

“THE BEGINNING OF THE GOSPEL”

Introduction to the Gospel of Mark

Mark 1:1-3

Intro: We all know that there are four records of the life, teachings, and works of our Lord Jesus Christ: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The Gospel of Mark is the shortest, and, in comparison with the other Gospels, places more emphasis upon the works of the Lord rather than on the words of our Lord.

We first meet John Mark in Acts 12:12. He accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:5), but he left them when they got to Perga in Pamphilia (Acts 13:13), and returned to Jerusalem. When Paul and Barnabas prepared for their second missionary journey, Barnabas wanted to take Mark with them again, but Paul refused. And so Paul and Barnabas parted company, Barnabas taking Mark with him to Cyprus, and Paul took Silas with him. See Acts 15:37-39. Later on John Mark seems to have had a close relationship with the Apostle Peter. Peter referred to him in 1 Peter 5:13 as “my son,” probably meaning his spiritual son, like Timothy was to Paul. When Paul wrote to the church at Colosse, he mentioned “Marcus,” or John Mark approvingly, indicating that John Mark evidently was related to Barnabas, probably as a cousin. When Paul wrote his last epistle to Timothy, he sent for Timothy to come to Rome to be with him, and asked him also to bring John Mark with him, saying, “For he is profitable to me for the ministry” (2 Tim. 4:11). So John Mark has a close relationship with both Peter and Paul, but it seems that his relationship with Peter was what gave him the burden and the authority to write his record of the life and ministry of the Lord. The authority of the NT rests upon the authority of the apostles. Two of the Gospels were written by apostles: Matthew and John. Two were written by men who were not apostles: Mark and Luke. But both of these latter men were known for their close connection with the apostles, particularly Peter and Paul. All four of the Gospel writers combined do not give us what could be called a biography of the Lord Jesus, but their writings give such support to each other so as to give strong confirmation that what they wrote was the truth. The main subject in all four Gospels is the Lord Jesus Christ.

John Mark was a Jew. John was his Jewish name; Mark was his Roman name. It seems that his Gospel was written especially for the Romans. It tells us nothing about the birth and earthly life of our Lord. His introduc-

tion is very brief, but very much to the point, as we see in the first three verses of chapter 1. He may have gotten his burden for the Romans as a result of the time spent with Paul in that city. Scholars differ at many points regarding the back ground of this gospel, but it is certain that it was written under the direction of the Holy Spirit, and thus it belongs where it is in our New Testaments.

Graham Scroggie tells us this about John Mark:

This name occurs eight times in the New Testament, sometimes simply Mark, or Marcus, sometimes John, and sometimes ‘John, whose surname was Mark,’ or, ‘John who was called Mark.’

And then Dr. Scroggie added these references: Acts 12:12, 25; 13:5, 13; 15:37-39; 1 Pet. 5:13; Col. 4:10; Philemon 23, 24; 2 Tim. 4:11. But not a single time in the Gospel which bears his name.

But what we are mainly interested in tonight and in the weeks to come, is not when it was written, nor where it was written, nor to whom it was written, *but what was written*. Even who wrote it is not primarily important because we know, after all of these years, that it is a vital part of the Word of God. The Word of God carries its own authority. It is “living and powerful and sharper than any twoedged sword.” And in that connection no book of the Bible needs any further confirmation. Personally I believe it was written by John Mark, but by that I do not mean that he was the author. We need to distinguish between the writer and the author in each book of the Bible. The writers were John Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John, just to name a few, *but the Author of every book of the Bible is the Holy Spirit*. This is what is extremely important for us to remember.

Now I hope that while we are going through this Gospel, you will be able to add it, or parts of it, from time to time, to the other Bible reading that you are doing. And I expect to do the same. We can’t experience the power of the Word by simply reading what others have written about it. We need to read the Word for ourselves. We need to read it prayerfully and carefully. We need to read it repeatedly. We need to read it when and where we will be the least distracted in our reading. We can all be thankful for what we have learned from our parents, from pastors we have had, from Sunday School teachers who have taught us, from books we have read by men and women who have been taught by the Lord, and who have written to share their knowledge with us. But with all of that influence, we will be missing the greatest blessing of all if we are not reading the Bible for ourselves.

Dr. Harry Ironside, who for many years was the pastor of the Moody Church in Chicago, and was one of my teachers, a visiting lecturer who came to Dallas Seminary every year that I was there, had read the Bible for every year in his life. And he told us this when he was in his seventies. Obviously he had to double up some years to catch up on those years before he could read. But he was a man who saturated his heart with the personal reading of the Word of God.

Another man who was one of my teachers in seminary, Dr. Charles Feinberg, was a teacher who greatly influenced John MacArthur who sat under Dr. Feinberg's ministry at Talbot Seminary in Dr. Feinberg's later years. Dr. Feinberg for many years read the Bible four times a year. And I can often hear Dr. Feinberg's expressions or tone of voice when I hear Dr. MacArthur preaching.

I have told many of you about G. Campbell Morgan who, when preparing to teach a book of the Bible, would read it through forty times before he began to make notes on whatever book he was studying.

We need to read the Bible, and then re-read it, think about it, pray over it, but always keep reading it. None of us has anything that is more important for us to do. And it will produce rich dividends in our lives. That is one thing that I love to see in biographies of the Lord's servants who have lived in the past, and have been greatly blessed by the Lord. I think that it was George Mueller who said that we ought to read ten pages in the Bible for every page that we read in other books. He didn't mean that we need to count pages, but he meant that we need to do far more reading in the Bible than we do in other books. Giving priority to the Bible even makes good books about the Bible a greater blessing to us.

Now let me say one more word about the Gospel of Mark and the other three Gospels. Several years ago, I felt convinced that I ought to be reading the Gospels all of the time. And so I began reading the NT twice each year, using our Bible reading schedule. It is so arranged that if you begin reading the NT at the beginning of the year, and then begin again in July reading it a second time, there will only be about two weeks that you will not be reading in the Gospels. The Gospels tell us about the Lord Jesus Christ, focusing upon His ministry here on earth, but the writers all give us other facts about Him which carry us well beyond His earthly ministry. The Apostle John, for example, takes us back before the beginning of time as he began his Gospel.

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So read, read, read. Read God's Word. And you young people, start as soon as you begin to read. It may be years before you read it through the first time, but read it little by little. As families we need to be reading it together, encouraging each other to read. There is blessing, great blessing, awaiting all of us as we dwell on the pages of our Bibles.

But now let's look at that different way that Mark began his Gospel, and I am thinking tonight just of the first three verses.

It is very possible that he intended for verse 1 to be the title of his Gospel: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."

Now I have a question: How could this be the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ when Paul wrote in Galatians 3:8,

8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

But even before that we have the Gospel in germ form as far back as Genesis 3:15. And then it is pictured by the way God clothed Adam and Eve before He put them out of the Garden. The Gospel is older than the Bible because we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, according to Eph. 1:3-6.

What does this expression mean?

Well, it could mean, as I have already indicated, that this is another record of the coming of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, into the world.

But I am inclined to think that it means even more than that. I think that John Mark was tell us that Jesus Christ is the Gospel, that there would be no Gospel if it were not for Him. You can't preach Christ without preaching the Gospel, and you can't preach the Gospel without preaching Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Mark was telling us that there is not difference between Jesus Christ, as he came to earth in human form, and the Son of God. Any supposed preaching of the Gospel that does not recognized that as Jesus Christ He was the Son of God, is not the Gospel. The Gospel is good news. It is the best news. No other message can even begin to compare with it. There are men who claim to be preaching the Gospel in our day who actually deny that Jesus was the Son of God in human flesh. That is not the Gospel. The Gospel is Jesus Christ, the Son

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of God –Who He is, and what He did for the salvation of people throughout the whole world, from the beginning of time, to the end of time. If we are not straight here, we can't be right anyplace else if we are talking about man's relationship with God in salvation. This was a most powerful statement.

We need to get this truth firmly fixed in our minds.

And then John Mark went back to two OT passages:

- 1) In verse 2 he went to Mal. 3:1.
- 2) In verse 3 he went back to Isa. 40:3.

Now he was citing his authority for the statement that he had just made. The OT and the NT stand together on the meaning of the Gospel.

WHEN GOD BROKE HIS SILENCE

Mark 1:4-13

Intro: Bible teachers often refer to the period from the end of the OT to the beginning of the NT, as “the four hundred silent years.” In that expression “silent” means *God’s silence*. And “God’s silence” means a period of time when there was no direct revelation from God.

The whole OT anticipated the coming of a Redeemer. From Abraham on He was known as the seed of Abraham, and eventually as the Anointed One, the Messiah, the One we now know is our Lord Jesus Christ. And the coming of the Messiah was declared by John, the son of Zacharias and Elisabeth, whom we now know as John the Baptist. The four Gospels all speak of John the Baptist. And, as we learn from the first three verses of Mark’s Gospel, his coming was predicted by Isaiah and Malachi, although Mark mentioned the quotation from Malachi first, and then the quotation from Isaiah.

Matthew gets to John the Baptist in chapter 3, and he introduced his account of his ministry with the same quotation from Isaiah’s prophecy which Mark used. Matthew 3 is devoted entirely to the ministry of John the Baptist, ending with the baptism of our Lord.

Luke begins his Gospel, after a brief introduction, telling us about the birth of John the Baptist. In chapter 3 of Luke we get to the ministry of John the Baptist, and there Luke also quoted from Isaiah 40:3, along with verses 4 and 5.

The Apostle John began his Gospel in a way that was completely different from the other three Gospel writers, but it just takes five verses in chapter 1 for the Apostle John to get to the ministry of John the Baptist. John 1:6 gives us these words: “There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.” As we realize as we continue reading that the Apostle John was not talking about himself, but about John the Baptist.

Going on down in John, chapter 1, to verse 19 we see that a delegation of “priests and Levites” had been sent by the Jewish leaders, the Pharisees, to Jerusalem to find out just who this man was who was attracting such attention from the Jewish people. They wanted to know if he claimed to be the Messiah. He told them that he was not. Then they asked him if he was Elijah. He denied that. Then they wanted to know if he was the

prophet that should come. And again he said, “No.” Then they said, “Who art thou? That we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?” (John 1:22). John the Baptist’s answer was Isaiah 40:3. And the Apostle John obviously must have believed John the Baptist’s answer.

