

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK  
An Introduction

Intro: This morning we want to get acquainted in a general way with this book of the NT, and the man who wrote it.

Please read it as often as you can--once a week if possible. There is no substitute for reading the Word itself.

I. WHY ARE THERE FOUR GOSPELS?

They certainly are no four Gospels in the sense that we have in them four different messages. Their message is one and the same.

We call the first three Synoptics because they all look at the life of Christ from the same point of view. The Gospel of John stands alone because of its special purpose--to prove that Jesus Christ was the Messiah, the Son of God! The first three plus John do not give us a life of Christ. Thus, the primary reason cannot be biographical.

There seem to be two basic answers to our question:

- A. To indicate the overwhelming importance of Jesus Christ in the Word of God.

We really have no parallel for this in the Scriptures--four books devoted to the life of one Man, telling us who He was, where and how He lived, what He did, and what He taught!

Thus, this fact, plus the emphasis that is made in every other book of the Bible--both OT and NT--indicate that WITHOUT ANY QUESTION THE MOST IMPORTANT PERSON IN ALL OF THE BIBLE IS THE LORD JESUS GREAT. He is:

- greater than Abraham,
- greater than Moses,
- greater than David,
- greater than any of the Apostles of the NT.

- B. To present the Lord Jesus Christ to different groups in different ways.

The Gospel of Mark has two distinctions:

- 1) It is the first to be written. Tradition indicates this very strongly.
- 2) It is the shortest to be written. Luke is the longest, Matthew second, John third, and then Mark.

Matthew and John were apostles. Their information is

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obviously was firsthand.

We have no indication in Scripture that either Mark or Luke ever saw the Lord. Therefore, their information is secondhand.

HOWEVER, WE MUST REMEMBER THAT THE AUTHORITY OF EACH RESTS ULTIMATELY UPON THE FACT THAT THEIR WRITINGS WERE INSPIRED OF GOD!

Luke's Gospel was written after much personal research. As one reads Luke's account of the life and ministry of Christ we cannot **forget** that he was a close companion of the Apostle Paul.

Mark knew both Paul and Peter.

He is mentioned in 1 Pet. 5:13 as Peter's "son." This means that he had something of the same relationship with Peter that Timothy had with Paul--he had either been led to the Lord by Peter, or Peter had been a great help to him in his spiritual life!

From these different backgrounds, from the contents of the four Gospels, and from Church history we learn that:

- 1) Mark wrote for the Romans. Cf. Romans by Paul for a parallel. *He prob. wrote in Rome c. 50 A.D.*
- 2) Matthew wrote for the Jews.
- 3) Luke wrote for the Greeks.
- 4) John was not writing for any particular group, but wrote for all men with a special evangelistic emphasis.

Again, the contents of the four Gospels will show us that:

THE BRANCH

CF. JER. 23:15

CF. ZECH. 6:12

CF. ISA. 4:2

CF. ZECH. 2:8

- 1) Matthew presents Christ <sup>as</sup> ~~the~~ King of the Jews.
- 2) Luke presents the humanity of Christ. In Luke's Gospel He is the Son of man.
- 3) John presents Christ in His Deity--as the Son of God.
- 4) MARK PRESENTS CHRIST AS ISAIAH PRESENTS HIM IN THE OT--AS THE SUFFERING SERVANT.

## II. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS OF MARK'S GOSPEL?

A. Proportionately, Mark records less of the teachings of Christ than any of the other Gospel writers. It is clear that this is not his main emphasis.

B. There is no genealogy in Mark, <sup>nor any record of his early life,</sup> nor is there in the Gospel of John. This would be of no concern to the Romans.

MARK "STRESSED FACTS RATHER THAN THEMES OR TOPICS" (TENNEY, 156). SEE II. IN OUTLINE.

They would be impressed by the contrasts, presented so well by Mark, between the greatness of our Lord as a Servant, and His lowliness.

- C. Action and brevity characterize Mark's Gospel. The words, immediately, straightway, forthwith, are found more often in Mark than in any of the other Gospels.

MARK EVIDENTLY WAS WRITING FOR THOSE WHO KNEW VERY LITTLE. THEREFORE, THE NEED TO BE SIMPLE AND BRIEF.

