If you are *'ashamed'* (EPAISEECHUNOMIA) meaning: to feel shame for something, to be ashamed of ME (Jesus) and my words (his teachings & affirmations) then the *'Son of Man'* will also be *'ashamed of him'*. This speaks of the attitude that one has towards Christ. If you are ashamed of Christ today (meaning that you reject Him) then he will do the same to you at his second coming. There are no second chances.

CONCLUSION:

1. Jesus openly speaks about his life and we should listen.
2. When we don't have the same thoughts as Christ we are his enemy.
3. Jesus will discipline you when you act against his will.
4. Let us not be ashamed of the one who died on the cross for us.

The gospel of Mark

36 – The transfiguration

9:1-13

¹And Jesus was saying to them, “Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.”

²Six days later, Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John, and brought them up on a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them; ³and His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them. ⁴Elijah appeared to them along with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus. ⁵Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” ⁶For he did not know what to answer; for they became terrified. ⁷Then a cloud formed, overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud, “This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!” ⁸All at once they looked around and saw no one with them anymore, except Jesus alone.

⁹As they were coming down from the mountain, He gave them orders not to relate to anyone what they had seen, until the Son of Man rose from the dead. ¹⁰They seized upon that statement, discussing with one another what rising from the dead meant. ¹¹They asked Him, saying, “*Why is it* that the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” ¹²And He said to them, “Elijah does first come and restore all things. And *yet* how is it written of the Son of Man that He will suffer many things and be treated with contempt? ¹³But I say to you that Elijah has indeed come, and they did to him whatever they wished, just as it is written of him.”

(NASB)

1. I can't believe my eyes (9:1-4)

¹And Jesus was saying to them, “Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.”

²Six days later, Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John, and brought them up on a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them; ³and His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them. ⁴Elijah appeared to them along with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus.

After speaking to his disciples concerning his coming death and the price of being a true disciple, Jesus pronounces this astonishing statement:

¹And Jesus was saying to them, “Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.”

There were some that would not die before they saw the kingdom of God. But what exactly is the kingdom of God? What does the bible teach us about it? What does it mean or what does it represent? We first need to understand that the term ‘kingdom of God’ (Mt 6:33; Mark 1:14,15; Luke 4:43) has alternative titles such as:

1. "Kingdom of Christ" (Mat. 13:41; 20:21)
2. "Kingdom of Christ and of God" (Eph. 5:5)
3. "Kingdom of David" (Mark 11:10)
4. "The kingdom" (Mat. 8:12; 13:19)
5. "Kingdom of heaven" (Mat. 3:2; 4:17; 13:41)

But they basically all have the same meaning: The kingdom of God essentially speaks of His rule and authority here on earth (or in heaven). So Jesus was stating that some of the disciples would not die until they actually saw (*until they see*) EIDO meaning: to see literally or figuratively, to know, be aware, and behold - the kingdom of God. And not only that but they would see this kingdom '*come with power*'. The Greek word DUNAMIS is used meaning: miraculous power, great strength or ability. Was Jesus saying that some would see the establishment of the kingdom of God here on earth a pure theocracy that the Jews had been waiting for? The answer lies in the following three verses.

² Six days later, Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John, and brought them up on a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them; ³ and His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them. ⁴ Elijah appeared to them along with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus.

It would take six days before the Lord Jesus would offer an explanation to what he had said concerning the kingdom of God. This reminds me that our questions may not be answered in the timeframe that we would like. Job waited before finding out what was happening in his life. Daniel also waited to know why his prayers had not yet been answered. Joseph waited thirteen years before he understood why he had been sold by his brothers. Waiting to 'know' is part of a disciple's life, we must not forget that we walk by faith (2 Cor. 5:7) and not by sight.

The '*some of those who are standing here*' (v.1) are named Peter, James and John. This was not the first time (nor the last) that Peter, James and John had been privileged to see things that other disciples were not given to see. In Mark 5:37 they were the only disciples that Jesus took with him to witness the rising of the little dead girl. In Mark 14:33 they were asked by Christ to come with him separately and pray in the garden of Gethsemane, but they failed and fell asleep. We might wonder why they were chosen by Christ to be the only ones to witness these events. I believe that we have the answer in this following verse:

Galatians 2:9

and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

(NKJV)

Here we see that Paul names James, Cephas (Peter) and John as the pillars of the church of Jerusalem. It may be that because of their future ministries Peter, James and John needed an 'extra' insight into who Christ was.

They went on a '*high mountain*' which is not named but some believe it to be Mount Tabor in Galilee. It is said that the four were '*by themselves*'. There were no other witnesses to this event. Once more we see that Christ only wanted Peter, James and John to witness the unveiling of himself. As a disciple I must understand and accept that Christ will reveal himself unto others as he chooses. He is sovereign in what He does and we must respect His authority and not envy those who have received greater revelations than we have.

'...And He was transfigured before them; ³ and His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them.

Jesus was '*transfigured*' (METAMORPHOO): change, transfigured into another form. We are to comprehend that what the three disciples saw of Christ (his outer shell, or body if you prefer) changed into something else. In other words, before their very eyes, Jesus became something else! Something very different, what was never seen was now before their very eyes. This is how it is explained:

³ and His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them.

This is difficult to explain but it seems as though what Jesus was inside shone outside of his fleshly body! Jesus was exposing who he truly was (pure light). Imagine a man opening a few buttons of his shirt to expose his undershirt. In a way Jesus was opening his ‘first layer’ to expose what was hidden by it! *‘His garments became radiant’*. The English word for *‘radiant’* is STILBO in Greek and this is an APAX which means that it is only used once. As I said this event is unique and our three witnesses must have been astounded by what they saw. The word STILBO means: to gleam or flash intensely. Imagine a great flash of light that temporarily blinds you – that is what came forth from Jesus’ body! It is also said that Jesus became *‘... exceedingly white’*. The Greek word for *white* is LEUKOS which means: light or white. So this intense flash that shone forth from Jesus was of pure light! But there was another surprise that awaited them.

⁴ Elijah appeared to them along with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus.

Two of the greatest men of the Old Testament appeared before their very eyes – yet they had been dead for centuries! What does this teach us? It teaches us the reality of life after death. It teaches us that death is only a ‘curtain’ that we need to pass through to gain the after-life. It means that all the promises concerning redemption and everlasting life are true. But why Moses and Elijah? There are many theories and the Bible does not explain why they were chosen to speak with Christ. Some believe that Moses was chosen because he represents the Law and Elijah because of his ministry as an important prophet. The Old Testament was often divided in two, namely the Law and the Prophets (Mat. 7:12; Mat. 22:40; Luke 16:16; Acts 13:15; Rom. 3:21).

It is written that Moses and Elijah were speaking with Jesus. In Greek it gives the idea that they were continually speaking together. So it was a constant conversation between the three of them. Do you wonder what they were talking about? To find out you will need to read the same event in the gospel of Luke.

Luke 9:30,31

**(30)And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah,
(31)who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to
accomplish at Jerusalem.**

(NKJV)

The subject of their precious conversation was His coming death. No wonder, for this is the central theme of the entire Bible – The Lamb of God who is sacrificed on our behalf (John 1:29;36). May this subject also be on our lips and burning in our hearts. May we share openly the grace of God manifested on the cross.

Romans 5:8

**But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners,
Christ died for us.**

(NKJV)

2. Peter speaks up (9:5,6)

**⁵ Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make
three tabernacles, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” ⁶ For he did
not know what to answer; for they became terrified.**

We see that the three disciples were *terrified*. The Greek word is EKPHOBOS meaning: frightened out of one's wits, exceedingly great fear. They were filled with fright and I can understand! Imagine seeing someone that you know very well suddenly burst into an explosion of pure light! Because they were so frightened they didn't know how to react. But Peter, being Peter, took courage and spoke for the group. But as you can imagine when we are filled with fright we don't always speak logically.

⁵ Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”

I don't know in what way *'it is good for us to be here'* since they were totally terrified! But anyways Peter had the idea to build a *tabernacle (tent if you prefer)* for Jesus, Moses and Elijah. Why build a tent for them? Was he thinking that they would remain on earth for a few days or weeks? Why else would they need a tent? It reminds me that when we are in frightful situations our thinking is sometimes no longer grounded in logic. We may say things or do things that we never would if we were not so frightened. So let us be careful if this happens to us.

3. The Father also speaks (9:7)

Then a cloud formed, overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud, “This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!”

If they were not frightened enough another manifestation will be given – the Father will speak. This is a very rare occasion. Actually there are only three occasions where the Father spoke openly to people.

1. At the baptism of Jesus (Mat. 3:17)

Matthew 3:17

And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

(NKJV)

2. On this occasion (Mark 9:7)

Then a cloud formed, overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!"

(NKJV)

3. After Jesus spoke of his crucifixion (John 12:28)

John 12:28

"Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came from heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again."

(NKJV)

The final testimony given concerning Jesus was from the Father himself! A cloud (NEPHELE) meaning: cloudiness. A cloud was formed before them and not only that it totally enveloped them for the cloud was '*overshadowing*' (EPISKIAZO) meaning: to cast a shadow upon. We know that it is the Father speaking since He said '...this is my beloved son, listen to Him'. The Father had a personal message for Peter, John and James and it was divided in two. The first is that Jesus was '*My beloved Son*'. So He truly was the Messiah and was well loved by the Father. The second was: '*listen to Him*'. A direct command to surrender their volition unto the Son. May I suggest that these two messages are just as important for disciples of today as they were back then? Jesus is the Son of God and is well loved AND we also need to surrender our volition into His hands. Is that what we are doing?

4. The son gives his counsel (9:8-10)

⁸ All at once they looked around and saw no one with them anymore, except Jesus alone.

⁹ As they were coming down from the mountain, He gave them orders not to relate to anyone what they had seen, until the Son of Man rose from the dead. ¹⁰ They seized upon that statement, discussing with one another what rising from the dead meant.

As though it was a dream Peter, John and James were left alone with Christ! Moses and Elijah had gone back where they had been before. No audible trace of the Father – just silence. They seemed to be speechless before what they had witnessed. I wonder what went through their minds and how they looked at each other on the way down the mountain. Now Jesus speaks to His disciples:

⁹ As they were coming down from the mountain, He gave them orders not to relate to anyone what they had seen, until the Son of Man rose from the dead.

With strict order he demanded that they kept what they had seen for themselves. This event truly was for them only. But there would come a time when they would be free to speak about it '*until the Son of Man rose from the dead*'. As with all disciples there is a time for all things for keeping silent and for speaking.

Ecclesiastes 3:7

**A time to tear, And a time to sew; A time to keep silence, And a time to speak;
(NKJV)**

The disciples finally began to open up and speak concerning what they had just lived. What they spoke about was not what I would think they would have!

¹⁰ They seized upon that statement, discussing with one another what rising from the dead meant.

They spoke about *'what rising from the dead meant'*! They just witnessed the coming back to earth of Moses and Elijah after centuries of being humanly dead. They heard them speaking with Christ. They were covered by a cloud and the voice of God – the Father resounded in their ears and they chose to speak about *'what rising from the dead meant'*! In my book this would have been the third item on my list of conversation. First would be the voice of God Himself, second seeing Moses and Elijah alive and well and then *'what rising from the dead meant'*. Sometimes I just don't understand how others think. A good lesson for all of us, there will always be people who do not see things the way WE see them.

5. The disciples want to know (9:11-13)

¹¹ They asked Him, saying, “Why is it that the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” ¹² And He said to them, “Elijah does first come and restore all things. And yet how is it written of the Son of Man that He will suffer many things and be treated with contempt? ¹³ But I say to you that Elijah has indeed come, and they did to him whatever they wished, just as it is written of him.”

A spiritual questioning rises and the disciples need to understand concerning another teaching they had heard – it was about Elijah and his coming. The answer Jesus gave was that 'yes' Elijah must first come and *'restore all things'*. The word *'restore'* (SPOKATHISTEMI) means: to reconstitute. But what did Elijah have to reconstitute? The straight ways of the Lord of course! He had to set things back on track. The Pharisees, scribes and teachers of the Law had twisted the Word of God so much that it had become a shadow of what it was meant to be. Now Jesus gives another astonishing comment:

¹³ But I say to you that Elijah has indeed come, and they did to him whatever they wished, just as it is written of him.”

Elijah *'has indeed come'* and *'they did with him whatever they wished'*. How could this be for Elijah had not come back except in this brief episode on the mountain top. Who was this Elijah that Jesus was referring to? Again to find out we must turn to another gospel.

Matthew 17:12,13

(12)"But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands."

(13)Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist.

John the Baptist was the voice that cried in the desert telling people that they needed to repent for the kingdom of God was at hand (Mat. 3:2; Mark 1:15). The sad part was that most of the people didn't receive his message.

CONCLUSION:

1. Sometimes Christ will reveal himself in a very personal way to certain disciples.
2. When we are terrified it is sometimes better to keep quiet than to say foolish things.
3. The crucifixion of Jesus is central to the Bible.
4. Listen to the counsel of the Lord Jesus.
5. Don't be afraid to ask Jesus the questions that fill your heart.

The gospel of Mark
37 – The healing of the man's son

9:14-32

¹⁴ When they came *back* to the disciples, they saw a large crowd around them, and *some* scribes arguing with them. ¹⁵ Immediately, when the entire crowd saw Him, they were amazed and *began* running up to greet Him. ¹⁶ And He asked them, “What are you discussing with them?” ¹⁷ And one of the crowd answered Him, “Teacher, I brought You my son, possessed with a spirit which makes him mute; ¹⁸ and whenever it seizes him, it slams him *to the ground* and he foams *at the mouth*, and grinds his teeth and stiffens out. I told Your disciples to cast it out, and they could not *do it*.” ¹⁹ And He answered them and said, “O unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him to Me!” ²⁰ They brought the boy to Him. When he saw Him, immediately the spirit threw him into a convulsion, and falling to the ground, he *began* rolling around and foaming *at the mouth*. ²¹ And He asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood. ²² It has often thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!” ²³ And Jesus said to him, “If You can?” All things are possible to him who believes.” ²⁴ Immediately the boy's father cried out and said, “I do believe; help my unbelief.” ²⁵ When Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “You deaf and mute spirit, I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again.” ²⁶ After crying out and throwing him into terrible convulsions, it came out; and *the boy* became so much like a corpse that most *of them* said, “He is dead!” ²⁷ But Jesus took him by the hand and raised him; and he got up. ²⁸ When He came into *the house*, His disciples *began* questioning Him privately, “Why could we not drive it out?” ²⁹ And He said to them, “This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer.” ³⁰ From there they went out and *began* to go through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know *about it*. ³¹ For He was teaching His disciples and telling them, “The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later.” ³² But they did not understand *this* statement, and they were afraid to ask Him.

(NASB)

1. What's the argument about? (9:14-18)

¹⁴ When they came *back* to the disciples, they saw a large crowd around them, and *some* scribes arguing with them. ¹⁵ Immediately, when the entire crowd saw Him, they were amazed and *began* running up to greet Him. ¹⁶ And He asked them, "What are you discussing with them?" ¹⁷ And one of the crowd answered Him, "Teacher, I brought You my son, possessed with a spirit which makes him mute; ¹⁸ and whenever it seizes him, it slams him *to the ground* and he foams *at the mouth*, and grinds his teeth and stiffens out. I told Your disciples to cast it out, and they could not *do it*."

We left Jesus along with Peter, James and John coming down the mountain. We can only imagine that the three disciples were still stunned with what they had seen and heard on the mountain top. How would you have felt if you had seen Moses and Elijah and heard the very voice of God – the Father?

A rather large crowd, with scribes and the remaining other disciples were there when they arrived. But what were they doing? It seems that they were *arguing* (SUZETEO) meaning: to investigate jointly, discuss, dispute. It seems that there was a controversy and a heated discussion arose.

¹⁵ Immediately, when the entire crowd saw Him, they were amazed and *began* running up to greet Him.

The 'Him' that the crowd saw was Jesus. It seems that his presence so disturbed the crowd that they ceased their heated discussion. The presence of Christ should always have a great effect on us also. It is written that they were *amazed* (EKTHAMBOS) meaning: utterly astounded. It is not written why they were amazed and the context does not give us any clues. But in their amazement they *began running up to greet Him*. They were more than happy that he had arrived. I can only imagine that they may have thought that Jesus would settle their argument.

¹⁶ And He asked them, “What are you discussing with them?” ¹⁷ And one of the crowd answered Him, “Teacher, I brought You my son, possessed with a spirit which makes him mute; ¹⁸ and whenever it seizes him, it slams him *to the ground* and he foams *at the mouth*, and grinds his teeth and stiffens out. I told Your disciples to cast it out, and they could not *do it*.”

Once Jesus asks what the discussion was all about the father of the demon possessed son spoke up and many interesting facts are given concerning evil spirits. First notice that the father knew that the cause of his son's distress was a *spirit*. Today some mock the idea that such a thing exists (demon possession) but there was no doubt in the father's mind and as we will see in Jesus' mind that this effectively was true. Second we see the effect of this demon possession on the son '*which makes him mute*'. The lad was no longer able to speak. We can only understand that this boy was able to speak before and had suddenly become mute. The powers that evil spirits have are greater than we often imagine it is no wonder that we are told to have nothing to do with them or their works (2 Cor. 6:14-16). Third, the unclean spirit is able to literally toy with the boy and push him around as it pleases - it '*slams him to the ground*'. Fourth, we also notice that the boy's body does not react favorably to the unclean spirits possession – *he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth and stiffens out*. I would like to add that we also see the character of this unclean spirit – it is evil. It willingly does harm to a defenseless boy. Be warned! Unclean spirits are never 'friendly' and they never desire 'our best'. The last fact to notice is that the disciples were asked to cast it out BUT '*they could not do it*'. You can not improvise yourself as an exorcist – not even if you are an apostle of Christ.

2. Jesus is irritated (9:19)

¹⁹ And He answered them and said, “O unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him to Me!”

This statement was not given towards the father who spoke to Jesus but rather to the entire crowd. Notice in verse sixteen it is written: '*He asked them*' meaning the people in the crowd. So naturally his answer is:

'He answered them' – the crowd. Jesus calls them *'unbelieving generation'*. This is the only occasion in the gospels that Jesus calls people of a crowd *'unbelieving generation'*. The word *'unbelieving'* (APISTOS) means: disbelieving. It seems that they lacked faith in this matter (demon possession) and how to help the poor boy. Too often we are also subject to disbelief when confronted with difficult situations in life. The apostles that had remained with the crowd (nine of them) they at least should have believed that this boy could have been delivered since they themselves had witnessed deliverances in the past (1:22,26; 3:30; 5:28; 7:25). But for some reason they were also part of the *'unbelieving generation'*. Now the word *'generation'* (GENEA) means: age, generation, nation, time. The context gives us the exact meaning of the word and here it is easily identified as a given group of people (the crowd). We rarely see Jesus get upset and this is one of those occurrences. *'How long shall I put up with you?'* The word *'put up'* (ANECHOMAI) means: to bear with, to endure. So he orders that the child be brought to him.

3. Jesus and the father of the boy (9:20-24)

²⁰ They brought the boy to Him. When he saw Him, immediately the spirit threw him into a convulsion, and falling to the ground, he *began* rolling around and foaming at the mouth. ²¹ And He asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. ²² It has often thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!" ²³ And Jesus said to him, "If You can?" All things are possible to him who believes."²⁴ Immediately the boy's father cried out and said, "I do believe; help my unbelief."

As soon as Jesus looks at the boy we see that it has an immediate effect on the unclean spirit.

²⁰ They brought the boy to Him. When he saw Him, immediately the spirit threw him into a convulsion, and falling to the ground, he *began* rolling around and foaming at the mouth.

The boy suddenly went into convulsion (SPARASSO) meaning: spasmodic contractions. Then he fell to the ground and finally he foamed at the mouth. Some unbelievers would simply say that he had an epileptic seizure but the Scriptures identifies clearly that it was not a physical ailment but rather an attack from an unclean spirit.

²¹ And He asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood. ²² It has often thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!” ²³ And Jesus said to him, ““If You can?” All things are possible to him who believes.”²⁴ Immediately the boy's father cried out and said, “I do believe; help my unbelief.”

Jesus takes time to speak to his father before delivering the lad. I personally would have taken care of the boy and then spoke to his father. But once more we see that the order in which we believe things should be done are not always the Lord's. It's a good reminder for all of us when we wish things would be done differently or faster in our personal life – His time may not be our time.

Notice that the Scriptures calls the unclean spirit an 'it', *“It has often thrown him...”*. Contrary to mankind, angels and demons do not have a sexual identity. One of the reasons is that a gender (male or female) is a biological function and the spirits do not have a biological body but rather a celestial one. In Greek there are three genders: masculine (he, his, him), feminine (she, her, hers) and neuter (it, its) – angels are of the neuter gender. Again we see the true character of this unclean spirit for it seeks to destroy the child by trying to throw him into a fire or water. They imitate their leader for whom Peter said:

1 Peter 5:8

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

(NKJV)

A heart wrenching conversation takes place between the father and Jesus.

²² It has often thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!" ²³ And Jesus said to him, "If You can?" All things are possible to him who believes."²⁴ Immediately the boy's father cried out and said, "I do believe; help my unbelief."

The father asks for pity towards his son. It seems that the father is uncertain '*if you can*'. Is he uncertain that Jesus is able to chase the demon away or is he uncertain that Jesus desires to chase the demon away? I believe that it is 'if he is able to do anything' since the discussion was about not being able to do anything for the child. Jesus directs the man towards the necessity of faith: '*All things are possible to him who believes*'. How fitting is this lesson for us today! How many times do we fail simply because we do not have confidence in God? The father's response '*I do believe; help my unbelief*' manifests that this man's faith becomes alive. This may be one of the reasons why Jesus spoke to the man before he delivered his son. He wanted the father to enter into a faith relationship with him. Do we have this affiliation with Christ? Do we truly believe that he is the Messiah?

4. The healing (9:25-27)

²⁵ When Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You deaf and mute spirit, I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again."²⁶ After crying out and throwing him into terrible convulsions, it came out; and *the boy* became so much like a corpse that most of *them* said, "He is dead!"²⁷ But Jesus took him by the hand and raised him; and he got up.

Once more we see the absolute authority of Christ. When Jesus rebukes the unclean spirit in verse twenty five:

“You deaf and mute spirit, I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again.”

It has NO OTHER CHOICE than to obey the Lord of lords and the King of kings! Demons are always afraid of Jesus. There is not one occurrence where an unclean spirit challenges Jesus – never! Now the boy seems to be dead at least that's what most of the people thought. But by just one touch the young boy gets up being delivered from his demon-possession.

5. What went wrong? (9:28,29)

²⁸ When He came into *the* house, His disciples *began* questioning Him privately, “Why could we not drive it out?” ²⁹ And He said to them, “This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer.”

In all three gospels where this story is told we do not know whose house is spoken of. But a question arises in the minds of the disciples: ‘*Why could we not drive it out*’. It is mentioned in Luke 9:40 that the father had asked the disciples to drive the demon out but they could not. So they asked Christ why they failed. The answer Jesus gave is: ‘*This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer*’. This gives another insight on the world of fallen angels. It seems that there are different ‘kinds’ of demons and some are more difficult to cast out than others. Now why did Jesus say ‘*by anything but prayer*’? It may be that the nine disciples believed that the power was in them to cast out demons (since they were the chosen apostles). It just may be that they tried to do this on their own strength and had forgotten that they needed the Father's authority. If this is the case then it is yet another lesson for all of us who try to minister relying on ourselves instead of trusting the Lord. That might be why Jesus spoke of prayer. When we pray we manifest our dependency on the Lord.

6. Jesus proclaims his coming death (9:30-32)

³⁰ From there they went out and *began* to go through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know *about it*. ³¹ For He was teaching His disciples and telling them, “The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later.” ³² But they did not understand *this* statement, and they were afraid to ask Him.

Once more we find Jesus alone with his disciples as he takes time to prophecy concerning his up-coming life events. He uses the title of ‘*Son of Man*’ to refer to himself. Jesus tells them three things that will happen to him. The first is that he ‘*is to be delivered into the hands of men*’. This speaks of his future arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane. Second that ‘*they will kill Him*’, speaking of the cross. Third that ‘*He will rise three days later*’, foreseeing his resurrection.

But why were ‘*they afraid to ask Him*’? Was it because they had miserably failed to free the demon-possessed boy? Did they feel that they should understand but didn’t and that brought a sense of shame? Did they believe that Jesus would be disturbed if they questioned him? We do not know and it is left just as it is. This brings a question to mind. Are we also sometimes afraid to ask Jesus to answer things we simply do not understand? If we have become children of God then there should be no reason to stop us from asking our heavenly Father to come to our lack of understanding. James teaches us the following:

James 1:5

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

(NKJV)

CONCLUSION:

1. Instead of arguing it is best to ask Jesus.
2. Our lack of faith can irritate the Lord.
3. Demons are very real and we should never have any dealings with them.
4. Demons are never able to stand the power and authority of Christ.
5. Never believe that you can do anything on your own power.
6. Never be afraid to ask Jesus what you do not honestly understand.

The gospel of Mark
38 – Who is the greatest?

9:33-37

³³ They came to Capernaum; and when He was in the house, He *began* to question them, “What were you discussing on the way?” ³⁴ But they kept silent, for on the way they had discussed with one another which *of them* was the greatest. ³⁵ Sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them, “If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.” ³⁶ Taking a child, He set him before them, and taking him in His arms, He said to them,³⁷ “Whoever receives one child like this in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me does not receive Me, but Him who sent Me.”
(NASB)

1. The big question (9:33)

³³ They came to Capernaum; and when He was in the house, He *began* to question them, “What were you discussing on the way?”

The house that is mentioned is probably Peter’s as we have seen before. It is only when they had arrived at their destination that Jesus asked a question. Please remember that in our last section Jesus had revealed that he would be betrayed, would be killed and three days later he would resurrect from the dead.

Jesus asked what I call ‘the BIG question’ – “What were you discussing on the way”? We can easily imagine that it must have had to do with the revelation that Jesus had previously given them. Questions such as: ‘Who would betray Jesus? Surely not one of us! ‘How is Jesus going to die? Would it be by stoning of the Jews or by the hands of the Romans? And what about the resurrection, ‘how could he be raised from the dead’? Why would God allow the Messiah to die and what would be the reason for his death?

Notice that the disciples made certain that the Lord would not be part of their discussion. Things certainly have not changed! How many times we hold conversations that the Good Lord would not approve! How many times we do things ‘hoping’ Christ will not find out!

2. The big silence (9:34)

³⁴ But they kept silent, for on the way they had discussed with one another which of them was the greatest.

I almost have a grin on my face when I read that *'they kept silent'*. When a parent catches their child 'red handed' and asks: 'What were you doing?' they mostly freeze and keep silent. They know that what they have done was not allowed and that 'they were in for it'. Disciples of Christ also sometimes act like children and not in the good sense.

Notice that they knew what they had done wrong and that is why they were keeping silent. Their conscience was bothering them. They knew they should not have been talking about this subject. When we read the gospels we find that there are other occurrences where this subject (being the greatest) came up. Remember in Mat. 20:20-23 when the mother of James and John came and asked Jesus if her two sons could have pre-eminence over the other disciples in his kingdom? This caused quite a stir between the other ten when they heard of this!

The very idea of wanting to be first or above the others in any way was foreign to anything that Christ had taught or lived. As we will see later in Mark 10:45 Jesus will say:

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

(NKJV)

3. The big answer (9:35-37)

³⁵ Sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them, "If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." ³⁶ Taking a child, He set him before them, and taking him in His arms, He said to them,

³⁷ “Whoever receives one child like this in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me does not receive Me, but Him who sent Me.”

Have you noticed that Jesus does not need any of his disciples to answer the question before he brings his comments! Once again we see the manifestation of the deity of Christ – he knows all things. Jesus calls all twelve of his disciples for this is for all of them. In general all of the teachings of Jesus are for all of his disciples. So when we read the Scriptures imagine that Christ is speaking to you unless it is out of the scriptural context. So let’s open our ears to what he has to say.

³⁵ Sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them, “If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.”

The presupposition is *‘If anyone wants to be first’*. I can understand by this that it is not everyone who has the desire to be *‘first’* among his brethren. Some people are quite content simply to follow orders and to serve those in need. But there are some who have a deep desire to be leaders at all costs, who have difficulty to accept the leadership of others and believe that their way would be best! So if you are that type of person this is what the Lord has to say to you: *‘he shall be last of all and servant of all’*. Instead of being the leader and having control Jesus says that being first is actually being last. He is talking about being humble like Jesus was when he washed his disciples’ feet (John 13:5). It is a question of the attitude of your heart. Jesus also said that to be first you need to be a *‘servant of all’*. Jesus did not only say these things for the others to apply to their lives but he openly applied these to himself.

Mark 10:45

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

(NKJV)

This goes against everything that we are generally taught. The world-view is that we should take care of ourselves before caring for others. It also teaches us that we need to step over others to 'go up the social ladder'. The Lord says the opposite – be humble and serve others. But if we don't take care of ourselves who will? Jesus also gave an answer to that:

Mat. 6:33

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. (NKJV)

Jesus will no further explain his thoughts about being great or being the first in our life.

³⁶ Taking a child, He set him before them, and taking him in His arms, He said to them,³⁷ "Whoever receives one child like this in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me does not receive Me, but Him who sent Me."

To manifest the importance of being humble and looking after others instead of ourselves like the world dictates, Jesus will give an illustration with a child. In Jesus' day women and children were not as important as men and they were taught to remain 'in their place'. In general men did not openly bother that much with children. So Christ takes a child in his arms (by this we can tell that he or she must have been rather young) and speaks to his disciples.

What he says is stupendous! If you receive: DECHOMAI, meaning to accept, receive, take – a child you are receiving me. In other words what you are doing to that child you are doing to me. By receiving that child you are also receiving me. He is telling his disciples that their attitude concerning being first needs to absolutely change. Instead of rebuking children as they did in another instance found in the gospel of Matthew.

Matthew 19:13,14

(13)Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them.

(14)But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

(NKJV)

They needed to humble themselves and think of others first. It wasn't 'manly' in those days to be around kids. Unfortunately for the most part it is still not a 'manly' thing to do to think much about children.

But Jesus goes further stating that '*whoever receives Me does not receive Me but Him who sent Me*'. So being humble, serving others and receiving children among ourselves opens the door to be received by God the Father! In other words God will be pleased with us when we do not search to be the first but rather have a serving attitude for all even the little children. This may just be one of the greatest lessons that we all need to understand!

CONCLUSION:

1. Be very careful concerning your desire to be great in the eyes of others.
2. Jesus knows what is in your heart and what you are talking about.
3. Being humble and serving others is what is appreciated by the Lord God.

The gospel of Mark
39 – Who is for us?

9:38-41

³⁸ John said to Him, “Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we tried to prevent him because he was not following us.” ³⁹ But Jesus said, “Do not hinder him, for there is no one who will perform a miracle in My name, and be able soon afterward to speak evil of Me. ⁴⁰ For he who is not against us is for us. ⁴¹ For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because of your name as *followers* of Christ, truly I say to you, he will not lose his reward.
(NASB)

1. No you can't (9:38)

³⁸ John said to Him, “Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we tried to prevent him because he was not following us.”

The person who was upset and brings this event to Christ's ears is John. There is only one John in the group of apostles. He turns out to be the writer of the gospel of John, the three letters of John and also the book of Revelation. Why was John (and the others) so upset?

First of all it is about a person that they do not know '*we saw someone*'. Since the person is not named we can honestly imagine that they do not know the person. Here we see that they were not receptive of this unknown person's actions. Have you noticed that it is the very same today in our Christian setting? We often are not at ease with people we do not know even if they say that they are believers in Christ.

Second, this person was doing something that they never had seen outside of their intimate circle – he was '*casting out demons*'. How could he get that power – he's not one of us! How could he receive such favor from God? Why he even does this '*in Your name*'. This is highly regular! We don't know him, we have never seen him. How then can he work wonders in your name? They were speaking as though they were an elite who are the only ones who could ever do such a thing.

Third, *'he was not following us'*. As though the way to be able to do miracles was somehow earned by following Jesus – as THEY had done. I do see a bit of jealousy on the apostles' part and also the incapacity to be as flexible as the Lord God is! This reminds me of how things work even today. If you're not following 'OUR' way of thinking, if you're not doing things the way 'we think' it ought to be done, if you're not 'part of the gang' – then you're not O.K. and God can not use you to do anything.

So what did they do? – *'we tried to prevent him'*. Not only were they displeased because this 'nobody' was doing miracles by casting out a demon, they actually tried to stop him! You can't do this - we are right and you are wrong. How many battles has Christianity fought simply because one disciple of Christ did not follow Christ exactly like the other did? I am not speaking of differences in cardinal theological points but rather of secondary things. Such things are explained by Paul in Romans 14 concerning different views such as eating meat or not or following certain days or not. May we learn what Paul calls *'the Law of liberty in Christ'* and apply it to everyday life.

2. No you can't (9:39,40)

³⁹ But Jesus said, “Do not hinder him, for there is no one who will perform a miracle in My name, and be able soon afterward to speak evil of Me. ⁴⁰ For he who is not against us is for us.

This time it is Jesus who says 'NO' but this time to his own disciples. Here we see Jesus' reaction. The disciples thought they had done something worthwhile and mentioned it to Christ. They probably even thought that they would get recognized by Christ for the 'good job' they had done. Was Jesus going to say: 'I'm proud of you boys - that guy had absolutely no business doing what you alone are supposed to do'. Well the apostles were in for a surprise and also a life lesson. So let's open up our own ears.

Jesus tells them *'Do not hinder him'*. The word *hinder* (KOLUO) means: to stop, prevent or forbid. Jesus was telling them that it was not the man that had been wrong but they

themselves! Jesus was saying: 'You don't have the right to tell this man what to do!' I can only guess that they were stunned by his reaction. Is Jesus not sometimes also stunned by our relationship towards others? Jesus will continue and tell the reasoning behind his command to leave that man alone.

(39) for there is no one who will perform a miracle in My name, and be able soon afterward to speak evil of Me.

There is one thing that I would like to mention concerning this part of the verse. What is a true miracle? Some people believe that every out of the ordinary sign or wonder is a true miracle and therefore is done by the signature of God. But is this true? Is every 'miracle' a God given miracle? The answer is NO THEY ARE NOT! Jesus warns his disciples of the following:

Matthew 24:24

"For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.

(NKJV)

We are plainly told by Jesus that not every supernatural occurrence is from God. The ones that are mentioned here have one goal and that is to '*deceive*' people – this does not come from God but rather from false christs and false prophets.

The apostle Paul also warned the Christians concerning false works of wonder.

2 Thessalonians 2:9,10

(9) The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,

(10) and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

(NKJV)

Here Paul speaks of the workings of Satan and equates them with: *'all power, signs and lying wonders.'* Notice that the aim once more is to deceive people. The lawless one does these fake miracles so that people will not *'receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved'*.

Finally John also speaks of these false miracles in the Book of Revelation – warning us again.

Revelation 13:13,14

(13)He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men.

(14)And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived.

(NKJV)

This beast who looks like a lamb but is actually a dragon will perform *'great signs'* and *'makes fire come down from heaven'* and this *'in the sight of men'*. For the third time notice the aim: *'And he deceives those who dwell on earth by THOSE signs'*.

So what is a true miracle in the biblical sense? It is not the capacity to work wonders and signs – we are warned that false prophets and the coming unholy trinity (Satan, the beast and the false prophet) are able to do so. A true miracle coming from the Lord is one that is done *'in MY name'* – one that has received full approval of the Lord.

Coming back to our text Jesus said:

⁴⁰ For he who is not against us is for us.

The man who was doing miracles in the name of Jesus was NOT an enemy but was actually someone approved by Christ. May this lesson remain in our hearts!

3. Nothing is lost (9:41)

⁴¹ For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because of your name as *followers* of Christ, truly I say to you, he will not lose his reward.

At our first glance this verse might seem to be just ‘dropped’ and has nothing to do with stopping someone from doing miracles in Jesus’ name. What Jesus is doing here is that he is actually approving what this man was doing. By doing this he is emphasizing that they were **WRONG** and that the unknown man was **RIGHT**. The man was giving something – liberation from the domination of demons. Here Jesus speaks of someone who is also giving to someone – ‘*a cup of water*’. The two are not comparable but a lesson is to be learned. When you do something to others either ‘*in my name*’ or ‘*as followers of Christ*’ a reward will be given unto you, a reward that you will never lose.

CONCLUSION:

1. It is not because some Christians do things differently than you that you are automatically right and they are wrong.
2. Not all miracles are from God. One must maintain a spirit of discernment.
3. Remember that ‘He who is not against us is for us.’
4. All you do in the name of Christ unto others will be rewarded and you shall never lose this reward.

The gospel of Mark
40 – Causing to sin

9:42-50

⁴² “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble, it would be better for him if, with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he had been cast into the sea. ⁴³ If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life crippled, than, having your two hands, to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire, ⁴⁴ [where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED.] ⁴⁵ If your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame, than, having your two feet, to be cast into hell, ⁴⁶ [where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED.] ⁴⁷ If your eye causes you to stumble, throw it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell, ⁴⁸ where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED. ⁴⁹ “For everyone will be salted with fire. ⁵⁰ Salt is good; but if the salt becomes unsalty, with what will you make it salty *again*? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.”