All four of the Gospel writers also record the baptism of our Lord by John the Baptist, but I will say more about that in just a moment.

We know from the Gospel of Luke that John the Baptist was just six months older than the Lord Jesus. In Luke 1:36 of the KJV Elisabeth is called Mary’s cousin, but a better translation would be *relative* as the word is translated in the NASB, the ESV, and the NIV.

Just how much attention was being paid to the prophecies of the OT when John the Baptist and our Lord were born, we do not know. But we know that there were those who were expecting the Messiah. However, most of them seemed to believe He was coming as their King to deliver them from Roman oppression. But what we need to realize as we pick up any of the Gospel records to read, that the period of God’s silence had come to an end. Multitudes of the Jewish people may have forgotten the promises of God, but God had not forgotten them, and He had people even in those days who were looking for their Messiah-Redeemer.

As we begin to read Mark’s Gospel, and come to the mention of the Gospel, and then the quotations from Malachi and Isaiah, I think that we are to understand that John the Baptist knew that this was his mission. It is clear from Luke 1 that Zacharias, John the Baptist’s father, understood what his son’s mission would be. And somehow, as John the Baptist grew up, he knew, too, what his mission was in the world.

The first point that John Mark made in writing about John the Baptist had to do with:

I. JOHN THE BAPTIST’S MISSION (Mark 1:4-6).

He came to baptize, not in Jerusalem, but “in the wilderness.” A mighty work was done right from the beginning. He did not go to the people, but the people came from Jerusalem and all over Judea (in which Jerusalem was located). And Matthew added that they came “from all the region round about Jordan” (Matt. 3:5). There was no advance team that went

ahead to announce his ministry. No outstanding, well known, celebrity accompanied him. He just began to preach, and the people came. And what is even more astounding when you compare it with modern evangelism, John the Baptist preached about sin, and how sin can be forgiven. That is what “remission” is. He came telling the people how their sins could be pardoned, how they could be set free from divine judgment as well as from the bondage of sin.

He came to call the nation Israel to repentance. And the way they expressed their repentance was by being baptized. And John the Baptist was an immersionist. Notice that John Mark said in verse 10 that following His baptism, our Lord came “up out of the water.” Later when Philip baptized the Ethiopian eunuch, we are told that “they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip ... and he [the eunuch] went on his way rejoicing” (Acts 8:38b-39a).

Now John the Baptist did not preach salvation by water, nor by works. He preached that Jesus was “the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world.” But people were baptized, confessing their sins, giving evidence of their repentance, and expressing their intention to live a life that was pleasing to God. There was no entertainment, just the simple preaching of the Word of God. You know, “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Rom. 10:17).

Water baptism is actually a humbling experience. I had that impressed upon me early in my ministry when I was the Pastor of the West Memorial Baptist Church in Vancouver, B.C. **Illus:** the lady who wanted to wear a bathing cap at the baptismal service.

It must have been an amazing experience to hear John the Baptist preach, and then to see the people responding with tears, confessing their sins, and seeking the release from the burden of sin which can only come when God forgives. When God is really working, as He was through the ministry of John the Baptist, you don’t need a lot of publicity, or a lot of promotional work. But the preaching of the Word by a godly man like John the Baptist was, is all that it takes to see a mighty work of God. We don’t work up revivals; they are brought down from God.

And there wasn’t anything particularly attractive about the preacher. No

indication is given that he was a charismatic person. His dress could not have been more simple. I might have had dinner with him, but only for half of the menu.

We need to notice these things when we read our Bibles. We are inclined to think in terms of what will draw a crowd. John the Baptist was more concerned about what would draw the blessing of the Lord.

Notice that there is no indication that he was seeking to reach just a particular group of people. When John saw Pharisees and Sadducees in the crowd, he didn't see any evidence of repentance on their part. So he warned them that God was a God of judgment as well as forgiveness, and that if their repentance was not true repentance, they needed to know that "unquenchable fire" awaited them. John the Baptist preached to all men, but he was partial to none. God was doing a mighty work in many hearts, but there are always those who do what everybody else is doing just because it looks like everyone else is doing it. Not even our Lord Jesus Christ got the response from the people that John the Baptist got.

It is hard to distinguish in a faithful man between his mission and his message. They really go together. A faithful man is going to have the true Gospel. But beginning with verse 7 and going through verse 8 we have:

II. JOHN THE BAPTIST'S MESSAGE (Mark 1:7-8).

(Read verses 7 and 8.)

John the Baptist was true to the Biblical prediction of his ministry. John never did give his business card to the priests and Levites who came to find out who he was. He told them that he was "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord." And he was using Scripture when he said that. He was not trying to hide who he was, but neither was he interested in letting them know who he was; he only wanted them to know who the Lord was, and how to get right with Him.

What did John Mark say about John the Baptist's message?

In so many words John the Baptist said, "It was not who I am, but who He is. It was not what I can do for you, but what He can do for you." John added that the Lord was so great that he was not worthy to be the lowliest

of His servants, the one who would loosen the sandals on His feet. Regardless of what may have been the human relationship between John and Jesus (because if their mothers were related, that made them relatives too), John saw his own insignificance in the light of the greater glory of the Lord Jesus.

John's words in verse 8 do not minimize the importance of baptism, but they exalt the ministry of the Lord. It is possible for us as servants of the Lord to baptize with water, but none of us is able to baptize with the Spirit.

Illus: I had a Greek teacher who told our class that the Greek βαπτίζω does not mean *to dip*, but to put in and to leave. But it does have both meanings in Scripture. It pictures our death, burial, and resurrection with Christ, but it also pictures our death to the old life, and resurrection to “walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4).

But now we come to our third point in these verses:

III. THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD JESUS (Mark 1:9-11).

(Read Mark 1:9-11.)

In connection with the baptism of our Lord, let me take you for a few minutes to Matthew's account of the baptism of our Lord. It is found in Matthew 3:13-15:

13 Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

14 But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?

15 And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.

What did the Lord mean by these words? Did He mean that salvation is by baptism? No, He was agreeing with John that He needed to be baptized by the Lord, but that it was necessary for Him to take John's place in order that John might have His place, a place of full acceptance with the Father, which is what salvation is.

And this was the very moment, as Jesus was baptized, that the Apostle

John tells us that John the Baptist “saw, and bare record that this was the Son of God” (John 1:34).

Then it was that a very wonderful thing happened. Matthew mentioned this. And so did Luke, and so did John. But see it here in our text in Mark 1:10-11. It was a moment when the Spirit of God descended upon the Lord, anointing Him for His earthly ministry, and the Father spoke from heaven indicating that our Lord was fully qualified on earth to do the work that the Father had sent Him to do, sent Him to become a Man and to die for men because no other human being could qualify for such a task.

One point remains:

IV. THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS (Mark 1:12-13).

The word “spirit” in verse 12 should be capitalized because it refers to the Holy Spirit.

The study of the temptation of our Lord is a subject by itself. It is given more in detail by both Matthew and Luke. But here it is just mentioned by Mark.

It was brought about by the Holy Spirit. The scene was the wilderness. The Lord was tempted personally by Satan. He was with wild beasts who normally could have attacked Him. Angels ministered to Him. Matthew says that this was after the temptation was over.

But the question has to be raised: Why would Satan, our Lord’s chief adversary, want to tempt the Lord? He surely would have known that the Son of God could not sin any more than the Father could sin, or the Holy Spirit could sin? And why was the Spirit evidently so concerned that the Lord be subjected to temptation?

We are told in the book of Hebrews that our Lord was “tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). So one reason surely was that our Lord might be a merciful and faithful high priest for us.

But I think that there must have been another reason, and this is only my suggestion. Satan knew that the Son of God could not sin, but what he didn’t know was what effect His birth as a Man could have affected His

Deity. And so the Holy Spirit was determined to show at the beginning of our Lord's ministry, not only that He would not sin, but that He could not sin! Satan left our Lord, perhaps not fully convinced, and planning to get at Him at some other time. Only the other times were events when the Devil, as he often does with us, used people, or trying circumstances, to get us to sin against the Lord.

Concl: And so we have the beginning of Mark's Gospel, brief, but complete, and to the point. John the Baptist is given as a confirmation of the basic promise of the OT, and thus confirming the reliability of the Word. He also is our example of what our attitude toward the Lord should be. And we have both the Spirit and the Father's confirmation of our Lord's perfect qualification to be our Savior. Tested personally by the Devil himself, the Lord demonstrated that as a Man He truly remained in the fullest sense, the Son of God.

If we know the Lord, we ought to turn from these verses thanking God that we do. If we do not know the Lord, then we ought to give the most serious consideration to these words, asking God to help us to understand these words in order that we, too, might know the Lord Jesus Christ, the only Savior, as our Savior from sin and the judgment of God. We need to know about the Lord, but then we need to know Him by putting our faith in Him as our Savior.

THE UNIQUENESS OF JESUS' MINISTRY

Mark 1:14-35

Intro: Up until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into the world, there never had been a ministry like His, nor has there ever been another like His. As John Mark began to review the life and ministry of our Lord, he seems to have been impressed with *the authority* of the Lord. We have that word in verse 22, and again in verse 27. It is the Greek word ἐξουσία. It is one of the Greek words for *power*, or *ability*. Thayer, in his Greek lexicon, gives as its first meaning “the power of *choice*, the liberty to do as one pleases. The people were used to their scribes and Pharisees who were very jealous of their authority. They expected everyone to submit to them and not to question *why*. But the Lord Jesus was neither a scribe or a Pharisee. But He had an authority which the people recognized, an authority of which He spoke on one of His last messages to His disciples found in Matthew 28:18-20. This is what the Lord said to them:

18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power [authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Where did our Lord get His authority? Actually as the Son of God He had sovereign authority over all things, and yet as a Man He received His authority from the Father. This is what He was referring to in Matthew 11:25-27:

25 At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

26 Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.

27 All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.

This was the question with which the scribes and Pharisees brought to the Lord throughout His ministry. You will find them asking it even when He was approaching the end of His ministry on earth. See Mark 11:27-28:

27 And they come again to Jerusalem: and as he was walking in the temple, there come to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders,

28 And say unto him, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority to do these things?

According to the priests and scribes and elders, the Lord had no right to do what they were doing. They had worked hard to get the authority that they had, and they could not understand what right our Lord had to do what He was doing without getting His authority from them. The people, on the other hand, who heard the Lord from the very beginning of His ministry, recognized that He had authority, although they may not have understood where it came from.