Mark is not known for his great detail. He actually includes little not included in the other Gospels--less than 10% of his entire book. We will notice these passages that are found only in Mark as we go through the book. Graham Scroggie points out only 67 verses.

- D. Special things which indicate that the readers were Gentiles:

1. Aramaic expressions are translated.
2. Jewish customs are explained.
3. Latin expressions are used.

### III. THE OUTLINE.

The plan of the Gospel seems quite clear:

- I. Introduction (1:1-13). Here we find the theme (v. 1) and the preparation for our Lord's public ministry in (1) the ministry of John, (2) our Lord's baptism, and (3) the temptation.
- II. The Record of the Lord's Public Ministry (1:14-8:26). This leads up to an emphasis on our Lord as a Person, and leads into His Passion. The main point in this section seems to show what the Lord did, what He taught, and the effect that it had upon the people who saw, heard, and/or were helped by Him.
- III. The Transition (8:27-38). Here the Lord checks regarding what men were saying about Him as a Person-- and then what His disciples thought.  
From this point He "began to teach them" about His sufferings in Jerusalem.
- IV. The Glory and Greatness of the Lord (9:1-13:37). This begins with His transfiguration and concludes with His second coming in glory. There is an emphasis here on identifying Him as a Person.
- V. The Suffering and Death of Christ (14:1-15:47).
- VI. The Resurrection and Ascension of Christ (16:1-20).

- IV. THE REFERENCES TO MARK IN THE NT. He is mentioned in only 7 chapters, but not at all in the Gospel which bears his name.

- A. Acts 12:12, 25. The first of these has to do with the prayer meeting which was held in his mother's house when

NOT MENTIONED IN THE GOSPEL(S). BUT POSSIBLY MLC. 14: 51, 52 IS A REF. TO HIM - ONLY HERE IN NT.

Peter was in prison; the second tells that John Mark accompanied Barnabas and Saul (the Apostle Paul) to Antioch.

- B. Acts 13:5, 13. John Mark stayed with Paul and Barnabas until they went to Perga, then he returned to Jerusalem.
- C. Acts 15:37, 39. On their second journey Barnabas wanted to take John Mark with them, but Paul refused. The result was that Paul and Barnabas parted company--Paul taking Silas; Barnabas, John Mark.
- D. Col. 4:10 and Ph. 24 can be taken together. They show that the rift between Paul and John Mark had been healed and that Mark was with Paul in Rome during Paul's first imprisonment there.
- E. The last mention is in 2 Tim. 4:11. What a commendation for John Mark! "For he is profitable to me for the ministry." It shows evidence of his spiritual growth and the effectiveness of a life which doubtless continued after the martyrdom of the Apostle Paul.

Conclusion: No more wonderful Person ever lived. No one ever spoke as He did. The miracles He performed will forever stand as witnesses to His Deity.

It is our high honor and privilege to be able to sit at the feet of John Mark to learn what he has to tell us about the Lord Jesus Christ, remembering that much that he knew had been taught to him by the Apostle Peter.

Let us read this Gospel again and again to become better acquainted with our Lord that we may love Him more and trust Him more and seek to live only for His glory.

CB - 1/9/72 a.m.

## THE BEGINNING OF THE GOSPEL

MARK 1:1-13

Intro: Reading time - 1 1/2 hours.

Outline:  
of the Gospel

- I. Intro (1:1-13)
- II. The Lord's Ministry - Emph. on what He did + taught (1:14-8:26).
- III. The Lord's Ministry - an ~~eclectic~~ (8:27-38). Who is He?  
Here we hear first about His sufferings, death, + resurrection.
- IV. The Lord's Ministry - emph. on the GLORY of His Person (9:1-13:37).
- V. His Prep. for Death (14:1-42)
- VI. His Arrest, Trial, Suffering, and Death (14:43-15:47).
- VII. His Resurrection + Ascension (16:1-20).

In Mark we have:

- 1) no genealogy
- 2) nothing about the birth of John the Baptist.
- 3) " " " " Christ
- 4) " " " shepherds
- 5) " " " wise men
- 6) " " " flight into Egypt.
- 7) " " our Lord in the Temple at 12.
- 8) " " His years before He was 30.