(NASB)

1. The first warning (9:42)

⁴² “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble, it would be better for him if, with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he had been cast into the sea.

When we read the gospel one can notice that Jesus gives severe warnings to his listeners. Some may remember his famous ‘woe to you...’ in Mat. 23. Jesus is often portrayed as kind, loving and forgiving. This is true but if this is the only vision of Christ that we have then we are mistaken! We often forget that he is holy and that he does not accept sin in our life. The section that we are now looking at is one of the sternest in the gospel of Mark. May we all take Jesus’ warning seriously!

He begins with the word ‘*whoever*’ declaring that there are no exceptions to be understood. This was for ALL of his listeners. Disciple or not, follower or not, apostle or not. No one was to be excluded and neither are you and I.

So no one is allowed to do what – ‘*causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble*’. Jesus’ first warning has to do with the relationship that one has with children. The term ‘*little ones*’ (MIKROS) means: small, least and little. Jesus has a particular regard for the safety and well-being of children. We will see in Mark 10:14 how endearing they are to Christ. May we take heed to the coming warning concerning our dealings with children! What Jesus does not want is for people to act in a way that makes these little children ‘*who believe*’ (in him is to be understood) to ‘*stumble*’. This word in Greek (SKANDALIZO) means: to entrap, to entice or to trip-up. It is from this Greek word that we get our English word scandalize. Adults are models for children and what they say and do is often modeled by children. If one has a life-style that entices the little ones to sin or if they harm the little ones and cripple them either physically or mentally – they will be severely judged by the Lord.

Their judgment is compared with the following:

...it would be better for him if, with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he had been cast into the sea.

I would first want you to notice that the coming judgment is upon the individual (*better for him*). No one will be able to hide by saying ‘I was enticed to do it’ or ‘they made me do it’. Even if you were to be caught in what is called ‘mob mentality’ you still will be personally accountable for your own conduct. There are no valid excuses for your actions, words or deeds – none whatsoever!

For those who do any harm to children Jesus declares that ‘*it is better for him*’ meaning that the former is better than the latter. So it is better for that person to tie a heavy millstone around his neck and to be cast into the sea. Just the thought of the outcome of doing this is horrendous! Yet, it is far better than the judgment to come for those who harm or entice children into evil.

2. The second warning (9:43,44)

⁴³ If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life crippled, than, having your two hands, to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire, ⁴⁴ [where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED.]

The next three warnings concerning the hand, foot and eye, are to be taken figuratively. The cutting off of the members are never to be done. This was NEVER practiced in the Bible. What Jesus is teaching about is the GRAVITY of sinning. The *'hand'* is the member with which we do most of our daily deeds. With our hands we can reach out and offer food to the hungry or steal from others. With our hand we can heal the wounded or cause death in battle. In Mat. 5:29 Jesus also speaks of the *'hand'* and its deeds.

Matthew 5:30

"And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

(NKJV)

This section of Mark has the most condensed warnings about hell! On three occasions Jesus speaks of hell! It is better for you to have your hand cut off than to be in hell. The word *'hell'* (GEENNA) means: Valley of the son of Hinnom. It is in the Valley of Hinnom that the idolatrous Israelites made their children pass through the fire to Moloch (1 Kings 11:7, 2 Kings 16:3 and Jeremiah 32:35). To have a better understanding of how this Valley became a symbol for a place of eternal torment the description in Smith's Bible Dictionary is very helpful:

Valley of, otherwise called "the valley of the son" or "children of Hinnom," a deep and narrow ravine, with steep, rocky sides, to the south and west of Jerusalem, separating Mount Zion to the north from the "hill of evil counsel," and the sloping rocky plateau of the "plain of Rephaim" to the south. The earliest mention of the valley of Hinnom is in

(Joshua 15:8; 18:16) where the boundary line between the tribes of Judah and Benjamin is described as passing along the bed of the ravine. On the southern brow, overlooking the valley at its eastern extremity Solomon erected high places for Molech, (1 Kings 11:7) whose horrid rites were revived from time to time in the same vicinity the later idolatrous kings. Ahaz and Manasseh made their children "pass through the fire" in this valley, (2 Kings 16:3; 2 Chronicles 28:3; 33:6) and the fiendish custom of infant sacrifice to the fire-gods seems to have been kept up in Tophet, which was another name for this place. To put an end to these abominations the place was polluted by Josiah, who renders it ceremonially unclean by spreading over it human bones and other corruptions, (2 Kings 23:10,13,14; 2 Chronicles 34:4,5) from which time it appears to have become the common cesspool of the city, into which sewage was conducted, to be carried off by the waters of the Kidron. From its ceremonial defilement, and from the detested and abominable fire of Molech, if not from the supposed ever-burning funeral piles, the later Jews applied the name of this valley -- Ge Hinnom, Gehenna (land of Hinnom)--to denote the place of eternal torment. In this sense the word is used by our Lord. (Matthew 5:29; 10:28; 23:15; Mark 9:43; Luke 12:5).

So the person who does evil with his hands to children is warned of severe consequences and is called to repent and abstain from doing so.

3. The third warning (9:45,46)

⁴⁵ If your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame, than, having your two feet, to be cast into hell, ⁴⁶ [where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED.]

The third warning (and second speaking of hell) speaks of the foot. Now the feet are the members that bring us to where evil is done. The word 'stumble' (AKAUDALIZO) means: to entrap and figuratively to entice to sin. So if your feet are in a hurry to make you sin you have to do something about it. Remember what Proverbs six says:

Proverbs 6:16-19

(16)These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him:

(17)A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood,

(18)A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil,

(19)A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren.

(NKJV)

The warning that Jesus was giving was nothing new. It had been given many centuries before and was locked in what we call the Old Testament. Notice the words '*hates*' and '*abomination*'. These are very strong words and manifest the total disdain that the Lord God has for people whose feet are swift to do evil. Friend, if you have such feet, time has come for you to repent and stop what you are doing.

4. The fourth warning (9:47,48)

⁴⁷ If your eye causes you to stumble, throw it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell,

⁴⁸ where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED.

Our fourth warning (and third speaking of hell) speaks of the eyes. Out of the three body parts the eyes were (and still are) the most important body part in a person's life to be able to function normally. It is also the eyes that entices us the most to sin. We covet so much with our eyes and we also do great harm with our eyes. Remember the story of 'the good Samaritan' in Luke 10 and how the two religious men turned their face so not to see the poor hurting man. By not 'seeing' the man they thought they would be justified in their lack of help.

Once again the Lord teaches that if your eye is making you sin then pluck it out and throw it away! Again this is not to be taken literally but it is a hyperbole (exaggerated statements or claims not meant to be taken literally).

The consequence is the same as with the hand and the feet – hell. Hell is a place of eternal torment for those who have rejected Jesus the Messiah. In the book of Revelation it is called the ‘second death’ (Rev. 2:11; 20:6;14; 21:8)

5. The last warning (9:49-50)

⁴⁹ “For everyone will be salted with fire. ⁵⁰ Salt is good; but if the salt becomes unsalty, with what will you make it salty *again*? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.”

As with our opening verse ‘*whoever*’ the closing one is for ‘*everyone*’. Again it embraces all people. Fire is usually a symbol of judgment like with Peter (1 Peter 1:7), Paul (1 Cor. 3:13) and John (Rev.8:7).

Everyone will pass through judgment. Remember that this section has to do with sinning and allowing our members to sin. Here Jesus also speaks of ‘*salt*’. He mentions: ‘*have salt in yourselves*’. He had already said that his disciples are the light and *salt* of the earth. Notice what he says:

Mat. 5:13

"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.

NKJV

Both (Mark 9:50 and Mat. 5:13) mention that disciples are salt and saltiness can be lost and if this happens then the salt has become useless. Here we see the importance of keeping our given ‘saltiness’ to continue being useful for the Lord. I also see that being ‘salty’ will bring peace between the brethren.

CONCLUSION:

1. Never be a stumbling block for little children.
2. Keep your hands, feet and eyes under control.
3. Keep your spiritual saltiness.

The gospel of Mark
41 – Questions concerning divorce

10:1-12

Getting up, He went from there to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan; crowds gathered around Him again, and, according to His custom, He once more *began* to teach them.

² *Some Pharisees came up to Jesus, testing Him, and began to question Him whether it was lawful for a man to divorce a wife.* ³ **And He answered and said to them, “What did Moses command you?”** ⁴ **They said, “Moses permitted *a man* TO WRITE A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND SEND *her* AWAY.”** ⁵ **But Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment.** ⁶ **But from the beginning of creation, *God* MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE.** ⁷ **FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER,** ⁸ **AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH; so they are no longer two, but one flesh.** ⁹ **What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.”**

¹⁰ **In the house the disciples *began* questioning Him about this again.** ¹¹ **And He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her; ¹² and if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery.”**

(NASB)

1. The setting (10 :1)

Every story has a setting and the one we are going to investigate has one that is becoming more and more familiar.

Getting up, He went from there to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan; crowds gathered around Him again, and, according to His custom, He once more *began* to teach them.

Jesus is once more on the move and this time he is passing through Judea which is located in the southern part of Israel between the Mediterranean and the Dead Sea. He is traveling eastward beyond the Jordan River. Our text does not mention where exactly this event happens. The recording of this same event is also found in Mat. 19:1-12 and the village where this event happened is also not revealed.

A usual crowd of people '*gather around Him again*'. It seems that wherever Jesus arrives news spread of his presence like a prairie wild fire. It is important to understand this to comprehend the growing hatred the religious elite have against Jesus. The people are turning to HIM for their spiritual guidance thus abandoning the Pharisees, Sadducees, Scribes and the other teachers of the Law. This, in-turn, means that they are losing their power and control over them.

Here we also see that '*according to His custom, He once more began to teach them*'. The ministry of teaching has a predominate place in Jesus' life. He used every occasion possible to speak concerning His Father and the kingdom that was at hand. This noble cause should also be carried out by ALL who declare themselves Disciples of Christ. We need to remember the Great Commission that was given by Christ as he left to be with His Father.

Matthew 28:18-20

(18) And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

(19) "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

(20) "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

(NKJV)

And also in:

Acts 1:8

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

(NKJV)

2. The tricky question (10:2)

² Some Pharisees came up to Jesus, testing Him, and *began* to question Him whether it was lawful for a man to divorce a wife.

Now the Pharisees (who were the main adversaries of Christ) '*came up to Jesus*'. This wasn't by 'chance' that they passed by and saw Jesus and decided to ask him a question. This was intended, for in Mat. 19:3 it is written:

(2) *Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking...*

The word '*testing*' (PEIRAZO) in Greek means: to test, to scrutinize. It is obvious that they wanted to find some fault in the teachings of Christ. If they could do this then they could accuse him and have him put away for good. So what was their question?

(v.2) ...and *began* to question Him whether it was lawful for a man to divorce a wife.

This happened to be a BIG question in his days. Actually there were two schools of thought that were very opposite to one another. The two opposing men were Rabbi Hillel and Rabbi Shammai. Rabbi Shammai taught that the grounds for divorcing a spouse had to be on sexual grounds. While Rabbi Hillel taught that one could ask for a divorce based on ANY reason. The entire debate depended on the interpretation of Deut. 24:1,

Deuteronomy 24:1

"When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house,

(NKJV)

By answering one way or the other Jesus would have been automatically a target for the 'side' he did not choose. So what is Jesus going to do?

3. Jesus' question (10 :3)

³ And He answered and said to them, "What did Moses command you?"

Here we see the wisdom of the Lord, he brings the Pharisees back to where it all began – with God giving his commands to Moses. Now, for the most part, the Pharisees did not respect Jesus but ALL did respect Moses. None could disavow this great man of God. This is a perfect lesson that we should all acquire. As a Disciple of Christ I am called to base all of my spiritual understanding on what the Scriptures teach and not on human philosophy and wisdom (Col. 2:8).

4. The Pharisees answer (10 :4)

⁴ They said, "Moses permitted *a man* TO WRITE A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND SEND *her* AWAY."

The Pharisees were referring to Deut. 24:1 that is mentioned above. This verse was the 'key' to the entire dispute between both 'clans'. Notice that they mentioned that '*Moses permitted*'. Moses never obliged a person to divorce! A person could always manifest forgiveness, mercy and compassion. As Jesus will explain still today when our spouse offends us even with an immoral sexual behavior – one can forgive like Christ has forgiven us at the cross (Col. 3:13).

5. Jesus' explanation (10:5-12)

⁵ But Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. ⁶ But from the beginning of creation, *God* MADE THEM MALE AND

FEMALE. ⁷ FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER, ⁸ AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH; so they are no longer two, but one flesh. ⁹ What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.”

¹⁰ In the house the disciples *began* questioning Him about this again. ¹¹ And He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her; ¹² and if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery.”

So that it will be easier for us to understand I will separate Jesus' response into various sections.

Section one is found in verse five:

⁵ But Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment.

The whole matter of divorce is founded on '*your hardness of your heart*'. The term '*hardness of heart*' (SKLEROLARDIA) means: hard heartedness, fig. destitution of spiritual perception. In other words we have a hard heart when we do not perceive things like the Lord God does; the subject here being a husband-wife relationship. It is our hearts that bring divorce into being. The lack of forgiveness, mercy, compassion and grace are the ingredients that makes divorcing our spouse attractive. THIS is the reason why such an exit from marriage was in the Law of Moses.

Section two is in verses six through eight:

⁶ But from the beginning of creation, *God* MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE. ⁷ FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER, ⁸ AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH; so they are no longer two, but one flesh.

In this section Jesus brings the Pharisees back to the original intent for marriage, what God had in mind when marriage was instituted. We first see that the intent for marriage is strictly between a man and a woman (*male and female*). No other form of marriage is acceptable before the Lord no matter what mankind says!

A second thought is that of the creating of a new family cell (*leave his father and mother*). A newly married couple is not an extension of the family cell of their parents but rather an independent entity. A third thought is the sexual aspect (*the two shall become one flesh*). A marriage includes a physical union between the man and the woman. It also gives the idea of the two becoming one. They are two individuals that have sex but rather two people that through marriage and a sexual act become one in all aspects.

9 What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.”

This phrase ‘seals’ the original goal of God for a marriage. Normally a marriage is not to be broken. Are there any exceptions? There are two. The first taught by Jesus in Mat. 19:9.

"And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery."

(NKJV):

If one of the two is unfaithful to his/her spouse then then the spouse to whom this offense has been done against *can* divorce. Note that permission is granted but it is not automatically done. An offended spouse may manifest compassion and, forgiveness and shower his spouse with grace. Never the less permission is given in this case.

The second is taught by Paul in 1 Cor. 7:15:

But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace.

(NKJV)

If a couple is unevenly ‘yoked’ and the unbelieving spouse no longer wants to be in a marital relationship – then we are to let the person go and can re-marry (*not under bondage*

in such cases). There are no other Biblical reasons for divorcing. This was God's original ideal. Unfortunately SIN has made this very difficult to accomplish.

¹⁰ In the house the disciples *began* questioning Him about this again. ¹¹ And He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her; ¹² and if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery.”

After Jesus leaves the Pharisees and arrives at a familiar house Jesus continues on the subject of divorce. He speaks of a man who unlawfully divorces his wife and tells his disciples what happens when this is done.

“Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her; ¹² and if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery.”

Without a divorce founded on biblical grounds you become an adulterer (*commits adultery against her* and *she is committing adultery*). Notice that both genders are used as an example. Both men and women are referred to here. There is no distinction, no difference, and no discrimination. Divorces always has its roots in a hardened heart and everything should be done to save a marriage. Unfortunately we live in a sinful world.

CONCLUSION:

1. Still today the question of divorce and remarriage is tricky and often brings confusion.
2. To find the right answers we must come back to the initial intent of God towards marriage.
3. Only sexual immorality, abandonment and death (of course) can end a marriage.

The gospel of Mark
42 – Jesus and the little children

10:13-16

¹³ And they were bringing children to Him so that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴ But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant and said to them, “Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. ¹⁵ Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it *at all*.” ¹⁶ And He took them in His arms and *began* blessing them, laying His hands on them.

(NASB)

1. The disciple’s rebuke (10:13)

¹³ And they were bringing children to Him so that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked them.

There are very few stories, in the life of Jesus, where children participate. This is one of them. So let’s listen to what Christ has to say. In this first verse we see that there are four participants in this episode.

The first are the parents for they were the ones that ‘*were bringing children*’. This wonderful teaching for all of us who are parents or older family members. We see the importance of bringing our children to the feet of Jesus. It is what every Christian parent should do. It is their responsibility to teach them about the Lord and his wonderful works and grace. This reminds me of what the Father instructed Moses to write:

Deuteronomy 6:6,7

(6)"And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.

(7)"You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

(NKJV)

As we can see from our text these parents were doing what was right in the eyes of the Lord and when we bring our children closer to our Great Redeemer we also are acting well. Let no one discourage you from your calling as a parent or a close relative to bring your little ones to Jesus.

The second participant is the Lord Jesus. The parents brought their children *'to Him'* – Jesus. There was a reason why they brought their children to Christ for they knew who he was:

John 8:12

Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

(NKJV)

He was a shining light in the very dark world that they were living in. They could have also seen in him the possibility that he just might be the Messiah! Who else could have done all these miracles and spoke as no other man has? The children that we have should only be brought to Christ. No church or religious institution can ever save from the judgment to come. Christ and only Christ should be introduced to our children as Savior and mediator between mankind and God the Father.

Acts 4:12

"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

(NKJV)

Our third group are the children for the parents brought their *'children to Him'*. This tells us a lot. For the parents to willingly bring their children to Christ manifests that they knew that their little ones would be welcomed by him (as we will see in verse fourteen).

I can not but ponder on the following: do we welcome little children in our lives? If we represent Jesus to the little ones (because we are his disciples) what do they see in us? Are we stern and grouchy, cold and unaffectionate? Or do their little faces brighten up when they see us? Remember what Jesus said concerning the way we act with children!

Matthew 18:6

"But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

(NKJV)

Our last group are the Disciples of Christ. One would think that they would have welcomed the parents bringing their children. Quite the contrary! They acted the opposite since *'the disciples rebuked them'*. The word rebuked (EPITIMAO) means; To censure, forbid or admonish. In other words the Disciples of Christ were telling the parents to 'go away' or to 'leave Jesus alone' or 'not to bother him'. Quite a welcoming committee! Imagine an usher of your church telling parents to leave their children at home and not to bring them in the sanctuary! As we will see they did not have the mind of Christ. It always surprises me to see that even after being with Christ and learning from him for so long the disciples 'mess up' so easily.

2. Jesus' indignation (10:14-16)

¹⁴ But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant and said to them, "Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. ¹⁵ Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it *at all*." ¹⁶ And He took them in His arms and *began* blessing them, laying His hands on them.

Notice in verse fourteen that Jesus '*saw this*'. There is nothing that slips out of his eyesight. I'm glad that this is so. Jesus knows and sees all that occurs. As the Good Shepherd he keeps a watchful eye on each of his sheep.

It is comforting when I live difficulties knowing that I am under his care, but stressful when I stray from the narrow path. One way or another a disciple's life is always under the Lord's radar.

It is written that Jesus was *'indignant'* (AGAN) meaning: to be greatly afflicted. Jesus was not happy with what he saw. The disciples telling the parents to 'go away' or 'stop disturbing the Master' irritated him. I wonder how many times the Lord sees what we are doing and it brings forth the same sentiment? So this is what he said to them:

“Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

The disciples were trying their best to keep the children away from Jesus. I wonder if they thought that children were not important enough or worthy enough for the Master to attend to them? We need to remember that two thousand years ago children did not have the same status as today. This is how Jesus reacted to his disciple's claims: *'Permit the children to come to me'*. This is in direct opposition to his disciples. When in our lives the Holy Spirit opposes our thoughts we need to take heed!

Jesus says *'Permit the children to come'*. The idea behind the word *'permit'* (APHIEMI) is: to send, to go. Jesus is telling the disciples to let them go and allow them to *'come to me'*. He is telling them that they are terribly wrong and their attitude concerning children is not to be repeated! He then tells them: *'do not hinder them'*. The word *'hinder'* (KOLUO) means: to stop, prevent or forbid. Often our attitude can hinder children one way or another. Children are often watching adults: the way they act and talk and how they interact with other people. Once again, a warning is given concerning our relationship with children. Children should always be welcomed in church and not seen as a nuisance!

(v.14)... **for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.**

What did Jesus mean when he said that *'the kingdom of God belongs to such as these'*? The term for *'such as these'* is (TOIOUTOS) meaning: of this sort (denoting character). In our text we are dealing with children, small children (PAIDION): an infant, young child. Now what trait of character do *'such as these'* have that is so particular? I believe that in a corresponding text we have a clue:

Matthew 18:3,4

(3)and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

(4)"Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

(NKJV)

Our clue is found in verse four where Jesus says: *'whoever humbles himself'*. In general little children are humble, they are unpretentious and meek. Being *'humble'* is a key trait of character to enter the kingdom of God. The opposite to being humble is to glorify oneself. Do you know the one who first tried to glorify himself before the Lord and what happened to him? Lucifer was cast from the heavens (Isaiah 14:12-15) and is waiting for his eternal judgment. Remember what James wrote:

James 4:6

But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."

(NKJV)

After telling his disciples not to stop them from coming to him and also telling them *'why'* it is so, Jesus now gives to all of them a severe warning.

¹⁵ Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it *at all*."

This is an absolute truth, there are no exceptions. NO ONE will ever enter the kingdom of God if he first does not *'receive'* (DECHOMAI) meaning: accept, take or receive it with the attitude of a child which is in all humility. It is said that pride is the greatest of all sins and here we have a perfect example of this. It will stop you from entering the kingdom of God. Pride has no place in anyone's life especially one who calls himself a Disciple of Christ.

¹⁶ And He took them in His arms and *began* blessing them, laying His hands on them.

Notice how warm and affectionate Jesus is. *'He took them in his arms'*. He is not a distant person, he loves the little children and welcomes them openly. Can you imagine being embraced by the Lord? It just might be that when we will be with him we also will feel his welcoming arms around us! Notice that Jesus did exactly what the parents had hoped for (v.13... *that he might touch them*). He did more than that he also blessed them by laying his hands upon them. Jesus always gives more than what we hope for.

CONCLUSION:

1. Bring your children to Jesus and don't hesitate to do this.
2. Never be a stumbling block for children.
3. Always keep a humble heart.

The gospel of Mark
43 – The rich young man

10:17-31

¹⁷ As He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and asked Him, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” ¹⁸ And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone. ¹⁹ You know the commandments, ‘DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, Do not defraud, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.’” ²⁰ And he said to Him, “Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up.” ²¹ Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, “One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” ²² But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property.

²³ And Jesus, looking around, said to His disciples, “How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!” ²⁴ The disciples were amazed at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” ²⁶ They were even more astonished and said to Him, “Then who can be saved?” ²⁷ Looking at them, Jesus said, “With people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God.”

²⁸ Peter began to say to Him, “Behold, we have left everything and followed You.” ²⁹ Jesus said, “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel’s sake, ³⁰ but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life. ³¹ But many *who are* first will be last, and the last, first.”

(NASB)

1. The million-dollar question (10:17)

¹⁷ As He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and asked Him, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

I often call this the ‘Million dollar question’! There is no question more important for you and I to receive a biblical answer to than this one. It will determine where you will pass eternity!

This story is also told in Mat. 19:16-22 and Luke 18:18-23 and they will be helpful for us to get a complete understanding of this event. In Luke we see that this man was a ‘*certain ruler*’, which tells us that he had authority, power, either political or civil. Rulers have great possessions (as we will later see). People usually are respectful and even, to some degree, fear them. Now this man was not very old for in Mat. 19:20 it is written ‘*the young man*’.

As Jesus was just about to set out (EKPORENOMAI) meaning: to depart, for a new journey this rich young ruler ‘*ran up to Him*’. It seems that this man could not restrain himself from getting his question answered. By this we see that it had been pressing on his mind – where shall I be for all eternity?

This manifests that no matter what the riches of this world you possess they will never ease your conscience from thinking about the afterlife! What the world offers does not quench your spiritual thirst. May this be a lesson for all who have ears to listen! This man had it all: money, power, authority, admiration and respect but his soul was as dry as the Arabian Desert. So this was his big opportunity to speak to Jesus and it seems that nothing would stop him from doing so.

(v.17)...a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him,

This is quite a feat for a rich person to do. He set aside his pride and ‘*ran to Him*’. He may have hesitated and seeing that Jesus was getting ready to leave he ‘*ran to Him*’ before it was too late. May we never hesitate but run to Jesus before he also gets out of our sight! He did an even greater thing because he ‘*knelt before Him*’. This man was determined to get Jesus’ attention. He humiliated himself before Him. I do not believe that a rich person does this very often – humility is not a trait of character often found in rich rulers especially in those days!

As we can see this question concerning the afterlife is truly pressing his heart. He recognized that Jesus had the answer he needed but will he accept what Christ says?

(v.17)... and asked Him, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

We can understand that Jesus stopped when this man humbled himself and was attentive to what he was saying. Jesus always has an open heart for those who are honest in their approach. This is when he asks the BIG question. I believe that this is the only story where such a question is raised. I wonder why?

He calls Him ‘*Good Teacher*’ He sees in Him something that was different than all the others who taught. He saw Him as being ‘*Good*’ and as we will see this becomes one of the corner stones of Jesus’ discussion with him. This man is asking how he can ‘*inherit eternal life*’. In both Matthew and Luke he asks ‘*What good thing shall I do*’. In his mind he has something to DO to be able to ‘*inherit*’ (KLERONOMEO) meaning: to be an heir to – eternal life. People were taught that to obtain God’s favour one MUST DO this and that, follow the Laws and the tradition of the Elders and so forth. This is what RELIGION is all about – doing in order to receive from God. All religions have this same base. Follow the rules and God may give you his favors. This man didn’t know what rules and regulations he had to follow – he was mixed up and wanted a clear path to walk on. Still today the vast majority of people are in complete confusion regarding ‘how to be O.K. with God’. Do you personally know the way to the Father (John 14:6)?

2. Jesus’ first answer (10:18,19)

¹⁸ And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone. ¹⁹ You know the commandments, ‘DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, Do not defraud, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.’”

Before answering, Jesus sets one thing straight: *'No one is good except God alone'*. This was a real blow to this man's understanding of himself as it is to countless others. The vast majority of people truly believe that there is some 'good' in them. We are taught that we were born 'good' and that it is life that makes us sometimes to be 'bad'. Let's be very clear and once and for all ***'No one is good except God ALONE'***. In his great epistle to the Romans Paul discusses this very openly that ALL have sinned and NONE are good (Rom. 3:9-18).

Since this man thought that he needed to do things to inherit eternal life Jesus places a test before him and names him six of the Ten Commandment. Please notice that these six have to do with his relationship with others and not the ones that deals with his relationship with God (the first four). The test is very simple 'how are you doing with people around you?'.

3. The young man's answer (10:20)

²⁰ And he said to Him, "Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up."

As with most of us this man does not see himself as he truly is. He still believes that he's a good person and that his relationship with others was following God's standards. He is totally blinded as the Scriptures write:

2 Corinthians 4:4

whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

(NKJV)

4. Jesus' final recommendation (10:21)

²¹ Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

Jesus kept '*looking at him*'. Even though, after being told that only God was good, this person still thought too much of himself and could not grasp his profound state of sinfulness not only does Jesus continue on '*looking at him*' but also '*felt a love for him*'. Rare are the occasions where it is written that Jesus loved a specific person. We see this with Martha, Mary and Lazarus and also with the apostle John. Here lies another case before us. The word '*love*' (AGAPAO) means: to love in a social or moral sense. We know that Jesus loves sinners, plain proof is set before your eyes. One might wonder why Jesus said the following:

(v.21)... "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

A hint is given to us in Mat. 19:21:

Matthew 19:21

Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

(NKJV)

Remember that the young ruler was looking for something to do to inherit eternal life. His belief system told him that work and rules are necessary to gain God's approval. After telling the young man that it is impossible because '*no one is good except God alone*' Jesus places another test to show him who he really is – a great sinner. In other words Jesus says: 'If you want to be perfect and work your way to heaven (which is impossible) well do this:

(v.21)...go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”

Jesus told him to do three things, which are all bundled in one main idea. The first is *‘sell all you possess’*. Don’t forget that he was rich. He was told to abandon all that made him who he was. The second is *‘give to the poor’*. He was to willingly abandon what he had and loved but give it to people that he did not know. People that were totally the opposite to who he was. Third *‘come and follow me’*. He needed a new direction in life, no longer living for himself but being totally devoted to following Christ. Now a promise was given if he would do this *‘you will have a treasure in heaven’*. Wasn’t that the answer to his question – having eternal life. One might find Jesus’ answer very strange and it is. But be reminded that the person wanted to WORK to get to heaven. Here Jesus is just showing him that it is impossible to go to heaven by OUR own means.

5. The young man’s response (10:22)

²² But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property.

Please notice what the fruit of the man *‘who owned much property’* is. It is described in two words. The first is *‘saddened’* (STUGNAZO) meaning: to render gloomy. The second is *‘grieving’* (IUPEO) meaning: to distress. All that his wealth brought to him caused him to be saddened and to feel sorry and inward pain. This man was torn apart. He wanted the heavenly blessings but COULD NOT RECEIVE THEM because his heart was attached to earthly treasures. Remember the words of Christ:

Matthew 16:24

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

(NKJV)

This man had come to Jesus, humbled himself and asked the most important question that a man needs to know the answer. He was not ready to accept what Jesus said. As with many we come to Jesus wanting him to say what we would like him to. He left empty handed and broken hearted – all because of his love for money! Is there something that is keeping you from following Jesus?

6. The disciples concerns and Jesus' response (10:23 – 31)

²³ And Jesus, looking around, said to His disciples, “How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!” ²⁴ The disciples were amazed at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” ²⁶ They were even more astonished and said to Him, “Then who can be saved?” ²⁷ Looking at them, Jesus said, “With people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God.”

²⁸ Peter began to say to Him, “Behold, we have left everything and followed You.”²⁹ Jesus said, “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, ³⁰ but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life. ³¹ But many *who are* first will be last, and the last, first.”

Verse twenty three is a warning for all whose aim in life is to gain all that is possible while setting God aside. In reality they have their own god – Mammon!

²³ And Jesus, looking around, said to His disciples, “How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!”

Amen that Jesus did not say that that it was ‘impossible’ for them to ‘*enter the kingdom of God*’ but rather ‘*How hard it will be*’. But why? It is because the riches of this world had possessed their hearts and blinded their desire for any true spiritual life. Remember what Paul wrote to the Corinthians concerning their salvation:

1 Corinthians 1:26-29

(26)For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.

(27)But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;

(28)and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are,

(29)that no flesh should glory in His presence.

(NKJV)

Not many among the Corinthian believers were: wise, powerful and noble of birth. The words of Christ are true, it is difficult for the wealthy to enter the kingdom of God.

²⁴The disciples were amazed at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” ²⁶They were even more astonished and said to Him, “Then who can be saved?” ²⁷Looking at them, Jesus said, “With people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God.”

I can understand why the ‘*disciples were amazed*’. They also wanted to enter the kingdom of God but by hearing the words of Christ they wondered if THEY would ever enter! Now the word ‘*amazed*’ (THAMBEO) means: stupefy, astonished – they just couldn’t believe what they had just heard. So Jesus will continue speaking on this very important subject.

²⁵ It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

Jesus compares the impossibility of a camel to *'go through the eye of a needle'* (This was a proverbial expression in Jesus' day). There are different views concerning this but the Greek is very revealing. The word *'eye'* (TRUMALIA) means: an orifice. The word *'needle'* (RHAPHIS) means: puncture, a needle. So Jesus is truly comparing a camel with a rich person. See the image and how difficult it is for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God!

²⁶ They were even more astonished and said to Him, “Then who can be saved?” ²⁷ Looking at them, Jesus said, “With people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God.”

It seems that the further Jesus explains how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God the more the disciples *'were even more astonished'*. I can understand because it is the same today. It happens that when we search and study certain theological subjects that it seems that we understand less and less.

So they asked this question *'Then who can be saved?'* If the rich and noble and important people can't enter easily how can the rest of us (poor and negligible people) enter? In other words they were saying *'What about us?'* Jesus then reveals to them a secret:

“With people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God.”

Jesus transfers the capacity to enter the kingdom from the person unto God himself. Isn't that the Gospel story? What man can never do God does for mankind. Christ died in our place. Christ was judged in our stead. He was our substitute at the cross. What Jesus is telling them is the following: *'You can't do it on your own but it is possible for God to do it for you'*. The prophet Isaiah wrote:

Isaiah 12:2,3

(2)Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; 'For YAH, the LORD, is my strength and song; He also has become my salvation.'"

(3)Therefore with joy you will draw water From the wells of salvation.

(NKJV)

It seems that Peter is not satisfied with the answer that Jesus brought. He may also want to be very certain concerning the future for himself and the eleven others.

²⁸ Peter began to say to Him, “Behold, we have left everything and followed You.”²⁹ Jesus said, “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel’s sake, ³⁰ but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life. ³¹ But many *who are* first will be last, and the last, first.”

If the rich hardly can enter the kingdom of God – what about us for ‘*Behold we have left everything and followed You*’. They had left fathers and mothers and work and business and their own families. What Peter had said was true. Some today may feel the same that they have left all for Jesus. The Master has not forgotten them and will reward them.

Jesus said, “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel’s sake, ³⁰ but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.

Here is Jesus’ promise to all who follow him with a heart that is true. We see that they will not be forgotten, quite the opposite, for ‘*he will receive a hundred times as much now*’. How can I receive a hundred times as much – now?

I can clearly understand and it is simple. Before I came to Christ through repentance I had one set of parents, one home and a few friends. Now as a believer in Christ I have friends all over the world, homes, ready to receive me across the globe. A family of millions upon millions in every continent. Christ has truly fulfilled his promise.

There is an aspect of this promise that many shun to receive: *'along with persecutions'*. We don't want *'persecution'* and we try to avoid this at all cost. Yet Jesus says that they will come and depending where you live on this planet persecution will differ in form and fashion.

Jesus ends with *'and in the age to come, eternal life'*. Notice that Jesus made a full circle on the subject that was brought to him by the rich young ruler – eternal life and how to get it. Be a real Disciple of Christ and eternal life is yours.

CONCLUSION:

1. Have you asked Jesus to become your Savior and repented of your sins?
2. Do you understand and accept that there is nothing good in you and that only God is good?
3. Do you really believe that you can keep all of God's commandments?
4. Do you have any idols that keep you from following Christ?
5. Have you left all to follow Christ because of what he has done for you at the cross?

The gospel of Mark
44 – Jesus predicts his death again

10:32-34

³² They were on the road going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking on ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who followed were fearful. And again He took the twelve aside and began to tell them what was going to happen to Him, ³³ saying, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and will hand Him over to the Gentiles. ³⁴ They will mock Him and spit on Him, and scourge Him and kill *Him*, and three days later He will rise again.”
(NASB)

1. Jesus leads the way (10:32)

³² They were on the road going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking on ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who followed were fearful. And again He took the twelve aside and began to tell them what was going to happen to Him,

Have you ever noticed that it is never the Disciples that lead the way or decide to go here or stop at the next village? Disciples follow their Teacher and never the opposite. Jesus is leading his disciples and their destination is Jerusalem. Far too many believers have this notion all wrong. They want to lead. They want to tell Jesus what to do or what things ought to happen in their lives. They believe that they have the right to plan their own lives and choose what their future will look like. They are the leaders and they want Jesus to follow them in their dreams and aspirations – what folly! Here *‘Jesus was walking ahead of them’* and they followed. Are you trying to follow or lead in your life? Are you the master or the servant? Do you decide or wait for instructions? Failure is clothed in leading one’s life instead of being led by Christ.

Jesus was leading them to Jerusalem – the Holy City. Jerusalem lies about 60 kilometers from the Mediterranean Sea and about 38 from the Jordan River. The most ancient name of Jerusalem was Salem (Gen. 14:18). It later became known as Jebus (Judges 19:10,11). It was David that took the city from the Jebusites (2 Sam. 5:6,9) and that is why it is also

called 'The city of David'. It is at this point that Jerusalem becomes the religious and political center of Israel. After the kingdom was split in two, Jerusalem continued to be the capitol of Judah. Afterwards it was plundered by the Babylonians but was rebuilt by the Israelites in 536 B.C. It passed through the hands of Alexander of Macedon, then Ptolemy of Egypt. In 170 B.C. it fell into the hands of Antiochus Epiphanes who set up the image of Jupiter in its temple. Jerusalem recovered its freedom in 163 B.C. and a century later it was conquered by Rome. It was taken and totally destroyed by Titus in 70-71 A.D. When Jesus lived, Jerusalem was the religious center for all Jews whether they lived in Israel or were living elsewhere in the world.

(V.32)... and they were amazed, and those who followed were fearful.

This phrase can be difficult to analyse. Before continuing my question is: 'why are they amazed and fearful?' Is it because of what was said in our previous section concerning how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God? Or is this phrase a description of the atmosphere that the Disciples felt as they followed Jesus who was describing what will happen to him?