When I decided years ago not to go on in my ministry with a certain denomination, some of my friends warned me that if I didn't stay with them, I would have nowhere to preach. Well, that was a long time ago, and I have never lacked a place to preach. The Lord came to earth as a Man, and His authority as a Man was given to Him by His Father. This was evident from the time of His baptism when the Father spoke from heaven. The Son of man needed no authority from men; His authority was from heaven, and from His heavenly Father. And our authority to preach the Word of God today does not come from any group of men. It comes from our Lord Himself. This does not mean that we should not seek the support and approval of the Lord's people, if they are guided by the Word in what they want to do, but our authority comes from the Lord.

Our text for this service begins with Mark 1:14, and goes down through verse 35.

The first evidence of our Lord's authority was seen in:

I. THE METHOD HE USED (Mark 1:14).

It is seen in the words of this verse which tell us that after the imprisonment of John, our Lord "came . . . preaching." Our Lord was primarily a preacher. He did not come to reform society. He did not come to entertain the multitudes. He "came . . . preaching."

You find those words preaching and/or teaching all through the record of our Lord's ministry in the Gospels. On one occasion when the Lord was in the synagogue in Nazareth He was given a copy of the prophecy of

Isaiah, and He opened it to the place in Isaiah 61 and read where it was said of Him, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach.” See Luke 4:17, 18.

With all of the work that has to be done in the ministry of the church today, if we are not doing this primary work, we are not doing what the Lord wants us to do: to preach. We may have discussion groups, but our purpose in the discussion groups is not to decide what we are to believe in the Bible, or not believe. We are there to have some one lead us to a knowledge of the truth revealed in the Word.

And this leads me to my second point. What did our Lord preach? So let us talk about:

II. THE MESSAGE THAT HE PREACHED (Mark 1:14-15).

He preached “the Gospel of the kingdom of God.” Many who believed in the Lord while He was here on earth thought that He had come to set up His kingdom on earth, would put down Rome, and reign over the nations of the earth. But that was not His purpose then. He is coming to do that at some future time, but “the gospel of the kingdom of God” is “the Gospel.” And that is evident from the fact that the Lord went on to say, “Repent, and believe the Gospel.”

Are we in the kingdom of God now? We had better be. We entered the kingdom of God by the new birth, according the teaching that the Lord gave to Nicodemus. The Lord came preaching like John the Baptist preached; they preached repentance! Repentance has to do with sin. It has to do with sorrow over our sins, but, in addition, repentance means that by God’s grace we intend to forsake our sins, to turn away from our sins, and to turn to the Lord to do His will. And in order to repent we need to believe the Gospel, believe the good news that Christ came to die for sinners, to seek and to save lost sinners.

This is our mission. And we are under both a divine obligation and divine authority to proclaim this message. Cf. Paul charge to Timothy in 1 Tim. 4:1 ff.

The third thing that Mark mentioned about the Lord in the exercise of His authority was seen in:

III. THE MEN HE CHOSE TO FOLLOW HIM (Mark 1:16-20).

We just have the first four men that the Lord chose here, but they were certainly representative of the rest. He chose four fishermen. They were not prominent. They were not leaders. They were not scholars. They were fishermen.

What contact the Lord had had with them before, we do not know, but what we do see here is the exercise of the Lord's authority. Look at these verses. The Lord called, and they came. Neither business nor family stood in the way. The call of God was upon these men, and they came. This is always true. When the Lord calls, people come. They drop whatever they are doing, and they come. Another word for authority is sovereignty.

Cf. 1 Cor. 1:26-31. The Lord does not call us because of what we are in ourselves, but in order that we might become instruments in His hands to do His will and to bring glory to God. Even a highly gifted person, or a very influential person, has no right to glory in anyone or anything but in God Who uses us for His glory.

But then we see the Lord in the synagogue in Capernaum.

IV. THE PREACHING OF THE LORD (Mark 1:21-22).

The Jews who were in the synagogue on that day never heard preaching like they heard then. There was power in the Lord's preaching which was teaching. If we are not teaching when we preach, then we are not really preaching. The Lord taught the truth, just as we are to teach the Word. And there is power in the Word, convicting power, convincing power, and redeeming power. We know from what is said about the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees that they taught as the truth, the doctrines of men. The people did not know the difference between the Word of God as compared with the traditions of the elders, until they heard the teaching of the Lord Jesus. The Word of God carries its own power. Cf. Heb. 4:12. It may not be what people want to hear, but it is what they need to hear, and it is what God and the Lord Jesus want us to preach. And when we do, the Spirit of God honors it, people are blessed, and there are those who believe and are saved. It may not all happen at once, but there is never a true experience of salvation but what the Word of God has been involved in it. Don't do as seeker pastors do today, seek to draw people

in by music, and stories. Our commission from our Lord is to preach the Word. Begin with the Word, and they you will be able to hang on to them with the Word. Even when people don't want it, give it to them anyway. God will use it.

As we come to verse 23, we come to the kind of a situation that the Lord faced all through His ministry as He faced some of the fruits of sin – demon-possession and physical illness.

V. THE HEALING MINISTRY OF OUR LORD (Mark 1:23-34).

There had been many miracles performed prior to our Lord's coming to the earth, and for a time His apostles performed miracles after the Lord went back to heaven, *but at no time and by no one were so many miracles performed as those which the Lord performed while He was here on earth. And the Apostle John in his Gospel tells us that the Lord performed miracles as evidence of His Deity.* Cf. John 20:30-31. We don't know how many He performed, but they were many. But they were never done to attract a crowd. They were always done to meet the many needs of the people in those days.

But one thing that was very significant in our Lord's ministry was the number of demon-possessed people who were delivered. And it seems that the Devil (and there is only one Devil) had turned out in force to destroy people and to destroy the Lord, if possible. And yet the Lord delivered people who were demon-possessed most often with just a word. So the authority that the Father had given Him extended to the world of Satan's power as well. And yet the deliverance of a demon-possessed person was minor compared with what it takes for the salvation of a single sinner.

Finally, we have in verse 35 a wonderful picture of:

VI. THE FELLOWSHIP BETWEEN THE FATHER AND THE SON (Mark 1:35).

JESUS AND A LEPER

Mark 1:36-45

Intro: In my text for this evening we come to the last ten verses of Mark

1. It is hard for me to leave verse 35 behind because prayer had such a very important place in the life and ministry of our Lord. As I have said a number of times recently, I believe it is more difficult for us to understand the Deity of our Lord than His humanity. It is true that when our Lord became a Man there was a blending together of His Deity and His humanity which is illustrated by the blending together of the oil and the meal in the Meal Offering. When our Lord ascended into heaven after His death and resurrection, it was in His human body that He departed. And we have it from an angel that when the Lord returns, He will be this same Jesus. We must not go beyond what is written in Scripture in our attempt to understand our Lord's humanity, but it is especially evident in His prayer life. It is interesting that our Lord Who was followed unmercifully from place to place, found it necessary to "get up a great while before day" and to go out to "a solitary place" to pray. And even then His disciples looked for Him because the crowds were coming to them asking about Him! As far as I remember, there is no record that our Lord ever prayed with His disciples. The Garden of Gethsemane was probably the time when that became a possibility, but even taking His disciples, Peter, James, and John with Him into the inner part of the Garden, He got to a certain point, left those three, and went a short distance on where He prayed to His Father.

The incident recorded here was early in the public ministry of the Lord. It probably was what Luke referred to in Luke 4:42 and 43, which says that He "went into a desert place," but nothing is said about prayer. However, we can assume that that is why He went into that "desert place." Luke does mention that the crowds were seeking the Lord, and that they wanted Him to stay with them instead of going on like He did.

But I go back to verse 35 in Mark 1 again tonight to link it with what followed. When we read in verse 36 that "Simon and they that were with Him followed after Him," it sounds like He probably had little or no time for prayer. But that is not necessarily the case. What is important for us to understand is the important place that the Lord gave to prayer in connection with His ministry. The Lord was preparing for an extensive ministry throughout Galilee, and this was how He sought to prepare for it. It is safe to say that none of us has ever been as busy as our Lord was.

And yet He deliberately took time out to go to the Father to receive through prayer, strength, guidance, and blessing upon His ministry in the days immediately before Him.

We need to take the lesson to heart even though preaching may not be what we are going to be doing. We all are the Lord's servants, and serve the Lord in different ways. And, as it is often said, if the Lord needed those times of prayer as He went to His heavenly Father, how much more do we need to make time for prayer in our daily lives. And if it is such that we aren't out among people, yet we can take the time to pray for those who do. Much of the time that Spurgeon was preaching, there were people in his church who were praying for God's blessing upon His ministry. We need prayer before we minister, while we are ministering, and after the ministry is over. It is probably true that one reason we are not seeing greater blessing today than we are, is because we have allowed our *busyness* to keep us from praying. Just think of how much time you have given to prayer today, or yesterday. The effectiveness of our praying is not dependent upon much long we pray, but upon our faithfulness in prayer. If such thoughts are a rebuke to us, we need to give serious thought as to how and when we can pray more than we do. God is pleased when we come to Him acknowledging our dependence upon Him. All that we do is not enough if we do not have God's blessing upon us. The Lord in His humanity illustrates this truth.

Now these ten verses emphasize three things concerning our Lord Jesus Christ.

First, his preaching ministry. Second, the synagogue. Third, the healing of the leper.

I. HIS PREACHING MINISTRY (Mark 1:36-39).

Now we all know that the Lord had a twofold ministry: a ministry of preaching and a ministry of healing. While we read in our text for tonight about His preaching ministry, we know that it was His healing ministry that brought the crowds. I think that it would have been very difficult for us to come out of our way of life today, and go back to conditions that prevailed when our Lord was here on earth. Sick people and dying people were everywhere. There were lame people, blind people, deaf people, people afflicted in many, many ways. Our text gives us one of many incidents in the life of our Lord when He healed a leper. It would have

been very difficult for us to take, to look upon so many people with deep, deep needs. Our Lord was moved with divine compassion upon them, and of ten spend whole days healing people of their various diseases.