Apparently these things were known. At least they did not fit into Mark's purpose for writing this Gospel.

## I. THE THEME (1:1).

Note each word carefully

- 1) "The gospel of Jesus Christ" - not by Him, but about Him. Good news!
- 2) "Jesus" - His name.
- 3) "Christ" - His office, His title.
- 4) "The son of God" - His equality in nature with the Father; therefore, His Deity.

Why "the beginning"?

- 1) First, because it actually starts with John's ministry. This is the beginning of the fulfillment of all <sup>the</sup> OT promises.
- 2) Second, because it marks a start toward an end, a goal. Cf. Acts 1:1.

## II. THE MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST (1:2-8).

### A. THE OT QUOTATIONS (1:2,3).

v. 2 is from Mal. 3:1a; v. 3 is from Isa. 40:3.

The one + only time Mark introduces an OT quotation.

Note what it signifies about John's ministry - "my messenger... prepare... voice... wilderness... Prepare."

It speaks of royalty coming

### B. THE <sup>NATURE AND</sup> EFFECTIVENESS OF JOHN'S MINISTRY (1:4).

He was a baptizer. His work was spiritual, having to do with sin, repentance, forgiveness - and testimony!

It had to do with Israel.

They went out to him. NOTE: The evidence of spiritual hunger with the people..

### C. THE HUMILITY OF JOHN (1:6-8).

1. In ~~the~~ his dress (1:6).
2. In his preaching (1:7,8).

He was not worthy to be the household servant of our Lord.

He could do nothing compared with what the Lord could do - in meeting the needs of people. His ministry was nothing without Christ's!

HOW NECESSARY TO BE REMINDED OF THIS AS WE BEGIN TO LOOK AT HIS EARTHLY LIFE!

There is no familiarity here!

NOTE: The first ref to the Holy Spirit in v. 8 - followed by vv. 10, 12.

ONLY GOT THIS  
FAR - 1/9/12

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

We have none of the <sup>extended</sup> detail given here that is found in the other Gospels. But what an impact Mark's brevity makes. FROM WHAT HAS PRECEDED, AND FROM WHAT FOLLOWS, WE CAN HARDLY BELIEVE WHAT WE READ HERE. Why should this be?

- NOTE: 1) The anointing by the Spirit (Luke 4, Isa. 61).  
2) The testimony of the Father

### IV. THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS (1:12,13).

NOTE: "Driveth Him" - our Lord was led by the Spirit with a force He could not resist. He was compelled!

Why?

Desired to be shown sinless and impeccable. How important this is for the following account! How unhesitating, yes, even eager,

is the Holy Spirit to expose our Lord to  
the worst that Satan (not his demons) has.  
"And the angels ministered unto Him."

Concl: Mark does not argue the existence  
of Satan, or angels, nor does he seek  
to prove Mal. or Isa. He just declares them  
for the record, as a foundation for all that  
is to follow - evidently trusting the Lord to  
use the Inte.

Cf. 1 Tim 3:16.



JESUS CHRIST--BAPTIZED AND TEMPTED

Mark 1:9-13 P.P. <sup>MATT. 3:13-4:1-11</sup>  
<sup>LUKE 3:21-23a, 4:1-13</sup>  
<sup>JOHN 1:29-34</sup>

Intro: As John Mark begins his Gospel he makes it very clear that his theme is good news about Jesus Christ.

It is good that he says this in v. 1 because otherwise we might think as we get to v. 2 that he is writing about John the Baptist.

We cannot help but be attracted to John the Baptist for several reasons:

- 1) His coming was actually prophesied by 2 OT prophets: Isaiah and Malachi.
- 2) The message he preached and its effectiveness.
- 3) The simplicity of his life (i.e., where he lived and preached, what he wore, what he ate, etc.).
- 4) His humility, as reflected in his attitude toward the Lord.

If John Mark does anything to put the Lord Jesus Christ into His proper place it is by starting out with John and Baptist so we can see the contrast!

In coming to v. 9 this morning we need to notice a few facts which we find in the other Gospels. THIS IS THE LORD'S FIRST APPEARANCE IN PUBLIC SINCE HE WAS TWELVE YEARS OF AGE. HE IS NOW THIRTY. Cf. Luke 3:23a,

"And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age."