One thing we do know is that they were both '*amazed*' and '*fearful*'. The word '*amazed*' (THAMBEO) means to be stupefied or astounded. It is as though they could literally not believe what they either were hearing or presently living with Jesus. There are times when walking with Jesus brings an overwhelming sense of peace and wonder but other times it is just too much for our minds to receive. A bit like when Peter walked on water or when Jesus calmed the storm. The other interesting fact is that '*those who followed were fearful*'. The word '*fearful*' (PHOBEO) means: frightened and by analogy to be in awe of. Walking with Jesus can be frightening. Think of the persecutions that are described in the book of Acts, especially when Saul received permission to persecute followers of Christ. He brought them to jail and even killed some of them. It is NOT TRUE that once you are born again all will be well. Paul wrote the following:

2 Timothy 3:12

Indeed all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,

(RSV)

Please notice that even though the Disciples were amazed and fearful they continued to follow Christ. Far too many because of fear, stop being witnesses of Christ. They shrink away and live a life in the shadows. They are ashamed to be known as believers. Remember what Jesus said:

Luke 9:26

For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

(RSV)

While they were following Jesus the Master he begins to do the following.

(v.32)... and again He took the twelve aside and began to tell them what was going to happen to Him.

The word '*again*' tells us that Christ is repeating what he once has said. In this case it is in Mark 9:30-32 where he first spoke of his coming death. Notice that he only takes '*the twelve aside*'. There are things that are meant only for the true disciples. When one follows Jesus on a daily basis as the Disciples did they are bound to learn things that sporadic followers never will. What a lesson for all of us who call themselves believers in Christ! The closer we walk with our Master the more we will be taught deeper insights of our faith. Never miss an opportunity to be with Christ. So Jesus tells them once again '*what was going to happen to Him*'. I believe that Jesus is preparing his Disciples for the coming events that will change their lives – His leaving! We will see that to the very end they did not grasp the full extent of his words concerning the sufferings of the cross. Another reason for studying the Scriptures is that we also will be prepared in life and not be astounded or worried by the current events of this world.

2. Jesus tells it all (10:33,34)

³³ saying, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and will hand Him over to the Gentiles. ³⁴ They will mock Him and spit on Him, and scourge Him and kill *Him*, and three days later He will rise again.”

There are five main statements that the Lord tells his Disciples. Let’s briefly look at them.

The first is *‘Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem’*. This is very important because Jesus had to die in Jerusalem. Have you ever wondered why? It is because Jesus is the ‘Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world’ (John 1:29,36). The Passover Lamb was sacrificed once a year and its blood was poured out for the forgiveness of sins of the Nation. This was done at the Temple situated in Jerusalem. The High Priest would enter the holy of holies with the lamb’s blood and the Lord God would be appeased and forgiveness be given. This was what is called a ‘type’ of Christ in the Old Testament. It pointed to the ‘real’ offering that would come. As I said this Passover celebration was to be done ONLY in Jerusalem. Since Jesus was *‘the lamb of God’* he automatically had to be sacrificed in Jerusalem.

The second is *‘and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes’*. The chief priests and the scribes were the religious elite. It would be through their hands that the Son would be given over. How ironic is that! Those were the guardians of the Law and the teachers of the multitude. Those who were to prepare the people for the arrival of their Savior - the Messiah, are the very ones that will be the instrument that brought death to Him. Beware of religious people that say they represent God for many of them are false prophets and false teachers. They play the ‘religious game’ for their own benefit! In Mathew 23 Jesus calls them: hypocrites, blind guides and sons of those who murdered the prophets.

The third is *‘and they will condemn Him to death and will hand Him over to the Gentiles’*. Why would the religious elite hand Jesus over to the Gentiles? Why would they not just

arrest him and kill him? Simply because they were under Roman authority and because of this they were not allowed to kill a person that had broken a law. They could beat him and whip him and bring any other form of punishment but not kill a person. It was only the Roman authorities that could do this. For Christ to 'hang from a tree' he had to pass into the hands of the Roman authorities. In fact Jesus had six trials! Three before the Jewish tribunals and three before a Roman court.

The fourth is *'They will mock Him and spit on Him, and scourge Him and kill Him'*. Jesus was prophesying how he would be handled by both the Jewish and Roman authorities. His death would not be in any way ordinary! He would be hated for no other reason for than saying that he was the Son of God!

The fifth is *'...and three days later He will rise again.'* This might be the most unbelievable statement of all. Being put to death and then to live again after three days! Actually the resurrection of the Messiah was the Father's proof to all humanity that Christ IS THE MESSIAH!

Acts 17:31

because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all men by raising him from the dead."

(RSV)

I believe that is why so many are ferociously trying to demolish or belittle the death and resurrection of Christ for this is the central point, the corner stone of our faith – Christ died and was raised from the dead to give us victory over sin and death.

CONCLUSION

1. Allow Jesus to lead the way – follow him!
2. Stay close to Christ and you will learn greater and deeper spiritual truths.
3. Following Christ is not easy. There is a cost.

The gospel of Mark
45 – James, John and Jesus

10:35-45

³⁵ James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, came up to Jesus, saying, “Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You.” ³⁶ And He said to them, “What do you want Me to do for you?” ³⁷ They said to Him, “Grant that we may sit, one on Your right and one on *Your* left, in Your glory.” ³⁸ But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” ³⁹ They said to Him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you shall drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized. ⁴⁰ But to sit on My right or on *My* left, this is not Mine to give; but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.”

⁴¹ Hearing *this*, the ten began to feel indignant with James and John. ⁴² Calling them to Himself, Jesus said to them, “You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. ⁴³ But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; ⁴⁴ and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

(NASB)

1. The request of James and John (10:35-37)

³⁵ James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, came up to Jesus, saying, “Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You.” ³⁶ And He said to them, “What do you want Me to do for you?” ³⁷ They said to Him, “Grant that we may sit, one on Your right and one on *Your* left, in Your glory.”

This story is also told in Mat. 20:20-28 and it is necessary to put the two together to get the full picture of our present segment. In Matthew we see that it is the mother of John and James that speaks for the benefit of her two sons. This can mean two things. First of all their mother can come on her own behalf and speak for her sons without their full consent or second it can also mean that the sons ask their mother to do so because they feel awkward

in doing it for themselves. One must remember that this episode in Matthew comes after Jesus tells his disciples the following:

Matthew 19:28

Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

(RSV)

It may be logical to believe that one follows the other since both speak concerning sitting on thrones. We may presume that Salome the mother of James and John has a motherly desire for the best for her sons and participates in this story. The demand was the following:

(v.35)...“Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You.”

You need also to remember that in Mark 9:33-37 Jesus teaches his disciples concerning being humble and serving one another. Telling them that whoever wants to be first needs to be the last. And here we are with John and James who seem to have totally forgotten that lesson. I guess we are all like the two brothers so forgetful about what true servanthood is all about. They were thinking about having the best places in the kingdom of God and what about us are we also always looking for the ‘best’ and forgetting what the true best really is?

Notice the tone of the communication unto Christ ‘*we want you to do*’ and also ‘*whatever we ask of you*’. It is not a favor but a demand that is made upon Jesus. I don’t believe that we see this anywhere else in the gospels. Their attitude is certainly not from a humble heart. Again I must say that this kind of communication between people and Christ has not changed much in 2000 years. How much demanding is there in our prayer meetings or in our hearts! We want Jesus to absolutely do this or fix that.

We demand and claim what our flesh desires and believe that Jesus is like a ‘genie in a bottle’ which we rub with our prayers. Have you noticed that all who came to Jesus for healing did it in a very humble manner? All the people that did not know Jesus personally had a better attitude towards Christ than these two disciples who have known him for quite a while. It seems that we also can get too ‘friendly’ and forget who Jesus truly is.

³⁶ And He said to them, “What do you want Me to do for you?”

Notice that Jesus doesn’t get irritated even though what they had done was insulting. You see if he would have gotten exasperated and ‘told them off’ then they would not have been able to receive the lesson that was intended for them. This is the perfect model for all Disciples. When someone annoys us we also should keep our calm and bring something good out of it all. Remember this proverb:

Proverbs 26:27

He who digs a pit will fall into it, and a stone will come back upon him who starts it rolling.

(RSV)

So Jesus extends his hand and continues what John and James have started: ‘*What do you want me to do for you*’. At this point it seems that after Salome asks a request for her two sons Jesus turns to them and speaks to both of them.

³⁷ They said to Him, “Grant that we may sit, one on Your right and one on *Your* left, in Your glory.”

The word ‘*grant*’ (DIDOMI) means to grant, to give. They turned to Jesus because they thought that only Jesus could give them what they asked for. We see that they recognized his authority and capacity to be able to do such a thing. They wanted to sit ‘*one on your right and one on your left*’. These were the best and certainly the most honorable places one could have at an important event. This reminds me of the parable of the ambitious guest in Luke 14:7-11.

This parable speaks of a person who desires the best place at a wedding. Jesus warns not to do this because someone more important can come along and you will be asked to leave your place for someone else to have and you will be publicly put to shame. The conclusion of this parable is the following:

Luke 14:10,11

(10)But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, 'Friend, go up higher'; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you.

(11) every one who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

(RSV)

This is a lesson that both James and John had not yet understood – humbling oneself and letting the Lord exalt you at his chosen time.

2. Jesus' question and the brothers' foolish answer (10:38-40)

³⁸ But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" ³⁹ They said to Him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you shall drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized. ⁴⁰ But to sit on My right or on My left, this is not Mine to give; but it is for those for whom it has been prepared."

In response to the demand of James and John we see that Jesus does not give an answer right away because there were issues that needed to be dealt with first.

³⁸ But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?"

There was a price to be paid to be able to sit at the right and left hand of Jesus. There is always a price to be paid for anyone who desires to follow Christ whole-heartedly. Jesus makes it very plain when he said the following:

John 15:19,20

(19)If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

(20)Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also.

(RSV)

This price is often forgotten. A true Disciple of Christ understands that he or she can no longer 'fit in' with the rest of the world for he has become a child of God. But not all believers see themselves as ready to do so. Why are so many ashamed of following Christ?

Jesus says '*You do not know what you are asking*'. Their demand was a foolish one. It seems that they only saw glory and greatness but had not even thought if it was the will of God for them to be able to. Are we also too swift to ask things of Christ without taking time to see if it would be for the greater glory of the Lord? Jesus is saying: 'Do you think you able to pass through what I will pass through to be able to get the reward of sitting on my right and on my left?'

³⁹ They said to Him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you shall drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized.

They answered in a twinkling of an eye: '*We are able*'. How imprudent it is to answer too quickly. Jesus had just told them '*you do not know what you are asking*' and they still did not know what they were talking about. May we always take time and think and also pray before we answer important questions.

The cup is often used as a symbol of suffering ([Psalm 75:8](#); [Isaiah 51:17](#); [Jeremiah 25:15-28](#)) James and John (wanting to sit on his right and left) thought they were strong enough to suffer. Jesus confirms that they will suffer (to a point that they never knew they would) but he also confirms the following:

⁴⁰ But to sit on My right or on My left, this is not Mine to give; but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.”

The Father has prepared certain places and honors for certain people. This is the Father’s prerogative and not the Son’s. In reality they were asking the wrong person!

3. The apostles get upset (10:41)

⁴¹ Hearing *this*, the ten began to feel indignant with James and John.

In the past we have seen that the Disciples talked among themselves concerning who was the greatest (Mark 9:34). What presently seemed to irritate the other ten is that James and John were actually doing something to try to be the greatest in the eyes of Christ. The word ‘*indignant*’ (AGANAKTEO) means: greatly afflicted, to be displeased. What James and John were doing got the rest of them angry and upset at them. Their ‘best friends’ were back-stabbing them. May we never be the ones that cause strife between brothers and sister in Christ! We need to be very watchful of our actions and our speech.

4. What it means to be first (10:42-45)

⁴² Calling them to Himself, Jesus said to them, “You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. ⁴³ But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; ⁴⁴ and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

Jesus comes to the rescue for this can destroy the fellowship and in part the work of Christ's training of the twelve – so he steps in. I believe that there are times when we need also to 'step in' when the situation in front of us demands leadership from us. Jesus will give an example of what IT DOES NOT MEAN to sit on a throne and have glory and power. He points to something that they could easily identify with – '*rulers of the Gentiles*' and '*great men*'. He points to them how they unfairly exercise their rule and their authority. The disciples could instantly think of the Roman rulers that treated them with cruelty and understand the words of Christ. Then Jesus tells them what IT DOES MEAN to have authority and glory.

⁴³ But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; ⁴⁴ and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all.

Jesus says 'NO' this is not the attitude that you should have. Being great IS NOT sitting on my right or on my left. Being great is being '*a servant*' for all and if you desire to be first (as John and James did) '*you shall be slave of all*'. That's not the picture that the two brothers had in mind. It is also often not the picture that Christians have in mind today.

CONCLUSION:

1. Don't make any demands on the Lord – we are just servants.
2. Don't make any foolish requests – think before you ask.
3. Let God glorify you and not the opposite.
4. True glory rests in serving others.

The gospel of Mark
46 – Bartimaeus by the road

10:46-52

⁴⁶ Then they came to Jericho. And as He was leaving Jericho with His disciples and a large crowd, a blind beggar *named* Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the road. ⁴⁷ When he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” ⁴⁸ Many were sternly telling him to be quiet, but he kept crying out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” ⁴⁹ And Jesus stopped and said, “Call him *here*.” So they called the blind man, saying to him, “Take courage, stand up! He is calling for you.” ⁵⁰ Throwing aside his cloak, he jumped up and came to Jesus. ⁵¹ And answering him, Jesus said, “What do you want Me to do for you?” And the blind man said to Him, “Rabboni, *I want* to regain my sight!” ⁵² And Jesus said to him, “Go; your faith has made you well.” Immediately he regained his sight and *began* following Him on the road.

(NASB)

1. Poor Bartimaeus (10:46,47)

⁴⁶ Then they came to Jericho. And as He was leaving Jericho with His disciples and a large crowd, a blind beggar *named* Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the road. ⁴⁷ When he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

This is the first and only time that the town of Jericho is mentioned in Mark. Jericho is a city found in Benjamin (Jos. 16:7). It is situated about 25 klm. North East of Jerusalem. It was the first city that was overtaken by the Israelites after entering the Promised Land (Joshua 6). Jericho was later rebuilt on another site and it had also been known as the ‘City of palm trees’ (Deut. 34:3). It flourished so much that it became second only to Jerusalem. It was the residence of the prophet Elisha (2 Kings 2:4,18).

Jesus was leaving this town. This story is also told in Mat. 20:29-34 and Luke 18:35-43. Whatever business Jesus had in Jericho it was finished and he was leaving. He was leaving ‘*with His disciples and a large crowd*’. We have often seen that when Jesus arrives it does not take a long time before a crowd forms to see him.

His reputation grows from day to day and the people of Jericho were more than pleased to have the opportunity to actually see Jesus. The person that this story focuses on is a man called Bartimaeus. In Hebrew the prefix 'bar' means 'son of' so Bartimaeus was the son of Timaeus. It is written that Bartimaeus was '*a blind beggar*'. If being blind was not enough he had to beg for his sustenance. It seems that his family was not wealthy enough to take good care of him. Being blind made him an outcast in society. Many considered the illnesses of a person as a God given punishment for some sin in their life. Usually no one really wanted to have anything to do with sick people. They even feared that their sickness would fall upon them if they were touched. So Bartimaeus had to beg – that's all he could do.

Please notice that he '*was sitting by the road*'. That was all he could do. He just sat there probably from morning to night. He was by the road because people were coming in and out of Jericho and he hoped that some would give him alms. But today someone would pass that would change his entire life. Jesus still passes by the lives of people and wants to help them.

**⁴⁷ When he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out and say,
“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”**

Let's not forget that there was a crowd that followed Jesus and when there is a crowd one thing is certain you can hear them coming. There was a different type of noise that Bartimaeus could hear – not the usual hustle and bustle. At one point '*he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene*'. By his reaction we will see that Bartimaeus had already heard of Jesus even if this had been the first time he had been in Jericho. He knew that Jesus was the great miracle worker and a prophet from God. This was his chance his one-time opportunity and he was not going to let Jesus just walk by. How many times can we let Jesus just pass us without calling upon his name to come to our aid?

So Bartimaeus '*began to cry out*'. The Greek word (KRAZO) means: to call aloud, to scream. Bartimaeus did not shyly call out to Jesus as though he was holding his breath. He was literally 'crying his lungs out', screaming and screaming his name. I believe that we need to learn more and more to call forcefully out to Jesus like Bartimaeus did.

He called him *'Son of David'*. This title given to Christ was more than just being a descendent of David, how would Bartimaeus have known this? The term *'Son of David'* had a Messianic meaning. To point this out we need only to read the event when Jesus came to Jerusalem sitting on a colt of a donkey in Matthew 21. Notice that in verse five a prophecy is brought forth and the one sitting on a colt was *'your king is coming to you'*. In verse twenty five we read:

Matthew 21:9

And the crowds that went before him and that followed him shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

(RSV)

The crowd cheered *'Hosanna to the Son of David'*. The crowd expected Jesus to be their coming King, who is *'the Son of David'* who is the Messiah for *'comes in the name of the Lord!'* We can easily believe that Bartimaeus actually thought that Jesus was the coming Messiah – and he was right.

Notice that he asked for only one thing – *'have mercy on me'*. He did not ask for a specific thing, he only wanted Christ to look at him and have compassion and mercy. If Jesus could do that he would instantly recognize his need and (he hoped) bring forth a miracle in his favor. Is it not better to let God decide what is best for us than to always demand what we believe is best! Have you asked Jesus to have mercy on you and heal you from your sinful state?

2. People's disapproval (10:48)

⁴⁸ Many were sternly telling him to be quiet, but he kept crying out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

It seems that the crowd did not appreciate Bartimaeus shouting out to Jesus. It is written that *'Many were sternly telling him to be quiet'*. The word *'sternly'* (EPITIMAO) means: To censure, admonish, forbid. We can understand from this that they were not politely asking Bartimaeus to be quiet – they were strongly telling him to “shut up”. We can see the disdain the crowd had for this poor man. Instead of thinking that this could be his opportunity to be healed and lead a normal life – they just put him down. How different they were from the four friends that brought the paralysed man to Jesus and opened the roof to get him to be with the Lord (Mark 2:4).

The word *'quiet'* (STOPAO) means: muteness, voluntary stillness. They wanted this man to cease calling out the name of Jesus. How many around us are trying to do the same, doing all they can to make his followers be silent about Him? They often succeed but will Bartimaeus cease his crying to Christ? It is written *'but he kept on crying out the more'*. The more they tried to silence him the louder he got! Nothing was going to stop Bartimaeus from trying to reach Jesus – his life depended on it. And so does the life of every person on this planet.

3. Jesus calls Bartimaeus (10:49-51a)

⁴⁹ And Jesus stopped and said, “Call him *here*.” So they called the blind man, saying to him, “Take courage, stand up! He is calling for you.”⁵⁰ Throwing aside his cloak, he jumped up and came to Jesus. ⁵¹ And answering him, Jesus said, “What do you want Me to do for you?”

Hearing the cries of Bartimaeus *'Jesus stopped'*. How I love these two words. Jesus stops everything he was doing for ONE PERSON. Remember that the disciples are following him and the crowd of people is following him – a great many people, but ONE PERSON caught his attention. A blind beggar, a non-person, a man that people despised. How wonderful is the heart of Jesus, how great is the Messiah filled with compassion, mercy and grace. If you are crying out to him with a sincere heart as Bartimaeus was – Christ also hears you.

Once he stopped he said *'Call him here'*. I wonder how the crowd felt. The one they pushed away and loathed has become the one Christ commanded to be brought to him. Once more this shows me the difference between the heart of man and the heart of Christ. Look how the people changed their attitude towards Bartimaeus for they said *'Take courage, stand up! He is calling for you'*. A minute ago they were crushing him and demeaning him, trying to take away the little dignity he had. Now they are encouraging, cheering and reassuring Bartimaeus. When Jesus speaks –everything changes. Just as the waves and the tempest became still (Mark 4:35-41) so the lives of men are in his hands.

What did Bartimaeus do when he heard that Jesus was calling him? We see him *'throwing aside his cloak'*. This was his outer garment. This man was sitting by the road all day long and he was dirty. He instinctively throws off his outer garment for he knew he was unclean and did not want to present himself that way before Christ. What a wonderful spiritual picture of a person coming to Christ and wanting to be unclothed of their sins! Bartimaeus knew who he himself was and who Christ the Messiah was also. He didn't slowly walk towards Jesus *'he jumped and came to Jesus'*. No one was going to stop him now – Jesus called his name and wants him to come to him. Have you heard Jesus call out to you? Have you turned away from His calling? Are you still sitting on the road of life? What is stopping you from 'jumping up' like Bartimaeus did?

The BIG moment has come and Jesus said *'What do you want Me to do for you?'*

4. Bartimaeus request (10:51b)

(v.51)... And the blind man said to Him, "Rabboni, I want to regain my sight!"

Bartimaeus was not afraid to speak to Jesus, he knew he would not be reprimanded like the crowd did. So he spoke to him and told him the desire of his heart *'Rabboni, I want to regain my sight'*. His most precious, valuable and prized need was to see again. If he could see again then everything would be different. Could you give me my eyesight? The first time we come to Christ our most important need is salvation – the forgiveness of our sins and that is what we should ask for.

5. The miracle (10:52)

⁵² And Jesus said to him, “Go; your faith has made you well.” Immediately he regained his sight and *began* following Him on the road.

In this case the faith of Bartimaeus was strongly manifested and it was his faith that made him persevere and ‘catch’ Jesus’ attention. True faith is always the key to our life as a disciple of Christ. Remember what is written:

Hebrews 11:6

And without faith it is impossible to please him. For whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

(RSV)

Now, is faith ALWAYS the key ingredient for a person to obtain God’s favour? Some people teach that person will not be healed if he has very little faith. In the Gospels we do find miracles where faith has little or nothing to do with the healing or miracle. In Mat. 12:9-14 the man with the withered hand did not even speak or ask Jesus anything and was healed. In Luke 7:11-17 Jesus raised the widow’s son from death and no one asked anything from him. In Mat. 8:28-32 Jesus chased away a demon from a man who asked for nothing. In John 5:1-17 Jesus healed a man who again did not ask for healing he did not manifest any faith needed to be healed – quite the contrary. So NO it is not always the faith of a person that is required but ALWAYS the grace of God upon that person.

(v.52)... Immediately he regained his sight and *began* following Him on the road.

The point I would like for you to notice is the following ‘*and began following Him on the road*’. In the beginning of our story Bartimaeus was ‘*sitting by the road*’, he now is walking with Christ. When our eyes are opened to spiritual truth concerning Christ there is only one thing we ought to do and that is to also begin to follow Him on the road of our life. Is that what you are doing?

CONCLUSION:

1. Do you see yourself as also being spiritually blind or have you been born again?
2. Have you ever cried out to Jesus so he can have mercy on you? If not what is stopping you?
3. Do you allow 'the crowd' to silence you as a Disciple of Christ?
4. Are you openly able to speak to Jesus like Bartimaeus did? If not, don't be afraid, just speak with an honest heart.

The gospel of Mark
47 – The triumphal entry

11:1-11

As they approached Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples, ² and said to them, “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find a colt tied *there*, on which no one yet has ever sat; untie it and bring it *here*. ³ If anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ you say, ‘The Lord has need of it’; and immediately he will send it back here.” ⁴ They went away and found a colt tied at the door, outside in the street; and they untied it. ⁵ Some of the bystanders were saying to them, “What are you doing, untying the colt?” ⁶ They spoke to them just as Jesus had told *them*, and they gave them permission. ⁷ They brought the colt to Jesus and put their coats on it; and He sat on it. ⁸ And many spread their coats in the road, and others *spread* leafy branches which they had cut from the fields. ⁹ Those who went in front and those who followed were shouting:

“Hosanna!

BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD;

¹⁰ **Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David;**

Hosanna in the highest!”

¹¹ **Jesus entered Jerusalem and came into the temple; and after looking around at everything, He left for Bethany with the twelve, since it was already late.**

(NASB)

1. Preparing his entrance (11:1-6)

You can also read this present story in Mat. 21:1-11 and Luke 19:29-40. The days of Jesus’ crucifixion and departure are drawing closer. This is the beginning of the final phase of the ministry of Christ. It is believed that about three years have passed since he was baptized by John. His triumphal entry into Jerusalem will be his last major public appearance before the cross. In a unique way this is how it should have been if the Jews would have received Jesus as their Messiah. But God had other plans since salvation was also to be given unto all the Gentiles.

As they approached Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples, ² and said to them, “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find a colt tied *there*, on which no one yet has ever sat; untie it and bring it *here*. ³ If anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ you say, ‘The Lord has need of it’; and immediately he will send it back here.” ⁴ They went away and found a colt tied at the door, outside in the street; and they untied it. ⁵ Some of the bystanders were saying to them, “What are you doing, untying the colt?” ⁶ They spoke to them just as Jesus had told *them*, and they gave them permission.

Jesus is heading for Jerusalem but before he arrives he makes preparations for his stay with his disciples. Bethphage was a little village on the eastern foot of the Mount of Olives. Bethany was also a small village near Bethphage on the same side of the Mount of Olives. It was on the road towards Jericho about 4 klm from Jerusalem. It was here that Jesus ‘*sent two of His disciples*’ on an errand. We see that preparation is important in ministry. May this be a lesson for all of us. Too much time is wasted because of lack of preparation. In my office I have a plaque that says: ‘I did not plan to fail, I failed to plan’. So what were the two supposed to do?

“Go into the village opposite you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find a colt tied *there*, on which no one yet has ever sat; untie it and bring it *here*. ³ If anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ you say, ‘The Lord has need of it’; and immediately he will send it back here.”

Jesus was asking the disciples to do something out of the ordinary. They had to take a colt and bring it to Him. Now the colt did not belong to them and just taking it was not permitted (it would be stealing). Jesus knowing that this might bring up trouble he prepared the disciples with what to do.

³ If anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ you say, ‘The Lord has need of it’; and immediately he will send it back here.”

Jesus was reassuring His disciples that everything would go well. Actually, as we will see, this had been prepared before the foundation of the world. Did you know that there are 'good deeds' that the Father has also prepared for you before the foundation of the world? As they were sent to get the colt for the Lord so are His present day disciples sent all over the world to do His bidding.

Ephesians 2:10

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

(RSV)

The disciples trusted the Lord and did exactly what he had told them. Is it not comforting and reassuring to see that everything lies in the hands of God!

⁴They went away and found a colt tied at the door, outside in the street; and they untied it. ⁵Some of the bystanders were saying to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" ⁶They spoke to them just as Jesus had told *them*, and they gave them permission.

What I also notice is that there were some people who objected to the disciples doing God's will. There will always be people who try to hinder the Lord's work. But notice that as soon as the words of the Lord are spoken '*They spoke to them just as Jesus had told them*' the entire situation turns around and they are able to do as they were told. The Word of God always has to be central to the ministry that the Lord gives his disciples.

2. The people's reaction (11:7-10)

⁷They brought the colt to Jesus and put their coats on it; and He sat on it. ⁸And many spread their coats in the road, and others *spread* leafy branches which they had cut from the fields. ⁹Those who went in front and those who followed were shouting:

“Hosanna!

BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD;

¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David;

Hosanna in the highest!”

It seems that some of the disciples made a ‘saddle’ for the Lord because they *‘put their coats on it’*. Once this was done Jesus took his place on the donkey. It is interesting to know why Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. What Jesus was doing is that he was manifesting that he was the ‘servant ruler’ of the people. When a king rode on a donkey it manifested that he was here to serve the people over whom he ruled (Judges 10:4, 12:14) and not to dominate them. On the other hand when a king arrived on a horse it was for political or military purposes. Jesus chose a donkey because he was a servant-king and this is the main theme of the gospel of Mark.

⁸ And many spread their coats in the road, and others *spread* leafy branches which they had cut from the fields.

The crowd responded by doing two things. The first is *‘many spread their coats in the road’*. This was actually an homage that they were giving Jesus. It was a royal homage. We see that the people did this when Jehu became king (2 Kings 9:12,13). The crowd was declaring that they recognized Jesus as their coming king – the Messiah. But the hearts of men are fickle and it will only take a few days before they cry out for his execution! The second thing is *‘and others spread leafy branches’*. In John 12:13 it is written that these were palm tree branches. In those days palm branches were commonly used as a symbol of joy and victory. They were also used by the Roman soldiers and the Jews as a symbol of peace (Rev. 7:9,10). This is exactly what the Lord Jesus brought to the people.

⁹ Those who went in front and those who followed were shouting:

“Hosanna!

BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD;

¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David;

Hosanna in the highest!”

This was a Messianic prophecy that was accomplished before the crowd's very eyes. It may be that many understood what was truly happening – the Messiah was with them.

Zechariah 9:9

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on an ass, on a colt the foal of an ass.

(RSV)

They shouted out '*Hosanna*' which means 'save now'. This was a shout of joy coming from the people's hearts towards their God. The cry '*Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord*' is from Ps. 118:25,26 which again is a cry of joy unto the Lord God.

**¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David;
Hosanna in the highest!"**

This was the promised kingdom that they referred to (1 Kings 2:4, 8:25). At this point if the religious leaders rejected Jesus as the Messiah we see that the crowd welcomed him. They rejoiced at what they were seeing – Jesus entering Jerusalem sitting on a donkey – just as it was prophesised!

3. Jesus' destination (11:11)

¹¹ Jesus entered Jerusalem and came into the temple; and after looking around at everything, He left for Bethany with the twelve, since it was already late.

Was this a sign that Christ was giving. As he entered Jerusalem he headed straight for the temple. This reminds me of the first occurrence where Jesus manifested his goal in life.

Luke 2:49

And he said to them, "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"

(RSV)

His time had not yet come and after his triumphal entrance he humbly went back with his disciples. I wonder what the crowds thought at this point seeing him going back to Bethany.

CONCLUSION

1. Preparation in life is always necessary. Christ has prepared his triumphal entrance to Jerusalem. Has he entered your heart?
2. Do you still react with joy and reverence at the thought of Christ in your life? Are you still laying down your coats and waving palm branches before him?

The gospel of Mark
48 – Jesus clears the Temple

11:12-19

¹² On the next day, when they had left Bethany, He became hungry. ¹³ Seeing at a distance a fig tree in leaf, He went *to see* if perhaps He would find anything on it; and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. ¹⁴ He said to it, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again!” And His disciples were listening. ¹⁵ Then they came to Jerusalem. And He entered the temple and began to drive out those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves; ¹⁶ and He would not permit anyone to carry merchandise through the temple. ¹⁷ And He *began* to teach and say to them, “Is it not written, ‘MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL THE NATIONS’? But you have made it a ROBBERS’ DEN.”¹⁸ The chief priests and the scribes heard *this*, and *began* seeking how to destroy Him; for they were afraid of Him, for the whole crowd was astonished at His teaching.

**¹⁹ When evening came, they would go out of the city.
(NASB)**

1. Jesus is hungry (11:12-14)

Here we see that Jesus and his disciples were heading back to Jerusalem. He had a triumphal entry but left the Holy City to head back to Bethany.

¹² On the next day, when they had left Bethany, He became hungry. ¹³ Seeing at a distance a fig tree in leaf, He went *to see* if perhaps He would find anything on it; and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. ¹⁴ He said to it, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again!” And His disciples were listening.

It was customary to be able to take whatever fruit one needed from the trees that were on the road-side. This was not against any law and anyone doing this would never be punished. So Jesus and his disciples are returning to Jerusalem because they are but a few days from Passover. It is believed that there were four or five days left before this great feast.

On his way *'He became hungry'*. This provides further proof that Jesus was fully man for he had needs like you and me. He came to a fig tree which brings us to verse thirteen and fourteen. These verses, if not well understood, might seem very strange.

¹³ Seeing at a distance a fig tree in leaf, He went to see if perhaps He would find anything on it; and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. ¹⁴ He said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again!" And His disciples were listening.

Passover has been calculated to be in the very beginning of the month of April so we are at the end of March. In Judea we are entering summer and it was very possible that fig trees would bear fruit. Actually the fig tree had fruits before the tree is in leaf but the fruit mature with time. Jesus being hungry *'He went to see if perhaps He would find anything on it'*. He was hoping that the tree had mature fruits, that it was ready for harvest.

It is written that Jesus *'found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs'*. There was a season for figs but figs could be found on certain fig trees all year round. There are two types of fig trees. The 'Baccore' which bears fruits in June. The 'Kermouse' which is used for preservatives and cakes, bears fruits in August. Some of the 'Kermouse' fig tree (long and dark type) had fruit that hangs on it all winter long. This fruit could be eaten at any time once it was ripe.

¹⁴ He said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again!" And His disciples were listening.

Expecting to find fruit but seeing none Jesus cursed the fig tree. This entire section is prophetic and must be seen this way as we will see later in Mark 12:1-12. The fig tree is a symbol of Israel and God was expecting fruits from His people but they had none. They were His people, they had received the Law and the Prophets. They knew exactly how they should have lived to glorify the Lord God – but they did not. They were spiritual hypocrites and like this fig tree outwardly seemed to be ready for harvest but had no fruit. The curse that Christ brought forth was a sentence of destruction upon Israel.

Time had come, the Messiah was in their presence but they rejected His very presence for the most part. Because of this, Israel would soon be devastated.

2. Jesus is angry (11:15-17)

¹⁵ Then they came to Jerusalem. And He entered the temple and began to drive out those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves; ¹⁶ and He would not permit anyone to carry merchandise through the temple. ¹⁷ And He *began* to teach and say to them, “Is it not written, ‘MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL THE NATIONS’? But you have made it a ROBBERS’ DEN.”

When you look at the last verse of our last section and we look at what he did in this section we can see something particular.

**¹¹ Jesus entered Jerusalem *and came* into the temple; and after looking around at everything, He left for Bethany with the twelve, since it was already late.
(NASB)**

First notice that ‘*after looking around at everything*’ (PERIBLEPO) meaning: to look ALL around, Jesus took a careful look at the state of the temple. He inspected his father’s house and how the caretakers were looking after it and how it was administered. He did nothing ‘*He left for Bethany*’. It was after the event with the fig tree not bearing any fruit, after the cursing of the tree that when he came back he begins to execute the sentence he had just brought forth! This was the beginning of the end of God’s patience with his beloved Israel.

¹⁵ Then they came to Jerusalem. And He entered the temple and began to drive out those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves; ¹⁶ and He would not permit anyone to carry merchandise through the temple.

The Holy Temple had become more of a market place where one could make business selling different articles such as animals for the sacrifices or exchange monies for Temple money. The people were exchanging the spiritual aspect and reverence to the Lord into a lucrative commercial trade industry. This time Jesus ‘cleans’ the house, by doing three things.

The first is that he *‘began to drive out those who were buying and selling in the temple’*. The word *‘drive out’* (AKBALLO) means: expel, send away. In other words Jesus kicked out those who were buying and selling in the temple. People were allowed to buy animals for a given sacrifice. One did not bring an animal on a long trip to Jerusalem, he would buy one once he arrived. The problem was that this was done *‘in the temple’*. People had taken their business *‘inside’*. There are things that you do outside the temple and things that you do inside the temple. I wonder what the Lord thinks of all these churches where merchandise is sold and publicity is made to go and buy this and that after the conference is finished. A church building is not a place for commerce it is a place of worship.

The second is that Jesus *‘overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves’*. The word *‘overturned’* (KATASTREPHO) means: To turn upside down, overthrow. The temple had its own currency and since people came from different parts of the world they needed to exchange their currency into temple currency. So there was a commerce for this. We still have them – places where you can exchange your money for the currency of the country that you are visiting. This also was done inside the temple and Jesus vigorously turned every table upside down. By kicking the seats *‘of those who were selling doves’* he was telling them to ‘get out of here’. He was causing quite an upset in the temple.

Third is that Jesus *‘would not permit anyone to carry merchandise through the temple’*. Again this dealt with the commerce and the business done inside the temple. Jesus stopped all provision of selling ‘goods’. He went to the source of the merchandizing and cut off its foundation. Have you noticed that the religious leaders had let all of this commerce just pass by and had done absolutely nothing to stop any of this? I believe that this clearly manifests their spiritual state. Woe to many so called churches of today!

¹⁷ And He *began* to teach and say to them, “Is it not written, ‘MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL THE NATIONS’? But you have made it a ROBBERS’ DEN.”

Jesus brings back the true perspective or the true reason for the existence of the temple. It was to be a place of communion between God and His people, a place where one could be in the presence of the Lord a place where forgiveness was to be poured out and worship brought not a place of commerce.

The temple was to be ‘*a house of prayer for all the nations*’. This was taken from Isaiah:

Isaiah 56:7

these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.

(RSV)

People had changed the House of God and ‘*made it a robber’s den*’, a place where people would steal from those coming to the temple. Does this not resound in your mind? Does this not still happen? Some churches and ministries still make money from people who come to them for spiritual guidance! What would Jesus do if he would be here today and visit those who say they speak in his name!

3. The reaction of the religious authorities (11:18,19)

¹⁸ The chief priests and the scribes heard *this*, and *began* seeking how to destroy Him; for they were afraid of Him, for the whole crowd was astonished at His teaching.