And yet, having said that, notice what He told His disciples when they told him that everybody was looking for Him. It was not unkind of Him. The Lord could not be unkind. But it showed that His priority was preaching. (Read verse 38.) On one occasion when our Lord was in the synagogue in His home town of Nazareth, the book of Isaiah was given to Him. He turned to what is the sixty-first chapter of Isaiah in our Bible, and began to read, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor,” and then he read on. But the first place was given to preaching.

But now let me turn to a second emphasis in what we have in our text. This has to do with the place where He usually went when He entered a city to ministry:

II. THE SYNAGOGUE (Mark 1:39).

Nobody really knows the origin of the synagogue, but it was a place that would compare with our church buildings. It was the place where the people went. Synagogues arose probably as a matter of convenience for the people because getting to the temple was impossible for many people because of the distance involved. Nobody thought of synagogues and the temple as in competition with each other. But the temple, although some teaching was done there, was primarily a place of worship. The synagogue was primarily a place of teaching. This is where the people were. Later on Paul, in his ministry, usually went to the synagogue when he entered a city.

But it was not only because the people were there, that our Lord went to the synagogue, but it was because the teaching in the synagogues had deteriorated so much, that the Lord went there to bring the truth to the people. And this is what made the people marvel at His teaching. The Lord went preaching the Gospel. The Jews, most of them, thought that they were the people of God because they were Jews, because of their history, because to them had been committed the Scriptures. And yet just as the Bible was being misused and misinterpreted in our Lord’s day, He went preaching the Gospel, calling upon Jews to repent of their sins, and to believe the Gospel. See Mark 1:15. So these Jews who thought that

they were right with God, were learning from our Lord's ministry, and as time went on, from the ministry of the apostles, that they were not right, that they were under the judgment of God, and that the Gospel was their only hope. Of course there were some Jews who knew the truth and who knew the Lord, but they were definitely in the minority. So that is where the Lord would begin His ministry when He went to a new place.

In one city (and Mark does not tell us where except we know that it was in Galilee) as our Lord was preaching, and casting out demons (v. 39), He suddenly was confronted by:

III. A LEPER (Mark 1:39-45).

We can tell that this man was really desperate because he never should have been in the synagogue in the first place. Lepers were required by the law to keep their distance from people who were not lepers. There have been many who have raised questions about the nature of this disease, that it was something different from what we know of today as leprosy. I am not going to get involved in that discussion tonight because that is outside of what I know about the disease. But I feel we are safe in calling it leprosy. Whatever it was, it was a hopeless disease. It was a living death. The man did not need to tell the Lord what his problem was; the Lord was able to see that just by looking at the man.

It sounds like the man interrupted the Lord as He was preaching. But he came to the Lord, not laying hold of the Lord, but "beseeching Him, and kneeling down to Him, and saying unto Him, Lord, If Thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Note the leper's frantic appeal, and yet his evident humility as he came to the Lord. He knew that the Lord could heal him. What he didn't know was, would He.

Although the leper was careful not to touch the Lord, we read that the Lord stretched out His hand, and touched the leper, saying to Him, "I will; be thou clean."

What happened? Verse 42 tells us that when the Lord had spoken those words, "immediately," not gradually, but "immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed." He wasn't told that he would gradually get better, as some of our present-day healers say when it is obvious that they have not been able to do what they professed to do. The change took place in the leper immediately. He was healed. And it had to

be apparent to everyone in the synagogue.

But what did the Lord tell him to do? (Read verses 43 and 44.) So our Lord told Him what he was not to do, but what he was to do.

He was not to tell any man what had happened, but he was to go directly to the priest, and he was to offer for his cleansing what Moses had commanded the people to do.

Where do you find that? I am sure that was the first thing that popped into the priest's mind. How many times do you think that priest had been confronted with that request? Most likely NEVER! Where would he find out what to do? He probably didn't know. Well, where would he look? Look at Leviticus 14, beginning with verse 1. (Read.)

But why did the Lord want the cleansed leper to go to the priest? The first reason would be that they were still under the Law, and our Lord was teaching the former leper to be obedient to the Word of God.

But there was another reason. It is stated at the very end of verse 44: "For a testimony unto them." Others were evidently involved in the cleansing, so the Lord said "them." What did this mean? It meant that this miracle might serve the purpose of all of our Lord's miracles, to show that He was the Son of God. And then the next step would be that the priest himself would be saved. You see, the Lord knows a lot of things that we don't know. But evidently our Lord knew that that priest was one of the elect, and that this incident would result in his salvation.

Did the cleansed man do what the Lord told him to do? No, he didn't. He just started to tell everyone what had happened to him. As a result the Lord had to change what He had been doing before.

We can understand why the former leper did what he did. His life had been given back to him. His joy was uncontrollable.

But what about the priest and his associates? Let us be sure that if I am right in saying that that priest was one of the elect, the Lord reached him in another way and at another time.

It is regrettable that the leper did not obey the Lord. I don't know what to say about his salvation. I hope when we get to heaven that we will meet both this leper, and the priest to whom he should have gone. Let us learn from this how important it is for us to do what the Lord tells us to do first. If we do, then other blessings are sure to follow.

A MIRACLE BECOMES A MINISTRY

Mark 2:1-12

Intro: This miracle is recorded in all three of the Synoptic Gospels. The word Synoptic means that the three Gospels are just a synopsis of the life and ministry of our Lord, but it also means that they approach the subject from a similar point-of-view. John's Gospel is not more thorough than the other three, but his approach is entirely different from Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

In Matthew's Gospel it appears in chapter 9, verse 1-8. In Luke's Gospel, in chapter 5, verses 18-26.

Mark tells us that this miracle was performed in Capernaum, on the shore of the sea of Galilee. Matthew called it "his own city." Luke does not say where it was. But we can say that there were three cities which were important in the life of our Lord, in addition, of course, to Jerusalem. He was born in Bethlehem, raised in Nazareth, and later made His home, or at least His headquarters, in Capernaum. According to Mark's Gospel, our Lord had been in Capernaum immediately following the call of Peter and Andrew, and James and John. It was there that the Lord delivered a man who was demon possessed. Evidently the Lord performed an unusual number of miracles in Capernaum because later our Lord denounced the city in these words found in Matthew 11:23-24:

23 And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

24 But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.

We all know that the Lord destroyed the whole city of Sodom because of the sin which still bears its name, and yet He denounced Capernaum because she had not been responsive to the many miracles that Lord performed there. He implied that Sodom would have been more accepting of our Lord if the same number of miracles had been performed in her that were performed in Capernaum. This reminds of what a solemn responsibility is laid upon people who saw our Lord's miracles, or, for us today, those of us who know about the Lord's miracles from what we have read, or heard taught, from the Bible. The light was surely given to Capernaum, but when it is not received, the light became darkness, and the darkness was intense!

What was the Lord's purpose in performing His miracles? It is clear that, while there had been other miracle workers, even in OT times, yet none ever performed as many miracles, nor as many different types of miracles, as our Lord did.

In answering that question, What was the Lord's purpose in performing miracles, we can say at least four things:

1) He performed them because Scripture predicted that He would. See Matthew 8:16-17:

16 When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick:

17 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses .

This was a quotation from Isaiah 53:4.

2) He performed miracles because He had compassion on the multitudes. There were many, many sick people in every city when our Lord ministered here on earth. We read, for example, in Matthew 14:14:

14 And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.

But there was also a third reason that the Lord performed miracles:

3) The Gospel of John was written to tell us this third reason why the Lord performed so many miracles. See John 20:30-31:

30 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

We can also say that there was another reason for the miracles:

4) They gave Him the opportunity to preach the Gospel, and so often the miracles themselves were illustrations of how physical healing could picture spiritual healing, or, in other words, salvation.

In no way did our Lord ever perform miracles to be sensational. His healing always attracted a crowd, but that was not His main purpose. In fact, in some cases He avoided the crowds. But this palsied man which we are considering tonight was a case in which all three of the Lord's purposes were involved.

Now let us consider this miracle.

I. THE PLACE WHERE THE MIRACLE WAS PERFORMED (Mark 1:1-2).

We are told in all three of the Gospels that the Lord was in a place which was crowded with people, so much so that the men carrying the palsied man, were not able to get through the crowd. Luke alone tells us what kind of a crowd was there. Listen to what Luke wrote in Luke 5:17:

17 And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judaea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them.

We could almost say that this was a convention. Evidently there were some Pharisees, doctors of the Law, and other Jewish leaders who were interested in what the Lord was teaching. And they may have requested that they be given time with Him where they could ask the Lord questions. We can't say for sure. But it seems that it was an interested group. Mark tells us that the Lord was preaching to them. That apparently was the reason that everybody was there, to hear what the Lord was preaching. It is right after this that Luke gives his account of the healing of the man who had the palsy.

Then we read about:

II. AN UNEXPECTED INTERRUPTION (Mark 2:3-4).

Mark is the only Gospel writer who tells us that there were four men who were carrying the palsied man. And so we see that this man was incapable of coming to the Lord on his own. We don't even know what he knew about the Lord. But it is very evident that the four men knew about the Lord, and that they firmly believed that the Lord could help him. It may have been that they were motivated by the possibility that their friend might die before they could get him to the Lord.

So when they couldn't get in the door. They took a stairway which was usually built on the outside of the homes in those day, got up on the roof, began to remove the roofing until they had enough space to let the man down right in front of the Lord. I don't know of many incidents in Scripture which would compare with the emergency nature of what those four men did.

But what was it that drew a response from the Lord?

III. THE LORD'S RESPONSE (Mark 2:5).

It does not say that the Lord saw faith in the palsied man. It says that it was when the Lord "saw their faith," the faith of the men who had let their friend down through the roof, that He said to the palsied man, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." The Greek word translated "son" is the word τέκνον. It is a family word. It means *a born one*. The Lord was recognizing the palsied man as a member of the family, and it had to be the family of God. He was one of God's elect. And so, instead of saying, "Arise, take up thy bed, and walk," our Lord said, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee."

Now the Lord performed other miracles of healing where it was clear that the disease from which they were suffering was due to sin. And I am inclined to feel that this was the situation here. Not anything is said about the faith of the sick man, but he must have been willing for his four friends to bring him to the Lord. However that may have been, the Lord declared his sins were forgiven. He was saved.