FROM THIS TIME ON HE IS HARDLY EVER OUT OF THE PUBLIC EYE.

Let us notice carefully the fact succession of events which Mark records for us here. Mark's brevity tends to make them even more emphatic! There are six particular things, all involving the Lord, and in each case involving others also.

The first three happened at the baptism, but we will look at them separately.

I. THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST (v. 9).

Mark is the only one who says he came from Nazareth.

What is the significance of his baptism? Two things stand out:

- A. He obviously is being identified with those who came to John the Baptist "confessing their sins." See v. 5.

If we did not know Who He is, we might feel that this was the case. But, as we go through the Gospel we find that, though He was a man, He was vastly different from

any person of His day. In fact, He is different from any person who ever lived--before or since!

ALL FOUR GOSPELS HAVE THEIR DIFFERENCES AS TO THE DETAILS WHICH THEY INCLUDE, BUT THEY ARE ALL IN AGREEMENT ON ONE POINT: JESUS CHRIST WAS NOT A SINNER!

Why then was He baptized? Note Matt. 3:13-15. Here we have a picture of the depths to which the Lord would have to go in order to deliver sinners from their sins. Cf. Isa. 53:6; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13; 1 Pet. 2:24; Rom. 8:3, "For what the law could not do . . ."

See also Phil. 2:5-8.

The baptism, with its picture of death, burial, and resurrection, points ahead to the Cross. There could be no Gospel without this!

After seeing this, what else did the baptism mean?

B. It placed our Lord's approval on the ministry of John.

John believed that man's greatest problem was that he was a sinner!

He also believed that sins had to be forgiven--and that God was the only One who could forgive them.

He believed that men had to acknowledge that they were sinners (this is the meaning in part of confession), but he also believed that true confession meant forsaking their sin.

He believed that sins could be forgiven, and he came preaching repentance to prepare the way for the Lord who was coming after him!

OUR LORD PUTS THE STAMP OF HIS FULL APPROVAL UPON THIS MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST!

How different this was from our Lord's attitude toward the religious leaders of Israel!

## II. OUR LORD'S ANOINTING BY THE HOLY SPIRIT (v. 10).

Do you remember His reading a short time later in the synagogue in Nazareth? Cf. Luke 4:16-20.

As a man, it seems that our Lord performed all of His miracles in the power of the Spirit. It was evidence, as Nicodemus said, that God was with Him. Cf. John 3:2.

But, why did the Holy Spirit come "like a dove"? What does the Word of God have to say about doves?

- 1) Doves indicate purity. Cf. Gen. 8:11. Also S. of Sol. 6:9, "My dove, my undefiled, is but one."
- 2) Doves speak of meekness. Cf. S. of Sol. 2:14,  
"O my dove, who art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice . . ."
- 3) Doves picture beauty. The last part of the verse above is, "For sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." See also S. of Sol. 5:12,  
"His eyes are like the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set."
- 4) Doves are harmless. Cf. Matt. 10:16, "Wise as serpents, harmless as doves."
- 5) Doves mourn; they can be grieved. Cf. Isa. 59:11,  
"We roar all like bears, and mourn greatly like doves."

All of these are characteristics of the Holy Spirit, but they are also characteristics which we can expect to see in the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ.

### III. THE FATHER'S VOICE FROM HEAVEN (v. 11).

As the descent of the Spirit indicates the approval of the Holy Spirit, SO NOW WE HAVE THE FULL, UNQUALIFIED APPROVAL OF THE SON BY THE FATHER.

"Son" indicates equality in nature.

"Beloved" speaks of the great affection the Father has for the Son. There never has been a higher use of this word.

"In whom I am well pleased." This is a past tense in the original, and one authority (Lenski, p. 53) translates it, "In whom I was well pleased . . . in choosing Him." When the choice was made in eternity past that the eternal Son should be the Redeemer, God was completely satisfied with the choice--and now declares His complete approval.

GOD FINDS ALL OF HIS DELIGHT IN HIS SON. Nothing could be more important in relation to the Gospel!