¹⁹ When evening came, they would go out of the city.

Notice that the chief priests and the scribes did not try to stop Jesus for they had their hand in this by giving permission to do commerce inside the temple.

They did not dare try to stop him because of what people thought of him. The people believed that he was a great prophet a few days ago he had entered Jerusalem and was acclaimed as a great man from God. Some even thought he might be the Messiah. The religious elite '*were afraid of Him*', so they set out to see '*how to destroy him*'.

CONCLUSION:

1. Jesus expects that we bear fruit.
2. The House of God is a place of communion and not commerce.
3. Some of our churches and ministries need to reflect on how they are doing things and repent!

The gospel of Mark
49 – Jesus and the fig tree

11:20-26

²⁰ As they were passing by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots up. ²¹ Being reminded, Peter said to Him, “Rabbi, look, the fig tree which You cursed has withered.” ²² And Jesus answered saying to them, “Have faith in God. ²³ Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be *granted* him. ²⁴ Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be *granted* you. ²⁵ Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions. ²⁶ [But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions.]”

1. Peter’s statement (11:20-21)

This ‘block’ can actually be separated in two. The first deals with faith (v.20-24) and the second dealing with prayer (v.25,26).

²⁰ As they were passing by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots up. ²¹ Being reminded, Peter said to Him, “Rabbi, look, the fig tree which You cursed has withered.”

In our last section Jesus, after cleaning out the temple, leaves Jerusalem. We can gather from v.20 that night time had passed and Jesus and His disciples are once again on their way back to Jerusalem (v.27). As it was noted before we are looking at the very last days in the life of Christ. As they did last time they passed by the same fig tree. We can see by this that there were not many different roads to take from Bethany to Jerusalem – there was probably just one main road. Now there was something particular with this tree ‘*the fig tree withered from the roots up*’.

Naturally this has to do with the cursing of the fig tree (11:12-14) which Jesus had done previously. It's one thing to say something extra-ordinary but it's quite another for what you said to happen! For the cursing of a tree to actually occur you need to be more than a man for only God can do such a thing. No man has power over nature.

The fig tree was '*withered*' (XERAINO) meaning: to desecrate, to shrivel, and to dry up. One day it has leaves which gave the passerby the impression that the fruits were ready for harvest and the next it is completely dead. Something important is mentioned about this tree - '*from the roots up*'. The word 'root' (RHIZA) simply means a root. Remember that this fig tree symbolizes Israel and its spiritual state. On the outside it looks pious and spiritual like the fig tree with its luscious leaves. But inside Israel was not spiritually alive and did not bear fruit like the fig tree who had no fruit for Jesus to eat. This tree withered up '*from the roots up*' just as Israel did. It had dried up spiritually from the inside and the very roots of their attachment to God had become dead. And once the roots dry up the entire life is destroyed. May this also be a warning to all who are Disciples of Christ, if the inside is drying then the outside will be dying!

2. Faith, prayer and forgiveness (11:22-26)

²² And Jesus answered saying to them, "Have faith in God. ²³ Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be *granted* him. ²⁴ Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be *granted* you. ²⁵ Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions. ²⁶ [But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions.]"

Peter is astounded by what he saw and calls out to Jesus for an answer to something that happened that he just doesn't understand. May this be a model for all of us. When we are confronted with a situation that is out of our reach our natural instincts should be to call out to the Lord and speak to Him about it. Jesus responds first of all by saying: '*Have faith in God*'. When confronting difficult situations or incomprehensible facts of life we must not be frightened but instantly place our faith in God.

Mic 7:7

**But as for me, I will look to the LORD, I will wait for the God of my salvation; my
God will hear me.**

(RSV)

But what is *faith*? The book of Hebrews answers that quite clearly.

Hebrews 11:1

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

(RSV)

In the following verse Jesus explains what perfect faith can do. Since no man has perfect faith it is understandable that no man can do what Christ did.

**²³ Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the
sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to
happen, it will be *granted* him.**

Jesus is speaking in what is called a hyperbole. A hyperbole is a figure of speech that contains an exaggeration of ideas for the sake of emphasis. Christ did not mean that one’s faith could do this but accentuates the power of having faith in God. In other words it is faith in God that opens up the doors in doing unbelievable things. A history of 2000 years of Christianity is filled with men and women of great faith that have done great things for the Lord. When reading the Bible it is so important to recognize what type of language is being used for if we don’t we will actually believe (as it is presented to us) that we can move mountains by faith.

²⁴ Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be *granted* you.

Is Jesus giving a magical formula for receiving from God what we desire? A bit like Aladdin who only needed to rub the magic lamp and a genie would do what he commanded? Obviously he is not. First, all that is granted by the Father is according to his own will. Notice in Hebrews 11 how many great saints did not receive what they hoped for! It was simply not in God's will for them to receive – the time had not come yet. Second, the emphasis is on faith not your own but faith in who God is and what God can do. If we truly have faith in the perfect God of Israel we need to say as Christ did: '*Not my will, but yours be done*'. It is evident that in His prayer in the Garden Jesus had perfect faith yet he placed everything in His Father's hands.

The third aspect concerning prayer deals with forgiveness. How many Christians believe that their prayers are heard and yet are not because of this.

²⁵ Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions.

Forgiveness is the third aspect of Jesus' teaching concerning prayer. The first is having true faith in God, the second is praying according to the will of the Father and the third deals with forgiving others. Here we see that people who do not honestly forgive others are not forgiven by the Father! In other words he will deal with you as you deal with others. If we remain unforgiving God does the same. Does this mean that our salvation is lost? Absolutely not but what it means is that our relationship with God is broken because we do not forgive as He has forgiven. Remember the parable about the servant who owed a fortune to his king and was released from his debt (Matthew 18:21-35) because he begged him? And what the same servant did with his friend who owed him a hundred denarii – he did not release him of his debt because of his lack of forgiveness. Remember the last verse of this story which is the focal point of it all.

Matthew 18:35

So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

(RSV)

Beloved make certain that your heart has forgiven everyone of everything before you go to prayer because that is what the Lord God has done to you because of Christ.

CONCLUSION:

1. Have faith in the person of God and do not rely on your own faith.
2. When you pray do so in the will of God and not your own.
3. Be certain that you have forgiven everyone before you pray.

The gospel of Mark
50 – Jesus and his authority
11:27-33

²⁷ They came again to Jerusalem. And as He was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to Him, ²⁸ and *began* saying to Him, “By what authority are You doing these things, or who gave You this authority to do these things?” ²⁹ And Jesus said to them, “I will ask you one question, and you answer Me, and *then* I will tell you by what authority I do these things. ³⁰ Was the baptism of John from heaven, or from men? Answer Me.” ³¹ They *began* reasoning among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say, ‘Then why did you not believe him?’ ³² But shall we say, ‘From men?’”—they were afraid of the people, for everyone considered John to have been a real prophet. ³³ Answering Jesus, they said, “We do not know.” And Jesus said to them, “Nor will I tell you by what authority I do these things.”

(NASB)

1. The authorities question Jesus’ authority (11:27,28)

In section forty-eight the religious authorities fearing Jesus *‘began seeking how to destroy Him; for they were afraid of Him’* (11:18). We can only assume that they now had a plan and began executing it.

²⁷ They came again to Jerusalem. And as He was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to Him, ²⁸ and *began* saying to Him, “By what authority are You doing these things, or who gave You this authority to do these things?”

The *‘they’* are the disciples and Jesus. In our last section we saw that they headed for Jerusalem and came across the fig tree. Once the teaching concerning this tree was over they continued towards their goal which was Jerusalem. In life we must not be deterred from the goal that the Father has set for us. On our walk on the narrow path events will occur (like the fig tree) but these must not prevent us from marching forward.

Once he arrived Jesus *‘was walking in the temple’*. He went to the most important section of Jerusalem – His Father’s house which he had ‘cleaned out’ a little while ago. It did not take long before *‘the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to Him’*. We can see by this that they were on the ‘look out’ for Jesus. Let’s not forget that they had decided to do away with him (11:18). When they saw Him they asked the following questions:

²⁸ and *began* saying to Him, “By what authority are You doing these things, or who gave You this authority to do these things?”

These two questions really have the same answer. ‘*By what authority*’ or ‘*who gave you this authority*’ sound the same. What they wanted to know is ‘who gave you permission to act this way and where did you get the capacity to do it’. Let’s keep in mind that THEY thought that THEY were the religious authority and since Jesus had not obtained THEIR authority then they believed that he did not have permission to act the way he did.

2. Jesus’ response (11:29,30)

²⁹ And Jesus said to them, “I will ask you one question, and you answer Me, and *then* I will tell you by what authority I do these things. ³⁰ Was the baptism of John from heaven, or from men? Answer Me.”

This is another incredible example of the wisdom that Christ had. He could have told them the answer – ‘It is with my Father’s authority that I do these things’ but Jesus wanted to go deeper and teach them about themselves. So instead of directly answering them he asks them to answer his question first promising that he would answer their question. You see the religious authorities wanted to trap Jesus with their trick question but the tables have turned and Jesus will set his own trap and win.

³⁰ Was the baptism of John from heaven, or from men? Answer Me.”

If asked, the vast majority of the common folk that saw and heard John would have automatically answered – from heaven. The crowds thought greatly of John because Christ had revealed who he really was:

Matthew 11:7-10

(7)As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to behold? A reed shaken by the wind?

(8)Why then did you go out? To see a man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, those who wear soft raiment are in kings' houses.

(9)Why then did you go out? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.

(10)This is he of whom it is written, 'Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee.'

(RSV)

Why was it so difficult for the religious elite to see what was so evident? Sometimes the answer is difficult to accept for Jesus had already told the religious leaders that they were spiritually blind (Mat. 15:14). How difficult it is to accept our faults, how blind we often are to our personal sins! The question Jesus asked was quite simple to answer – from heaven or from men.

3. The authorities reaction (11:31,32)

³¹ They *began* reasoning among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say, ‘Then why did you not believe him?’ ³² But shall we say, ‘From men?’”—they were afraid of the people, for everyone considered John to have been a real prophet.

The word ‘*reasoning*’ (LOGIZOMAI) means: To take an inventory, to estimate, to think. Confronted by this seemingly simple question they began to seriously think of all the consequences of their answer. The more they thought the more they understood that this was a ‘trap’ question. There were two possibilities”

“If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say, ‘Then why did you not believe him?’

If they answered ‘*from heaven*’ then the logical conclusion is that they should have accepted that John was the forerunner of the Messiah which would be Jesus. They would have to conclude that they were wrong and would have to bow down before Jesus and worship him.

³² But shall we say, ‘From men?’”—they were afraid of the people, for everyone considered John to have been a real prophet.

On the other hand if they said that the baptism of John was not from heaven there were also consequences that they did not want to face – the people. They knew that the people thought that John was a prophet. They had ignored him but not so with the common people. There would have been a riot if they would have spoken against John. So what are they to do? Even today when we willingly deny the truth we may try to reason things but to no avail. Let us never be spiritually blind like they were. May we joyfully accept the Lord’s authority over our lives.

4. Jesus’ final response (11:33)

³³ Answering Jesus, they said, “We do not know.” And Jesus said to them, “Nor will I tell you by what authority I do these things.”

Having thought and discussed about it, seeing that one way or another they were 'caught' with not having a good answer they simply said: *'We do not know'*. The whole point of Jesus asking them a question was that they would reflect and come to the conclusion that he truly is from the Father and that the Father gives him authority to do all these things. But they didn't want to lose face, their pride had taken over. By not taking this opportunity they missed the chance given to them to get right with God. Are we passing up opportunities that God places in front of us? Do we let our pride get in the way?

By saying *'Nor will I tell you by what authority I do these things'* Jesus manifests that he actually had the 'upper hand'. They had come to try to catch him one way or another but Christ turned their own 'tables' upside down as he did with the sellers in the temple.

CONCLUSION:

1. Before coming to Christ with our complaints and grievances let's make certain that our heart is pure before him.
2. When Christ places his finger upon a sin that we have, let us be humble enough to accept the truth and repent.

The gospel of Mark
51 – The parable of the tenants
12:1-12

And He began to speak to them in parables: “A man PLANTED A VINEYARD AND PUT A WALL AROUND IT, AND DUG A VAT UNDER THE WINE PRESS AND BUILT A TOWER, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey. ² At the *harvest* time he sent a slave to the vine-growers, in order to receive *some* of the produce of the vineyard from the vine-growers. ³ They took him, and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. ⁴ Again he sent them another slave, and they wounded him in the head, and treated him shamefully. ⁵ And he sent another, and that one they killed; and *so with* many others, beating some and killing others. ⁶ He had one more *to send*, a beloved son; he sent him last *of all* to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ ⁷ But those vine-growers said to one another, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours!’ ⁸ They took him, and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard. ⁹ What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vine-growers, and will give the vineyard to others. ¹⁰ Have you not even read this

Scripture:

**‘THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED,
THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER *stone*;
¹¹ THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD,
AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES’?’**

¹² And they were seeking to seize Him, and *yet* they feared the people, for they understood that He spoke the parable against them. And *so* they left Him and went away.

(NASB)

1. The parable of the tenants (12:1-9)

One must know what a parable is and its usage before continuing. The Oxford dictionary defines a parable as: a simple story used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson, as told by Jesus in the Gospels. What we will see in this section is Jesus telling a story (real or invented it does not matter) to bring his audience to understand a spiritual lesson.

And He began to speak to them in parables: “A man PLANTED A VINEYARD AND PUT A WALL AROUND IT, AND DUG A VAT UNDER THE WINE PRESS AND BUILT A TOWER, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey. ² At the *harvest* time he sent a slave to the vine-growers, in order to receive *some* of the produce of the vineyard from the vine-growers. ³ They took him, and beat him and sent him away empty-handed.

⁴ Again he sent them another slave, and they wounded him in the head, and treated him shamefully. ⁵ And he sent another, and that one they killed; and *so with* many others, beating some and killing others. ⁶ He had one more *to send*, a beloved son; he sent him last *of all* to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' ⁷ But those vine-growers said to one another, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours!' ⁸ They took him, and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard. ⁹ What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vine-growers, and will give the vineyard to others.

It is written that Jesus '*began to speak to them in parables*'. The '*them*' refers to the religious elite that had just questioned his authority (Mark 11:27-33). You can see this new section either as a continuing confrontation or a continuing teaching hoping that some will come to the truth. What I see is that Christ continues to communicate spiritual truth to his adversaries. May we never cease to hope to see family, friends and people in general come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

This parable must be heard in the context of Jesus dying in a few days and trying to reach the hearts of these men. Remember that they are very familiar with Jewish history and well versed in spiritual matter and the tradition of the elders. They should have understood both the story that Jesus was telling them and the conclusion that he had drawn.

Before we continue it must clearly be understood that Jesus is speaking concerning Israel. It is clear from the Old Testament that God considered Israel as his vine that he planted himself.

Psalms 80:8,9

(8) Thou didst bring a vine out of Egypt; thou didst drive out the nations and plant it.

(9) Thou didst clear the ground for it; it took deep root and filled the land.

(RSV)

Jeremiah 2:21

Yet I planted you a choice vine, wholly of pure seed. How then have you turned degenerate and become a wild vine?

(RSV)

Another section that you must absolutely read is Isaiah 5:1-7 which describes the disappointment God has towards Israel his vine. Once you have read this section you will easily notice the direct links between what Jesus is saying and what the prophet Isaiah wrote. It is undeniable that Christ makes a direct reference to the state of Israel and how it discarded the will and exhortations of God.

(v.1)...“A man PLANTED A VINEYARD AND PUT A WALL AROUND IT, AND DUG A VAT UNDER THE WINE PRESS AND BUILT A TOWER, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey.

Here we see the tender care that the Lord God had for his vine. He first determined a place to plant his vine (in Palestine). Then he *‘put a wall around it’*. That speaks of his protection, how he guarded Israel from its enemies. He then *‘dug a vat under the wine press’*. He provided everything needed for its growth and well-being. Finally he *‘built a tower’*. A high place for looking outward to be prepared in case of an attack. Every detail mentioned is to manifest the tender care and love God had for his people. All he did was for their benefit. Once this was done, once everything was in order and the vine had taken roots in its vineyard the owner *‘rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey’*. God left the administration of the vineyard to his people and went away.

² At the *harvest* time he sent a slave to the vine-growers, in order to receive *some* of the produce of the vineyard from the vine-growers.

Harvest time is the time when the vine should have grapes that are mature and ready for the taking. This speaks of the time that Israel should have been mature, bearing spiritual fruits, and ready for the second part of God’s plan which deals with establishing his kingdom on earth. Remember that the Lord God had done everything so that his vine could grow, be secure and well taken care of. The owner of the vine (God) was expecting a harvest *‘in order to receive some produce of the vineyard’*. So he sends a slave to the vine-growers. This represents the Lord God sending prophets and God fearing people to His vine Israel.

³ They took him, and beat him and sent him away empty-handed.

This was the vine-grower’s response to the owner of the vine sending someone to get his share. They had no respect for the person *‘beat him and sent him away empty-handed’*. In other words they rebelled against the owner of the land.

⁴ Again he sent them another slave, and they wounded him in the head, and treated him shamefully.

So the owner is patient and he sends another messenger but when he got there *'they wounded him in the head, and treated him shamefully'*. Notice that the treatment the second messenger got was worse than the first one. The first one got beaten and the second one was wounded in the head and was treated shamefully. This manifests that the vine-growers despised more and more the owner of the vineyard. This manifests Israel that was growing further and further away from its God, how they became even violent against the messengers that were sent to them.

⁵ And he sent another, and that one they killed; and so with many others, beating some and killing others.

Jesus continues his parable and introduces new factors to his story. Not only do the vine-growers wound the messengers that were sent now they kill them! Did Israel kill prophets that were sent for them to repent of their ways – yes and this is what Jesus said:

Luke 11:47,48

(47) Woe to you! for you build the tombs of the prophets whom your fathers killed.

(48) So you are witnesses and consent to the deeds of your fathers; for they killed them, and you build their tombs.

(RSV)

Also notice that *'and so with many others'* by this we see that the Lord God perseveres and send more and more servants to warn his vine about their spiritual lack. May He be blessed for His patience and perseverance! This reveals the heart of Israel that is growing harder and harder – reacting so violently against their Lord.

⁶ He had one more to send, a beloved son; he sent him last of all to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.'

The parable now speaks of the owner who decided to send his own beloved son. This is a clear picture of God the Father sending His beloved Son into the world. The father in the story thought that the vine-workers would never do any harm to his son for *'They will respect my son'*. In real life Israel should have respected their Messiah, they should have greeted him with respect and dignity – worshipping Him as their divine Savior.

⁷ But those vine-growers said to one another, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours!' ⁸ They took him, and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard.

This is another prophetic picture concerning Israel. In our parable the vine-growers seeing the heir (the son) believed that by killing him they will become owners of the land! This perfectly reflects how the vine-growers (the spiritual leaders in general) also thought. They did not really want God to rule over them and by getting rid of all the messengers (prophets) and now the heir (the Messiah) they think they will continue to rule as they desire. So what did the vine-growers do?

⁸ They took him, and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard.

Not only did they kill the beloved son but they also *'threw him out of the vineyard'*. This is exactly what the religious elite will do the Son of God. They will take him, then they will kill him (on the cross) and they will also *'threw him out'* because he will die just outside of Jerusalem on mount Golgotha. No one, unless they are spiritually blind, could not have understood the parable Jesus had spoken.

⁹ What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vine-growers, and will give the vineyard to others.

This is the conclusion or the spiritual lesson of the parable. It tells them what will happen to them. Once the vine-growers go as far as killing the son of the owner he will unleash his fury against them.

(v.9)...He will come and destroy the vine-growers, and will give the vineyard to others.

The taking care of God's kingdom will be taken away from Israel and he *'will give the vineyard to others'*. These *'others'* are the Gentiles (for there are only two groups of people on earth).

Acts 13:46

Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. (RSV)

We are now in the times of the Gentiles where the gospel is preached to all Jews and non-Jews. All can now enter into a new covenant with God. A covenant sealed with the blood of Christ shed on the cross, a covenant which is perfect and eternal (Heb. 10:10-14). This was a promise that the Lord God had made to Abraham that through him ALL NATIONS would be blessed (Gen. 12:3).

2. The question (12:10,11)

**¹⁰ Have you not even read this Scripture:
'THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED,
THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER *stone*;
¹¹ THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD,
AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES'?"**

Then, as though to seal his parable, Jesus asks a question. This question points directly to the Holy Scriptures. Since they were the teachers of Israel they knew the Torah very well. Jesus is using the Words of God to 'drive a nail' in the story. He is telling them that they are the ones the vineyard owner (God) is talking about. He is also telling them that he is the '*chief corner stone*' that the builders had rejected! A picture of them rejecting the '*corner stone*' that the Lord had placed for Israel.

3. The reaction (12:12)

¹² And they were seeking to seize Him, and yet they feared the people, for they understood that He spoke the parable against them. And so they left Him and went away.

They didn't understand anything, their minds were blinded. They wanted to '*seize him*' but again we see that '*they feared the people*'. The Scriptures testify that '*they understood that He spoke the parable against them*'. What is so unbelievable was that they understood yet they were so spiritually blind that they rejected Christ. Something in them burned against Jesus and whatever proof was set before them they disregarded it.

CONCLUSION:

1. May our hearts be open to the Messiahship of Christ.
2. May we serve the coming King – God's beloved Son.

The gospel of Mark
52 – Jesus and paying taxes
12:13-17

¹³ Then they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Him in order to trap Him in a statement. ¹⁴ They came and said to Him, “Teacher, we know that You are truthful and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay a poll-tax to Caesar, or not? ¹⁵ Shall we pay or shall we not pay?” But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, “Why are you testing Me? Bring Me a denarius to look at.” ¹⁶ They brought *one*. And He said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?” And they said to Him, “Caesar’s.” ¹⁷ And Jesus said to them, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” And they were amazed at Him.
(NASB)

In our last section we left the religious elite wanting to seize Jesus but since they were afraid of the crowds they refrained from arresting him. By the first verse we can imagine that they went and gathered together and thought about what they could do.

1. The trick question (12:13-15a)

¹³ Then they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Him in order to trap Him in a statement. ¹⁴ They came and said to Him, “Teacher, we know that You are truthful and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay a poll-tax to Caesar, or not? ¹⁵ Shall we pay or shall we not pay?”

It seems that the opponents of Christ thought of another attack. They knew that people in general hated to have to pay taxes to the Roman Empire so their trick question would deal with this subject. If Jesus would say that they should pay taxes to Rome then people would rise-up against him. If he would say not to pay taxes then he could be accused of sedition towards Rome. So they thought that this was a win-win situation for them.

It is written that *‘they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Him’*. It is incredible how opposing forces can team-up and be in accord to fight Jesus together! You see the Pharisees and the Herodians normally were common enemies. The Pharisees had a disdain for Rome and hoped that God would establish his kingdom on earth. They loved and taught the tradition of the elders and did not want to be polluted with the ways of Rome. On the opposite of the spectrum you had the Herodians. This was a political party that sympathised with Rome. They followed Herod who was the representative of Rome for that region.

They welcomed the reign of Rome and also accepted the Roman culture. In everyday life these two groups of people detested each other but for this cause, because Christ was a threat to both groups, they decided to work together to have victory over him. This is so even today, various groups who are drastically different will join forces to try to demolish any Judeo-Christian belief and walk of life. This was their plan *'to trap him in a statement'*. If they could catch Jesus saying something wrong then they could use this against him. This was their trick question:

¹⁴ They came and said to Him, “Teacher, we know that You are truthful and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay a poll-tax to Caesar, or not? ¹⁵ Shall we pay or shall we not pay?”

They first flatter Jesus with four statements. We should always be very careful when people who normally do not like us speak well of us in such an unusual way. The first flattery is *'we know that you are truthful'*. How devilish of them! If Jesus was *'truthful'* (ALETHES) meaning: true as in not concealing, why would they not listen to him in the first place? The second flattery is *'and defer to no one'*. The word *'defer'* (MELO) means: to be of interest to. Since Jesus was truthful he did not take in consideration anyone or any party when he talked. He did not say one thing to a certain person and something else to another. This is a rare quality that we all should possess. The third flattery is *'you are not partial to any'*. This is a continuation of the second flattery but gives a sense that Jesus does not look to or regard certain people for his own benefit either. The fourth flattery was *'but teach the way of God in truth'*. Notice that all four flatteries are actually true. They were not flatteries because flatteries exaggerate and embellish and this was not the case. Jesus was all that they said he was. But because they had twisted evil minds they thought that flattery was a way to break his defense against them! So here is the question.

Is it lawful to pay a poll-tax to Caesar, or not? ¹⁵ Shall we pay or shall we not pay?”

The *'poll-tax'* was a tax that everyone who had been listed on a Roman census had to pay. The question dealt with how Jesus felt towards the Roman Empire and their rule over them. Did he embrace them or did he reject their authority? We must remember that Israel was a theocracy – God ruled over them as supreme Lord. But Rome was a dictatorship – Man ruled over them. The poll-tax was not a great one, quite small actually but all women between the ages of 12 and 65 and all men between 14 and 65 had to pay it. As I said before, the people in general despised paying this tax because for them it meant that they accepted 'Caesar' as their ruler. It was like paying a tribute or giving an offering to him which would be idolatry. So, Jesus, *'shall we pay or shall we not pay'?*

2. The amazing answer (12:15b-17)

But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, “Why are you testing Me? Bring Me a denarius to look at.”¹⁶ They brought *one*. And He said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?” And they said to Him, “Caesar’s.”¹⁷ And Jesus said to them, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” And they were amazed at Him.

Notice that when the Pharisees and the Herodians approached Jesus they used flattery against him. Jesus being truthful and not partial did not react as they did for he began answering them by reflecting upon them who they really were. Jesus ‘*knowing their hypocrisy*’ (HUPOKRISIS) meaning: to act, actor, deceit. Jesus could see right through them. He knew that they were trying to fool him and planned to use his answer against him. May we also remember that we can not ‘play the fool’ with Christ for he can see right through us! He asked them ‘*Why are you testing Me?*’ The word ‘*testing*’ (PEIRAZO) means: to entice, to test. This was no friendly discussion. They were not really interested in the true answer but were looking for any answer to use against him.

So Jesus asks ‘*bring me a denarius to look at*’. A denarius was the standard silver coin in the days of Caesar Augustus. It was a normal day’s wage for a soldier or a day laborer. This was the coin that was used to pay tribute to Caesar. That is why Jesus asked for a denarius.

¹⁶ They brought *one*. And He said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?” And they said to Him, “Caesar’s.”

This denarius bore the image of the emperor and the inscription "Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus" on one side and "*pontifex maximus*" on the other. The Jews viewed the term of "*pontifex maximus*" (chief bridge-builder) in the sense of high priest. You can understand why both inscriptions were offensive to them. So Jesus asks ‘*Whose likeness and inscription is this*’. The word ‘*likeness*’ (EIKON) means: likeness, representation or image. The word ‘*inscription*’ (PIGRAPHE) means: superscription, inscription. For the coin had a stamped picture of Augustus Caesar and a phrased describing him. The answer was quite simple for they did not hesitate and said ‘*Caesar’s*’. It may be that they thought ‘we got him – he’s going to say that we should pay to Caesar’. That’s all that they would have needed!

¹⁷ And Jesus said to them, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” And they were amazed at Him.

In his great wisdom Jesus answered perfectly. If something belongs to somebody – give it to him and if something belongs to God – give it to Him also! No one could refute such an answer. There are some Christians today who refuse to pay taxes to their governments because they are worldly and not of God. This teaching manifests that even if we would live in a country as mean and cruel as Israel which was under the ‘boot’ of Rome we still would need to pay what was asked.

I wonder if sometimes, as Christians, we forget to give ‘*God the things that are God’s*’ with our time, energy, capacities, monies and so forth? Do we preciousely keep OUR part and openly neglect GOD’S part?

‘And they were amazed at Him’. They just could not believe what they had just heard! They had mastered a ‘win-win’ plan. They were confident that they had Jesus in the palm of their hands for whatever way he chose he would automatically lose. Yet with a few words they had been humiliated before everyone that was there.

CONCLUSION:

1. Fools will always fail in their relationship with Christ.

The gospel of Mark
53 – Marriage and the resurrection
12:18-27

¹⁸ Some Sadducees (who say that there is no resurrection) came to Jesus, and *began* questioning Him, saying, ¹⁹“Teacher, Moses wrote for us that IF A MAN’S BROTHER DIES and leaves behind a wife AND LEAVES NO CHILD, HIS BROTHER SHOULD MARRY THE WIFE AND RAISE UP CHILDREN TO HIS BROTHER. ²⁰ There were seven brothers; and the first took a wife, and died leaving no children. ²¹ The second one married her, and died leaving behind no children; and the third likewise; ²² and *so* all seven left no children. Last of all the woman died also. ²³ In the resurrection, when they rise again, which one’s wife will she be? For all seven had married her.” ²⁴ Jesus said to them, “Is this not the reason you are mistaken, that you do not understand the Scriptures or the power of God? ²⁵ For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. ²⁶ But regarding the fact that the dead rise again, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the *passage* about *the burning* bush, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB’? ²⁷ He is not the God of the dead, but of the living; you are greatly mistaken.”
(NASB)

1. The Sadducees and their trick question (12:18-23)

Before we begin our section I must explain who the Sadducees were. First of all the Sadducees were a religious group or school of thought. One of their main points was that they did not believe (contrary to the Pharisees) that the oral law was a divine revelation from God. They believed that only the written Law (the Law of Moses) had divine authority. They also did not believe in the resurrection after death, or in angels and spirits which the Pharisees believed (to their credit). In other words they were very much in rivalry with the Pharisees. In general the Sadducees were wealthier than the Pharisees and even if they were less numerous this gave them political power. It must be noted that Jesus confronted the Pharisees on more occasions than he did with the Sadducees.

¹⁸ Some Sadducees (who say that there is no resurrection) came to Jesus, and *began* questioning Him, saying, ¹⁹“Teacher, Moses wrote for us that IF A MAN’S BROTHER DIES and leaves behind a wife AND LEAVES NO CHILD, HIS BROTHER SHOULD MARRY THE WIFE AND RAISE UP CHILDREN TO HIS BROTHER. ²⁰ There were seven brothers; and the first took a wife, and died leaving no children.

²¹ The second one married her, and died leaving behind no children; and the third likewise; ²² and so all seven left no children. Last of all the woman died also. ²³ In the resurrection, when they rise again, which one's wife will she be? For all seven had married her."

In our last section we see that the Pharisees (12:13) came to Jesus with what I call a 'trick question' and they failed to trap him. This was a golden opportunity for the Sadducees to prove that they were smarter than their rivals the Pharisees. So they also came to Jesus with their own ruse.

¹⁹ "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that IF A MAN'S BROTHER DIES and leaves behind a wife AND LEAVES NO CHILD, HIS BROTHER SHOULD MARRY THE WIFE AND RAISE UP CHILDREN TO HIS BROTHER.

What the Sadducees were referring to is found in Deut. 25:5-10. Up to this point, what they said was true. They did not mention that a man did not have to do this if he really did not want to. It was an insult for the widow and shunned upon but he did have a choice.

²⁰ There were seven brothers; and the first took a wife, and died leaving no children. ²¹ The second one married her, and died leaving behind no children; and the third likewise; ²² and so all seven left no children. Last of all the woman died also.

As you may notice the story that they invent is so outrageous that it is impossible to believe – even though it is a story! A woman marries one man who dies and then marries his brother who also dies and so on until all seven brothers pass away without leaving her with child. As their premise it is just plain senseless. It is a ridiculous story because they don't believe in an afterlife and think they can discount it with this fairy-tale.

²³ In the resurrection, when they rise again, which one's wife will she be? For all seven had married her."

They finally come up with their trick question. You must remember that the Sadducees DO NOT believe in the resurrection. If all brothers had this woman for a wife once they rise from the dead who will be her husband? Will it be the first, second or all the way down to the seventh husband? I can imagine a grin on their face thinking that they will prove Jesus wrong. If they can do this he will be declared a false prophet and people will stop following him.

2. The fundamental reason for spiritual mistakes (12:24)

²⁴ Jesus said to them, “Is this not the reason you are mistaken, that you do not understand the Scriptures or the power of God?”

This is a very important verse not only for the Sadducees but for EVERYONE to understand. There are so many false teachers, prophets, pastors and so forth today simply because they perform the same mistake as these men did. First of all Jesus tells them straight out *‘Is this not the reason you are mistaken’*. Jesus tells them ‘you are wrong – totally wrong’. At this point I can also imagine their faces growing long and their eyebrows sinking over their eyes! Jesus does not fool around with TRUTH. He continues with what grounds he declares that they are mistaken. There are two points that he brings forth.

The first one is *‘you do not understand the Scriptures’*. When Jesus speaks of the Scriptures (GRAPHE) meaning: document, holy writ he is speaking of ALL of what we call the Old Testament. For Jesus quotes not only from the books of Moses but also the Prophets which the Sadducees do not believe have authority. So they were mistaken because they did not use the entire Scripture to base their belief on. In other words they chose the section(s) that they wanted and left out the section(s) that were unfavorable to them. Still today we see this all the time. People speak in the name of the Lord but use the verses to prove what they think instead of leaving the Scriptures speak for itself. How shameful this is and Jesus openly condemns those who do this.

Matthew 15:14

Let them alone; they are blind guides. And if a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit."

(RSV)

Matthew 23:15

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you traverse sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.

(RSV)

Is it important for us to *‘understand the Scriptures’*. Of course it is. It is vitally important so we do not get swayed by smooth talkers.

The second ground for them being mistaken is that they did not know *‘the power of God’*. Not only did they not know the Scriptures but they did not understand *‘the power of God’*. In other words they limited their concept of God and made for themselves a little god that

was able to do only certain little things. For them the miracle of life after death just could not be. They believe that angels and spirits don't exist because God is not that powerful! We may not go as far as that but how many times do we believe that a particular situation can not be resolved. –We also limit God in our thinking. The power of the God of Israel is limitless. I hope you believe this!

Psalms 115:3

**Our God is in the heavens; he does whatever he pleases.
(RSV)**

Psalms 135:6

**Whatever the LORD pleases he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all
deeps.
(RSV)**

3. Jesus answers the Sadducees (12:25-27)

²⁵ For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. ²⁶ But regarding the fact that the dead rise again, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the *passage* about *the burning bush*, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB’? ²⁷ He is not the God of the dead, but of the living; you are greatly mistaken.”

The answer is quite simple. People ‘*neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven*’. One of the purposes of marriage is procreation (having children). Since Adam and Eve were under a curse and were condemned to die, procreation was necessary. On the other hand spirits (good or bad) are beings created to live eternally – they never die. Because of this there is no procreation. This is the point that Jesus is bringing. Once we rise from the dead there is no marriage, no need for procreation since people have now been given celestial bodies (1 Cor. 15:40) that are somewhat like the angels in heaven. They had it all wrong!

But Jesus does not stop there, he continues his explanation and goes even further.

²⁶ But regarding the fact that the dead rise again, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the *passage* about *the burning bush*, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB’? ? ²⁷ He is not the God of the dead, but of the living; you are greatly mistaken.”

Notice that Jesus will use a verse that is found in the Books of Moses (the only ones that they thought had any authority). He will show them how little they actually knew of the Scriptures! They gloated about their knowledge! There is a difference between knowing and understanding. One can recite entire books of the Bible yet understand very little of what he knows.

Jesus makes a statement '*He is not the God of the dead, but of the living; you are greatly mistaken.*' Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were not dead but were alive with the Lord God. Our God is life and gives life. Our God gives life even unto those who have physically died (Rev. 20:12,13). For the second time Jesus says '*you are mistaken*' but adds the word '*greatly*'. The Sadducees really had no clue about what they were speaking about.

CONCLUSION:

1. Don't think that you are smarter than everyone else – you will be surprised!
2. Use the entire Scripture on which to base your theological understanding and not only the sections that you prefer.
3. Allow Christ to reprove you when you are mistaken.
4. There is no marriage after death.

The gospel of Mark
54 – The greatest commandment
12:28-34

²⁸ One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, “What commandment is the foremost of all?”²⁹ Jesus answered, “The foremost is, ‘HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; ³⁰ AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.’ ³¹ The second is this, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” ³² The scribe said to Him, “Right, Teacher; You have truly stated that HE IS ONE, AND THERE IS NO ONE ELSE BESIDES HIM; ³³ AND TO LOVE HIM WITH ALL THE HEART AND WITH ALL THE UNDERSTANDING AND WITH ALL THE STRENGTH, AND TO LOVE ONE’S NEIGHBOR AS HIMSELF, is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.” ³⁴ When Jesus saw that he had answered intelligently, He said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” After that, no one would venture to ask Him any more questions.
(NASB)

1. The scribe and his question. (12:28)

There are many major players in this gospel: Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, teachers of the Law. In our present section we have another group who are called the ‘Scribes’. Who are they and what do they do? We can find the history of the scribes from the times of King David to the times of Jesus.