But there were some scribes there who didn't say anything, but they were thinking in their hearts that the Lord was speaking blasphemies because He was declaring this man's sin forgiven. They said, and rightly so, that only God can forgive sins. That was right. But apparently it never occurred to them that the Lord might be the Son of God.

But the Lord knew what they were thinking. And so He asked them a couple of questions. The first was, "Why reason ye these things in your hearts?" And the second question we have in verse 9. (Read.)

What possibly was the Lord's reason for asking the first question? Was it to ask them to express to Him the problem that they saw, which might have led to their understanding that He was God, the Son!

What is the answer to the second question? Well, I would rather say to a person, "Your sins are forgiven," because they would have no way of checking to see if that were true. But if you tell a man to get up (that would be a problem for a palsied man), take up thy bed (would be a second problem for a man with palsy), and walk (was problem #3).

But the Lord prefaced his instructions to the palsied man by saying, "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power of earth to forgive sins,

I say unto thee” – and then he told the palsied man to do those three things.

What happened?

The palsied man, cured of his palsy, got up, picked up his bed, and walked out of the house – not only healed, but a forgiven sinner and a child of God! And he didn’t do any of it gradually, He did it all “immediately”! It was not gradual, but instantaneous!

Do you suppose that when it says “that they were all amazed, and glorified God, that that included the Pharisees and doctors of the Law also? I am inclined to believe that it did, but how far beyond that it went, only the Lord knows. But it is surely an amazing story, and every bit of it true, of the Deity and sovereignty of our Lord over sickness and over sin. We don’t go along with those who say that if you are saved, you should never get sick. But we can say that sickness is the fruit of sin, not always as a judgment for a particular sin, but because if there had not been sin, there would never have been sickness.

Concl: There is a lot of encouraging truth in this miracle which opened the door for ministry. I think that anyone reading this story is impressed, or should be impressed, with the words in verse 5, “When Jesus saw their faith,” not the faith of the palsied man, but “their faith,” the faith of his friends, the Lord performed a twofold miracle – a healing of the body, and the healing of the soul.

We can’t believe for anyone else even though many times we wish that we could. But we can by faith, by prayer alone, or by testimony to our friends, or by putting a book presenting the Gospel in their hands, or by inviting them to come to church with us, we can bring them to Christ. We know that the Lord gave this man’s four friends the faith to bring the sick man to Christ, and the Lord gave the sick man the faith to be saved. We are to preach the Gospel any way that we can; the Lord uses His Word according to His sovereign will.

MORE BLESSING, MORE OPPOSITION

Mark 3

Intro: As we read through any one of the Gospels, we become familiar with two characteristics of the life and ministry of our Lord.

The first is that He was constantly confronted with human needs. Sometimes those needs were physical; at other times they were spiritual. And so the Lord gave Himself primarily to doing two things: healing the sick, and teaching the truth of God. The people flocked to Him with their needs, and they took special delight in His teaching. Endless opportunities were before the Lord.

At the same time there was opposition, and that opposition did not come primarily from Rome, but from the scribes and Pharisees and other leaders of the Jews. One would think that the Jewish leaders would have welcomed the ministry of the Lord, but instead they were the main sources of opposition. And they were relentless. It seems that wherever He went, they were there. Whatever He did, they saw it. The Lord was looked upon by them as an outsider because He had not been trained like the scribes and Pharisees had. In John 7 we have the attitude of the Jewish leaders expressed in the question that they asked, “How knoweth this man letters, having never learned ?” (John 7:15). They meant that He had never been to their schools, and they could not understand how He could teach the way He did, and where He had learned the truths that He taught. But only in rare cases like that of Nicodemus do we find those religious men really seeking the answer to their own questions. You will remember that Nicodemus had come to the conviction that no man could do the miracles that the Lord was doing unless God was with him. The Jews were so blinded by their own conceit and love of power, that they were not seeking help for themselves, and were doing all that they could to stand in the way so that the Lord could not help those who were in need.

We get so accustomed to reading about the miracles that the Lord performed that we fail to realize how really astounding this was to the people of that day. Sickness and disease and death were everywhere. And all of a sudden this man appeared who had unlimited powers for doing good – healing diseases, driving out demons, and even raising the dead. The prevalence of demon possession during the ministry of our Lord indicates that the forces of Satan were out in full to discredit and to

defeat all that the Lord was doing, and even to destroy Him.

But through it all the Lord continued His work. He was careful around the scribes and Pharisees, but He healed and He taught even when they were present.

Mark here in chapter 3 shows How the opposition was growing against the Lord.

Anyone can see how serious the opposition at this point was by reading verse 6. (Read.) That is the end of the first part of the chapter.

But then we see the Lord moving ahead with His own plans while ministering to the people, He called twelve of His disciples who were to be His apostles. Then it is important to note in verses 20 and 21 the concern of some well meaning friends. Verse 21 marks the conclusion of this part of the chapter.

And then the opposition was both renewed and intensified as the scribes charged the Lord with being an emissary of the Devil, a most incredible charge against the Lord. But the Lord did not hesitate to show how ridiculous such a charge was. And then the Lord brought up the subject of sins and forgiveness. This goes from verse 22 to verse 30.

And then the last five verses of the chapter have to do with the mother of our Lord and his brothers coming to see Him, and how He responded to those who told Him that they were there looking for Him.

So the opposition was from family and friends as well as from his enemies, although the nature of the opposition was very, very different. With the former, the motivation was love; with the latter, it was hatred.

I. THE HEALING OF THE MAN WITH THE WITHERED HAND (Mark 3:1-6).

This was an incident showing the hardness of heart that prevailed among the scribes and Pharisees. “Hardness” means blindness, stupidity, and callousness, a condition which actually disqualified these men for making any claim as being the men they pretended to be. They were phonies!

Notice that the Pharisees went immediately to the Herodians who were

more like a political party than they were religious leaders. And what they had in their hearts toward the Lord was murder.

II. THE LORD'S CONTINUING MINISTRY AND CALLING OF THE APOSTLES (Mark 3:7-21).

In this section we get some relief from the scribes and Pharisees. The popularity of the Lord continued. His teaching is not mentioned, but it is implied because of our Lord's request for a small boat. But then He also healed all who were sick, and cast out demons. But the Lord had not desire to enlist the help of the demons even though they recognized and began to publish Who the Lord was.

But then we have a wonderful section dealing with the calling of the twelve disciples who were to become His apostles. Note His charge to them in vv. 14 and 15. And then their names were given. There were no prominent men among them.

III. THE VICIOUS CHARGE AGAINST THE LORD BY THE SCRIBES (Mark 3:22-30).

No greater accusation could have been directed toward the Lord than that He was serving the prince of the demons, indicating that His work was Satanic. They were really blaspheming His Name. They accused Him of being demon-possessed.

But the Lord issued a warning against blaspheming the Holy Spirit. He did not say that these Jews had committed such an unforgivable sin, but His warning was that they were approaching very close to it. It may be that the Lord was looking ahead to the period following His own time on earth when the Holy Spirit would be given. Such blasphemy against the Holy Spirit and the light which would have been given, would be unforgivable.

IV. THE CONCERN OF THE LORD'S MOTHER AND HIS BROTHERS (Mark 3:31-35).

We really should not need anyone to remind us of the deep love that our Lord would have had for His mother. And the same would have been true about His love for His brothers. He was not being disrespectful nor unkind to any of them. But He was pointing out that our relationship with

each other as the people of God, was what really counts. We are always inclined to put the main emphasis upon human relationships, and boast about those. Remember how there were those who said to the Lord that the woman who gave Him birth, and who nursed Him in His infancy, was especially blessed. But it was not that that secured heaven for Mary the mother of our Lord. I am referring to the words we find in Luke 11:27-28:

27 And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked.
28 But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.

And so let us make sure that we are not putting our hope on any relationship, nor upon any good deeds, for our salvation. The only people who have heard the Word of God, and do it, are those who have believed in the saving grace of Christ, and whose lives are, therefore, directed by the Word of God.

Concl: Let us make sure that we are trusting the Savior. There are those today who would discredit the Lord Jesus Christ and everything He did. We can say that they are the descendants of the scribes and Pharisees. They may clerical robes even, but if they are not trusting Christ and preaching the Gospel, they are wolves in sheep's clothing.

THE SOWER, THE SEED, AND THE SOIL

Mark 4:1-20

Intro: Our Lord, Who was the greatest of all teachers, taught with parables. What is a parable? The dictionary defines it as “a comparison; specif., a short fictitious narrative from which a moral or spiritual truth is drawn; as, the *parables* of Christ” (Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, p. 718).

The Greek word, παραβολή, is essentially the same. It means “placing one thing by the side of another” and then comparing them. It was a teaching tool that the Lord used frequently. This parable at the beginning of Mark 4 is probably the best known of all of our Lord’s parables.

When He had finished this parable, His disciples wanted to know why He taught in parables? And we have His answer in verses 11 and 12. Anyone who does not believe in election and the sovereignty of God in salvation will not understand the Lord’s answer. (Read vv. 11-12.)

“The mystery of the kingdom of God” has to do with the full understanding of the truth of salvation. Some people, in fact, many people, who heard our Lord telling this story, while they would have been very familiar with a sower sowing seed, and getting different results from different places where the seed would fall, would recognize that part of what the Lord was saying, but they did not understand the Lord’s purpose for telling such a story, especially when most of them could have told the same story themselves.

But notice that while the Lord told His disciples, “Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God,” they needed the Lord to explain it to them. That tells us a lot about Bible study and Bible teaching. Those of us who know the Lord still need the illuminating work of the Spirit in order to understand the Word of God, even what we might call the simpler truths of God’s Word.

This story does not represent the way farmers plant seed today. While the farmers in those days did some preparation, it was not as extensive as the work that farmers do today. They did not plant such large crops as farmers often do today. They did not have the equipment to do so. It is true that farmers in any age have to put up with poor soil, and weeds, and birds, but they were special problems in those days.

In my college days in the south I had the privilege often of preaching in country churches. The people were usually poor. Their homes were often hardly more than shacks, but you would find in those poor place people who were the salt of the earth. I had grown up in Tacoma and only had a very scanty understanding of the work of a farmer. But I learned a great deal from those simple people, and it was always a blessing to get out on weekends to minister to them.

They would not have been surprised at such a parable as this that the Lord told His disciples. But the doctrine that the Lord had in mind in telling such a parable, they would have needed an explanation. And notice how in verse 13 the Lord made it clear that understanding this parable, was a key to understanding all of the Lord's parables. So this was the place to start.