### IV. THE SPIRIT'S PART IN THE TEMPTATION OF THE LORD JESUS (v. 12).

If we were compiling the unusual verses of Scripture, this verse would have to be on the list.

First, we need to determine what the purpose was for the temptation of the Lord Jesus Christ. As far as Satan, and

and possibly angels, and men were concerned, IT WAS TO SEE IF HE WOULD SIN. From the Spirit's point of view, it was to show THAT HE COULD NOT SIN.

Satan knew that God cannot sin; He did not know what effect the incarnation had had upon our Lord.

The Spirit of God is so anxious to show what the outcome would be, even before our Lord began His public ministry, that He compelled the Lord to go into the wilderness, or desert, and He did it with a force that our Lord could not resist. Cf. Thayer, p. 193. The Holy Spirit had absolutely no doubt as to what our Lord would do.

Contrast all of this with Jas. 1:13.

V. THE TEMPTATION BY SATAN (v. 13a).

"Satan" means adversary. He was the Lord's adversary, and he is ours. Mark makes it clear that our Lord's temptation was not just for a day or so, but for "forty days."

And, to add terror to it, Satan saw to it that "the wild beasts" were there.

Satan had an opportunity to do everything that he could do. One thing is certain. Jesus Christ did not sin. HOW IMPORTANT THIS IS WITH RESPECT TO THE GOSPEL! If Jesus Christ ever sinned, there is no Gospel!

Thank God, though His enemies had every chance to produce the evidence that He was a sinner, NO EVIDENCE WAS EVER FOUND BECAUSE THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE! cf. John 14:30.

CF. HEB. 4:15, 16, FOR WE HAVE NOT AN HIGH PRIEST WHICH CANNOT...

VI. THE MINISTRY OF ANGELS (v. 13b). "Seen of angels" - 1 Tim. 5:16.

He was fed with food provided by angels, as Elijah was! Cf. 1 Kings 19:5-8.

Were these some of the same angels, or the very same, who sang, "Glory to God in the highest . . ."?

The angels were there. They saw what went on. They knew the results. And, with great joy as to the outcome, they "ministered unto him."

Concl: This ends John Mark's introduction. What a wealth of truth we have here concerning our Lord Jesus Christ-- truth illustrated and confirmed in hundreds of ways in all that follows. Here are the roots of all that follows--the beginnings of the beginning. Here we are introduced to Him. We see why He came, and that not even Satan with 40 days to work could defile what God was doing through His Son!

FISHERS OF MEN FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD  
Mark 1:14-20

Intro: With v. 14 John Mark's record of the public ministry of our Lord begins.

The first 13 verses are introductory and preparatory. They show the uniqueness and superiority of the Lord Jesus Christ by placing Him along side of one of the greatest, if not the greatest, preacher who ever lived!

But John's place in history was clearly to prepare men for the coming of the Lord. Even the prophecies of Isaiah and Malachi indicated this. John's own ministry proved it.

Probably about a year (maybe as much as a year and a half) come between vv. 13 and 14. Inserted here we must place the events record by the Apostle John in John 1:35-4:43.

From John we learn that Andrew and probably John, with possibly the addition of Peter and James, were disciples of John the Baptist before they became disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Also, from such verses as John 2:2, 12; 3:22; 4:2, 8 we know that the Lord had those who were His "disciples" prior to the call of Peter and Andrew and James and John. They may have been included among those "disciples," but here we have the record of the Lord calling them from what they had been doing into a special ministry with Him: fishing for men!

So, it is important to realize that this was not as abrupt as it might seem if we only had the Gospel according to John Mark.

But before we look at that, let us look at

I. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AS A PREACHER (Mark 1:14, 15).

Note: He appears first, not as a worker of miracles, but as a preacher!

The Lord Jesus had been in Judea. John tells us this. Now we find Him in Galilee--probably because already the opposition to His ministry made it unwise to minister in or near Jerusalem.

The beginning of His work is indicated by the imprisonment of John the Baptist. Mark will tell us more about in ch. 6. This marks the end of John's ministry

Mark tells us what our Lord preached, and briefly summarizes the content of His message.