1. It first of all seems that they may have had some sort of duty to record military events (Judges 5:14).
2. The scribes (SOPHERIM meaning: to write, to set in order, to count) later filled an office with King David and Solomon (2 Sam. 8:17; 20:25; 1 Kings 4:3).
3. We can also see them as treasurers and managers of the King’s monies (2 Kings 12:10).
4. In the days of Hezekiah the scribes transcribed old records and interpreted the Law (Jer. 8:8).
5. After the captivity this office became more dominant as they were the ones who preserved the Sacred books, the laws, the hymns and prophecies of the past (Neh. 13:13)

6. With time 'the words of the scribes' were honored above the Law! It became a greater crime to offend them than to offend the Law! This became the first step in annulling the commands of God in favor of the traditions of the elders (Mark 7:13).
7. They evaded the Law and tampered with the conscience of men (Mat. 15:1-6; 23:16-23)
8. They and the Pharisees were constantly denounced by the Lord (Mat. 7:29).

(These 8 points were taken from Smith's Bible Dictionary)

²⁸ One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, "What commandment is the foremost of all?"

The word "arguing" (SUZETEO) means: to investigate, discuss, reason, dispute. What the scribe was hearing was the discussion between the Sadducees and Jesus concerning marriage after the resurrection. We can gather that this scribe was present when the Sadducees confronted Jesus with their 'trick question'. Being a witness of this and 'recognizing that He had answered them well' he also wanted to talk to the Lord. Now the word 'recognizing' (EIDO) means: to know, to be aware, behold. So he knew that Jesus was right and because of this he wanted to know Jesus' opinion concerning a question he had in mind. We will later see that contrary to the Sadducees this scribe had good intentions.

(v.28)... "What commandment is the foremost of all?"

Since the Torah was at the heart of Jewish life it was natural for this man to ask this question. There were 613 different laws in the Old Testament but which one was the most important? Which one stood above all the others? Now the word 'foremost' (PROTOS) means: best, chief, first of all. So this scribe wanted to be certain concerning the most important of all the commandments. If the answer was important for the scribe it should be just as important, even more, for all true believers today. So let us listen to the answer Christ gave.

2. Jesus' answer (12:29-31)

²⁹ Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; ³⁰ AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.'

³¹ The second is this, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

Jesus uses the same Greek word for '*foremost*' (PROTOS) so we know that his answer is in line with what the scribe is asking. There can be no mistake about it. For the first part of His answer Jesus quotes Deut. 6:4,5.

The first part of the greatest commandment deals with who God is: '*The Lord God is one Lord*'. This speaks of the 'oneness' of God, that God is a single being and no one else is like Him. The Israelites were surrounded by countries who worshipped different gods and idols. By giving what is called the '*Shema Yisrael*' *the Lord God identifies Himself as the only true God. Jesus emphasises the importance of knowing God before you can do anything else in relationship with Him.*

The second part of the greatest commandment deals with our love for God. Notice that it is written '*with all your*' on three occasions. This term comes from the Greek word HOLOS which means: complete, all, throughout. The greatest commandment deals with the ONLY God and also our love towards Him. We are to be 'complete' in our worship towards Him. Our relationship with God must envelop our entire being. We must give Him our fullest, complete and total devotion. God does not accept 'part-time' worshippers!

Jesus goes on to explain the different aspects of life where the Lord God is to be loved. It must be said that the word 'love' is difficult to explain. May we just say that loving someone is giving our whole-hearted attention to him. Our entire being is to be involved with our deep attachment to God. It begins '*with all your heart*'. This manifests where our devotion rests. The heart is portrayed as the seat of all of our emotions. We were created as emotional beings and we must encompass this aspect of who we are in our relationship with God. The second is '*with all your soul*'. This refers to who we are for we are living souls. All of me (all the different parts which makes me) should love the Lord God. The third is '*with all your mind*'. This speaks of my intellect, my thoughts and so forth. And finally '*with all your strength*', with all the capacities that the Lord has allowed you to have. This gives the idea that I should use my God-given gifts and capacities to manifest how important God is for me.

³¹ The second is this, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

Notice that the scribe asked for the first and greatest of all the commandments. Also notice that Jesus gives him more than he asked for! Not satisfied with teaching what is the greatest commandment Jesus moves on to explain the second greatest commandment which deals with people.

It is relatively easy to ‘love God’ and not care about people around us! That’s what most of the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the scribes were doing. It is very easy to be comfortable in our own little world while shutting out the rest of the planet. So Jesus knowing that a balance is needed includes a second commandment of greatest importance – our relationship with others.

The word ‘love’ in relationship with our neighbor is the same as the one used in relationship with the Lord God. It is a deep attachment which touches our intellect and also our volition. The second commandment deals with our ‘neighbor’. Remember when one asked Christ ‘Who is my neighbor?’ in Luke 10:29-37. This parable teaches us that our neighbor is actually anyone who is next to you – whoever he is. Now we are given the standard of what our love should be for our neighbor. We need to love that person just as much as we love ourselves. Remember what Jesus said:

Matthew 7:12

So whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.

(RSV)

3. The scribe’s response (12:32,33)

³² The scribe said to Him, “Right, Teacher; You have truly stated that HE IS ONE, AND THERE IS NO ONE ELSE BESIDES HIM; ³³ AND TO LOVE HIM WITH ALL THE HEART AND WITH ALL THE UNDERSTANDING AND WITH ALL THE STRENGTH, AND TO LOVE ONE’S NEIGHBOR AS HIMSELF, is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

The scribe acknowledges that Christ answered wisely. What I would like for you to notice is the last phrase: ‘*is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices*’. This is so important for us to understand. The Lord God desires our love and devotion and that we treat others just as we love ourselves MORE than all the sacrifices one could offer to receive forgiveness for his lack of love of God and his neighbor. Remember what Samuel said to King Saul:

1 Samuel 15:22,23

(22)And Samuel said, "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

**(23) For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has also rejected you from being king."
(RSV)**

4. Jesus' declaration (12:34)

³⁴ When Jesus saw that he had answered intelligently, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." After that, no one would venture to ask Him any more questions.

The declaration of Jesus is unique in the gospels. He sees that the scribe answered '*intelligently*' (NOUNECHOS) meaning: intellect, the mind, mindfully. His reasoning coincided with the thoughts of Christ so Jesus approved. Because the scribe accepted the teachings of Christ on this matter Jesus replied '*You are not far from the kingdom of God*'. The word '*far*' (MAKRAN) means: at a distance. This gives the idea that the scribe was near the kingdom of God. He was not yet IN the kingdom for he had not accepted Christ as the Messiah. There are people that agree with most of the Christian doctrines but for some reason have not taken a stand for Christ and follow Him. They are near but not yet IN the kingdom. Have you made up your mind? Is Christ your Messiah and have you repented before him?

CONCLUSION:

1. Do you practice the first and second greatest commandment?
2. Are you NEAR or IN the kingdom of God?

The gospel of Mark
55 – Whose son is the Christ?
12:35-40

³⁵ And Jesus *began* to say, as He taught in the temple, “How *is it that* the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? ³⁶ David himself said in the Holy Spirit, ‘THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, “SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET.”’

³⁷ David himself calls Him ‘Lord’; so in what sense is He his son?” And the large crowd enjoyed listening to Him.

³⁸ In His teaching He was saying: “Beware of the scribes who like to walk around in long robes, and *like* respectful greetings in the market places, ³⁹ and chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets, ⁴⁰ who devour widows’ houses, and for appearance’s sake offer long prayers; these will receive greater condemnation.”
(NASB)

1. Jesus’ teaching concerning the Christ. (12:35-37a)

In our last few sections we have seen the Pharisees, Sadducees and scribes come to Jesus and ask him questions. What we now see is the opposite. Jesus is asking and no one seems able to answer!

³⁵ And Jesus *began* to say, as He taught in the temple,

It was accustomed for Jesus to take every opportunity to teach people concerning the kingdom of God. He preached to masses as with the Sermon on the Mount (Mat. 5-7) and on the last day of the Feast of the Tabernacles (John 7:37-39). But he also preached to individuals like the Samaritan woman (John 4:1-42) and the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11). This time Jesus teaches in the temple. It was normal for Jesus to do this. As we will see later, when he will get arrested he will openly say that he taught daily in the temple (Mark 14:49).

(v.35b)... “How *is it that* the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? ³⁶ David himself said in the Holy Spirit, ‘THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, “SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET.”’

³⁷ David himself calls Him ‘Lord’; so in what sense is He his son?”

The question is a difficult one. The religious elite understood that one day a descendant of David would re-establish a God given throne in Jerusalem. Some even thought that this king to be would actually be the Messiah. The problem deals with the relation between David and the Christ (which means Anointed = Messiah). How could the Messiah be both lesser than David (being his descendant) and yet at the same time be greater than David (being his Lord)? Here Jesus quotes Ps. 110:1. This is a Messianic prophecy, notice that there are two LORDS *'The Lord said to my Lord'*. Who was David's Lord if not God the Father? So God the Father spoke to another Lord but who is he if not God the Son. So the father told the Son to *'sit at my right hand until I put Your enemies beneath your feet'*. Jesus today is sitting at the Father's right hand (Rom. 8:34, Eph. 1:20, Col. 3:1, Heb. 1:3, 1 Peter 3:22). So Jesus asks *'in what sense is He his son?'* Now the Pharisees (Mat. 22:41) were not able to answer Jesus' question. More than that the religious elite was so humiliated before the crowds that Matthew tells us the following:

Matthew 22:46

And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did any one dare to ask him any more questions.

(RSV)

2. The response of the crowd (12:37b)

Let's not forget that all of this happened in the open at the temple. Jesus lives in the light. He does not hide as we sometimes do. He is not afraid to bring the truth forward and also teach lessons to those who are for Him and also to those who oppose Him.

(v.37b)... And the large crowd enjoyed listening to Him.

The crowd *'enjoyed'* (HEDEOS) meaning: sweetly, pleasure, gladly *'listening to Him'*. Why would they do that in this particular case? I believe it is because Jesus had the upper hand with the Pharisees. He *'shut them down'* with one question. We must remember that in general people were afraid of the Pharisees and the Sanhedrin because of the power they had over them. Remember the story of the blind man that was cured by Christ and how his parents were so afraid of them?

John 9:22

His parents said this because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if any one should confess him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.

(RSV)

So, for once someone stood up to these men and put them in their place. And the crowd just loved it. Justice was being served and the hypocrites were openly rebuked! No wonder Jesus was loved by the common people and hated by those who proclaimed to be ‘men of God’.

This is a lesson for all who are Disciples of Christ. We must not be afraid to stand up for the truth. Paul writes to Titus that he must stand up to some Cretans because of what they say – ‘*Therefore rebuke them sharply*’ (Titus 1:13). He also tells Titus ‘*Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority*’ (Titus 2:15). He also tells Timothy to do the same thing (2 Tim. 4:2). People of God need to rebuke when falsehood about God is shared by anyone.

3. The warnings against the scribes (12:38-40)

³⁸ In His teaching He was saying: “Beware of the scribes who like to walk around in long robes, and *like* respectful greetings in the market places, ³⁹ and chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets, ⁴⁰ who devour widows’ houses, and for appearance’s sake offer long prayers; these will receive greater condemnation.”

Jesus ends this confrontation with a word for the crowd that was present. He warns them: ‘*Beware*’ (BLEPO) meaning: to look at, behold, take heed. Jesus was warning them concerning the scribes. May we also take heed to what the good Lord has to say for we live in times of great religious hypocrisy! There are six things that the Lord points out.

First: ‘*Beware of the scribes who like to walk around in long robes*’. Some scribes like to make a ‘fashion statement’. They wanted to stand above the crowd and dress so much better than the common people. What a contrast with John the Baptist who was clothed with camel’s hair and with a leather belt and Jesus himself who only had a tunic to his name!

Second: ‘*and like respectful greetings in the market places*’. The scribes loved attention. They manifested it not only by what they wore but also by the ‘*greetings*’ (ASPASMOS) meaning: salutations people gave them as they walked about. Again this is something that Jesus had taught not to do.

Matthew 23:8-11

(8) But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brethren.

(9) And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven.

(10) Neither be called masters, for you have one master, the Christ.

(11) He who is greatest among you shall be your servant;

(RSV)

Third: *'and chief seats in the synagogues'*. Again this has to do with prominence. The synagogue was to be a place of worship and communion with God. They turned this around and instead of having people focus on the things of the Lord they wanted the focus to be on themselves! Remember Jesus on the night he was betrayed, he washed his disciples' feet (John 13:5). He was humble and served instead of being served.

Fourth: *'and places of honor in banquets'*. Even when they were out of the synagogue they wanted the best. Being invited to banquets they wanted to be at the 'head of the table' but Jesus warned that this should never be done.

Luke 14:8-11

(8) "When you are invited by any one to a marriage feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest a more eminent man than you be invited by him;

(9) and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give place to this man,' and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place.

(10) But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, 'Friend, go up higher'; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you.

(11) For every one who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

(RSV)

Fifth: *'who devour widow's houses'*. The word *'devour'* (KATESTHIO) means: to eat down. These scribes would take advantage of widows and their weaknesses. Paul also speaks of men who take advantage of certain women.

2 Timothy 3:6,7

(6) For among them are those who make their way into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and swayed by various impulses,

(7) who will listen to anybody and can never arrive at a knowledge of the truth.

(RSV)

Sixth: *'and for appearance's sake offer long prayers'*. The scribes wanted to show how spiritual they were. The word *'appearance's'* (PROPHASIS) means: outward showing, pretence, show. They made a public spectacle of what should have been done in private like Jesus taught.

Matthew 6:5,6

(5) "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by men.

Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.

(6) But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

(RSV)

Jesus ends with a terrible warning that should make all of us shiver!

(v.40)...these will receive greater condemnation."

There will be a judgment and the scribes will '*receive greater condemnation*'. The word '*greater*' (PERISSOTEROS) means: in a more superabundant way. The word '*condemnation*' (KRIMA) means: avenge, condemned, damnation. So the scribes that love to do these six things will be judged in a far greater way than others will. May we also be warned not to have such an attitude!

CONCLUSION:

1. The Christ is also the Lord God.
2. May we never bear the fruits of the scribes.

The gospel of Mark
56 – The widow's offering
12:41-44

**⁴¹ And He sat down opposite the treasury, and *began* observing how the people were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large sums. ⁴² A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent. ⁴³ Calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, "Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury; ⁴⁴ for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on."
(NASB)**

1. Jesus observes (10:41,42)

⁴¹ And He sat down opposite the treasury, and *began* observing how the people were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large sums. ⁴² A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent.

What is the '*treasury*' that Jesus sat down opposite from? Its origin goes back to the early days when the Israelites would bring to the House of Yaweh their tithing, offerings and even spoils of war. We see this as early as Joshua 6:19 and 24. When David secured provisions for the construction of the temple it was placed in the '*treasuries*'. We also see that David made certain that Solomon would build the temple with a room for the '*treasuries*' (1 Chron. 28:11). Later when the temple of God was plundered by enemies it is written that they carried away its treasures (1 Kings 14:26; 15:15,18; 2 Kings 12:18, etc.) Under Nehemiah, with the rebuilding of the temple, the treasury chambers were also included (Neh. 13:4). This is where the people brought their tithings and offerings of all sorts. In the times of Jesus the '*treasury*' were 13 trumpet shaped chests that were in the 'court of women' for the reception of the offerings of the people coming to worship in the Lord's house.

Easton's Bible Dictionary writes: "Nine chests were for the appointed money-tribute and for the sacrifice-tribute, i.e., money-gifts instead of the sacrifices; four chests for freewill-offerings for wood, incense, temple decoration, and burnt-offerings" (Lightfoot's Hor. Heb). The apostle John mentions them in John 8:20. With this verse we can imagine that the '*treasury*' in the court of women was a place where Jesus openly taught in the temple.

Notice that Jesus *'began observing'* (THEOREO) meaning: to be a spectator, behold, perceive. It seems that Jesus was in the *'women's court'* where the *'treasuries'* were and since the thirteen chests were there he simply looked at how people reacted to them. Would I dare say that Jesus does the same today? If he truly is with us *'until the closing of the age'* (Mat. 28:20) then Jesus – God the Son can not only perfectly be with us but also see everything that we do. As a child of God we are called to remember to do all things for His glory (1 Cor. 10:31). We see that Jesus is also interested in what people do so he watches them pass in front of the treasury chests.

What he observed is *'how the people were putting money into the treasury;'* There seems to be an imbalance in churches concerning money. Either it is over stated – give, give, give or God wants you to be rich, rich, rich – both are incorrect! On the other hand if you believe that God is not concerned with your giving then you are wrong. The text reveals the opposite. In this section Jesus will deal with offerings in relation to our heart. In our church setting it would be Jesus observing what we give when the offering plate passes in front of us.

(v.41)...and many rich people were putting in large sums.

The first group of people that Jesus noticed were *'many rich people'*. The word *'rich'* (PLOUSIOS) means: abounding, fullness, richness. There were wealthy people that came to the temple, passed through the *'court of women'* and before entering the temple they *'were putting in large sums'*. The word *'large'* (POLUS) means: much, many, largely. So they put in the treasuries a good amount of money. Since they were wealthy they put in MORE than those who were less fortunate. Just like in our churches some who have more give more – or do they?

⁴² A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent.

We also see *'a poor widow'* that comes along. The word *'poor'* (PTOCHOS) means: beggar, poor, in distress. WE can see the contrast with the *'many rich people'*. One is rich and gives much and the other is poor and she gives *'two small copper coins'*. The coins that she placed in the treasury were the smallest denomination of Roman coinage available. It is said that it was worth one eighth of a cent. The word *'cent'* (KODRANTES) means: the fourth part of something, so the poor widow didn't give much – right?

2. Jesus responds to what he sees (10:43,44)

⁴³ Calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, “Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury; ⁴⁴ for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on.”

It seems that what he saw touched him so much that he wanted his disciples to also benefit from what he had seen. One might say that it is normal that the rich give more and the poor give less that there is no lesson to be learned from this. How wrong we are if we believe this is the case.

So Jesus '*calling His disciples*', the word '*calling*' (PROSKALEOMAI) means: to call towards, to summon. He calls them to come near him for he has something to say. Do we hear our Master's voice calling us? Do we listen to the Spirit's voice when he desires to teach us and guide us? Jesus begins his lesson on giving to the House of the Lord.

(v.43)...“Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury;

He tells them that the poor widow '*put in more*' (PLEON) meaning: more in quantity or quality. Now we know that she did not put in 'more in quantity' for she gave next to nothing. So we come to understand what Jesus meant – she gave more in 'quality'! Many rich came and gave good amounts of money and don't forget that this was publicly done. People nearby could actually hear the sound of all the coins that you would drop in the 'treasury'. Now why would Jesus demean the rich who were putting a lot of money was it not for the House of the Lord? Was it not for its up-keeping and maintenance? Was it not to pay the salaries of those who worked in it? Was it not also for the distribution for the poor? So what's wrong with the rich that Jesus was watching? How could they give less than the poor widow?

⁴⁴ for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on.”

It is written that the rich '*put in out of their own surplus*'. The word '*surplus*' (PERISSEUO) means: in excess, superfluous. It seems that what they gave actually meant nothing for them. It was what we would call 'pocket money' or 'loose change'. What they gave changed nothing in their life. If I have one hundred dollars and give one dollar as an offering does it really have an impact on my life? – No!

On the other hand the poor widow *'put in all she owned, all that she had to live on'*. She gave *'out of her poverty'*. The word *'poverty'* (HUSTERESIS) means: falling short, penury, want. She gave out of her necessity in life, what she needed to buy food and other necessities. When she gave, it was out of her love for the Lord. Her giving also manifested that she believed that the Lord would provide for her. What true love and faith!

Do you remember the Lord's complaint through the prophet Malachi when he spoke of their worthless sacrifices that they brought to Him?

Malachi 1:6-8

(6)"A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear? says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name. You say, 'How have we despised thy name?'

(7)By offering polluted food upon my altar. And you say, 'How have we polluted it?' By thinking that the LORD's table may be despised.

(8)When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that no evil? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that no evil? Present that to your governor; will he be pleased with you or show you favor? says the LORD of hosts.

(RSV)

What they brought manifested their hearts towards God – he wasn't much in their eyes so they gave insignificant offerings. In this story the rich brought insignificant amounts of money – their spare change. But the poor widow offered the best she had not of her surplus for she had none but out of her need!

CONCLUSION:

1. Jesus is interested in what we do and what we offer to the Lord.
2. Let us not give out of our surplus but bring offerings to the Lord that are worthy of his Majesty.

The gospel of Mark
57 – Signs of the end of the age
13:1-27

As He was going out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, “Teacher, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!” ² And Jesus said to him, “Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another which will not be torn down.”

³ As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew were questioning Him privately, ⁴ “Tell us, when will these things be, and what *will be* the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?” ⁵ And Jesus began to say to them, “See to it that no one misleads you. ⁶ Many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am *He!*’ and will mislead many. ⁷ When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be frightened; *those things* must take place; but *that is* not yet the end. ⁸ For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will *also* be famines. These things are *merely* the beginning of birth pangs.

⁹ “But be on your guard; for they will deliver you to *the* courts, and you will be flogged in *the* synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them. ¹⁰ The gospel must first be preached to all the nations. ¹¹ When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but *it is* the Holy Spirit. ¹² Brother will betray brother to death, and a father *his* child; and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. ¹³ You will be hated by all because of My name, but the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.

¹⁴ “But when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. ¹⁵ The one who is on the housetop must not go down, or go in to get anything out of his house; ¹⁶ and the one who is in the field must not turn back to get his coat. ¹⁷ But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! ¹⁸ But pray that it may not happen in the winter. ¹⁹ For those days will be a *time of* tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never will. ²⁰ Unless the Lord had shortened *those* days, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom He chose, He shortened the days. ²¹ And then if anyone says to you, ‘Behold, here is the Christ’; or, ‘Behold, *He is* there’; do not believe *him*; ²² for false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order to lead astray, if possible, the elect. ²³ But take heed; behold, I have told you everything in advance.

**²⁴“But in those days, after that tribulation, THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, ²⁵ AND THE STARS WILL BE FALLING from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. ²⁶ Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN CLOUDS with great power and glory. ²⁷ And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven.
(NASB)**

(I believe in the rapture of the church, the reign of the Anti-Christ, personal coming of Jesus Christ, the millennium, and the final battle of Armageddon and finally the restoration of all things the way they were intended by the Lord God. The subject is so vast that only a quick overview of events will be mentioned in this section.)

1. Questions asked (13:1-4)

As He was going out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, “Teacher, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!” ² And Jesus said to him, “Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another which will not be torn down.”

³ As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew were questioning Him privately, ⁴ “Tell us, when will these things be, and what *will be* the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?”

This section occurs after Jesus openly condemns the spiritual leaders who were in the temple. We can see that Jesus left them *‘As He was going out of the temple’*. Although the religious elite had been publicly humiliated before a crowd of people there was nothing that they could do. They left him unharmed. It is at this point that the disciples manifest interest in the beauty of the temple: *‘behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings’*. The disciples were looking at the temple and feasting their eyes on its superb architecture, asked Jesus to participate in their wonder.

² And Jesus said to him, “Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another which will not be torn down.”

Instead of agreeing with his disciples, which he could have, Jesus projects the future of the temple. Now there is a great lesson to be understood here. There are things that are apparent and things that will become apparent. Our eyes should be fixed on the things that will become apparent in the future. The way we see things should reflect how the Lord God sees them. The disciples saw a wonderful building before them but Jesus saw its destruction and desolation: *‘Not one stone will be left upon another which will not be torn down’*.

We know that this happened in 70 a.d. when General Titus destroyed Jerusalem and crushed its rebellion against Rome. It is important to understand that since that time the Jewish people have had no legitimate place to offer a sacrifice for the atonement of their sins.

³ As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew were questioning Him privately,

Being intrigued by Jesus' statement four of his disciples (the original four) come to him for a private chat. The Mount of Olives is just East of Jerusalem and you can see the city afar off. It was part of a small mountain chain and it was richly planted with trees. People often came to this Mount to escape the busy city of Jerusalem. Here they could find themselves in a calm and cool environment especially during the hot summer season. Why only these four disciples – we don't know. May I suggest that, as with people in general, some are more curious than others?

⁴ “Tell us, when will these things be, and what *will be* the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?”

Their question is like a coin, it has two sides. The first is '*when will these things be*' and the second '*what will be the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?*' So they wanted to know when it was going to happen (the destruction of the temple) and what are the coming signs that this will happen. One must not forget that the temple was at the very heart of the Jewish existence. Hearing Jesus say that it will be destroyed was unheard of. No one thought that the temple would ever be devastated again.

2. Concerning the Tribulation period (13:5-23)

⁵ And Jesus began to say to them, “See to it that no one misleads you.⁶ Many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am *He!*’ and will mislead many. ⁷ When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be frightened; *those things* must take place; but *that is* not yet the end. ⁸ For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will *also* be famines. These things are *merely* the beginning of birth pangs.

⁹ “But be on your guard; for they will deliver you to *the* courts, and you will be flogged in *the* synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them. ¹⁰ The gospel must first be preached to all the nations. ¹¹ When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who

speak, but *it is* the Holy Spirit. ¹² Brother will betray brother to death, and a father *his* child; and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. ¹³ You will be hated by all because of My name, but the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.

¹⁴ “But when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. ¹⁵ The one who is on the housetop must not go down, or go in to get anything out of his house; ¹⁶ and the one who is in the field must not turn back to get his coat. ¹⁷ But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! ¹⁸ But pray that it may not happen in the winter. ¹⁹ For those days will be a *time of* tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never will. ²⁰ Unless the Lord had shortened *those* days, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom He chose, He shortened the days. ²¹ And then if anyone says to you, ‘Behold, here is the Christ’; or, ‘Behold, *He is* there’; do not believe *him*; ²² for false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order to lead astray, if possible, the elect. ²³ But take heed; behold, I have told you everything in advance.

I must point out to you again that this is just an overview and that you should read good books in relation to the end-times.

2. A - The warnings of Jesus (12:5-8)

⁵ And Jesus began to say to them, “See to it that no one misleads you. ⁶ Many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am *He!*’ and will mislead many. ⁷ When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be frightened; *those things* must take place; but *that is* not yet the end. ⁸ For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will *also* be famines. These things are *merely* the beginning of birth pangs.

His first warning concerns imitators that will come after he departs. Their goal is to: ‘*misleads you*’. The word ‘*mislead*’ (PLANAO) means: to cause to roam, to go astray. Some will come and have a secret desire to separate people from the truth. They will do this by lying saying ‘*I am He*’. False prophets will declare lies to mislead people even saying that they are Christ! How many have already come and declared to be prophets of God saying that the return of Christ would be on a given day! How many have declared that the end-times have already begun! Jesus was right and will ever be right!

His second warning deals with *'wars and rumor of wars'*. He tells his disciple *'do not be frightened'* because *'those things must take place; but that is not yet the end'*. People are always afraid when war is on the rise and many believe that each 'great war' will be the end of the world. But Jesus says no it's not the end yet. Since the nuclear age the world has been under constant threat of annihilation but true believers know that men will not destroy the world in such a war.

His third warning deals with four aspects: the rising of one nation against another, kingdoms against each other, earthquakes on the rise and also famines. But again we are told *'These things are merely the beginning of birth pangs'*. The word *'beginning'* (ARCHE) meaning: a commencement, order of time. The disciples were asking *'when will these things be?'* and Jesus begins to set this in a time-frame to answer them. All these warnings lead up to the *'when'* they were asking about. All these things mentioned are not the *'when'* but *'the beginning of birth pangs'*. Similarly as a woman has her contractions she knows that the time is coming for her to give birth.

2. B – The coming sufferings of his disciples (13:9-13)

⁹“But be on your guard; for they will deliver you to *the* courts, and you will be flogged in *the* synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them. ¹⁰ The gospel must first be preached to all the nations. ¹¹ When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but *it is* the Holy Spirit. ¹² Brother will betray brother to death, and a father *his* child; and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. ¹³ You will be hated by all because of My name, but the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.

First Jesus said to be on your guard for false prophets and people saying 'I am He'. Now Jesus tells them to also *'be on your guard'*. The word *'guard'* (BLEPO) means: behold, beware, and take heed. Our attention must focus on Jesus' warnings because far too many Christians are sleeping instead of being alert! The unbelievers will *'deliver you to the courts'*. The word *'deliver'* (PARADIDOMI) means: betray, bring forth or put into prison. True believers will be persecuted by the civil authorities. This began shortly after the ascension of Christ when Peter and John were first arrested in Acts four. Throughout history Christians have been persecuted. It is said that more Christians were killed in the 20th century than all the preceding centuries combined! Once they have been captured *'you will be flogged in the synagogues'*. The word *'flogged'* (DERO) means: to scourge, beat, smite. Believers will be greatly mistreated but what is unbelievable is that this will be done *'in the synagogues'*! The synagogues were places of worship not places of torture.

So you can see what type of ‘anti-Christian’ climate will exist. People will take pleasure in hurting people in houses of worship.

There is a reason for all of this and Jesus says ‘*you will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them*’. Since Acts 1:8 we are called to be witnesses of Christ and this will continue until the coming of the end-times. The word ‘*testimony*’ (MARTURION) means: to give evidence, to testify. The testimony of the risen Christ will be brought even to the highest ranks of this world’s system.

¹⁰ The gospel must first be preached to all the nations.

In the ‘Great Commission’ (Mat. 28:19) the apostles were told to ‘*make disciples of all nations*’. To accomplish this, Christians will testify of Christ by their life and also by their verbal testimony ‘*to all nations*’.

¹¹ When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but *it is the Holy Spirit*.

Hearing all of this it is normal that fright builds up in one’s heart and one may become faint in his faith – even want to hide the truth about it. In verse eleven Jesus encourages his disciples. He tells them ‘*do not worry beforehand*’. The word ‘*worry*’ (PROMERIMNAO) means: to be anxious in advance. This makes me think of when Peter was jailed and in the middle of the night when he was sleeping an angel woke him up to free him (Acts 12). And also of Paul and Silas who were singing songs while in prison (Acts 16). These men did not ‘*worry beforehand*’!

Now why were they not to be worried simply because:

(v.11)... but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but *it is the Holy Spirit*.

Christ gives the assurance that the Holy Spirit will be with them and just ‘*say whatever is given*’. The word ‘*given*’ (DIDOMI) means: to give, bestow, grant. It is the Holy Spirit who will give them what to say. So they will not need to think about a defense before the courts. It is reassuring that God will be with us in every circumstances for He said: ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you’ (Heb. 13:5).

¹² Brother will betray brother to death, and a father *his* child; and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. ¹³ You will be hated by all because of My name, but the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.

Jesus now speaks of the sufferings that his disciples will receive from their own families. Hatred will bring betrayal and betrayal will bring forth death. Ferocious animosity will not only be between brothers but also '*and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death*'. Parents will deliver up their children to the authorities and children will do the same towards their parents and all '*will be put to death*'.

But why all this hate? What is the source of all this revulsion? Jesus says '*You will be hated by all because of My name*'. It is because true believers belong to Christ and the world hates the Messiah.

John 15:18,19

(18)"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you.

(19)"If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

(RSV)

Jesus ends this part by saying something that has troubled many believers throughout the centuries. Many believe that because of this phrase we can lose our salvation!

(v.13)... but the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.

Dr. Thomas Constable gives a clear analysis of this phrase:

'The last part of [Mark 13:13](#) states a general principle. Faithful endurance of persecution to its end results in deliverance. Disciples who endure their persecution faithfully to the end of that persecution will experience deliverance from it while they are alive. Disciples who endure their persecution faithfully to the end of their lives will experience deliverance from it by death. Disciples living just before Jesus returns who endure their persecution faithfully to the end of the present age will experience deliverance at Jesus" second coming.'

When Jesus says: '*he will be saved*' the word '*saved*' (SOZO) means: to save, deliver, protect. It is used in a vast variety of meaning and contexts. Often we automatically think of being '*saved*' having to do with salvation. But many times it has nothing to do with it. In Mat. 8:25 the disciples cry out to Jesus '*save us*' (SOZO).

It was from the storm. In Mat. 9:21 the same Greek word is used (SOZO) by the woman with the flow of blood to mean 'made well'. In Mat. 14:30 Peter cried out (SOZO) to Jesus 'Lord save me' when he began to sink in the sea.

The context has nothing to do with personal salvation from the judgment to come for His sacrifice is perfect and eternal (Heb. 10:10-14). It has to do with the persecution of Christians and their deliverance from their persecutors. Even if deliverance comes through the death of the believer, let us remember what is said:

John 3:36

He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him.

(RSV)

2. C – The coming of the abomination (13:14-18)

¹⁴“But when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. ¹⁵The one who is on the housetop must not go down, or go in to get anything out of his house; ¹⁶and the one who is in the field must not turn back to get his coat. ¹⁷But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! ¹⁸But pray that it may not happen in the winter.

Once the scene is set and the world is ready, the Abomination of Desolation will appear. The Book of Daniel speaks of this unique person in chapters 11 and 12. With his power he will be able to go to war against God's people and institutions. He will enter into conflict with all that is holy on earth and systematically win. He will replace sacrifices to the Lord by having(or forcing) people to worship him. His goal is to reign in Jerusalem as God himself. When these day will appear Jesus says: '*flee to the mountains*'. Don't go back home to get something, not even a coat, just '*flee*' away from where you are. He also thinks of the tragedy of being pregnant and having nursing babies '*in those days*'. How difficult it will be for them to '*flee*'. Being warned. Jesus says: '*But pray that it will not happen in the winter*'; which would make everything so much more difficult. One will need to cry out to God in those dreadful days for He will be their only consolation and hiding place.

2. D - The time of tribulation (13:19-23)

¹⁹For those days will be a *time of* tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never will. ²⁰Unless the

Lord had shortened *those* days, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom He chose, He shortened the days. ²¹ And then if anyone says to you, ‘Behold, here is the Christ’; or, ‘Behold, *He is* there’; do not believe *him*; ²² for false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order to lead astray, if possible, the elect. ²³ But take heed; behold, I have told you everything in advance.

Jesus is describing the ‘*time of tribulation*’. The word ‘*tribulation*’ (*THLIPSIS*) means: pressure, afflicted, persecution. This period of time will be one of great persecution that ‘*has not occurred since the beginning of creation which God created*’. Nothing has ever been seen to be as terrifying as the time of tribulation. When you think of all the horrors of the past: wars, natural devastation, pestilence, plagues and epidemics one can not imagine the terrors that will come about. And not only that Jesus continues and says: ‘*and never will*’. This world-wide period of tribulation, this reign of the antichrist will never be followed by anything as hideous in earth’s history either!

²⁰ Unless the Lord had shortened *those* days, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom He chose, He shortened the days.

The grace of God is also manifested in mankind’s darkest hours. It is written that the Lord God will ‘*shortened those days*’. The word ‘*shortened*’ (*KOLOBOO*) figuratively means: to abridge. The Lord God will reduce this period of time. One might ask why? The answer is because ‘*no life would have been saved*’. The antichrist would have systematically killed everyone on earth. Here we see the true face of our spiritual enemy. That is why one of the names given to him is Abaddon which means ‘*the destroyer*’ (Rev. 9:11). It is written ‘*but for the sake of the elect*’;

The elect (*EKEIKTOS*) meaning: favorite, chose, elect. In the Old Testament it is the nation of Israel (Deut. 7:6) and those who would enter into covenant with Yahweh. In the New Testament God adds all those who call upon the name of Jesus will be saved (Acts 2:21) and become God’s elect (Col. 3:12). So for those people God will shorten the days of tribulation.

2. E – One last warning. (13:21-23)

²¹ And then if anyone says to you, ‘Behold, here is the Christ’; or, ‘Behold, *He is* there’; do not believe *him*; ²² for false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order to lead astray, if possible, the elect. ²³ But take heed; behold, I have told you everything in advance.

He returns to the first warning in 13:5 about false prophets telling people *'here is the Christ'* or *'He is there'*; as though false prophets envelop this entire time period. He tells us *'do not believe him'*. This is plain to understand yet so many today follow preachers and teachers who flood their cursed gospel upon the earth.

²² for false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order to lead astray, if possible, the elect. ²³ But take heed; behold, I have told you everything in advance.

These false Christs and false prophets will be able to do unbelievable signs and wonders. But their desire is to *'lead astray'* (SPOPLANAO) meaning: to pass astray, to err. Their power will come from the evil one himself (Rev. 13:2) who gives it to his servants. They will do all they can to lead the believers astray that is why we need to take heed as we see in the following verse.

²³ But take heed; behold, I have told you everything in advance.

Knowing that these things will one day come it is the responsibility of the Disciple of Christ to understand what is happening and prepare himself. Jesus has *'told you everything in advance'* so take heed.

3. Concerning the Second Coming (13:24-27)

²⁴ "But in those days, after that tribulation, THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, ²⁵ AND THE STARS WILL BE FALLING from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. ²⁶ Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN CLOUDS with great power and glory. ²⁷ And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven.