The parable was about "a sower," or we would say, a farmer, one who went out to plant seed for the purpose of eventually harvesting a crop. It was also about the "seed" which he sowed, and finally the harvest, or lack of harvest that he got from the various places where the seed was sown.

So let us look now at:

I. THE PARABLE (Mark 4:1-9).

We have already seen how the people flocked in great numbers to hear the teaching of the Lord, and that they noticed a great difference between the teaching of the Lord and the teaching of the scribes. It was a very unconventional place for a Bible class, but the Lord adjusted to the circumstances that He had to. So he was in a ship just off of the shore in the sea of Galilee, and the people were on the shore, a multitude of them, listening intently to what our Lord had to say.

As He started, He called upon them to listen: "Hearken."

Then He spoke of four different conditions regarding the soil. The first one he mentioned was a place where people had been walking across the land. The land was packed down, and so the birds had a feast on that part of the land where the farmer was working. It was not large, but the farmer hoped to get some harvest from it.

The second was land that had a lot of rock in it. The soil was good, but

the rocks kept the seed from establishing a good root system, and so although it was the first to sprout, it did not last because it did not have enough soil to support it.

The third was soil where thorns grew up with the seed. You will remember that when the Lord brought judgment upon Adam after he had sinned, the Lord said that the land was going to be cursed with “thorns . . . and thistles” (Gen. 3:18). And that has been a plague that farmers have had to deal with from that day until this.

The last of the four soils was good, and it brought the farmer a harvest – some of it thirty fold, some sixty, and some an hundred! This is what the wanted.

And then the Lord concluded that part of his teaching by saying, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” Now of course everyone has ears, and ears are given to us so we can hear. But the Lord did not say, “He that hath ears let him hear,” but “he that hath ears to hear let him hear.” It is God who gives us ears to hear the Word of God, which includes the ability to understand the Word. That ability is God-given. Not all have it, but it is a cause for great rejoicing if reading the Word, or hearing the Word, also causes you to enjoy hearing it, and even wanting to hear more.

This concludes the parable. The Lord obviously taught more than this, but John Mark took this part because he wanted to focus attention on this part of the Lord’s teaching. But we believe that it was not just John’s desire in writing his Gospel, but that this was all according to the leading that the Holy Spirit gave to him.

So when the crowd was gone, and the Lord was with His disciples, they wanted to know what the parable meant. You see, they had “ears to hear.” And, as we learn from Matthew’s account of this same parable, the disciples wanted to know why the Lord taught in parables (which was probably included when Mark said simply that they asked the Lord about the parable.

And so we can ask:

II. WHY PARABLES? (Mark 4:10-12).

Parables were a very simple form of teaching. By definition a parable is

short, so people are not held very long by any of them. But the Lord may have surprised His disciples when He said that He had two purposes for teaching with parables. And they were diametrically opposed to each other. He wanted *to conceal the truth* from some; but *to reveal it* to others. Some were satisfied with the story, but others, like the disciples, wants to know the meaning.

I think that the Lord was teaching His disciples that we are not to try to force the truth down people's throats. Paul told Timothy that "the servant of the Lord must not strive" (2 Tim. 2:24). We must be patient with people who are indifferent to the truth, or even those oppose the truth. But we must all remember that we are sent to preach the Gospel, *not to debate it*. If the Lord gives people a hunger for the truth, they will come back. But apparently most of the people that the Lord spoke to on that day were content to hear, and then leave. That is the way it always is.

But now we come to:

III. THE EXPLANATION OF THE PARABLE (Mark 4:13-20).

A. The sower.

The Lord was a sower. He was training His disciples to be sowers. And we know that this is a commission that we all have. Not all of the disciples were called to be apostles, but all believers are called upon to sow the Word. This is not limited to pulpit ministry, although it includes pulpit ministry. But we all are commissioned to sow the Word.

Referring again to my time with those poor farmers in rural Texas, it was customary to have "revival meetings" every summer. (Tell about my experience with a man in the community who did not go to church.)

We are all to be sowing twelve months out of every year, and three hundred and sixty-five days out of the year *as the Lord brings opportunities our way*.

But now let us identify:

B. The seed (v. 14).

Very clearly the seed is "the Word," *the Word of God*, or to be more

specific, the Gospel. This passage is dealing with the message that brings people into the kingdom of God. Remember verse 11. A farmer may sow several kinds of seed, but in this parable there is just one seed.

But then the Lord went on to talk about:

C. The soil (vv. 15-20).

As we have already seen, the Lord recognized four types of soil. And these represent four kinds of people, with four results which follow the sowing of the seed.

1. The wayside (v. 15).

We are not in this business of sowing very long before we learn that we are not only sowers, but we have to be soldiers. We have an enemy to contend with, an enemy who will do everything he can to keep people from hearing the Gospel, but once they have heard it, he looks for the opportunity to snatch it away from them. He may do this by putting doubts in their minds about the Gospel. He may sow doubts about the truth of the message, or about the Lord Himself. But he is a master at getting the Word of God away from those who have heard it. Many a child has grown up hearing the Gospel from the time they could remember anything, but perhaps the Devil and Satan (the same person) has made them think that knowing the Gospel is the same as believing the Gospel.

2. Stony ground (vv. 16-17).

It looks at first like these people have really been saved. They have received the Word “with gladness.” And it may look to the sower that there is fruit here, real results from the preaching of the Gospel. But it always takes time to tell if a person has really been saved, or not. There are many people today that fall into this category. As long as things do along in a pleasing way, they continue. But as the Lord said, when affliction or persecution comes their way “for the Word’s sake,” they are gone!

It may be that before the Lord comes there will be persecution for those of us who know the Lord. That is not the idea that many people have about the Christian life. They have been told that being saved means problems solved, not more problems of a different kind. So, to get rid of the opposition, they make themselves absent from the meeting of the Lord’s

people. I have seen this happen many, many times. They go along fine for a while, but then something happens and you don't see them anymore. And they go back to doing what they were doing before the Gospel was presented to them. We must never give people a false idea of what it means to be a Christian, a child of God. When people tell us that they are "born again," we need to ask them what they understand about what that means. There is a lot of stony ground among professing Christians.

Next we come to:

3. Thorny ground (vv. 18-19).

These are people who hear the Word, and apparently accept the Lord. They believe the facts of the Gospel, or at least they say that they do. But "the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of others things, enter in, into the heart, and choke out the Word. It is not that the Word lacks power, but it is that there has been a faulty idea of the Gospel, and worldliness chokes out the Word.

But, thank God, there is always the"

4. Good ground (v. 20).

Notice the expression that we have heard that we have not had before: "and bring forth fruit." The Gospel changes lives. It is not always fruitful at the same time and to the same extent in every case. But the Gospel is life-changing. Salvation is a work of God in the heart, and it manifests itself in a transformation of life. Christians are not perfect, but they are changed. They are not perfect, but they are interested in becoming holy as God is holy. This is why the sower sows the seed. He looks for the fruit, and rejoices when he sees it.

Concl: This parable is a first, basic message on what we as sowers of the Word of God when we go out into the world to tell people about their need of salvation, and the only Savior. We tell them about the grace of God toward sinners. We sow the seed faithfully. But this means that we need to be very careful that we know our message. We are to proclaim the truth, just as the responsibility for the sower is to sow the seed. But only God can bless the work of the farmer, and only God can bless His Word which we carefully sow, in order that it might bring salvation to those who hear the message.

A TEACHER OF PARABLES

Mark 4:21-34

Intro: It is difficult for us to understand how the truth of God had been misinterpreted, and sometimes even put out of sight by men, when our Lord came into the world. The Jews were inclined to feel that because they were Jews, they were the children of God. And they deliberately scorned the Gentiles as not being on a par with themselves as far as their relationship with God was concerned. Even though the OT spoke of salvation being extended to the whole world, that emphasis was buried as far as the Jews were concerned.

In these parables of our Lord we see that He emphasized the sovereignty of God in salvation, and He pointed out in very clearly in the first parable that it was never God's purpose to save everyone. But He also stressed the fact the being in the kingdom of God was a matter of one thing: a person's response to and relationship with the Word of God. So the Lord was not speaking of a literal kingdom (which the Bible deals with in other places, and which is yet to be fulfilled), but He was actually talking about salvation. That is brought out in the first parable of this chapter, Mark 4.

(Review the first parable briefly.)

Now in the parables that follow, the Lord was obviously building upon the first parable. He indicated as much by what He said in verse 13. Thus that parable is the key to the others.

Following the first parable, the Lord gave three others that were based upon the first.

In verses 21-25 we have the parable of the candle, or lamp, and what you do with it when it is lighted. And in verse 22 the Lord was clearly referring to His reference to the phrase, "the mystery of the kingdom of God," in verse 11. This word has a special meaning in the NT, as I have mentioned many times. It is a word which speaks of the progressive nature of the revelation given to us in the Word of God. Truth was revealed progressively in the OT, but the revelation has now been completed in the ministry of our Lord and in the ministry of the apostles who followed Him. But the Lord indicated in the first parable and its interpretation that God revealed the truth in a progressive way, and held some of it back for a time, not because He did not want to make it known, but because He did

want to make it known. And that is what He was doing here. And our Lord indicated that this was not something new, because it was what Isaiah had been told about his ministry. Verse 12 is a quotation from Isaiah 6:9-10. Please turn with me to that chapter so that we can see the type of ministry that Isaiah had.

It has never been God's purpose to save everyone, and those who interpret these parables with the idea that He did want to save everyone, have missed the point of what He was saying. If the Lord had wanted to save everyone, He could have done that. An omnipotent God can do anything that He is pleased to do. A part of our Lord's reason for teaching in parables, was to conceal the truth from many of His hearers. People can read the Bible. Non-Christian college professors can teach the Bible like they usually do, as "literature," without ever seeing the truth of salvation, or, if they see it, they don't understand what it is all about.

An example of religious people who are blinded was demonstrated around the world in the last couple of weeks where people continuously were speaking of the Pope as the "holy Father." Anyone who reads the Bible ought to know that "holy Father" is one of God's titles, and no man has the right to take it for Himself. People who use it of a mere man, regardless of who is, are guilty of blasphemy. But you can attribute this to spiritual blindness.