He preached "the Gospel of God." (There is better textual evidence for this than to include "of the kingdom.") This is good news--

- which had God as its Author,
- which came from God,
- which God had sent to man.

The basic truths in that message are fourfold:

- 1) "The time is fulfilled." The period of waiting, with divinely appointed limits, had been completed. All that the OT had anticipated was now being fulfilled with the appearance of our Lord.
- 2) "The kingdom of God is at hand." Lit., it has come, it is here!

This term, kingdom, is one of the most interesting and most important words in the Bible. It goes back to David and to Daniel in the OT. It reaches into the future as Israel awaits the establishment of the Millennial and then eternal reign of our Lord Jesus Christ. But let us be careful not to miss its primary meaning! Cf. Mark 10:23-26.

HERE OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST IS THINKING ABOUT THE SALVATION OF MEN!

What is necessary to enter in?

- 3) "Repent." This was John's word. It is a word which indicates that--
  - a person recognizes that he is a sinner.
  - that persons hates and wants to forsake his sin.
  - he therefore sets out to live a different life.

THIS WORD IS ALWAYS INVOLVED IN THE NEXT WORD. BUT IT IS POSSIBLE TO "REPENT" AND YET NOT TO

- 4) "Believe"--a new word. It is not new to the Bible, but new, and to become increasingly important throughout the ministry of our Lord, and afterwards.

Our Lord had spoken to Nicodemus about this.

He had emphasized it with the woman of Samaria in a different way, but it was there.

It is not doing something for God, but IT IS PUTTING YOUR TRUST IN GOD SO THAT HE CAN DO SOMETHING FOR YOU!

Mark says not merely to believe the Gospel, but to believe IN the Gospel. There is a difference.

The Gospel becomes clearer as we go along, but this basically was the message of our Lord, and the message of the Apostles who ministered after Him.

However, the Lord did not come to live forever and to be the only preacher. He had come to die, and His life was going to be very short. Therefore, He would call men to learn this message, to preach it, and to carry this message out to the nations of the earth.

And so we have . . .

## II. THE CALL OF THE FIRST APOSTLES (Mark 1:16-20).

We have already seen that this was not the first time that our Lord had met these men. IT IS IMPORTANT TO REALIZE THAT THEY ALREADY KNEW HIM AS THEIR SAVIOR. GOD DOES NOT CALL MEN TO SERVE HIM UNLESS THEY DO KNOW HIM.

Cf. Luke 5:1-11 as coming in here. Also Matt. 4:18-22.

The Lord had been watching Peter and Andrew. He noticed that they were, lit., casting their nets first on one side of the ship and then on the other.

He gave them a call, consisting of two parts: a command and a promise.

## 1) "Come after me."

They were not volunteering. The Lord was calling. The choice was His, not theirs.

It was not primary a call to leave something (although that was involved), but it was a call to be with the Lord. Cf. Mark 3:14. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST WAS TO BE THE ONE UPON WHOM THEIR AFFECTION AND THEIR ATTENTION WAS TO BE PLACED.

## 2) "And I will make you to become fishers of men."

He was going to make them what they were not at this time.

His words indicate that this will take time--that it would be a long, slow process.

This promise guarantees that the Lord will do what He sets out to do.

The one thing which probably none of them noticed at this time--IT WAS NOT JUST A PROMISE FOR ISRAEL, BUT FOR "MEN," ALL MEN WHEREEVER AND WHOEVER THEY MIGHT BE!

In v. 20 James and John were given the same call.

The response of all 4 men was the same, and immediate. The pull upon their hearts toward the Lord was greater than any other attraction in their lives.

Before we conclude this morning let us notice what these four men were doing when the Lord called them:

## 1) Simon and Andrew was fishing.

## 2) James and John were mending their nets.

The second must always precede the first. The nets have to be in good order if fish are going to be caught.

The word, "mending," is a word which Peter used years later when he wrote his first epistle. What memories it must have brought back, and how it must have re-emphasized with him that which was always necessary if we are to be used to reach others with the Gospel. See it in 1 Peter 5:10:

"But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after ye have suffered awhile, (himself) make you perfect (like mending a net), strengthen, settle you."

There is no need to talk about winning others to the Lord, of evangelism, of missions, unless our lives are in order. This is the greatest hindrance in the ministry of the Gospel: broken nets.