Jesus continues his discourse on the end-times. We are now at *'after that tribulation'*. This describes the grand return of the *'Son of Man'*. Jesus often referred to himself by using this title (Mat. 8:20; 9:6; 11:19). The universe will react to his coming. The *'sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, the stars will be falling, and the powers that are in heaven will be shaken'*. I can not imagine the type of celestial catastrophes described here but no one will miss the coming of the *'Son of Man'*. Jesus will return with *'great power and glory'*. He will be *'coming in clouds'*. He will manifest all of his glory to the entire human race. What a grand arrival for all of his enemies to see!

²⁷ And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven.

His angels will have one task to do and that is to *'gather His elect from the four winds'* that is from the four corners of the world. *'From the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven'*. Wherever they are they will *'gather together'* (EPISUNAGO) meaning: to collect upon the same place. All the true believers will be gathered together. I wonder what would be the number of the elect present. This reminds me of the lament of Christ when he stood before the Holy city.

Mat. 23:37

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! (RSV)

CONCLUSION:

1. The end-times signs are difficult to be certain of but we can be certain of what we do know. Difficult times are coming but our Lord will triumph.

The gospel of Mark
58 – The day and the hour
13:28-37

²⁸ “Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹ Even so, you too, when you see these things happening, recognize that He is near, *right* at the door. ³⁰ Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. ³¹ Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. ³² But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father *alone*.

³³ “Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the *appointed* time will come. ³⁴ *It is* like a man away on a journey, *who* upon leaving his house and putting his slaves in charge, *assigning* to each one his task, also commanded the doorkeeper to stay on the alert. ³⁵ Therefore, be on the alert—for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening, at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning— ³⁶ in case he should come suddenly and find you asleep. ³⁷ What I say to you I say to all, ‘Be on the alert!’”
(NASB)

1. The parable of the fig tree (13:28-31)

This is actually a continuation of the sermon that Christ is giving concerning the end-times. He comes with two ending conclusions. The first is explained through a common fig tree.

²⁸ “Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹ Even so, you too, when you see these things happening, recognize that He is near, *right* at the door. ³⁰ Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. ³¹ Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

Jesus desires his disciples to ‘*learn*’ (MANTHANO) meaning: to learn, to understand. He tells them all he can about the end-times so that they can understand them. He does not want to leave them in the dark concerning these times. Although they are not told everything they are given hints so that they can perceive that they are on the way of becoming true. So Jesus speaks of a fig tree. As we have already seen they were very common in Israel and there were different species. But they all had certain things in common. All had leaves and all bore fruit. It is wonderful how the Lord uses common objects to bring forth spiritual lessons.

So he explains that when a branch *'has already become tender and puts forth its leaves'* then people are certain that *'summer is near'*. One goes with the other. I could say *'when you see the sun going down you know that night time is upon you'*. It is a fact of nature that can not be denied for both go hand in hand.

²⁹ Even so, you too, when you see these things happening, recognize that He is near, *right at the door*.

So when you will see all these signs that I have spoken about come closer and closer (as the leaves on the fig tree) *'recognize'* (GINOSKO) meaning: to know, to be aware of, perceive. What are we to know and understand is – *'that He is near, right at the door'*. I must tell you that the pronoun 'HE' is actually 'IT' in the Greek! It is difficult to know exactly what Jesus is referring to because 'it' can be either the return of the Messiah or 'it' can also refer to the destruction of the temple. On the other hand 'it' can also refer to both since some prophecies have a double occurrence in time.

³⁰ Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. ³¹ Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

If this is a double-prophecy then it is easy to understand. The *'generation'* (GENEA) that Jesus is speaking of *'will not pass away until these things take place'*. Meaning that this will happen within a person's life time. If it is to be taken as an end-time event (the return of the Messiah, antichrist, etc..) then the term *'generation'* (GENEA) which means: an age, generation or nation can also refer to the nation of Israel which *'will not pass away until these things take place'*. Either way or both ways work very well with the text. I believe that Jesus is saying that this generation will see the destruction of the temple and that Israel (as a nation) will not become extinct and will see the return of the Messiah.

Jesus puts a 'seal' on what he has just said:

³¹ Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

It is a solemn declaration that these things will happen. It also manifests the deity of Jesus because NO MAN can guarantee that his words will last for ever!

2. The day and the hour (13:32-37)

³² But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father *alone*.

³³ “Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the *appointed* time will come. ³⁴ *It is* like a man away on a journey, *who* upon leaving his house and putting his slaves in charge, *assigning* to each one his task, also commanded the doorkeeper to stay on the alert. ³⁵ Therefore, be on the alert—for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening, at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning— ³⁶ in case he should come suddenly and find you asleep. ³⁷ What I say to you I say to all, ‘Be on the alert!’”

Verse thirty two is so important and has become the stumbling block of a great many ‘false prophets’. There are so many people that have tried to determine the ‘day’ that these things will happen but ALL have been proven false. The bible is very clear ‘*no one knows!*’ Absolutely NO ONE, not ‘*even the angels in heaven, nor the Son*’. The only person who does know is ‘*the Father alone*’. So stop believing all these false teachers and preachers – NO ONE KNOWS. Now some say that if the Son does not know, then that means that he is not God! They forget that Jesus as the Son of Man does not know. When he took on flesh he emptied himself of certain glories (Phil. 2:5-11) and became a man.

³³ “Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the *appointed* time will come.

If the disciples do not know the ‘when’ of these occurrences what are they to do? First they need to ‘*take heed*’ (BLEPO) meaning: behold, beware, to look at. Jesus is saying that the disciples should keep an ‘eye open’ for these signs. If the generation in Jesus’ time saw the destruction of the temple the present day disciple must keep his ‘eyes open’ to see them coming. Do you remember when Jesus asked some of his disciples to stay awake with him and pray in the Garden of Gethsemane? They fell asleep instead Mat. 26:36-46). This is what Jesus does not want us to do – to fall asleep spiritually! The second is ‘*keep on the alert*’. In the Greek it speaks of (PROSEUCHOMAI) meaning: pray, supplicate. Unfortunately we may miss the Greek meaning of the text. It truly gives the idea that one should be aware of these things coming but also that one should pray to the Father because they are coming. Now why should someone be alert and pray? Because people do not know when the ‘*appointed time*’ (KAIROS) meaning: proper time, will come.

³⁴ *It is like a man away on a journey, who upon leaving his house and putting his slaves in charge, assigning to each one his task, also commanded the doorkeeper to stay on the alert.* ³⁵ Therefore, be on the alert—for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening, at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning— ³⁶ in case he should come suddenly and find you asleep. ³⁷ What I say to you I say to all, ‘Be on the alert!’”

To encourage his disciples to always be alert Jesus tells a parable. Actually this story talks about what the disciples ought to do until the end-times arrive. He first speaks of ‘*a man*’, this is Jesus himself. He goes ‘*away on a journey*’ – that is goes back to his Father in heaven. But before he leaves he does these things:

- ‘*putting his slaves in charge*’ – since he leaves he gives authority to his slaves (as he gave authority to his disciples to carry on)
- ‘*assigning to each one his task*’ – they all had their specific work to do (as the disciples have different ministries and spiritual gifts)
- ‘*commanded the door keeper to stay on the alert*’ – the doorkeeper of the sheep pen needed to be alert and keep the sheep in safety. (as the disciples need to be watchful for enemies on the rise)

I imagine that you have noticed that between verses 34 and 37 Jesus says three times to be ‘*alert*’ (GREGORENO) meaning: to keep awake, to be vigilant. We all recognize the importance of repetition in the Scriptures! We are to be alert because:

- ‘*you do not know when the master of the house is coming*’ meaning that we do not know when Jesus will return so we should be busy doing what he has asked us to do.
- ‘*whether in the evening, at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning*’ giving the idea that there is not a single part of the day that a disciple may be relieved from being alert.
- ‘*in case he should come suddenly and find you asleep*’. What shame the disciple will feel when the Master comes suddenly and he is found at fault!

CONCLUSION:

1. We do not know when the Messiah will come back and until he does we need to stay alert!

The gospel of Mark
59 – Jesus is anointed
14:1-11

Now the Passover and Unleavened Bread were two days away; and the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to seize Him by stealth and kill Him;² for they were saying, “Not during the festival, otherwise there might be a riot of the people.”³ While He was in Bethany at the home of Simon the leper, and reclining *at the table*, there came a woman with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume of pure nard; *and* she broke the vial and poured it over His head.⁴ But some were indignantly *remarking* to one another, “Why has this perfume been wasted? ⁵ For this perfume might have been sold for over three hundred denarii, and *the money* given to the poor.” And they were scolding her.⁶ But Jesus said, “Let her alone; why do you bother her? She has done a good deed to Me.⁷ For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you wish you can do good to them; but you do not always have Me.⁸ She has done what she could; she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial.⁹ Truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her.”

¹⁰ Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went off to the chief priests in order to betray Him to them.¹¹ They were glad when they heard *this*, and promised to give him money. And he *began* seeking how to betray Him at an opportune time.
(NASB)

1. Planning ahead (14:1,2)

Now the Passover and Unleavened Bread were two days away; and the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to seize Him by stealth and kill Him;² for they were saying, “Not during the festival, otherwise there might be a riot of the people.”

We know that Jesus was sacrificed (killed) on the day of Passover for that is the day that the sacrificial lamb was offered as a sin offering for the entire nation. Our text says that the ‘*Passover and Unleavened Bread were two days away*’ this means that the Lord Jesus is two days away from His death on the cross.

The Passover was instituted in Exodus twelve. Just before the Israelites were going to be freed from Egypt a perfect lamb had to be killed and its blood applied to the posts of their houses. When the Lord would strike all the firstborn of Egypt He would see the blood of the lamb and ‘Pass over’ the Israelites leaving them untouched (Ex.12) from this plague of destruction.

The liberation from Egypt was to be celebrated from generation to generation to remind the Jews of the grace of God. When God's people ate the paschal lamb they also had to eat *'unleavened bread'* with bitter herbs to go along with it (Ex. 12:8). This was to remind them of the bitter life they had in Egypt before God intervened for them. The feast of the Passover was one of the three 'Great Feasts' of Israel and it is also our context for this section.

(v.1)... and the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to seize Him by stealth and kill Him;² for they were saying, "Not during the festival, otherwise there might be a riot of the people."

The religious elite *'chief priests and scribes'* had been seeking to get rid of Jesus for a while and since their plans had all failed they once again planned to strike out against Him. They *'wanted to seize Him by stealth'*. The word *'stealth'* (DOLOS) means: decoy, trick, bait or craft. Their plan was not to confront Jesus with the actual truth found in the Scriptures. They had tried before and had always been stumped by the Lord. So they decided to get rid of Jesus in a way that was not honorable – by trickery. Why did they want to *'seize Him'*? They wanted to *'kill Him'*; to once and for all get Jesus out of their way so that they could spiritually rule over the people in peace and by doing so keep them in spiritual darkness. They wanted to kill Jesus but *'not during the festival, otherwise there might be a riot of the people'*. They knew that he was loved, admired and even considered a prophet by the people. Had they not welcomed him with great honors when he entered Jerusalem sitting on a donkey?

2. The broken vial (14:3)

³ While He was in Bethany at the home of Simon the leper, and reclining at the table, there came a woman with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume of pure nard; and she broke the vial and poured it over His head.

We know that Jesus was in Bethany which was a few kilometers from Jerusalem. Bethany was the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus which Jesus had raised from the dead. Bethany was also the home of a man called *'Simon the leper'*. There is no other mention of this man in the New Testament. What is to be noted is that this man had probably been cured by Jesus and he could now have a social life. When he was a leper people were forbidden to have any contact with him fearing to also catch his disease. We can see that Simon was grateful unto Jesus because he had cured him – his house was open to the Master. So should all true believers also be eternally grateful to Jesus for curing them of the most dreadful of all diseases – sin! Should not our homes and our hearts always be open to receive Christ?

(v.3)... and reclining *at the table*, there came a woman with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume of pure nard; and she broke the vial and poured it over His head.

While they were at the table '*there came a woman*'. Mark does not tell us who she is but in John 12:3 we are told that it is Mary the sister of Lazarus. If you read this event in John 12 you will find two facts that might sound troubling. The first is that in Mark it was two days before Passover and in John it was six days before the Passover. Is this a mistake? Actually the Passover was a feast that lasted seven days. So depending on which day of the seven day Passover you are speaking about both could be right. The second is that in John it seems that this meal was in the house of Mary, Martha and Lazarus while in Mark it is in the house of Simon the leper. When you read the text in John closer you see that the supper was given in Bethany (where all four lived) but it was Simon who received Jesus and Mary, Martha and Lazarus were invited guests because of their close friendship with Christ.

Now Mary comes to Jesus while he was at the table with an '*alabaster vial of very costly perfume or pure nard*'. Alabaster was a very fragile stone that would be cut and shaped into various shapes. Alabaster is also sometimes called onyx marble. It is made of a translucent carbonate of lime and was prized because it kept perfume intact. This small vial contained '*pure nard*'. This nard (also called spikenard) was an aromatic herb of the valerian family. It was imported from Arabia, India and the Far East. The vial was broken and she poured it '*over His head*'. This is one of the reasons why this 'ointment' was to be deemed so precious to the Lord.

3. The resentment of some disciples (14:4,5)

⁴ But some were indignantly *remarking to one another*, "Why has this perfume been wasted? ⁵ For this perfume might have been sold for over three hundred denarii, and *the money* given to the poor." And they were scolding her.

'*Some were indignant*'. The gospel of John (12:4) tells us that the main character who resented Mary for doing this was Judas Iscariot. Now there will always be people who resent the fact that someone does some good. This is just because they would not have done it that way or not at all. May we be very careful not to resent other Christians for doing any type of good that we may think is unwise! You see these disciples believed that '*this perfume had been wasted*'. Here we see the true heart of Judas. He could not accept that Jesus would be given this offering of perfume but would have wanted it to be '*sold for over three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor*'.

Three hundred denarii was worth one year's wage for a man of labor. Mary was offering a year's worth of income! What does that say about her heart and love for Christ!

In John there is a verse that gives us more light into the heart of Judas.

John 12:6

This he said, not that he cared for the poor but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box he used to take what was put into it.

(RSV)

Judas may have looked very 'humane' by saying '*and the money given to the poor*'. But he was a hypocrite since he was the treasurer of the group (John 13:29) he would have desired to have all that money in his hands! John 12:6 tells us that Judas Iscariot '*was a thief*' and that he '*was used to take what was put into it*'.

(v.5)...And they were scolding her.

The word '*scolding*' (EMBRIMAOMAI) means: to snort in anger, to blame. So they were openly angry with what she did and they were publicly blaming her for what they thought was 'wasted money'. It is not for us to decide how a person's money is to be spent for the Lord. Even if we do not understand or would not have done it, it is between the Lord and them. How cold hearted are some disciples, how little have they learned from the Master!

4. Jesus' rebuke (14:6-9)

⁶ But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you bother her? She has done a good deed to Me. ⁷ For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you wish you can do good to them; but you do not always have Me. ⁸ She has done what she could; she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial. ⁹ Truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her."

The first thing He said was '*Let her alone*'. This is easy to understand, Jesus is saying 'stop it' or 'that's enough'. I can imagine that his voice grew louder as these words came from his mouth. He would not have a disciple act that way with Mary. This is not the way any disciples should act with a fellow believer. The second thing was '*why do you bother her*'. The word '*bother*' (KOPOS) means: to cut, to hurt or pain. It seems that the disciples were very mean in the eyes of the Lord. Jesus saw the harm that they were doing to Mary. We need to understand that words do 'cut deep' and profoundly hurt.

We should always watch the words that come out of our mouths and be certain that they edify (Rom. 14:19; 1 Cor. 10:23; 1 Thes. 5:11). The third thing he says is '*She has done a good deed to Me*'. Here Jesus is 'setting them straight'. Some disciples thought she was foolish but Christ says that what she did was '*a good deed*'. Now the word '*good*' (*KALOS*) means: beautiful, valuable, virtuous. They thought this was 'not good', Jesus says it was 'very good'. This reminds me of the following verse:

Isaiah 55:8

**For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the LORD.
(RSV)**

The fourth thing he said was:

⁷ For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you wish you can do good to them; but you do not always have Me.

The very thought that one day because of greatness of man's heart he will eradicate poverty from the world is absurd. It is very clear from these words that we will always have the poor among us. What the Lord says is that we should help them '*whenever you wish*'. BUT Mary did the right thing because '*you do not always have me*'. In verse eight and nine Jesus explains WHY she had done a '*good deed*'.

⁸ She has done what she could; she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial. ⁹ Truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her."

Without knowing it Mary had done the prophetic act of anointing '*My body beforehand for the burial*'. We must remember that after Jesus was taken off the cross by Joseph of Arimathea he will not get a proper burial preparation before he is placed in the tomb. Only after the Sabbath would some women come to his burial site to properly dispose of his body but by that time he had resurrected from the dead!

Verse nine tells us of the great honor that will be given to Mary (sister of Lazarus) down the centuries. Jesus says that what she has done '*will also be spoken of in memory of her*'. May I encourage all Disciples of Christ to do things that will be honored and remembered! May we be remembered for our 'good works' (Eph. 2:10) and not the opposite.

5. The revolt of Judas (14:10,11)

¹⁰ Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went off to the chief priests in order to betray Him to them. ¹¹ They were glad when they heard *this*, and promised to give him money. And he *began* seeking how to betray Him at an opportune time.

It seems that this 'waste of money' was too much for Judas. His love for money and his lack of accepting the Lord's rebuke pushed him and he '*went off to the chief priests*'. Now he perfectly knew that they were Jesus' enemies but his heart was now set on doing things his own way. May we never rebuke the Master's teachings concerning our faults! His plan was to '*betray Him to them*'. The word '*betray*' (PARADIDOMI) means: bring forth, cast, and deliver. So he tells the chief priests that he was able to deliver Jesus into their hands.

¹¹ They were glad when they heard *this*, and promised to give him money. And he *began* seeking how to betray Him at an opportune time.

The chief priests were so happy, because they could finally get their hands on him! They offered Judas a sum of money. In Mat. 26:15 we see that the amount was thirty pieces of silver. This was another fulfillment of a prophecy found in Zechariah:

Zechariah 11:12

(12) Then I said to them, "If it seems right to you, give me my wages; but if not, keep them." And they weighed out as my wages thirty shekels of silver.

(13) Then the LORD said to me, "Cast it into the treasury" --the lordly price at which I was paid off by them. So I took the thirty shekels of silver and cast them into the treasury in the house of the LORD.

(RSV)

CONCLUSION:

1. It is always good to do good to honor the Lord.
2. We will always have the poor among us.
3. Do we also have a sufficient price that would let us abandon our Lord for it?

The gospel of Mark
60 – The Lord's Supper
14:12-26

¹² On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover *lamb* was being sacrificed, His disciples said to Him, “Where do You want us to go and prepare for You to eat the Passover?” ¹³ And He sent two of His disciples and said to them, “Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him; ¹⁴ and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, ‘The Teacher says, “Where is My guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?”’” ¹⁵ And he himself will show you a large upper room furnished *and* ready; prepare for us there.” ¹⁶ The disciples went out and came to the city, and found *it* just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover. ¹⁷ When it was evening He came with the twelve. ¹⁸ As they were reclining *at the table* and eating, Jesus said, “Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me—one who is eating with Me.” ¹⁹ They began to be grieved and to say to Him one by one, “Surely not I?” ²⁰ And He said to them, “*It is* one of the twelve, one who dips with Me in the bowl. ²¹ For the Son of Man *is to* go just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! *It would have been* good for that man if he had not been born.” ²² While they were eating, He took *some* bread, and after a blessing He broke *it*, and gave *it* to them, and said, “Take *it*; this is My body.” ²³ And when He had taken a cup *and* given thanks, He gave *it* to them, and they all drank from it. ²⁴ And He said to them, “This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. ²⁵ Truly I say to you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.” ²⁶ After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

(NASB)

1. Preparation for the last supper (14:12-16)

We have come to the night before the death of Jesus. The time has come for the Son to lay down his life for the benefit of those who would believe in him.

¹² On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover *lamb* was being sacrificed, His disciples said to Him, “Where do You want us to go and prepare for You to eat the Passover?” ¹³ And He sent two of His disciples and said to them, “Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him; ¹⁴ and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, ‘The Teacher says, “Where is My guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?”’”

¹⁵ And he himself will show you a large upper room furnished *and* ready; prepare for us there.” ¹⁶ The disciples went out and came to the city, and found *it* just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover.

As we have said before, Passover and the day of Unleavened Bread are part of the same feast. The Passover lamb was to be sacrificed and the unleavened bread was to be eaten with bitter herbs. All of this was to commemorate the Lord's delivery of His people from the slavery of Egypt. We see that the disciples were preoccupied: *'Where do you want us to go and prepare for You to eat the Passover?'* They turned to Jesus for leadership for he was their Master. May we also be people whom others turn to for advice and leadership! Jesus gives them the following orders to secure a place for the Passover meal.

First, *'He sent two of His disciples'* (v.13). It is often beneficial to be two when we are sent to do God's business. It is always encouraging to be with a fellow believer. Second, he gives them very precise directions: *'go into the city'* then *'a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water'* (v.13). They were ordered to *'follow him'*. Then they were to meet a man at the end of their journey and talk to the owner of the house saying *'The teacher says, 'Where is my guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?'* (v.14). Jesus gave them a clear picture of what they were to do and also of the circumstances surrounding that event. Some parts of the Bible are mysterious but amen that the 'Good News' is easy to understand for anyone who has 'ears to listen'. Third, the man would show them where the place for the Passover meal would take place.

¹⁶ The disciples went out and came to the city, and found *it* just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover.

Here we see that the disciples did what Christ said. They found things just as Christ said they would happen and the Upper Room was found. Once this was done *'they prepared the Passover'*. It seems that nothing was left to chance. This should be the Christian's way of life, to follow instruction like the Lord tells us.

2. The shocking declaration (14:17-21)

¹⁷ When it was evening He came with the twelve. ¹⁸ As they were reclining *at the table* and eating, Jesus said, "Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me—one who is eating with Me." ¹⁹ They began to be grieved and to say to Him one by one, "Surely not I?" ²⁰ And He said to them, "*It is one of the twelve, one who dips with Me in the bowl.* ²¹ For the Son of Man *is to go* just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! *It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.*"

Contrary to other events when Jesus was present this time He was only *'with the twelve'*. There were no crowds not even any followers, just Jesus and the twelve. This was a unique event and Jesus wanted to be alone with his apostles. The setting is a peaceful one yet Jesus was going to drop a 'bomb' into their conversation!

¹⁸ As they were reclining *at the table and eating*, Jesus said, "Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me—one who is eating with Me."

They were *'reclining at the table and eating'*. It was, after all, Passover and they were enjoying a meal of lamb with bitter herbs. There was a sudden change of atmosphere when Jesus said: *'Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me – one who is eating with Me'*. Someone would *'betray'* (PARADIDOMI) meaning: to surrender, to yield, to bring forth. Someone would actually betray Jesus and hand him over to the authorities! How could anyone ever want to do that?

¹⁹ They began to be grieved and to say to Him one by one, "Surely not I?"

Every one (except Judas) was bewildered. Out of their confusion *'They began to be grieved'*. The word *'grieved'* (LUPEO) means: distress, to be in heaviness. It seems that their hearts were broken at the thought that one of them would do such a thing. It was utter disbelief and they openly said: *'Surely not I'*

²⁰ And He said to them, "*It is one of the twelve, one who dips with Me in the bowl.*"

Jesus was not going to leave his disciples in suspense, after all this was a grave accusation. So he gives the disciples a clue to whom it was going to be: *'It is one of the twelve, one who dips with Me in the bowl'*. The dipping in the bowl has to do with the bitter herbs. In the pascal meal they needed to eat unleavened bread AND bitter herbs. So people would take the bread and dip it into the mix of bitter herbs and eat it. The gospel of Matthew tells us clearly who would betray Jesus:

Matthew 26:25

**Judas, who betrayed him, said, "Is it I, Master?" He said to him, "You have said so."
(RSV)**

After this astonishing revelation, Jesus continues to speak about His traitor.

²¹ For the Son of Man *is to go just as it is written of Him*; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! *It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.*"

Jesus could not escape what was written concerning him. The Holy Scriptures are eternal for they are the words of God. No man can escape either! We need to take heed to the warnings concerning the judgment to come and how to escape it through the beloved Son. Let us not be like the people in the days of Noah who heard of the coming flood and responded by laughter and mockery. Can you imagine the judgment that will fall upon Judas for '*It would have been good for that man if he had not been born*'. What a terrible judgment awaits him!

3. The Lord's supper (14:22-26)

²² While they were eating, He took *some bread*, and after a blessing He broke *it*, and gave *it* to them, and said, "Take *it*; this is My body."²³ And when He had taken a cup *and given thanks*, He gave *it* to them, and they all drank from it.²⁴ And He said to them, "This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many."²⁵ Truly I say to you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."²⁶ After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

This is what we often call 'The institution of the Lord's Table'. Jesus is not disturbed by the fact that He will be betrayed, for His eyes are fixed on the mission that the Father has given Him. May we be like Christ and not be deterred from the 'narrow path' that we are called to walk on.

Jesus shares both the bread and the cup of wine. In a few hours Jesus will share his life for them also and not only them but for all who would later believe. Both bread and wine are representative. They are NOT his actual flesh and blood. The Bible is very adamant about this – we are not allowed to drink or eat blood (Lev. 17:12-14; Acts 15:20).

Jesus speaks about a new covenant, a covenant which '*is poured out for many*'. This new covenant is 'sealed' not by the death and blood of a sacrificial animal but by the death and blood of the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29). He is the suffering Messiah that would come to deliver his people from their sins. Notice that his blood would be '*poured out for many*' not for all but for many. Some believe in universal salvation – that everyone who ever lived will be saved. But as we see, this is not so.

²⁵ Truly I say to you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.” ²⁶ After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

In verse twenty five we have a glimpse of how eternity will be. We see that Jesus will drink wine in the kingdom of God. We also know that there will be a great feast given for the Bride of Christ (Rev. 19:6-10). They sang to the glory of God! Even when he knew that death was upon him Jesus glorified the Father. How much we need to learn from our beloved Savior concerning accepting all things with the right attitude. And off they went to the Mount of Olives.

CONCLUSION:

1. As we march forward may we do as Christ asks us.
2. May we be careful not to betray Christ.
3. Let us participate with great joy in the Lord's Table.

The gospel of Mark
61 – Jesus predicts Peter's denial
14:27-31

²⁷ And Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away, because it is written, ‘I WILL STRIKE DOWN THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP SHALL BE SCATTERED.’ ²⁸ But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.” ²⁹ But Peter said to Him, “Even though all may fall away, yet I will not.” ³⁰ And Jesus said to him, “Truly I say to you, that this very night, before a rooster crows twice, you yourself will deny Me three times.” ³¹ But Peter kept saying insistently, “Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!” And they all were saying the same thing also.
(NASB)

1. The Lord's declaration (14:27,28)

We left our last section with the betrayal of Judas being exposed by the Lord and the establishing of the Lord's Supper. It was a bitter-sweet Passover meal for his disciples. They are now heading for the Mount of Olives where yet another scene of great importance will take place.

²⁷ And Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away, because it is written, ‘I WILL STRIKE DOWN THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP SHALL BE SCATTERED.’ ²⁸ But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.”

It was one thing to learn about Judas falling away and betraying the Lord but quite another to hear what the Lord now had to say. You must remember that when Jesus spoke about a betrayer all were asking ‘Is it me? How relieved they must have felt when the culprit was exposed! They might have even felt that they were the strong ones – the faithful ones.

Jesus tells them ‘*You will all fall away*’. It wasn't only Judas that would betray but each and every one of them. The words ‘*fall away*’ (SKANDALIZO) means: to trip up, stumble or to entrap. The event that will happen on the Mount of Olives, will become a stumbling block for them for they will all deny Christ, not in the same manner as Judas but deny just the same.

Jesus explains the circumstances of their falling away: ‘*I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered*’. This is taken from Zachariah 13:7. We all know that the shepherd is the Lord Jesus and the sheep are his disciples. The word ‘*strike*’ (PATASSO) means: to knock, to smite.

The shepherd will be struck down. Notice that the 'I' in '*I will strike down*' is God speaking! It is God – the Father who will strike down God – the Son at the cross for it is written:

2 Corinthians 5:21

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

(RSV)

In verse twenty eight the Lord prophesies that not only will he be raised from the dead but also that they will also meet together.

²⁸ But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.

After telling his disciples that he will be smitten Jesus brings joy to his disciples' hearts, first by expressing once more that he will be raised from the grave. The resurrection is so important because it manifests that the Father has accepted his Son's sacrifice for sinners (Rom. 4:25; 6:4; 7:4). Secondly he declares that they will meet again in Galilee. This came to be true in John 21:1-23 (The Sea of Tiberius is another name for the Sea of Galilee for Tiberius was the capitol of the region of Galilee). May our hearts also be encouraged with the thought that we will also be with Christ one day.

2. Peter's declaration (14:29)

²⁹ But Peter said to Him, "*Even though all may fall away, yet I will not.*"

Once more we see the impetuous character of Peter. Instead of accepting the words of the Lord and humbling himself – he raises his heels against him! Peter should have felt crushed and ashamed under the thought that he will '*fall away*' from his Master – but no! Peter makes a statement that must have surprised everyone but Christ! '*Even though all may fall away, yet I will not*'. What Peter is doing is that he places himself above all the others. They are weak but I am strong. They will fail but I will succeed. Peter was tearing everybody down and placing himself on a pedestal. Are we not also sometimes like Peter putting others down or thinking that we are better or more capable than others?

3. The Lord's response (14:30)

³⁰ And Jesus said to him, "Truly I say to you, that this very night, before a rooster crows twice, you yourself will deny Me three times."

This is one of Jesus' famous sayings. The truth is different than the words spoken by Peter. Jesus is saying 'Yes you will deny me, not only once but three times'! It was the pride of Peter's heart that was speaking. But the Lord can see his true intention. Let's not be mistaken here – Peter truly loves the Lord and believes that he will never betray him. The reality however is far different. As we commonly say today 'Talk is cheap'. May our lips always weigh our words. May our emotions not control our thinking. May we see ourselves as we truly are.

4. Peter's insistence (14:31a)

³¹ But Peter kept saying insistently, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!"

I don't understand why Peter is reacting this way especially after Jesus tells him that he surely will deny him and that three times. The facts are there and the Lord has spoken but Peter refuses to accept what the Lord tells him. We see a streak of pride rising in him. How many times do we systematically refuse to consent to what the Lord says? How many times do we think we are so much better than we really are? How many times do we argue with the Lord? Notice that this time Peter goes further than his first statement. The first time he says '*Even though all fall away, yet I will not*' (v.29). The second time Peter says '*Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You*'. He is now saying that he is ready to die with Jesus. It seems that Peter has lost touch with reality, his emotions have completely blinded him. He is going deeper and deeper into his denial.

5. The others join in (14:31b)

And they all were saying the same thing also.

This is an often forgotten phrase for we tend to think only of Peter and what he has said. Let us not forget that '*they all were saying the same thing also*'. It seems that the other disciples joined in Peter's folly. This manifests the fact that we need to be very careful with our thoughts. Here we have a leader who stands up and voices his thoughts and intentions. The reaction of his fellow disciples is simple to join in with what Peter is saying – without taking the time to think it through. Am I really willing to go to death with Jesus? May this be a warning for all of us.

Let us not be too swift to in bark on another person's desires and direction. In reality it is not only Peter that said that he would be ready to die with Christ and failed – ALL did.

CONCLUSION:

1. May we humbly receive the words of the Lord.
2. May we have a balanced view of where we stand before the Lord.
3. If the Lord rebukes us it is not time to try to prove him wrong.
4. Do not be carried away by someone else's emotions or speech.

The gospel of Mark
62 – The Garden of Gethsemane
14:32-42

³² They came to a place named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, “Sit here until I have prayed.” ³³ And He took with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be very distressed and troubled. ³⁴ And He said to them, “My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch.” ³⁵ And He went a little beyond *them*, and fell to the ground and *began* to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by. ³⁶ And He was saying, “Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will.” ³⁷ And He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? ³⁸ Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” ³⁹ Again He went away and prayed, saying the same words. ⁴⁰ And again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him. ⁴¹ And He came the third time, and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough; the hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴² Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!”

(NASB)

1. Jesus’ request to his disciples (14:32-34)

They have now arrived in the Garden of Gethsemane. This garden was a short distance from Jerusalem just east over the bridge of the Kidron. It was a peaceful place where olive trees thrived. This would be the last setting where Jesus would freely share with his disciples.

³² They came to a place named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, “Sit here until I have prayed.”

As we will see the Lord will divide his disciples into two groups. He asks the first group to ‘*Sit here until I have prayed*’. They were to stay still and sit down until the Lord had finished praying. What a great lesson for all believers! We are too often very active in our life simply thinking that the Lord is automatically with us in our endeavours. Here we see the opposite. Disciples sometimes need to do NOTHING until they hear from the Lord. Business is not automatically a sign of holiness. Jonah had to stay still in the belly of a fish to hear from the Lord. Elijah had to stay still in the mountains to hear the voice of God.

Jacob laid still and slept when the Lord spoke to him in a dream. Let us not move forward for the Lord until we have the certainty that he is leading us ahead.

³³ And He took with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be very distressed and troubled. ³⁴ And He said to them, “My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch.”

We know that Jesus had an ‘inner circle’ of disciples, people who were closer to Christ and into which he poured himself in a different manner. Peter, James and John were the three disciples who were closer to Christ and sometimes he brought them alone with him. One may wonder ‘Why does Jesus do this’? In Gal. 2:9 Paul tells us that Peter, John and James were the pillars of the church in Jerusalem. Jesus was simply training these three men for the ministry waiting ahead.

It is written that Jesus *‘began to be very distressed and troubled’*. The word *‘distressed’* (EKTHAMBEO) means: utterly affright, greatly sore. The word *‘troubled’* (ADEMONEO) means: to be full of heaviness. Jesus is allowing Peter, John and James to see the state of his heart. Jesus knows what lies ahead and is profoundly shaken by what he knows. Then he says: *‘My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death’*. The word *‘soul’* (PSUCHE) meaning: spirit, breath, this distinguishes man from the rest of creation. God did not breathe into them to make them a living soul. This manifests that Christ was perfectly man just as he was perfectly God – the Son. Now his soul (his very being) was *‘deeply grieved’* (PERILUPOS) meaning: intensely sad, exceedingly sorrowful. His sadness was so intense that he felt as though it introduced him to death itself! Jesus was already bearing the weight of our sins – his heart was tearing (figure of speech) under the pressure in the Garden of Gethsemane. He asks his three disciples to *‘remain here and keep watch’*. To *‘keep watch’* (GREGOREUO) means: to keep awake, be vigilant. He was going a little further on and asked them to keep awake. It is very rare that Christ had ever asked them to do something for him personally. Has Christ asked you to do something personal for him – are you keeping watch?

2. Jesus speaks to his Father (14:35,36)

³⁵ And He went a little beyond *them*, and fell to the ground and *began* to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by. ³⁶ And He was saying, “Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will.”

We are witnessing the battle of the flesh in Christ. We often say that Christ is fully man, and it is true, but we do not often see the battle of the flesh in him. The devil had tried just before Jesus began his ministry (Mat. 4 and Luke 4) offering him things that would please his flesh and Satan failed. Now at the very end of his ministry we again see Christ battling against his flesh and he is agonizing over it. If fighting against the flesh was difficult for Christ imagine how it is for all of his followers! The flesh has always been a forceful enemy of the children of God because it hates everything that has to do with true spirituality (Gal. 5:19-21).

His prayer was *'if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by'*. He knew of the cross and the judgment he would have to bear. He knew that the Father would turn His face away. He knew that he would taste the cup of his Father's wrath. So he pleaded if there was another way, if this could just 'pass by'. He knew that the Father had the capacity to take this cup away for he said *'All things are possible for you'*. There is no limit to what God the Father can do and taking this cup away was one of them. But even though Christ knew that the Father was capable of doing so and his profound wish was not to taste the fury to come, he quickly added: *'yet not what I will, but what you will'*. The will of the flesh was conquered through prayer and submission to the Father. Amen, that Christ won this first victory! May I add that the only way followers of Christ can ever conquer over the flesh is by readily submitting to the will of God through prayer.

3. Jesus speaks to Simon (14:37,38)

³⁷ And He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? ³⁸ Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Remember that Jesus had asked his disciples to remain watchful, to keep awake while he prayed a short distance from them. Also remember that Christ had shared the deepest troubles his heart possessed. He expected that their love and consideration for him would keep them from falling asleep. He expected that they also would pray along with him through this trial – but they didn't! When he came back he *'found them asleep'*. How disappointing this must have been for Christ. At the time of his greatest need of encouragement they failed him. He said *'Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour?'* Just one hour – that's all I was asking. I gave you three and a half years of my full attention could you not watch for just one hour? How many times have we fallen asleep instead of being awake and remaining strong for the Lord? Jesus adds:

³⁸ Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

He tells his three disciples how to battle against (spiritual) sleepiness. They were supposed to keep watch but they fell asleep. What was missing was *'and pray that you may not come into temptation'*. I believe that the temptation spoken of above is to stop being watchful and fall asleep while they were supposed to be brave and rise above the situation. Prayer will always be an instrument against failing as a disciple. Jesus recognises the power of the flesh when he says: *'the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak'*. The flesh has no power and will never have power over sin because sin finds its power in the flesh (Romans 7 & 8).