Now John Mark, guided by the Holy Spirit, had a reason for following the main parable with three others which we find in verses 20 through 34 of this fourth chapter. They are an elaboration of the kingdom of God, or, as we might say, of salvation itself.

The first had to do with a candle, or a lamp. The purpose of a candle or lamp is to give light. Long ago the Psalmist had written, "The entrance of Thy Words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple" (Psa. 119:130). And even before that in Psalm 119, we find these words in verse 105: "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." So as the Lord taught in parables, He was giving more light, light about the Gospel, so that His disciples would understand more fully the work of God in the world.

You might find some elements of the truth the Lord gave in the first parable of this chapter – you might find illustrations of it in the OT, but the Lord here by His teaching was giving light that His disciples needed

to understand.

It verse 22 the Lord was indicating that there was more to come. And it was not to make it more difficult for people to be saved, but so that the disciples would understand what they could expect, and what they should look for as they preached the Gospel. Not everything that appeared to be salvation, was salvation.

And then in verse 23 we come to that expression again which the Lord used in verse 9 of our chapter. All of us have ears. In fact, we have two of them. But it is possible for people to hear, and yet not hear, because they do not understand what they are hearing. If you have ears to hear it is because God has given you ears to hear and to understand His Word. Do you remember the words of that hymn that we sing frequently, #271, verse 3 which says this:

Why was I made to hear thy voice,
And enter while there's room,
When thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?

Every day we ought to thank the Lord that He has given us ears to hear. This is what God does. We can't do it for ourselves. By nature man is deaf as far as understanding the Word of God is concerned. And only God can make us hear.

Verse 22 is a promise from the Lord that the Spirit of God would eventually reveal everything that God intends for us to know. And we now have it all in the Bible.

But we are not only to hear, but we are to pay particular attention to what we hear, that is, what we hear as the Word is read, so that we can take full advantage of what God has revealed. Isn't this *a command* for us *to meditate* on the Word? I believe that it is! We hear the Word, and then we meditate on it. And the purpose of meditation is to gain a greater understanding of the Word. To those who respond to the Word in this way, more is given, that is, more understanding, more enjoyment, and more profit from the Word.

But for those who do not have ears to hear, even the truth that is written upon their hearts will be taken away, so that they are not affected by the Word of God the way they should be.

Then the Lord gave two more parables to illustrate the Gospel even more fully.

Remember from the first parable that the seed is the Word. “The sower soweth the Word” (Mark 4:14).

Sowing the Word is likened unto planting a seed. And obviously this is seed in good ground. But it takes time for the seed to grow. And that may take a while. It usually does when you are sowing corn, for example. The sower sows the seed. Paul used this illustration when he said, “I planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase” (1 Cor. 3:6). After the seed is sown, and someone else may come along to water it, *but it is always God who make a seed of corn to produce a crop – always God!* And that is why this work cannot fail. We may not see results every time, but God gives fruit where He is pleased to give it.

A farmer is wasting his time if God does not give fruit. We put the seed in the soil, and God does the rest. If we sow the seed, we will see a harvest.

Then we come to the final parable in this chapter. It has to do with a mustard seed. The Lord was not talking about sowing an oak tree, or a pine tree. He was speaking of garden plants. You would never expect from the size of the seed that such a large plant would be the result.

Now what are the prospects that the Gospel will succeed. Think of our Lord, and the humble beginning of His ministry. We know that He was the Son of God Who came to earth as a Man, but to most people He was just a man. And the men He chose were not prominent men who had a lot of charisma about them. They were poor. None of them had any money. They were not really trained for anything. Matthew was a tax collector, and that meant that he was a crook, robbing people by making them pay more than the Roman government required. And finally the Lord died on a Cross as the worst of criminals. We know that He arose from the dead, and then went back to the Father in heaven, but most people in the world think of that as a fairy tale.

But where is it all headed? The kingdoms of this world are going to become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. Every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. People will be saved out of every tribe and tongue and

nation. The saved will be more than any of us could number. The purposes of God will all be fulfilled, and none of the elect will be lost.

From an insignificant beginning, like a mustard seed, under the blessing of God, the Gospel will triumph above everything else, and God will be glorified for all eternity.

Concl: The Lord intended that this should encourage and inspire His disciples to be faithful in sowing the seed. And it should be for our encouragement too. God's purposes will not fail, and He will not lose a single person for whom Christ died. We need this encouragement for these days when the harvest seems to be lacking. We need to have faith and be faithful. God cannot, and He will not, fail.

THE LORD'S WAY IN THE STORM

Mark 4:35-41

Intro: The ministry of the Lord Jesus was one of teaching and also the performing of miracles. The miracle which we read about in these closing seven verses of Mark 4, followed a day of very strenuous teaching. The Lord didn't work by the hour. His days of public ministry often closed when He sought to get away from the crowds, either to pray and have fellowship with His Father, or to be for a time away from the crowds with all of the needs that they were continually bringing to Him. On this particular day, His time had been given to teaching, teaching by parables, as we learn from verses 33 and 34. (Read.)

Teaching is work, and it is especially difficult when it is necessary for all of the teaching to be explained. And this He was doing especially with His disciples. It has been said that if a man puts himself into his teaching, he will spend as much energy in an hour as that same man would spend in eight hours of physical work. The Lord had to be very careful in His teaching because His enemies were always present, hoping to hear something that they might be able to use against Him.

Actually the Lord had been teaching most of the day, and at the end of the day He was very tired. So He was looking for a place to rest. He had been teaching from a large fishing boat, and as the evening had started to come, He told His disciples, "let us pass over unto the other side." The Lord had frequently done this because the far side of the Sea of Galilee was not as populated as it was around Capernaum, and so there was more opportunity to be without the crowds, and to rest. We see from our Lord's suggestion to His disciples, and from the fact that when they did what He wanted them to do, He promptly went to sleep that we have here evidence of *our Lord's humanity*. In fact, Mark does not tell us that anyone else went to sleep, so we can say that the day of teaching had been more physically and emotionally demanding upon Him than it had been upon any of His disciples. And yet He was not entirely successful in getting away from the crowds because we are told in verse 36 that "there were also with him other little ships."

The Lord was obviously exhausted. He must have been hungry too. He was in great need of rest. The disciples did not mind what He did until they found themselves in a severe storm. But it was the storm that caused them to awaken the Lord.

If you have visited that part of the world, you may have experienced such a storm, or maybe you were told how quickly and unexpectedly a strong wind can come up and turn the placid sea of Galilee into mountainous waves, some as high as twenty feet.

Now we need to remember that at least four of the disciples were fishermen by trade before the Lord called them to be disciples, and it seems quite certain that the rest were familiar with what can happen in crossing the sea of Galilee at any time.

It is apparent from the reaction of the disciples to the storm that they thought that they were all going to drown. It became so dangerous that they finally awakened the Lord because they had no other hope that they would be saved.

Now remember that it was the Lord's suggestion that they leave immediately to go to the other side. So they were doing what the Lord wanted them to do. But the conclusion of the account also makes it clear that there were things about the Lord which they did not understand. They were finding out that doing the will of the Lord would not mean that they would have a trouble-free journey. And it looked to them like the Lord had not know what was coming either. The boat was filling with water, and it would not be long before they all would be in big trouble.

There is a real parallel to the situation that the disciples faced and the experiences that we often have in daily life. We don't enjoy the physical presence of the Lord, but unexpectedly we sometimes find ourselves in trouble for which there seems to be no happy solution. The Lord never promises us a life free from trials. Basically we experience what everyone else experiences in this life. And it does not seem that even the Lord is aware of the trouble that we can be in.

It is like the sickness Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha. They sent word to the Lord that Lazarus was sick, but the Lord did not come. And these women couldn't understand why the Lord did not respond to their appeal for help. But when the Lord finally came after Lazarus had died, they both said the same thing to Him: "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, our brother had not died." And they had probably said the same thing to each other over and over again.

In the situation that we are considering here in Mark 4, the Lord was

asleep, and not even the storm nor water in the boat had awakened Him. And they said to Him, “Master (or Teacher), carest Thou not that we perish?” They seemed to know that He could do something, but instead it seemed to them that He was totally unaware of what was going on. We must remember that these men were only gradually learning about the ways of the Lord. They evidently believed that He could have done something about it if He knew what was going on, but how could He know if He were asleep. But even worse than that was the possibility that He knew, but didn’t care. We can imagine that they were all busy trying to get rid of the water that was in the boat, but all that they could do was not enough. All kinds of thoughts go through our minds when we are experiencing the height of some kind of a storm. They had seen the Lord perform other miracles, but not this kind of a storm. So it was a new experience for them. I often wish that we had sound in the words of Scripture. It would be interesting to know who had a part in asking this question, “Carest Thou not that we perish?” Our text says that “they awake Him, and say unto Him . . .” We can imagine that Peter and Andrew and James and John had given the others all of the advice they had based on their experience with the sea of Galilee. But that was not enough. And so finally they woke the Lord up, and asked Him the question that was on all of their hearts.

Now we need to remember that, as the Apostle John declared so clearly at the beginning of His Gospel, that this Lord Jesus was the Word Who was in the beginning with God, and that He was God, and that nothing was made that He did not make in all of creation. They did not know if in becoming a Man He had somehow changed. They certainly did not expect Him to do what He did. We can tell that from their response at the end of our chapter.

What did He do? He did not answer them immediately. He did not rebuke them first, but He rebuked the wind first. This means that He spoke to the wind. And then He spoke to the sea. They had never done that, and they did not know that He would do that. But He did!

And what happened? “The wind ceased, and there was a great calm.” The Lord of creation was showing His power over creation. And He did it with just two words in Greek which are better translated, “Hush, be still.” He didn’t call upon the Father. It was not anything that took Him a long time. He just spoke to the wind and the sea, and the storm was over. “The wind ceased, and there was a great calm.”

Try to visualize the scene when suddenly the storm was over.

And then the Lord, calmly and graciously, said to them, “Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?”

The disciples did not answer Him. They feared exceedingly. The storm on the sea might be over, but they were still recovering from the experience that they had just been through. But they did talk to one another, and said, “What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?”

And right there Mark stopped. As chapter 5 begins we see that they got safely over to the other side of the sea.

But we have three questions that were asked, two by the Lord, and one that they asked each other. And quite evidently Mark put them here because he wanted us to answer them.