4. Again Jesus speaks to his Father (14:39)

³⁹ Again He went away and prayed, saying the same words.

The faults or weakness of his disciples do not deter Christ from his mission. He goes back and begins once more to pray to his Father. This is another lessons that should be noticed for believers who are active in the mission of the church and are often touched by what others do. Many are not as zealous as you may be and this has a 'dragging down' effect. We lose our enthusiasm because we are disappointed in others who have 'fallen asleep'. If this is the case may Christ be our model – may we persevere!

5. Jesus speaks to his disciples (14:40)

⁴⁰ And again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him.

So Jesus comes back for a second time. I can only believe that he hoped that this time they would be watchful and would follow his advice and pray. But Jesus *'found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy'*. It was late in the evening if not in the early hours of the new day and they were physically tired. They may have tried to keep awake but they were also limited by their humanity – so they fell asleep once more. We see that Jesus spoke to them because it is written: *'and they did not know what to answer Him'*. Please notice in both occasions how Jesus reacted. They failed him but he did not retaliate. He simply spoke with them and encouraged them. May we have the same attitude with those who fail us!

6. Jesus speaks to his disciples a third time (14:41,42)

⁴¹ And He came the third time, and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough; the hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴² Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!"

We understand by verse forty one that Christ went back and prayed to his Father for '*He came back the third time*'. He presented himself before his Father on three occasions and the Father's answer was the same, His plan was not going to change, the cross laid ahead and he must drink of the Father's cup.

We also see that even with two warnings concerning being watchful, they still failed a third time. This time his speech was quite different:

(v.41)...It is enough; the hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴²Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!"

Jesus fully accepts the will of the Father, he submits to His authority. He knows his time has come to be '*betrayed into the hands of sinners*'. He tells his disciples to get up knowing that Judas and his band are at hand.

CONCLUSION:

1. There are times when it is better to stop and wait until the Lord leads us forward.
2. There are times that prayer is needed to fight the flesh.
3. At all times our prayers should end with '*not my will but thine*'.
4. There are times to move forward with our Lord even when it is troublesome.

The gospel of Mark
63 – Jesus is arrested
14:43-52

⁴³ Immediately while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, came up accompanied by a crowd with swords and clubs, *who were* from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. ⁴⁴ Now he who was betraying Him had given them a signal, saying, “Whomever I kiss, He is the one; seize Him and lead Him away under guard.” ⁴⁵ After coming, Judas immediately went to Him, saying, “Rabbi!” and kissed Him. ⁴⁶ They laid hands on Him and seized Him. ⁴⁷ But one of those who stood by drew his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear. ⁴⁸ And Jesus said to them, “Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me, as *you would* against a robber? ⁴⁹ Every day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize Me; but *this has taken place* to fulfill the Scriptures.” ⁵⁰ And they all left Him and fled.

**⁵¹ A young man was following Him, wearing *nothing but* a linen sheet over his naked *body*; and they seized him. ⁵² But he pulled free of the linen sheet and escaped naked.
(NASB)**

1. Judas betrays Jesus (14:43-46)

We have seen that Judas left the Passover meal after he was declared the traitor, the one who would betray the Lord. Jesus took Peter, John and James to be with him while he prayed but on three occasions they fell asleep. Finally Judas returns and delivers Christ for the silver coins he was promised.

⁴³ Immediately while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, came up accompanied by a crowd with swords and clubs, *who were* from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. ⁴⁴ Now he who was betraying Him had given them a signal, saying, “Whomever I kiss, He is the one; seize Him and lead Him away under guard.” ⁴⁵ After coming, Judas immediately went to Him, saying, “Rabbi!” and kissed Him. ⁴⁶ They laid hands on Him and seized Him.

As Jesus finishes speaking to his disciples ‘*Judas, one of the twelve came up*’. The description of Judas as ‘*one of the twelve*’ is striking. He is ‘*one of the twelve*’ which describes all the spiritual benefits that this man received: being with Christ, hearing him speak, witnessing all the miracles, seeing his compassion and caring for all who came to him.

He had learned so many spiritual lessons concerning the kingdom of God as he walked with the one who was the true light of the world. Yet, this man called Judas was as blind and deaf as a rock! He delivered unto the religious elite the one who had never sinned and all of that for 30 pieces of silver. Remember the rich young ruler who asked ‘What shall I do to have eternal life’? He also turned from Christ because he loved money more than anything else. May this be a warning for all readers! You may outwardly know Christ and follow him as you were taught. You may even have ministries (as Judas did) but do you really love Christ and have repented unto him?

(v.43)...came up accompanied by a crowd with swords and clubs, *who were* from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.

This crowd is described as people with ‘*swords and clubs*’. So a good number of men (I presume no women took place in this mob) came armed with swords and clubs. Now who were these men? In Luke 22:52 some were called ‘*captains of the Temple*’. They had superintendence over the Levites and priests who guarded the temple. They were also known as the temple police. In John 18:2 we see that they were a ‘*detachment of troops*’ and ‘*officers from the chief priests and Pharisees*’. It seems that by the term ‘*detachment of troops*’ the Roman soldiers were part of the arresting party. There was an exceeding amount of force used to capture the Lord! I can only imagine that the religious elite did not want to fail in their twisted plan.

⁴⁴ Now he who was betraying Him had given them a signal, saying, “Whomever I kiss, He is the one; seize Him and lead Him away under guard.” ⁴⁵ After coming, Judas immediately went to Him, saying, “Rabbi!” and kissed Him. ⁴⁶ They laid hands on Him and seized Him.

To be certain that they would seize the right person Judas had given a signal to those who had come to arrest Jesus – a kiss. It would be the person whom he kissed who they needed to arrest. Imagine being betrayed with a kiss! One of the most personal signs of affection was to become the instrument of a death sentence. His kiss would be remembered and used as an adage for centuries to come – it is still used today as the greatest sign of betrayal! Judas comes to Christ and said ‘*Rabbi*’. This was a term of respect which in Hebrew meant: ‘*my great one*’. Be warned, it is not everyone who respects you who is attached to you. This was the signal, Judas had given his kiss now the time had come to arrest Jesus.

2. A disciple's defense (14:47)

⁴⁷ But one of those who stood by drew his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear.

One of the disciples '*drew his sword*'. This is the only place where a weapon is ever used, for Jesus was the '*Prince of peace*'. In reality it was not a sword as we see in a more contemporary setting but rather a dagger-like knife that was used for many different practices. They were of customary use and possession in Jesus' time. We know that it was Peter that drew his sword (John 18:10) and that the name of the servant was Malchus (John 18:10). Notice how bad a fighter Peter was – he couldn't even use his sword right! He only cut off the ear instead of causing more damage. By this we see that the apostles were not men of violence. But Peter wanting to protect his Master did what he thought was right – but he was terribly wrong! How many times do we do things for Christ thinking that this is the right thing to do and it is not! Notice that in Luke 22:51 Jesus took time to heal the ear of poor Malchus. Even when violence reigns Christ takes time to do good – and so should all of his disciples.

3. The response of Christ (14:48,49)

⁴⁸ And Jesus said to them, "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me, as you would against a robber? ⁴⁹ Every day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize Me; but *this has taken place* to fulfill the Scriptures."

Jesus speaks out and confronts the mob not with violence but with his words. He asks them if they think he is a robber '*as you would against a robber*'. If not why come '*with swords and clubs*'? The image that they had of Christ had been warped! They had the opportunity day after day to see what type of man he was. They knew that he was a man of God for he was '*in the temple teaching*'. So why come with violence in your hearts? And why, still today, is there so much violence against the name of Jesus? Why are there still Disciples of Christ who are martyred in so many countries? It is the hatred that people have for Christ. The following verse explains it very plainly:

John 15:18

**"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.
(RSV)**

Jesus also says:

John 15:25

**It is to fulfil the word that is written in their law, 'They hated me without a cause.'
(RSV)**

All of this was to *'fulfill the Scriptures'*. We can see in Isaiah 53 some of the Scriptures that were being fulfilled:

Isaiah 53:3

He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. (RSV)

Isaiah 53:7-9

(7)He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.

(8)By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people?

(9)And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. (RSV)

Isaiah 53:12

**Therefore I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.
(RSV)**

And also a verse found in Zechariah:

Zechariah 13:7

**"Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who stands next to me," says the LORD of hosts. "Strike the shepherd, that the sheep may be scattered; I will turn my hand against the little ones.
(RSV)**

4. The disciples' reaction (14:50-52)

⁵⁰ And they all left Him and fled.

⁵¹ A young man was following Him, wearing *nothing but* a linen sheet over *his* naked *body*; and they seized him. ⁵² But he pulled free of the linen sheet and escaped naked.

Seeing what was happening and fearing the Roman troops and the Temple guards '*they all left Him and fled*'. The shepherd had been struck and now the sheep were being scattered (Zec. 13:7). Just a few hours ago they all had said that they were ready to die with Christ (Mark 14:31). How fickle was their promise! Have you also made promises to the Lord and abandoned them at your first trial? We are no better than they were – are we not!

It seems that at a certain point in time '*a young man*' it is believed that this could have been John since he was the youngest by far than all the others. We later see that John was also not afraid to follow Jesus into the High Priest's court. If this is John we understand that he had a change of heart and wanted to follow his beloved Christ. This is a good lesson for all who fail Christ – there is always the possibility of turning back to him. It could also have been someone who had heard the soldiers leave with the Temple guards at night in Jerusalem and followed them afar to see what the commotion was about. If this is the case he left in a hurry in his '*linen sheet*' (his pyjamas) and followed everyone. When the soldiers began to seize Jesus and his disciples (John 18:8) and the fight broke out between Peter and Malchus this young man could have been easily caught in all of this.

⁵² But he pulled free of the linen sheet and escaped naked.

The young man was able to free himself but at a great cost he '*escaped naked*'. He would rather run away naked than to be in the hands of the soldiers!

CONCLUSION:

1. May we never betray Jesus!
2. Before doing something impulsively be certain that it is the will of God.
3. The Scriptures will always be fulfilled.

The gospel of Mark
64 – Jesus is before the Sanhedrin
14:53-72

⁵³ They led Jesus away to the high priest; and all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes gathered together. ⁵⁴ Peter had followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest; and he was sitting with the officers and warming himself at the fire. ⁵⁵ Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, and they were not finding any. ⁵⁶ For many were giving false testimony against Him, but their testimony was not consistent. ⁵⁷ Some stood up and *began* to give false testimony against Him, saying, ⁵⁸ “We heard Him say, ‘I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.’” ⁵⁹ Not even in this respect was their testimony consistent. ⁶⁰ The high priest stood up *and came* forward and questioned Jesus, saying, “Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?” ⁶¹ But He kept silent and did not answer. Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, “Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed *One*?” ⁶² And Jesus said, “I am; and you shall see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.” ⁶³ Tearing his clothes, the high priest said, “What further need do we have of witnesses? ⁶⁴ You have heard the blasphemy; how does it seem to you?” And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death. ⁶⁵ Some began to spit at Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him with their fists, and to say to Him, “Prophecy!” And the officers received Him with slaps *in the face*. ⁶⁶ As Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came, ⁶⁷ and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, “You also were with Jesus the Nazarene.” ⁶⁸ But he denied *it*, saying, “I neither know nor understand what you are talking about.” And he went out onto the porch. ⁶⁹ The servant-girl saw him, and began once more to say to the bystanders, “This is *one* of them!” ⁷⁰ But again he denied it. And after a little while the bystanders were again saying to Peter, “Surely you are *one* of them, for you are a Galilean too.” ⁷¹ But he began to curse and swear, “I do not know this man you are talking about!” ⁷² Immediately a rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had made the remark to him, “Before a rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.” And he began to weep.
(NASB)

1. Jesus is lead away (14:53,54)

⁵³ They led Jesus away to the high priest; and all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes gathered together. ⁵⁴ Peter had followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest; and he was sitting with the officers and warming himself at the fire.

We have seen that the Roman soldiers and the Temple guards arrested Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Now in our present scene we come to understand that they brought Jesus to stand before the high priest, the chief priests, the elders and the scribes.

Before we begin I must explain that Jesus passed through two trials which were made up of three parts each. Not all of them are mentioned in Mark. Actually not all of them are mentioned in a single Gospel. So here is the sequence of all six settings.

The Jewish trial

- Before Annas (John 18:12-14; 19-24)
- Before Caiaphas (Mat. 26:57-68; Luke 22:54; 63-65)
- Before the Sanhedrin (Mat. 27:1; Mark 15:1; Luke 22:66-71)

The civil trial

- Before Pilate (Mat. 27:2,11-14; Mark 15:1-5; Luke 23:1-5; John 18:28-38)
- Before Herod Antipas (Luke 23:6-12)
- Before Pilate again (Mat. 27:15-26; Mark 15:6-15; Luke 23:13-25; John 18:39-19:16)

As we can see the ones who plotted against Jesus have convened an assembly. The goal is simple it is to officially find any type of fault that will lead to his condemnation. They are acting as both judges and jury. In many ways the Jewish trial of Jesus was illegal and there are books that explain all of this.

Our eyes must also fall on Peter, who has *'followed him at a distance'*. We understand from the gospel of John that Peter followed John and that John went inside the court because he knew people there (John 18:15-17). The *'other disciple'* is understood to be John because John never names himself in his gospel but speaks of *'another disciple'*. Peter follows Jesus but we understand that it was John who probably led the way because he was known to the high priest and was not afraid to be there. Now once he was inside the courtyard this is what he did:

(v.54)...he was sitting with the officers and warming himself at the fire.

He stayed at a distance and did not want to be recognized as a follower of Jesus. How many of us also ‘stay at a distance’ being afraid to openly identify with our Savior? How many desire to be warm by the fire with unbelievers rather than to stand with Christ?

2. False testimonies (14:55-59)

⁵⁵ Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, and they were not finding any. ⁵⁶ For many were giving false testimony against Him, but their testimony was not consistent. ⁵⁷ Some stood up and *began* to give false testimony against Him, saying, ⁵⁸ “We heard Him say, ‘I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.’” ⁵⁹ Not even in this respect was their testimony consistent.

While Peter kept warm by the fire Jesus was facing the High Priest and the entire Council. The high priest was Caiaphas his full name was Joseph Caiaphas. He was the high priest under Tiberius and it was Velerius Gratus who has appointed him high priest for the time period of 18-36 AD. The ‘*whole Council*’ was made up of the Sadducees and the Pharisees. Their aim was simple ‘*trying to obtain testimony against Jesus to put Him to death*’. You can imagine how this was a mock trial especially when the judges had already condemned Jesus in their minds BEFORE the trial!

Even when the trial was ‘rigged’ they could not find a false testimony that stood up!

⁵⁶ For many were giving false testimony against Him, but their testimony was not consistent. ⁵⁷ Some stood up and *began* to give false testimony against Him, saying, ⁵⁸ “We heard Him say, ‘I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.’” ⁵⁹ Not even in this respect was their testimony consistent.

False testimonies, inconsistencies, things that were taken out of context - they tried everything but nothing was substantial enough to get Jesus arrested. How foolish can you be when the people you hire to bear false witness can’t even do a ‘good job’! So far their plan is not working, they have nothing to accuse Jesus of. If our story would stop there, they would not have a case against Christ.

3. Jesus and the high priest (14:60-65)

⁶⁰ The high priest stood up *and came* forward and questioned Jesus, saying, “Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?” ⁶¹ But He kept silent and did not answer. Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, “Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed *One*?” ⁶² And Jesus said, “I am; and you shall see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.” ⁶³ Tearing his clothes, the high priest said, “What further need do we have of witnesses? ⁶⁴ You have heard the blasphemy; how does it seem to you?” And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death. ⁶⁵ Some began to spit at Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him with their fists, and to say to Him, “Prophecy!” And the officers received Him with slaps *in the face*.

Seeing that the trial is going nowhere Caiaphas takes a stand and interrogates Jesus himself.

⁶⁰ The high priest stood up *and came* forward and questioned Jesus, saying, “Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?”

So far Jesus has kept silent like a lamb ready to be sacrificed. This silence infuriated Caiaphas who was waiting to catch Jesus by his words. He needed Jesus to say something. He was also amazed that Christ did not defend himself saying ‘*Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?*’ Again Caiaphas is bewildered.

⁶¹ But He kept silent and did not answer. Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, “Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed *One*?”

Because of Jesus’ silence before the false accusations Caiaphas speaks up and interrogates Christ by asking a direct question: ‘*Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?*’. The time had come, no more fooling around are you or are you not the Christ? This was a trick question. If Jesus says ‘NO’ then his ministry would fall apart because people thought he might be. If Jesus says ‘YES’ then he would be accused of blasphemy because they did not want to believe him.

⁶² And Jesus said, “I am; and you shall see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.”

The answer Jesus gave was a reference to the Messianic prophecies such as:

Psalms 110:1

A Psalm of David. The LORD says to my lord: "Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool."

(RSV)

Daniel 7:13

I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.

(RSV)

Notice that as long as the accusations brought against him were false Jesus did not speak a word. But when he was asked a true question: *'Are you the Christ'* Jesus answer readily with a resounding 'YES'!

⁶³ Tearing his clothes, the high priest said, "What further need do we have of witnesses? ⁶⁴ You have heard the blasphemy; how does it seem to you?" And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death.

This was the moment that the entire Council was waiting for. Declaring oneself the *Son of God* was blasphemous (unless you truly are). They had finally got the proof that they needed. Making a 'scene' the high priest acts as if he was outraged and insulted at Christ's response and tears his clothes! No further proof is needed – all heard the statement Jesus had made. He called himself the *'Son of God'*! Caiaphas calls upon his fellow Council members to come to a decision which was the following: *'And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death'*. Not a single man had any restraint in condemning Jesus – not one! How do we stand when we are in a crowd? Do we act like them or are we strong enough to stand for Christ?

⁶⁵ Some began to spit at Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him with their fists, and to say to Him, "Prophecy!" And the officers received Him with slaps *in the face*.

Instantly they began to *'spit at Him'* and to *'blindfold Him'* and also *'to beat Him'*. They also gave him *'slaps in the face'* and mocked him by saying *'Prophecy'*! In other words they literally disdained him which reminds me of the words of Christ:

John 15:23-25

(23)He who hates me hates my Father also.

(24)If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father.

(25)It is to fulfil the word that is written in their law, 'They hated me without a cause.'

(RSV)

4. Peter's denial of Jesus (14:66-72)

While this was going on we have another scene that is brought to us – Peter and his denial of Christ.

⁶⁶ As Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came, ⁶⁷ and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, "You also were with Jesus the Nazarene." ⁶⁸ But he denied *it*, saying, "I neither know nor understand what you are talking about." And he went out onto the porch. ⁶⁹ The servant-girl saw him, and began once more to say to the bystanders, "This is *one* of them!" ⁷⁰ But again he denied it. And after a little while the bystanders were again saying to Peter, "Surely you are *one* of them, for you are a Galilean too." ⁷¹ But he began to curse and swear, "I do not know this man you are talking about!" ⁷² Immediately a rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had made the remark to him, "Before a rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times." And he began to weep.

Peter has kept himself away from Christ and probably thought that he was safe near the fire surrounded by people. But a little '*servant-girl*' will forever change his life. Quite innocently a young girl comes near the fire and says the following:

(v.67)...“You also were with Jesus the Nazarene.”

She accuses Peter of being a follower of Christ. Up to now there had been many benefits of following Jesus which Peter had enjoyed. But this was another story. If Peter says 'YES' then there are chances that he also may land up before the tribunal beside Jesus and Peter did not want that. Notice that John had no difficulty being there and was even known by the high priest and others to have followed Jesus. If Peter says 'NO' then he thought everything would be alright. So what will he do?

⁶⁸ But he denied *it*, saying, "I neither know nor understand what you are talking about."

His answer was categorical *'he denied it'* the word *'denied'* (ARNEOMAI) means: to contradict, disavow and reject. He rejected her question *'I neither know nor understand what you are talking about'*. He's telling the young girl that she doesn't know what she is talking about. This was his first denial of Christ. Notice what Peter does next:

(v.68)....and he went out onto the porch.

Peter is getting out of there. He has been recognized and is moving away from the fire, away from his accuser of being a follower of Christ. The porch was an entryway unto the court where Jesus was being tried. We see that Peter is slowly trying to leave the premises.

⁶⁹ The servant-girl saw him, and began once more to say to the bystanders, "This is one of them!" ⁷⁰ But again he denied it.

The servant-girl is not accepting Peter's reply. She knows that she had seen him before along-side of Jesus. Peter might have thought that his answer would suffice, was she not just a servant-girl and he a man! But she persists and this shows me one thing. When God says that something will happen whatever you may do, it will not stop the Lord God from accomplishing his prophecies. This time the servant-girl brings a more assured accusation: *'This is one of them'*. You truly are a follower of Jesus I'm certain of it. For the second time Peter denies knowing Christ.

(v.70)... And after a little while the bystanders were again saying to Peter, "Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean too."

But the accusation continues, this time by a simple bystander who said: *'Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean too'*. Since Jesus was popularly known as a Galilean it was natural that Peter was his follower since we are told in Matthew that *'your speech betrays you'*. Peter could not hide any longer his accent betrayed him!

⁷¹ But he began to curse and swear, "I do not know this man you are talking about!"

This was the third time that he betrayed Jesus. Now there is something very interesting in this same story that is found in the gospel of Matthew. When Peter first denied Christ it is written that he *'denied'* Jesus (26:70). Then at the second time it is written that he *'denied it with an oath'* (26:72). Finally at the third denial (as we see in Mark also) he *'began to curse and swear saying: I do not know the man'* (26:74). The more Peter denied Christ the deeper into sin he fell, from denying him to cursing and swearing against knowing him.

The idea behind this cursing and swearing is that he made imprecations against himself if this was true. For us it would be something like: 'May God strike me right now if what I said was not true'.

Friend may this be a lesson for all of us – denying Christ over and over again sinks us deeper into the stronghold of darkness.

⁷² Immediately a rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had made the remark to him, "Before a rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times." And he began to weep.

Right away the *'rooster crowed a second time'*. The time of truth had finally come. Peter may have tried three times to hide his identity of knowing Christ. He had told everyone around him that it was not so. He even called a curse upon him if this was to be found true. But on the inside of Peter we see a different story. Peter's conscience was troubling him – he could not run away from the truth. The rooster had crowed and Peter had denied Jesus. He could not run away from God. No one can! See what Peter reaped from his denial *'he began to weep'*. This strong, brave and tempestuous man broke into tears – he was so ashamed of himself. Luke adds a piercing detail when this happened.

Luke 22:61

**And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times.
(RSV)**

Can you imagine Jesus staring down at Peter for he had heard everything that he had said? We know that all of Christ's disciples will pass before the 'judgment seat of Christ'. This is where all of our actions will pass through the judgment of fire"

1 Corinthians 3:12-15

(12)Now if any one builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw--

(13)each man's work will become manifest; for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done.

(14)If the work which any man has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward.

(15)If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

(RSV)

How will we feel as we stand before the Lord? Will our actions bring shame unto us? Will we be received with open arms? Or like Peter will we sometimes feel like crying because of our denial of Christ. What we have done in the past can not be changed but what we will do today and everyday after can be for the glory of our Savior.

CONCLUSION:

1. May we never be ashamed of Christ.
2. If asked, may our response be truthful.
3. May we not prefer being warmed by a fire with unbelievers rather than standing alongside our Savior.

The gospel of Mark
65 – Jesus and Pilate
15:1-15

Early in the morning the chief priests with the elders and scribes and the whole Council, immediately held a consultation; and binding Jesus, they led Him away and delivered Him to Pilate. ² Pilate questioned Him, “Are You the King of the Jews?” And He answered him, “*It is as you say.*” ³ The chief priests *began* to accuse Him harshly. ⁴ Then Pilate questioned Him again, saying, “Do You not answer? See how many charges they bring against You!” ⁵ But Jesus made no further answer; so Pilate was amazed.

⁶ Now at *the* feast he used to release for them *any* one prisoner whom they requested. ⁷ The man named Barabbas had been imprisoned with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the insurrection. ⁸ The crowd went up and began asking him *to do* as he had been accustomed to do for them. ⁹ Pilate answered them, saying, “Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?” ¹⁰ For he was aware that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy. ¹¹ But the chief priests stirred up the crowd *to ask* him to release Barabbas for them instead. ¹² Answering again, Pilate said to them, “Then what shall I do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?” ¹³ They shouted back, “Crucify Him!” ¹⁴ But Pilate said to them, “Why, what evil has He done?” But they shouted all the more, “Crucify Him!” ¹⁵ Wishing to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas for them, and after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified.

(NASB)

1. The council is convened (15:1)

Early in the morning the chief priests with the elders and scribes and the whole Council, immediately held a consultation; and binding Jesus, they led Him away and delivered Him to Pilate.

Once the three sessions of the Jewish mock trial has been finished and Jesus found guilty of blasphemy because he called himself the Son of God he is taken before the Roman authorities. One must remember that the Jewish authorities had civil power also but were not allowed to put someone to death. Only the Roman authorities could condemn someone to be executed (John 18:31). The religious elite held a ‘*consultation*’ (SUMBOULOS) meaning: a deliberate body, lay court. After hearing Jesus declare that he was the Son of God they talked together to see what should be done.

They had succeeded in their plan to condemn Jesus. What should they now do with him? So this is what they did *'they led Him away and delivered Him to Pilate'*. Now Pontius Pilate was the sixth Roman Procurator of Judea. His first great mistake was to move his Roman headquarters from Caesarea to Jerusalem – no Procurator had ever done this before. Because of the soldiers who naturally brought with them the emblem of Caesar into Jerusalem, this caused quite an outrage. The Jews took offense of the emperor's image on their emblems. Although Pilate recanted and brought the emperor's images back to Caesarea this caused quite an uprising. His reign caused more than once an insurrection among the people. Jesus refers to Pilate's oppression in Luke 13:1. Pilate was greatly despised by both the Jews and the Roman authorities.

2. Pilate questions Jesus (15:2-5)

² Pilate questioned Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" And He answered him, "It is as you say." ³ The chief priests began to accuse Him harshly. ⁴ Then Pilate questioned Him again, saying, "Do You not answer? See how many charges they bring against You!" ⁵ But Jesus made no further answer; so Pilate was amazed.

Knowing the accusations brought before him by the Jews Pilate directly gets to the point and asks him the following question: *'Are You the King of the Jews?'*. We can understand that Pilate did not simply make this question up by himself – he had been 'briefed' by the Jewish Council. Notice that when Christ is asked a question concerning his true identity he answers readily both with the Jewish religious establishment and the Roman Procurator *'It is as you say'*.

Once Jesus had given his declaration the *'Chief priests began to accuse Him harshly'*. It seems that the word *'harshly'* is not in the Greek but rather that they accused him of *'many things'*. What we do see is that the Council took every chance they had to relentlessly accuse Jesus.

Pilate once more questions Jesus because he is astounded by his attitude *'Do You not answer? See how many charges they bring against You!'*. The words of Pilate concur with the idea that *'many things'* (accusations) were brought against him. Jesus is silent before his accusers, after all was he not the Son of God and to say the opposite would be lying. He stood there as a lamb ready to be sacrificed.

⁵ But Jesus made no further answer; so Pilate was amazed.

Pilate *'was amazed'*. The word *'amazed'* (THAUMAZO) means: to wonder, to admire, to marvel. Pilate just could not understand why Jesus stood before him in complete silence.

Normally a man would bring a defense against an accusation but not Christ. There was no defense – he was the Son of God.

3. Jesus or Barabbas? (15:6-14)

⁶ Now at *the* feast he used to release for them *any* one prisoner whom they requested. ⁷ The man named Barabbas had been imprisoned with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the insurrection. ⁸ The crowd went up and began asking him *to do* as he had been accustomed to do for them. ⁹ Pilate answered them, saying, “Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?” ¹⁰ For he was aware that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy. ¹¹ But the chief priests stirred up the crowd *to ask* him to release Barabbas for them instead. ¹² Answering again, Pilate said to them, “Then what shall I do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?” ¹³ They shouted back, “Crucify Him!” ¹⁴ But Pilate said to them, “Why, what evil has He done?” But they shouted all the more, “Crucify Him!”

The *'feast'* is Passover and it seems that there was a tradition that was held between the Roma Procurator and the Jews *'he used to release for them any one prisoner whom they requested'*. In his commentary on Mark, Dr. Thomas Constable gives us better insight into what is going on:

"Two forms of amnesty existed in Roman law, the abolitio or acquittal of a prisoner not yet condemned, and the indulgentia, or pardoning of one already condemned. What Pilate intended in the case of Jesus, who at this stage of the proceedings had not yet been sentenced by the court, was clearly the first form."

It seems that Pilate had a scene to allow Jesus to live by bringing him to the crowd. After all if he was the King of the Jews people would naturally want him to be released.

⁷ The man named Barabbas had been imprisoned with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the insurrection.

Two men were brought to the crowd-the first being Jesus and then another man named Barabbas. We know little concerning this man except what this verse tells us. He had participated in an insurrection against Rome.

A group of Jews revolted and desired to cause an uprising against the Romans. During this revolt Barabbas had committed murder. We can understand that it was against a Roman soldier(s). Barabbas was one way or another going to be executed because of his deeds. Surely the crowd would choose Jesus.

It is understandable that Pilate had heard of Jesus and the love that people had for him.. Just a few days ago he was cheered by all as he made his way into Jerusalem. Certainly this was brought to the ears of Pilate.

⁸ The crowd went up and began asking him *to do* as he had been accustomed to do for them.⁹ Pilate answered them, saying, “Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?” ¹⁰ For he was aware that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy.

As the custom dictated the people asked for someone to be released and Pilate offered to release Jesus ‘*Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?*’. We can see the political game Pilate was playing against the religious elite. They wanted Jesus dead and Pilate offered the people to release him. In his mind Pilate was certain to win. Notice that ‘*the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy*’. He knew that the chief priests had no case, it was not truth that lead this inquiry but rather envy.

¹¹ But the chief priests stirred up the crowd *to ask* him to release Barabbas for them instead. ¹² Answering again, Pilate said to them, “Then what shall I do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?” ¹³ They shouted back, “Crucify Him!” ¹⁴ But Pilate said to them, “Why, what evil has He done?” But they shouted all the more, “Crucify Him!”

But the chief priests had another ‘card up their sleeve’ or a plan ‘B’ if you prefer. Seeing that they might lose they ‘*stirred up the crowd to ask him to release Barabbas for them instead*’. The word ‘*stirred*’ (ANASEIO) means: to excite, to stir up. It may have been by shouting the name of Barabbas louder and louder but one thing we know is that the crowd joined in. Once more we see how people are easily enticed to do what we wish. The same thing may be in churches today. People listen to eloquent preachers and are moved and follow them instead of studying the Scriptures as the Bereans did:

Acts 17:10,11

(10)The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Beroea; and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue.

**(11)Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with all eagerness, examining the scriptures daily to see if these things were so.
(RSV)**

Pilate seeing their trickery once more appealed to the crowd *'Then what shall I do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?'*. In the other gospels we see that Pilate pleads with the people telling that he does not find any fault in Jesus.

¹³ They shouted back, "Crucify Him!" ¹⁴ But Pilate said to them, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify Him!"

The crowd rejected Jesus – the prophet of God they had welcomed as King a few days ago was now to be crucified. No wonder the Lord God says through the prophet Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 17:9

**The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt; who can understand it?
(RSV)**

Does our heart waver from loving Christ to turning our backs on him? Do we also hesitate and follow the crowd instead of remaining faithful to our Savior? Are we easily enticed by others to walk on the 'broad road'? Is Jesus our King only when we congregate with other Christians? Nothing could stop the crowd, it had been determined before the foundation of the world that Christ would be sacrificed and the time had finally come.

4. The final decision (15:15)

¹⁵ Wishing to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas for them, and after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified.

It was not justice that Pilate was looking for but *'to satisfy the crowd'*. As mentioned before Pilate was not liked in Rome as Procurator of Judea for he had politically fumbled many times and his status as Roman Governor had been on the line. Pilate did not want to deal with another insurrection because it would probably be the end of his mandate and all the benefits that came with it. So he went the easy way *'Pilate released Barabbas for them'*.

After Barabbas was released and the crowd was appeased the following happened:

(v.15)..., and after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified.

The word *'scourged'* means: to whip. This was used as a public punishment. The Roman whips had either small iron balls or pieces of prickly substance attached at the end of every strand of leather. These would tear into the flesh and break even the bones.

It is said that often a criminal would die of the whipping before he was crucified. The one who created us was in the hands of his creatures!

CONCLUSION:

1. The hearts of men are truly twisted.
2. Envy, if not overcome, may bring you to do terrible things.
3. Beware not to be persuaded by the crowd or a fine orator – keep your mind on Christ.
4. Don't try to be a crowd pleaser.

The gospel of Mark
66 – The soldiers mock Jesus
15:16-20

16 The soldiers took Him away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium), and they called together the whole Roman cohort. 17 They dressed Him up in purple, and after twisting a crown of thorns, they put it on Him; 18 and they began to acclaim Him, “Hail, King of the Jews!” 19 They kept beating His head with a reed, and spitting on Him, and kneeling and bowing before Him. 20 After they had mocked Him, they took the purple robe off Him and put His own garments on Him. And they led Him out to crucify Him.
(NASB)

1. Jesus in the hands of the soldiers.

As we have seen, it was not allowed for a Jewish tribunal to condemn a person to death. That was why the Council went to see Pilate with their cause against Jesus. He has now been trialed and condemned to death. In Mark 15:15 we also have seen that Christ was first flogged by the Roman soldiers. This was not an obligation, flogging before crucifixion was not an automatic sentence. It was rarely expected that a person could stand the flogging. Roman soldiers were exceptionally cruel and were very good at causing pain and death.

16 The soldiers took Him away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium), and they called together the whole Roman cohort.

Jesus was taken to the Praetorium. This was where the Roman Magistrate would hear cases and decide the outcome. Mark writes that *‘the whole Roman Court’* had gathered together. One may assume that this was a ‘big’ event for Jesus was to be executed. Remember that Pilate had tried to get Jesus liberated but the crowd had shouted the name of Barabbas instead. All of Jerusalem must have been in turmoil.

17 They dressed Him up in purple, and after twisting a crown of thorns, they put it on Him;

The soldiers *‘dressed Him up in purple’*. The color purple was symbolic, it represented Royalty. Since Jesus called himself the Son of God the soldiers gave him a royal robe to better mock him. The color purple is only used of Christ in the four gospels. After dressing Jesus with a Royal colored robe, the Roman soldiers offered King Jesus a crown: *‘and after twisting a crown of thorns, they put it on Him’*. Palestine was abundantly covered with a wide variety of thorns from the *‘Rhamnus’* which was strong and hard and had long thorns.

This plant, although abundant near Jerusalem, could not have been used for Jesus' crown because it was very difficult to bend into shape. It is believed that the '*Capparespinosae*' was used because of its smaller sized thorns and flexibility to be shaped into a crown. The Roman soldiers were not delicate with the Lord when they placed this crown on him. They made certain that it would not fall off as he would be taken to Calvary. Great pressure would have been used to secure the crown on his head.

18 and they began to acclaim Him, "Hail, King of the Jews!"

The mocking of Jesus continues. First the purple robe, then the crown of thorns and now they verbally insulted Christ. One needs to read the other gospels to understand all the other aspects of this scene. The word '*acclaim*' (ASPAZOMAI) means: to enfold in the arms, to salute, to welcome. As it was accustomed for the soldiers to salute and hail a high ranking person, here we see that they ridiculed Jesus by both saluting him and praising him. One needs to remember what Christ had once said:

Matthew 12:37

**for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."
(RSV)**

What terrible judgment awaits these soldiers who enjoyed torturing the Prince of Peace!

19 They kept beating His head with a reed, and spitting on Him, and kneeling and bowing before Him.

The soldiers are not satisfied with their mocking Christ and they continued. First '*They kept beating His head with a reed*'. The word '*beating*' (TUPTO) means: to thump, a blow with the hand or an instrument. The soldiers were using a '*reed*', which is the stem of a plant, to hit Jesus in the face. Reeds of certain plants can become very dry and hard and cause great damage when used against a human body, let alone the face of a person. Then the soldiers were '*spitting on Him*'. This was a great sign of disdain and humiliation. Even today being spat on is a great insult, imagine being spat on the face! Finally they were '*kneeling and bowing before Him*'. Again this is because he called himself the 'Son of God'. They bowed before him and taunted the Lord of life.

20 After they had mocked Him, they took the purple robe off Him and put His own garments on Him. And they led Him out to crucify Him.

The soldiers actually took pleasure in hurting Jesus like they would with any common criminal. There was no pity, mercy or sympathy in the hearts of these men. Time had come to continue their task with Jesus. Once they tired with 'playing' with Jesus, they took off his purple robe and placed his old garments back. The time had come and they led him away to Mount Golgotha to crucify him.

CONCLUSION:

1. May we remember that it was because of our transgressions that Jesus suffered.
2. May our hearts be torn as we witness what Christ endured so we could be forgiven by the Father.

The gospel of Mark
67 – The crucifixion
15:21-32

²¹ They pressed into service a passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene (the father of Alexander and Rufus), to bear His cross.