(Comment on the questions, and show how the Lord was showing them their need. And by their question they were acknowledging that they did not know the Lord the way they needed to know him.)

(Comment also on their fear which prompted their question. This was a different fear from that which the Lord mentioned in verse 40. They were being brought to experience the fear of the Lord, and to recognize how really great and powerful and gracious the Lord really was.)

THE LORD IN SATAN'S DOMAIN

Mark 5:1-20

Intro: During our Lord's time on earth there were more miracles performed by our Lord than had ever been performed before or since by any one person. The Lord was concerned, of course, about the needs of those who were everywhere He went, but in doing these miracles He was giving evidence of His Deity. At the same time there was more demonic activity than is recorded in any similar period in human history. I have been in the ministry for over sixty years, and I have never seen a single case of demon possession. Our charismatic friends would deny that statement, but they are quick to tag almost any kind of abnormal behavior as demon possession. I am not saying that the Devil has not been very busy during the years following our Lord's time on earth, but I have never, and I doubt if any of you have, seen a man who could break chains which had been put on him to restrain him like the man in the parable we are considering tonight. I believe all of the instances that are recorded in Scripture of demon possession, and so I believe that there is such a thing, but if there have been cases of demon possession since our Lord was here on earth, at least they have not been as numerous and common as they were when the Lord was here on earth.

Why were they so prominent during our Lord's ministry in Israel? I think that there was one main reason: it was because the Devil and his demons knew that they were fighting for their very existence. To be sure they were fighting to maintain their control over the hearts of men. Judas was a man who was Devil-possessed, and that explains why he did what he did in betraying the Lord Jesus Christ. Two of the Gospels record this. This is Luke's account:

1 Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover.

2 And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him; for they feared the people.

3 Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve.

4 And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them.

5 And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money.

6 And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude (Luke 22:1-6).

And then we have the record given to us by the Apostle John is John 13:

21-31. (Read.) The man we are reading about tonight was demon-possessed with many demons. But Judas Iscariot was Satan-possessed. It is clear that Satan was doing everything possible to do away with the Lord, and he had been at it since he tempted the Lord. He knew that he was going to be involved in what our Lord came to do. And we see this very clearly in Hebrews 2:14-15:

14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

So, the reason there was so much Satanic activity during our Lord's time here on earth was because by His death He would save His people from their sins, but by His death He would destroy the one who had the power of death, that is, the Devil. So Satan, or the Devil, was doing everything he could to destroy the Lord. His power was displayed in a case such as we are told about here in Mark 5.

Satan is called "the god of this world," or *age*. He has had that position since Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden. Only God is greater than the Devil, or Satan. He knows that he is a doomed enemy, but he is trying to do as much damage to people while He can. He will be placed in the bottomless pit during the millennium, and he will be cast into the lake of fire for all eternity. But he is fighting now to do as much damage as he can before that time comes. Revelation 12:12 says that "he knoweth that he hath but a short time." And let us never underestimate what he can do. It looks like he has everything going his way when we look at the world today.

Now let us look at this miracle. You will find this same incident reported in Matthew 8:28-34 and in Luke 8:26-39.

I. THE DEMON-POSSESSED MAN (Mark 1:1-5).

The Lord had just finished a very busy day, and had gone with His disciples across the Sea of Galilee presumably to rest. But instead He and His disciples were immediately confronted by a man "with an unclean spirit," one way of describing a demon. And it speaks of the effect of what the demon does. He defiles all whom he can. He lived in a

graveyard, and he was very, very strong. But he also was very unhappy, and seemed intent on self-destruction. Here we have the Lord's description of one who is under Satan's power. It would have been a very frightening thing even to see such a person.

The Devil is very clever. He blinds people not only to the Gospel, but he blinds them to the effect of sin. We are not told how this man came to be demon-possessed, but you can be sure that he had trifled with sin in some form, and he had become a bondsman of sin, but also of Satan.

So, first of all, we see the man by himself. And it is not a pretty sight.

Next we see:

II. THE DEMON-POSSESSED MAN WITH THE LORD (Mark 5:6-13).

A remarkable change came over this demon-possessed man when he saw Jesus. Verse 7 sound like the words of the man, but in verse 8 the Lord recognized that the demon was speaking through the mouth of the man. But the Lord spoke to the unclean spirit, telling him to come out of the man. And when the Lord asked the demon what his name was, he responded by saying, "Legion." This is a word which has meant different numbers at different times, but it probably meant as many as 3,000. Or it could have meant just a large number, perhaps too many to count.

In verse 10 it apparently was the lead demon who spoke for all of the rest. They requested not to be sent "away out of the country," meaning Israel. I think that we can correctly assume from these words that the demons were there to work havoc in Israel.

Now let us go back and look at what the demon originally said to our Lord. There were plenty of men in Israel, particularly among the scribes and Pharisees, who were ready to dispute the claims of the Lord Jesus, *but that was never the case with Satan or the demons. They knew Him, and they feared Him, and knew that He held the power of judgment over them.*

In verse 11 we read that the Jewish farmers were busy raising and selling pigs. This was an animal that the Jews were not to eat. But evidently they had been eating them as well as raising and selling them. But the demons wanted to go into the swine. And when they did, the swine ran

down into the sea of Galilee, and were drowned. What became of the demons, we don't know. Were the demons destroyed? We don't know. What we do know is that this man was delivered by the power of the Lord Jesus Christ. And there are some other things that we know too.

III. THE RESULTS OF THE LORD'S MINISTRY (Mark 5:14-20).

Here we need to look at the various people who are mentioned at the end of this great story.

First, the men who kept the sheep, and the people in the city. See vv. 14-16).

Second, the condition of the man who had been demon-possessed – how he had been changed. See v. 15.

Third, the request of the man who had been delivered from the demons. See v. 18.

Finally, what the Lord told the man that he was supposed to do. See v. 19.

Concl: The lessons for us to learn:

- 1) The power of the enemy we face.
- 2) The condition of the demon-possessed, as an illustration of the effects of sin, and the transforming power of the Gospel.
- 3) The Lord's rejection by the multitudes.
- 4) The desire and the mission of the man the Lord had delivered.

ONE NEED UPON ANOTHER

Mark 5:21-43

Intro: (Read the text.)

This comes in a series of miracles that were performed by the Lord Jesus:

1) The stilling of the storm in the last part of chapter 4.

2) The deliverance of the demon-possessed man in 5:1-20.

And now we come to two that are woven together: the healing of a woman who had been bleeding for twelve years, and the daughter of the ruler of a synagogue who was sick and died before the Lord could get to her.

All of these were the effect of sin. This is one point that ties them all together. It should make us hate sin, and long for the day when sin and sickness will be no more.

All of these works of the Lord were done on cases that were humanly impossible. (Explain.)

In the first miracle the Lord rebuked the disciples because they had “no faith.” In the second, faith was not an issue. The Lord came upon the demon-possessed man, and delivered him. But it seems clear that the man came to faith in the Lord. In these third and fourth miracles faith definitely was an issue. There was a story behind both of these cases which is not given to us, a story which made the ruler of the synagogue and the woman with the issue of blood.

These last two probably illustrate what had happened to the Lord Jesus on many occasions – He would start to help one, and then be interrupted by someone else. In fact, it seems that this was probably the reason that Mark and Matthew and Luke chose to tell these particular incidents. It ought to remind us of the case of the illness of Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha. Only in that case, the Lord deliberately delayed going to the home of these three people that He loved until Lazarus had died. Time is very, very important when one is seriously ill. The point I am making is this: if the Lord had not been delayed by the sick woman, He might have gotten to the home of the little girl before she died. There must have been a frantic feeling in the heart of Jairus when the Lord was delayed.

When we think of this woman who had been sick for twelve years, we are probably talking about a woman who really looked sick. She probably had lost a lot of weight. She was weakened, terribly weakened by her ordeal, and it was nothing short of amazing that she was able to go where the Lord Jesus was. But she probably was strengthened by the possibility that the Lord could heal her. She had no money to pay Him. She had spent all that she trying to get well, but the doctors of her day had not been able to help her. And so we must assume that over those twelve years that she had been sick, she gradually got worse and worse. But she was so convinced that the Lord could help her, that she didn't feel that she had to call upon Him, just touch His garment. And when she did, she was healed immediately – and she knew it!

She felt that she could touch the Lord's clothing, and then not even have to bother Him at all. But she was terrified when He said, "Who touched my clothes?" This shows that there was a physical effect upon the Lord as He healed people. Fearing what the Lord's question might mean, she came trembling, and fell down before Him, telling Him all that she had done. And you know, she did not tell Him one thing that He did not already know. His eyes are on the just and the unjust. He sees when we sin, and He sees when we trust Him. "All things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13).

The words of the Lord Jesus to her dispelled her fears, and brought her peace. When the Lord said, "Thy faith hath made thee whole," He was recognizing that she had found not only healing for her body, but healing for her soul. And it seems that her soul was healed first.

But then, while the Lord was speaking to the woman, somebody came from Jairus' home, giving the bad news which he had feared would come: "Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further?" He felt that it was too late to do anything for the little twelve year old who had been at the point of death which her father left home to go get the Lord to come to heal her. Now it seemed too late.

But again it was the Lord's word that comforted him: "Be not afraid, only believe."

Why did the Lord take Peter, James, and John with Him. It was, as with the case on the mount of transfiguration that they might be a threefold witness to what had happened. And this mention of the three gives some

credence to the fact that Mark got most of his information from the Apostle Peter.

When the Lord said in Aramaic, Talitha cumi, it can be translated as “Little girl, arise.” Or some grammarians say that it means, “Little lamb, arise.” This gives us some insight into where this little twelve year old girl stood with the Lord. So at least the father and his little girl had true saving faith. But we must recognize that before the little girl could hear, the Lord had already restored her to life.

The lady in this story with the issue of blood had gotten sick the same year that this little girl was born. The Lord had told the former demon possessed man to tell what had happened to him; here he charged the parents at least, not to tell. The Lord was not seeking notoriety by doing things that had never been done before. The message of the Gospel is not to be spread that way. It is enough for us to see that in this case we see how circumstances, and obviously the work of the Spirit of God, were sufficient to bring at least these three to the Savior.

So all of the glory is to be given to the Savior. He came to do the Father’s will, and to redeem those whom the Father had given to Him.