²² Then they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull. ²³ They tried to give Him wine mixed with myrrh; but He did not take it. ²⁴ And they crucified Him, and divided up His garments among themselves, casting lots for them *to decide* what each man should take. ²⁵ It was the third hour when they crucified Him. ²⁶ The inscription of the charge against Him read, “THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

²⁷ They crucified two robbers with Him, one on His right and one on His left. ²⁸ And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “And He was numbered with transgressors.” ²⁹ Those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads, and saying, “Ha! You who *are going to* destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, ³⁰ save Yourself, and come down from the cross!” ³¹ In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes, were mocking *Him* among themselves and saying, “He saved others; He cannot save Himself. ³² Let *this* Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe!” Those who were crucified with Him were also insulting Him.

(NASB)

1. Simon of Cyrene (15:21)

Now as the soldiers were taking Jesus to the Skull to be crucified he had to pass through Jerusalem from the Praetorium of the Roman Magistrate to a small hill just outside the gates. Many of the streets were very narrow and there seemed to be a crowd of people following this event. Let us not forget that this is the Passover feast and the normal population of Jerusalem grew tenfold!

²¹ They pressed into service a passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene (the father of Alexander and Rufus), to bear His cross.

As Jesus passed through the crowd and pushed along by the soldiers there stood a bystander named Simon of Cyrene. He was a Hellenistic Jew born in Cyrene which is located on the north coast of Africa. Nothing is known of this man except what this verse tells us. He was the father of Alexander and Rufus. Both of these brothers are named in one verse. Alexander is found in Acts 19:33 and Rufus in Rom. 16:13. We are not certain that they are the same ones but chances are they might be. Simon was forced ‘*to bear His cross*’.

This may be because of the feeble state of Jesus. Normally a person did not live through the whipping of the Roman soldiers. Jesus' back must have been torn apart and his flesh hanging! With the loss of blood Jesus may have been too weak to carry the cross. Seeing that he could no longer bring the instrument of death on which he would be nailed, a soldier forced Simon to carry his cross for him.

2. The crucifixion (15:22-26)

²² Then they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull. ²³ They tried to give Him wine mixed with myrrh; but He did not take it. ²⁴ And they crucified Him, and divided up His garments among themselves, casting lots for them *to decide* what each man should take. ²⁵ It was the third hour when they crucified Him. ²⁶ The inscription of the charge against Him read, "THE KING OF THE JEWS."

Jesus arrived at his destination which was called Golgotha in Greek (GOLGOTHA) meaning; the skull. There are two reasons why this small hill may have been called Golgotha. The first is that this was the normal place of execution and there may have been many skulls (as well as other bones) that remained there. The second may have been that the small hill looked like a skull from afar. The Romans gave public executions to instill fear in the local population. This kept them quiet and docile not wanting to be the next on the list!

²³ They tried to give Him wine mixed with myrrh; but He did not take it.

When a person was crucified it happened that a Roman soldier would give a mixture of wine and myrrh. It was given to 'numb' the person so that his execution might be slightly easier. But here we see that the Lord *'did not take it'*. Was this not why he had come and lived on earth? Was he not willing to drink of the Father's cup? Jesus willingly received the punishment of the unjust and was not going to by-pass any part by taking this mixture. He bravely and fully became the Lamb of God which takes away our sins (John 1:29,36). Let us rejoice that the Lamb has been sacrificed on our behalf.

²⁴ And they crucified Him, and divided up His garments among themselves, casting lots for them *to decide* what each man should take.

The following description can be found in Farrar's book entitled 'Life of Christ'.

The Assyrians, Scythians, Indians, Germans, and from the earliest times among the Greeks and Romans. Whether this mode of execution was known to the ancient Jews is a matter of dispute. Probably the Jews borrowed it from the Romans. It was unanimously considered the most horrible form of death. Among the Romans the degradation was also a part of the infliction, and the punishment if applied to freemen was only used in the case of the vilest criminals. The one to be crucified was stripped naked of all his clothes, and then followed the most awful moment of all. He was laid down upon the implement of torture. His arms were stretched along the cross-beams, and at the centre of the open palms the point of a huge iron nail was placed, which, by the blow of a mallet, was driven home into the wood. Then through either foot separately, or possibly through both together, as they were placed one over the other, another huge nail tore its way through the quivering flesh. Whether the sufferer was also bound to the cross we do not know; but, to prevent the hands and feet being torn away by the weight of the body, which could not "rest upon nothing but four great wounds," there was, about the centre of the cross, a wooden projection strong enough to support, at least in part, a human body, which soon became a weight of agony. Then the "accursed tree" with its living human burden was slowly heaved up and the end fixed firmly in a hole in the ground. The feet were but a little raised above the earth. The victim was in full reach of every hand that might choose to strike. A death by crucifixion seems to include all that pain and death can have of the horrible and ghastly, --dizziness, cramp, thirst, starvation, sleeplessness, traumatic fever, tetanus, publicity of shame, long continuance of torment, horror of anticipation, mortification of untended wounds, all intensified just up to the point at which they can be endured at all, but all stopping just short of the point which would give to the sufferer the relief of unconsciousness. The unnatural position made every movement painful; the lacerated veins and crushed tendons throbbed with incessant anguish; the wounds, inflamed by exposure, gradually gangrened; the arteries, especially of the head and stomach, became swollen and oppressed with surcharged blood; and, while each variety of misery went on gradually increasing, there was added to them the intolerable pang of a burning and raging thirst. Such was the death to which Christ was doomed. --Farrar's "Life of Christ." The crucified was watched, according to custom, by a party of four soldiers.

Any man was cursed if he was hung on a tree (Deut. 21:22,23) and Paul (speaking of Christ) refers to this when he wrote to the Galatians (Gal. 3:10-14). Once he was hanging on the tree (cross) the soldiers 'divided His garments among themselves'. This was also a prophecy that is found in Ps. 22:18. If Jesus was not naked on the cross (which was the custom) he barely had anything on him. This was to add to the shame to be brought on the crucified.

²⁵ It was the third hour when they crucified Him. ²⁶ The inscription of the charge against Him read, "THE KING OF THE JEWS."

The *'third hour'* based on the Jewish way of reckoning time is now known as nine in the morning. You will notice that John writes that it was about the sixth hour (John 19:14) – is this an error? Not at all, for Marc was using the Jewish timeframe and John was using the Roman way of telling time. They both point to the same time. So at nine in the morning Jesus was nailed on the cross and the judgment of the Father began. It was a custom to write the crime of the person who was hung on a cross so that passersby understood why this was done. For Jesus his charge (or crime) was *'THE KING OF THE JEWS'*. In his dealings with Jesus, Pilate had asked the following question:

Luke 23:3

And Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" And he answered him, "You have said so."

(RSV)

Jesus was condemned not because he called himself the Son of God like the Jewish religious Council desired but rather as the King of the Jews because that was an offense before the Roman authorities.

3. The two robbers (15:27,28)

²⁷ They crucified two robbers with Him, one on His right and one on His left.²⁸ And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And He was numbered with transgressors."

Another prophecy unfolds before us – Jesus was crucified between two thieves which is found in Isaiah:

Isaiah 53:12

Therefore I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

(RSV)

4. The mockers (15:29-32)

²⁹ Those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads, and saying, "Ha! You who *are going to* destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, ³⁰ save Yourself, and come down from the cross!" ³¹ In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes, were mocking *Him* among themselves and saying, "He saved others; He cannot save Himself.

³² Let *this* Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe!” Those who were crucified with Him were also insulting Him.

As we have seen, this was a public execution and at the feet of Jesus a crowd stood by. In John 19:25,26 we see that as Christ was dying there are four women and the apostle John standing there. There was also the crowd divided into different types of people. The first group is made up of local people who were there to see the execution.

²⁹ Those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads, and saying, “Ha! You who *are going to* destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, ³⁰ save Yourself, and come down from the cross!”

Just a few days before the people of Jerusalem were claiming Jesus in a triumphant entrance to the Holy City. They cheered, laid down their tunics and cut branches in his honor. Now they were *‘hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads’*. They insulted him and mocked him *‘You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself, and come down from the cross!’* How empty and vile are the hearts of man. How easily are they deterred from the truth! James speaks of our language and how it must be like a pool of fresh water.

James 3:10,11

(10) From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brethren, this ought not to be so.

**(11) Does a spring pour forth from the same opening fresh water and brackish?
(RSV)**

But there was another group also standing there – the Jewish Council. They were savoring this moment. It had been a long time that they wanted to take hold of Jesus and do away with him.

³¹ In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes, were mocking *Him* among themselves and saying, “He saved others; He cannot save Himself. ³² Let *this* Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe!” Those who were crucified with Him were also insulting Him.

They gladly joined the crowd and they were *‘mocking Him among themselves and saying, “He saved others; He cannot save Himself”*. Have you noticed that both groups (which easily represents the non-religious and the religious) say the same thing: *‘save Yourself’*.

Can you see Satan at work until the very last moment? If Jesus would have come down from the cross at that very moment salvation would have been forfeited! Jesus would have failed and never would have been the perfect and holy sacrifice needed for the cleansing of our sins.

They also pushed Jesus to come down from the cross as proof that he truly was the Son of God. They said: *'Let this Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe!'* Do you think that even if he did so they would have believed- absolutely not! If after all the miracles Jesus had done in their midst they did not believe, their hearts would still have been closed at the cross. There is a warning given to us in Heb. 3:8,15; 4:7 concerning hardening our hearts. One can harden his heart and block salvation from becoming a reality in one's life. Dear reader has your heart opened to the truth found in Christ? Or are you like the crowd mocking Jesus who died on the cross for you?

The last group of people are the two thieves who *'were also insulting Him'*. Can you imagine dying yourself and still laughing at Christ and mocking who he said he was! But for one thief the story does not end here. In Luke 23:42,43 one of the thieves repents and asks Jesus to remember him and Christ answered:

Luke 23:43

**And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."
(RSV)**

CONCLUSION:

1. Simon carried the cross of Jesus and Jesus carried ours.
2. Even at the last moment of your life forgiveness can be found at the cross.
3. The world is divided in two: the mockers and the believers.

The gospel of Mark
68 – The death of Jesus
15:33-41

³³ When the sixth hour came, darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour. ³⁴ At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “ELOI, ELOI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?” which is translated, “MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?” ³⁵ When some of the bystanders heard it, they *began* saying, “Behold, He is calling for Elijah.” ³⁶ Someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink, saying, “Let us see whether Elijah will come to take Him down.” ³⁷ And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed His last. ³⁸ And the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. ³⁹ When the centurion, who was standing right in front of Him, saw the way He breathed His last, he said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!”

⁴⁰ There were also *some* women looking on from a distance, among whom *were* Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses, and Salome. ⁴¹ When He was in Galilee, they used to follow Him and minister to Him; and *there were* many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem.

(NASB)

1. Jesus' first shout (15:33,34)

We left Jesus crucified on the cross and it was the third hour which in our modern time is nine in the morning.

³³ When the sixth hour came, darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour. ³⁴ At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “ELOI, ELOI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?” which is translated, “MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?”

We are now at the '*sixth hour*' which is noon for us. This is the half way point since verse thirty four tells us that Jesus died at the ninth hour. It is written that '*darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour*'. The synoptic Gospels all declare that '*darkness fell*' but no one describes what it is. We can only imagine that this is the precise time when the Father poured his judgment upon the Son (Isaiah 5:25-30; 59:9,10; Joel 3:14,15, Amos 8:9,10, etc). It is also written that this '*darkness fell over the whole land*' this might be in reference to the Passover Lamb which brought the forgiveness of sin in all of Israel. Just as the ninth plague in Exodus was darkness just before the lamb was to be sacrificed and the blood applied on the doorposts of the homes so it was with the Lamb of God where darkness appeared before he was also sacrificed!

At the end of the ninth hour *'Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "ELOI, ELOI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?"*. This was to be his first final cry on the cross – the Father had abandoned him and for the first (and last) time in eternity the unity between Father and Son had been broken. The guilt of our sins had been placed on the beloved Son (Isaiah 53:5,6; 2 Cor. 5:21). We know why the Father abandoned the Son – it was so that redemption could be offered, so that the guilty could be justified.

2. The response of the bystanders (15:35,36)

³⁵ When some of the bystanders heard it, they began saying, "Behold, He is calling for Elijah." ³⁶ Someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink, saying, "Let us see whether Elijah will come to take Him down."

This was a gruesome Roman spectacle specially made to frighten anyone who thought of rebelling against the Empire. It was during the Passover festival and an enormous amount of Jews were in Jerusalem. Bystanders or travelers could see Jesus and the two thieves hanging there. The Romans would often let the bodies rot on the cross which made an even more terrifying statement. Scavengers of all types would feast on the rotting bodies

After hearing Jesus cry out *'the bystanders heard it, they began saying, "Behold, He is calling for Elijah"*. Remember that Jesus had explained that Elijah was supposed to come just before the Messiah (Mal. 4:5) but people did not recognize that it was John the Baptist (Mat. 11:14). This may also have been a mockery of Jesus crying out on the cross.

³⁶ Someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink, saying, "Let us see whether Elijah will come to take Him down."

This *'Someone'* does not seem to be a Roman soldier but one of the bystanders or spectators of his crucifixion. Someone in the crowd had pity on Jesus and wanted him to drink of the mixture we already have spoken about which might bring some relief. We see that they also wondered if *'Elijah will come to take Him down'*.

3. Jesus' final cry and last breath (15:37)

³⁷ And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed His last.

The word *'uttered'* (APHIEMI) means: to send forth. So Jesus sent forth *'a loud cry'*. The word *'loud'* (MEGAS) means: *exceedingly great*, we can imagine that all the bystanders heard his *'cry'* (PHONE) meaning: noise, sound, voice.

One last sound and then *'he breathed His last'*. The word *'breathed'* (EKPNEO) means: to expire, give up the ghost. In other words and as Jesus said it in Luke:

Luke 23:46

Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last.

(RSV)

4. The result of Jesus' sacrifice (15:38)

³⁸ And the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

Please note that the evening sacrifice was normally at three in the afternoon about (if not) the same time that Jesus died on the cross! What is the *'veil of the temple'*? This is probably the veil that separated the holy place from the courtyard. Notice that the veil was *'torn in two from top to bottom'*. All three synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) mention this. The veil separated the holiness of God from the people and only one priest could come in the holy of holies ONCE A YEAR with the blood of the Pascal Lamb that had just been sacrificed. The blood would purify the sins of Israel but had to be constantly repeated over and over again.

The veil was *'torn in two from top to bottom'*. This manifests that God himself destroyed the veil that kept mankind from approaching Him. This symbolized that the entrance unto the presence of God was now open – but why? This is because the Lamb of God (Jesus) had sacrificed himself and this sacrifice had been accepted by the Father. The writer of Hebrews explains this quite clearly (Heb. 6:19,20; 9:1-14; 10:19-22).

5. The centurion's testimony (15:39)

³⁹ When the centurion, who was standing right in front of Him, saw the way He breathed His last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"

Centurions were no ordinary soldiers. To become a centurion one would need years of faithful service and a proven knowledge of warfare. He would be a man of superior intelligence. It is said that a centurion would be like a captain in our armed forces. Since he was still *'standing right in front of Him'* it just might be that he had been in charge of the three executions. He remained there to assure the authorities that all would remain calm – since this is Passover and the crowds may become agitated since Jesus was beloved (by some at least!). After seeing all that happened from his whipping to his final cry on the cross this centurion came to only one conclusion *'Truly this man was the Son of God'*.

Have you come to the same conclusion? Has the evidence sufficed you? Is Christ really the Son of God and have you called upon him to save you from your sins?

6. Looking from afar (15:40,41)

⁴⁰ There were also *some* women looking on from a distance, among whom *were* Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses, and Salome. ⁴¹ When He was in Galilee, they used to follow Him and minister to Him; and *there were* many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem.

Not everyone was at the feet of Christ some '*women looking on from a distance*'. Three are named. First Mary Magdalene from whom Jesus had driven demons. The second was Mary '*the mother of James the less and Joses*'. James the less is to be distinguished from James the elder also known as James the apostle. Salome seems to be the wife of Zebedee. She was the mother of James and John. Some believe her to be the sister of Mary, mother of Jesus.

⁴¹ When He was in Galilee, they used to follow Him and minister to Him; and *there were* many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem.

Notice that besides John there were only women present at the crucifixion of Jesus. All of the remaining ten apostles were hiding somewhere. Even Peter after denying Jesus did not yet have a change of heart and was absent! The love of these women who had followed Jesus and had ministered unto him was stronger than those of the chosen twelve (except for John). What a testimony for all of us.

CONCLUSION

1. Amen that the sacrifice of the Lamb of God was complete and perfect. Amen that the veil was torn from top to bottom by the Father and that we can now come to Him.

The gospel of Mark
69 – The burial of Jesus
15:42-47

⁴² When evening had already come, because it was the preparation day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, ⁴³ Joseph of Arimathea came, a prominent member of the Council, who himself was waiting for the kingdom of God; and he gathered up courage and went in before Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus. ⁴⁴ Pilate wondered if He was dead by this time, and summoning the centurion, he questioned him as to whether He was already dead. ⁴⁵ And ascertaining this from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph. ⁴⁶ Joseph bought a linen cloth, took Him down, wrapped Him in the linen cloth and laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. ⁴⁷ Mary Magdalene and Mary the *mother* of Joses were looking on *to see* where He was laid.
(NASB)

1. Permission asked (15:42,43)

Time passes by for we have seen that Jesus died at the ninth hour and now we are at the very beginning of the evening.

⁴² When evening had already come, because it was the preparation day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, ⁴³ Joseph of Arimathea came, a prominent member of the Council, who himself was waiting for the kingdom of God; and he gathered up courage and went in before Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus.

The sun is slowly beginning to set and people were getting busy *'because it was the preparation day'*. This was the time when the Jewish people prepared themselves for the Sabbath. Since no work was to be done they prepared ahead of time what needed to be done on the Sabbath.

A man called Joseph of Arimathea is the center of this section. It is written that he was *'a prominent member of the Council'*. The Council spoken of is the same one that condemned Jesus and brought him before Pilate. He was *'a prominent'* (EUSCHEMON) meaning: well-formed, decorous, and honorable. This gives us an insight within the Council and we can see that there were some who secretly admired Jesus. Joseph was *'waiting for the kingdom of God'*. This gives us a clue to Joseph's hope in life. If the majority of the religious men in the Council were filled with envy and hatred, Joseph was truly a spiritual person who longed for the reign of God and the coming of the Messiah. It is written that he *'gathered up courage and went in before Pilate'*. This is what people of God look like.

Joseph was afraid but that did not stop him from doing what he knew he needed to do. He was first afraid of the Council, for they had just handed Jesus over to the Romans. Joseph, by doing this, took a stand against the Council of which he was a member. If they did this to Jesus they can also act against him! I can understand why Joseph was afraid for his entire life might be 'ruined' by the Council. He was also afraid of Pilate. Let's not forget that he was the highest Roman authority and at a whim Pilate can imprison or even have Joseph condemned to death. Good Christians also need courage. We also live in a world where we need to take a stand for Christ and often this is not popular and repercussions are very real.

Why would Joseph ask *'for the body of Jesus'*? Because the Sabbath was coming and Joseph did not want this man of God to be hanging on the cursed tree during the holy day of rest. It is very rare that the body of a deceased person would be given to anyone but a member of the family. This was even more true when the person had been condemned to die because of treason, as Jesus did. This is further proof that Pilate did not really believe that Jesus was guilty. Had he not tried over and over again to allow Jesus to be set free? I wonder why the family of Jesus did not come and ask Pilate for his body and why they did not provide a decent place for the body of Christ to rest?

2. Permission granted (15:44,45)

⁴⁴ Pilate wondered if He was dead by this time, and summoning the centurion, he questioned him as to whether He was already dead. ⁴⁵ And ascertaining this from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph.

Pilate seemed to be surprised that Jesus had already died. We know that it sometimes took days before a crucified person would actually die. So Pilate wanted to be certain and *'summoning the centurion, he questioned him as to whether He was already dead.'* I believe that the centurion mentioned here is the same who stood at the cross and declared that *'surely this was the Son of God'*. The centurion assured Pilate that Jesus had truly died. Pilate wanted to be certain since it would be possible that if he was not dead he could be taken care of and come back to health. If this would happen and be known then it would cause Pilate a lot of trouble with Rome. So once he knew he was dead he allowed Joseph to have the body of Christ.

3. Jesus is buried (15:46,47)

⁴⁶ Joseph bought a linen cloth, took Him down, wrapped Him in the linen cloth and laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. ⁴⁷ Mary Magdalene and Mary the *mother* of Joses were looking on to see where He was laid.

This was a quick preparation for the body of Christ – the Sabbath was at hand and work was not permitted. So Joseph *'wrapped Him in the linen cloth'*. This was the usual method of embalming. Cloth would be wrapped around the body with all sorts of ointment and myrrh. Jesus was laid in a tomb. We know from the other gospels that this tomb had never been used before. It was *'hewn out in the rock'*. This was to be a tomb for a prominent person. To be certain that no 'tomb raider' would come and plunder any valuable item that might accompany the deceased, Joseph *'rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb'*. This way it was sealed and protected. One needs to read the other gospels to have a complete picture of his burial.

⁴⁷ Mary Magdalene and Mary the *mother* of Joses were looking on to see where He was laid.

Notice that these two women were present at the crucifixion of Jesus and now they had followed Joseph and witnessed where Jesus had been placed. Where were all the others? Where were the brothers and sisters of Jesus? Where were his disciples? Where were the ones he had cured? Where are you!

CONCLUSION:

1. If you are a disciple of Jesus you need to be brave and bold.
2. As a disciple of Christ one needs to 'follow him' wherever it might bring us.

The gospel of Mark
70 – The resurrection of Jesus
16:1-8

**When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the *mother* of James, and Salome, bought spices, so that they might come and anoint Him.² Very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen.³ They were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?”⁴ Looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away, although it was extremely large.⁵ Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed.⁶ And he said to them, “Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen; He is not here; behold, *here is* the place where they laid Him.⁷ But go, tell His disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He told you.’”⁸ They went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.
(NASB)**

1. Walking towards the tomb (16:1-3)

We left the women looking where Joseph would bring the body of Christ. Since it was very late in the day and the Sabbath was about to begin, they left and they would come back after the Sabbath was over.

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the *mother* of James, and Salome, bought spices, so that they might come and anoint Him.² Very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen.³ They were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?”

This time Mark tells us that Salome was with the two Mary's. He previously had not mentioned that Salome had been with them when they had followed Joseph. But here she is with the others. Why had they come to the burial site? Mark writes: '*so that they might come and anoint Him*'. One must remember that Joseph had hastily placed the body of Christ in the tomb for the Sabbath was at hand. There had not been enough time to fully prepare the body for its rightful rest. The three ladies '*bought spices*'. This tells us that they spent good hard earned money out of respect for Christ. Remember that, in general, normal people did not have much to live by even less to spend for a funeral embalming. Once again we see the deep love these women had for Christ.

Their devotion for him did not seem to have any limits. Is this a reflection of my love and devotion for the Lord? Am I willing to spend my earnings for the cause of Christ? How far does my attachment to Christ lead me?

² Very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. ³ They were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?”

They set off *‘very early on the first day of the week’*. They were in a hurry to do good to Christ. They did not slumber saying ‘It makes no difference, he has died’. Their love pushed them to get up early and finish the work of Joseph of Arimathea. May we also be busy doing what is right for the Lord and his glory. May we also begin early in the morning when it is needed. The three women could have said ‘Joseph is wealthier than we are, let him buy the spices. After all he began the burial it’s his responsibility to finish it’. They wanted to do their part, like we should also want to do our part.

But there was a big question that filled their minds *‘Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?’*. These women knew that they were physically not able to roll the stone away and they were concerned that they might not do what they came to do. Not only were these stones heavy but a slant was normally carved in the rock where the stone was rolled into. This slant made the stone (which covered the entrance of the tomb) even more difficult to roll (or push forward). The women would need help to do their work and they did not know how they would get it.

2. A great surprise (16:4,5)

⁴ Looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away, although it was extremely large. ⁵ Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed.

Notice that even though they did not know how the stone would be rolled away they continued forward. How many times can we stop doing what we know should be done because we don’t know where we are going to get the help to do it? What they did not know is that the Lord God was going to give them a hand. *‘They saw that the stone had been rolled away, although it was extremely large’*. Once they arrived at the tomb all of their worries disappeared for the stone had been rolled away! God walked before them and was with them in their quest. We can only imagine that they were filled with joy and wonder!

So they entered the tomb and *'they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed'*. They were expecting to see the body of Christ. They had come with spices to finish his embalming. But to their great surprise it was not the body of Christ that they saw but *'a young man sitting at the right'*. We know that this was an angel (Mat. 28:2). It is written that *'they were amazed'*. The word *'amazed'* (EKTHAMBEO) means: astonished, affright or greatly amazed. In other words they had mixed feelings they were a bit frightened and greatly amazed at what they were seeing.

3. A greater surprise (16:6,7,8)

⁶And he said to them, “Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen; He is not here; behold, *here is the place where they laid Him.* ⁷But go, tell His disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He told you.’” ⁸They went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

The angel has a message for the devoted women. He first tells them *'Do not be amazed'*. It is the same word in Greek for both occurrences of *'amazed'*. His first concern was about them and how they felt. They were frightened and he wanted to cast all fear away. Isn't this heartwarming to see the care that the Lord had for his disciples! He assures them that all is fine through the agent of an angel. Now the Lord might not do this with us today (although he could if he wanted to) but he certainly does this through his written word and our brothers and sisters in Christ.

We also see that the angel knows what they were doing there: *'you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified'*. Did he know this because he had witnessed what had been going on or because the Father had told him – we do not know. Both cases are possible. What we do know is that the angel had good news for the women.

(v.6)...He has risen; He is not here; behold, *here is the place where they laid Him.*

I wonder what the faces of the women looked like when they heard *'He has risen'*? Joy, delight and bliss must have filled their hearts! And so should these fill all the hearts of true believers – Jesus has risen! The angel tells them: *'He is not here; behold, here is the place where they laid Him'*. As proof that he was resurrected, he points to the place where he had been laid but now the tomb was empty. The angel was saying: 'See for yourself, he is not here the tomb is empty'.

⁷ But go, tell His disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He told you.’”

Once the confirmation of his resurrection had been given the angel had a mission for them. They needed to go and *‘tell His disciples and Peter’*. All Disciples of Christ have the same mission to *‘go and tell’*. We also need to spread the good news of the resurrection of Christ. We need to announce salvation in Christ to proclaim to all who have ears to listen that forgiveness and righteousness is found only in the Son of God. But he also told them where they could find Jesus: *‘He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He told you’*. The message for the disciples was to go to Galilee and you will find him just as he had told you. The disciples were not only going to hear about his resurrection but they were going to actually see him alive and well. What an incredible message to bring to them.

⁸ They went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Off they went filled with *‘trembling and astonishment’*. The word *‘trembling’* (*TROMOS*) means: shacking with fear and the word *‘astonishment’* (*EKSTASIS*) means: bewildered, amazed. They just couldn’t believe what they had seen and heard and off they went trembling. They did not say anything to anyone. They just went off to go and tell the others what they had just witnessed.

CONCLUSION:

1. Let us not tarry in doing what we know the Lord wants us to do.
2. Great surprises await those who truly walk close to the Lord and have his interest at heart.
3. Christ is risen! May we tell all who have ears to listen.

The gospel of Mark
71 – Jesus appears to his disciples
16:9-20

⁹ [Now after He had risen early on the first day of the week, He first appeared to Mary Magdalene, from whom He had cast out seven demons. ¹⁰ She went and reported to those who had been with Him, while they were mourning and weeping. ¹¹ When they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they refused to believe it.

¹² After that, He appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking along on their way to the country. ¹³ They went away and reported it to the others, but they did not believe them either.

¹⁴ Afterward He appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at the table; and He reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He had risen. ¹⁵ And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. ¹⁶ He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. ¹⁷ These signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; ¹⁸ they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly *poison*, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.” ¹⁹ So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. ²⁰ And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed.]

(NASB)

You will notice that in many Bible translations of this last section (as in the NASB) it is in parenthesis. There is a debate concerning the origin of this section and its authenticity as the Word of God. In his commentary on Mark, Dr. Thomas Constable wrote the following to help us better understand the matter in dispute.

Many modern interpreters believe Mark ended his Gospel with Mark 16:8. [Note: E.g, Carson and Moo, pp187-90.] This seems unlikely to some others since if he did he ended it with an example of disciples too fearful and amazed to bear witness to the resurrected Jesus. Throughout this Gospel we have noted many unique features that appeal to disciples to serve God by bearing bold witness to Jesus, even in spite of persecution and suffering. They believe the women’s example would hardly be a good example for Mark to close his Gospel with.

*The ending of Mark's Gospel is one of the major textual problems in the New Testament. The main reason some interpreters regard Mark 16:9-20 as spurious is this. The two oldest Greek uncial manuscripts of the New Testament (fourth century), Codex Sinaiticus (Aleph) and Codex Vaticanus (B), plus many other old manuscripts, do not contain them. Moreover the writings of some church fathers reflect no knowledge of these verses. On the other hand, Mark 16:9-20 do appear in the majority of the old manuscripts, and other church fathers do refer to them. [Note: For more details, see Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, pp122-26.] Some interpreters believe the vocabulary, style, and content of these verses argue against Mark's authorship of them. [Note: E.g, Wessel, p792; Bratcher and Nida, pp517-22; et al.] This has led many modern scholars to conclude that Mark 16:9-20 were not part of Mark's original Gospel. [Note: E.g, Swete, p. cxiii; A. F. Hort, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, p199; B. B. Warfield, *An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, p203; Joel F. Williams, "**Literary Approaches to the End of Mark's Gospel**," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*42:1 (March1999):21-35; *The NET Bible note on16:9*; Lane, pp591 , 601-5; et al.]*

If they were not part of Mark's original Gospel, where did they come from, and are they part of the inspired Word of God or not inspired?

*It may be that Mark 16:9-20 were part of Mark's original Gospel and, for reasons unknown to us today, they were not included in some ancient copies of it. Thus these verses are as fully authoritative as the rest of the Gospel. [Note: John W. Burgon, *The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel According to S. Mark*; Morison, pp446-49 , 463-70; Lenski, pp750-55; et al.]*

Another view is that someone added Mark 16:9-20 to give this Gospel a more positive ending. He could have done so without divine inspiration, in which case these verses lack the divine authority that marks the rest of Scripture.

Alternatively someone could have added Mark 16:9-20 under the superintending influence of the Holy Spirit, in which case these verses have equal authority with the rest of the Gospel. [Note: Grassmick, p194.] There are other passages of Scripture that seem to have been written somewhat later than the body of the book in which they appear but which the Jews and later the Christians regarded as inspired. For example, the record of Moses' death appears at the end of Deuteronomy, which most conservatives believe Moses wrote (cf. Deuteronomy 34:5-12). Another example is the references to the town of Dan in the Book of Genesis, which town did not go by that name until after Moses' time. Evidently someone after Moses' day updated the name of that town. Several other examples of this nature could be cited.

The view of many evangelicals, including myself, is that even though we may not be able to prove that Mark 16:9-20 were originally part of Mark's Gospel, though they could have been, they appear to have been regarded as inspired and therefore authoritative early in the history of the church.

There are two other short endings to Mark's Gospel that follow Mark 16:8 in some ancient copies, but almost all textual scholars reject these as being spurious.

1. His first appearance. (16:9-11)

⁹[Now after He had risen early on the first day of the week, He first appeared to Mary Magdalene, from whom He had cast out seven demons. ¹⁰She went and reported to those who had been with Him, while they were mourning and weeping. ¹¹When they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they refused to believe it.

We have seen in our last section that some women came to Jesus' burial site with spices to finish the hasty preparation of Christ (remember this was done just before the Sabbath began). One of these women was Mary Magdalene and you can read her very short story in Luke 8:2. Some people think that she was a prostitute but there is absolutely no proof of this. Mary rushed to tell the others (apostles and disciples) about what she had seen and heard. We see that these disciples *'were mourning and weeping'*. Their beloved teacher had died and with him all the hopes they had accumulated for the coming of the kingdom of God. It seems that they had so easily forgotten all the times that Jesus had taught them that he would die and be raised from the dead. Are we not also forgetful of the wonderful promises that the Lord God has given us? What is even worse is the following:

¹¹When they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they refused to believe it.

They actually 'refused to believe it'. Mary comes storming in and tells of the great news of Jesus' resurrection and they did not believe! Their grieving blinded their hearts. Good news, when a heart is heavy, is often laid aside. We know from the gospel of John that Peter and John did go and see if this was true (John 20:1-10). May we never refuse to listen to good news concerning Christ and his kingdom even when our hearts are heavy.

2. His second appearance. (16:12,13)

¹² After that, He appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking along on their way to the country. ¹³ They went away and reported it to the others, but they did not believe them either.

Verse twelve speaks about the encounter Jesus had with the disciples who were on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-32) which ends with this verse:

Luke 24:32

They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures?"

(RSV)

3. His third appearance. (16:14)

¹⁴ Afterward He appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at the table; and He reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He had risen.

The word '*reproached*' (ONEIDIZO) meaning: to rail, chide, revile. This is very severe and reminds me of when Christ said to his disciples:

Matthew 8:26

And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, O men of little faith?" Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.

(RSV)

It seems that the disciples refuse to believe and hardened their hearts to the good news that was presented to them by other disciples. Our hearts will also deceive us if we do not keep them under the rule of the Lord. The following seems to be the order of Jesus appearing to others before his ascension:

1. Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9, John 20:11-18)
2. The women walking on the road (Mat. 28:9,10)
3. The disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-32)
4. To Peter (Luke 24:34)
5. To the disciples without Thomas (Luke 24:36-43; Mark 16:14; John 20:19-25)
6. To the disciples with Thomas present (John 20:26-32)

7. To seven disciples in Galilee (John 21:1-25)
8. To more than 500 disciples (1 Cor. 15:6)
9. To James (1 Cor. 15:7)
10. To the apostles at the ascension (Acts 1:3-11)

4. His commission (16:15,16)

¹⁵ And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. ¹⁶ He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.

There are controversial things written in this section (16:9-20) and we find some of these in these two verses. Here we see what is called the ‘Great Commission’ in Mat. 28:18-20. In Matthew this is given just before Jesus ascends to heaven before the eyes of his disciples while they were on a mountain in Galilee. On the other hand we have what seems to also be the ‘Great Commission’ but this time it is when the eleven were sitting around a table.

¹⁶ He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.

Verse sixteen also seems to be controversial because it appears to equate believing AND baptism as the means of salvation UNLESS the baptism that is spoken of is that of the Holy Spirit and not of a water baptism! This could reflect a spiritual truth that is needed to be understood. Believing with ‘head knowledge’ does not save. It is believing with our hearts through the new birth that brings salvation. Paul teaches that only those who have the Holy Spirit are actually saved:

Rom. 8:9

**But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Any one who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.
(RSV)**

Notice that the second phrase of verse sixteen adds more confusion: *‘but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned’*. Is it only disbelieving that brings condemnation or believing and no baptism that stops you from being saved? We know that it is faith alone in Jesus as your personal Messiah that brings salvation (John 3:36 and so many others).

5. The signs (16:17,18)

¹⁷ These signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; ¹⁸ they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly *poison*, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

Here we have a list of signs that will accompany the apostles. I say this because Jesus is speaking to the eleven sitting around a table (Mark 16:14). Is this only for the apostles or is Jesus speaking of all his disciples who are to come? Seeing that some of these signs were accompanying disciples in general I believe that this was for all his disciples. Were these signs to accompany the disciples *until the end of time* that is another question!

1. *‘In my name they will cast out demons’*. This we see the apostles do in the book of Acts.
2. *‘They will speak in new tongues’*. This we also see with the day of Pentecost in the book of Acts.
3. *‘They will pick up serpents’*. We see this with Paul when he was stranded on the island of Malta (Acts 28).
4. *‘They will drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them’*. This we do not see in the New Testament.
5. *‘They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover’*. We also see this in the book of Acts.

6. The ascension of Christ (16:19,20)

¹⁹ So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. ²⁰ And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed.]

Does this take place while Jesus was speaking to the eleven who were sitting around the table – it seems like it. But the ascension of Christ was in Galilee on a Mountain top (Mat. 28:18-20). Since this section is controversial I tend to believe that it was a section that was later introduced as part of the gospel of Mark.

We know that Christ is presently at the right hand of the Father (Acts 2:33; 5:31; 7:55,56; Rom. 8:34). This is the highest form of glory.

²⁰ And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed.]

The response of the disciples is that ‘they went out and preached everywhere’. This was their natural reaction and it should be the same for all of Christ’s followers. We hold the very message that truly changes lives for the better but mostly it is a message of reconciliation between God and mankind.

2Co 5:18,19

(18)All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation;

(19)that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

(RSV)

CONCLUSION:

1. This section of Mark is not unanimously accepted as being penned by Mark and inspired by the Holy Spirit. One must be certain that all teaching from this section vividly concurs with the general teaching found outside this text before believing or teaching it.