There is nothing wrong with the Gospel. There never has been anything wrong with it, and there never will be!.

The world still has its same need, and there are those in the world who are tired of their sin, who are trying and trying to change--and failing. No one has ever told them of the Savior. Perhaps some are even praying like Cornelius did in Acts 10.

Are our lives in order? Only the Lord can do that for us. It will take time. It requires growth. But, if we will set our affections on Him and be with Him, He will make us, too, fishers of men.

Concl: A word of warning: THE LORD DOES NOT DEAL WITH ALL OF US IN THE SAME WAY. HE MAY NOT WANT YOU TO LEAVE YOUR NETS, BUT WE CAN BE SURE THAT, IN WHATEVER OUR SPHERE OF LIFE MAY BE, HE WANTS TO MAKE US FISHERS OF MEN.

We do not learn how from the world!

Even the desire, the burden, does not come from our own hearts, nor does it arise just from our contact with people in the world. IT ARISES OUT OF OUR FELLOWSHIP WITH THE LORD, OUR TIME WITH HIM, AND IS THE RESULT OF WHAT HE DOES IN OUR HEARTS, PREPARING US AND BURDENING US TO REACH MEN WITH THE GOOD NEWS THAT HAS COME FROM GOD.

May our response be like that of Peter and Andrew and James and John!



IN THE SYNAGOGUE AT CAPERNAUM  
Mark 1:21-28

Intro: We have already learned two things about the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ:

- 1) He was preaching, preaching a message called, "the Gospel of God." It was a message which had to do with the forgiveness of sins.
- 2) He has, at this point, specifically called four men to join Him in His work. They were to be with Him, and He promised to make them "fishers of men."

This morning we are to learn two other things about our Lord:

- 1) That He was a teacher as well as a preacher--a teacher of the Scriptures.
- 2) That He could perform miracles. The outstanding thing about the first miracle recorded by John Mark is that it shows a) our Lord's conflict with demonic powers, and b) His superiority over them.

Before we proceed with these two incidents, we need to get acquainted with

I. CERTAIN NAMES AND TERMS WHICH WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND.

A. Capernaum.

This was a city right on the sea of Galilee. One thing which had prompted the Lord to come here was that He had been asked to leave Nazareth. Cf. Luke 4:16, 28-31.

This has been called His second home. He made it his headquarters for His Galilean ministry.

It is mentioned only three times in Mark. Cf. here, 2:1; 9:33.

The account in vv. 23-26 may indicate that this was a stronghold of Satanic activity. Perhaps this is one reason the Lord came here. At any rate, He later spoke the words of the most solemn judgment over this city. Cf. Matt. 11:23, 24,

"And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hades; for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee."

This helps us to understand Capernaum.

## B. The sabbath day.

This was Saturday, the seventh day of the week, the day in which the Jews were to do no work. It was their day of worship.

The Jews were required by the Mosaic Law to observe it faithfully. How this day was to be observed became one of the main reasons for the contention the Lord had with the scribes and the Pharisees.

In the study of the Word of God it must not be confused with Sunday, which is the Lord's day--the day which has been observed from the early days of the Church, commemorating the resurrection of Christ.

## C. The syna//gogue.

There is no Biblical basis for the founding of the syna//gogue. It evidently began at the time of the exile. There were syna//gogues in all of the larger cities, and often more than one in the largest cities.

The Jews met in the synagogues three days during the week: Monday, Thursday, and Saturday (especially).

It was primarily a place for teaching.

The services were made up of reading the Scriptures in the Hebrew language. A specific section from the Law was always read; the reader was free to choose a section from the Prophets. The Law was divided into 154 sections so that it could be read through in 3 years.

The synagogue was under the direction of a "ruler." Any Jew of age could read, and was free to make comments about his reading. Our Lord took advantage of this to get a hearing among the Jews. The Apostles, noticably the Apostle Paul, also used this method of reaching his own people.

Both men and women attended the synagogue, but the men would sit on one side, and the women on the other.

## D. The scribes.

Like the synagogue, they also seem to have developed out of the exile.

They made copies of the Law, but primarily they were the teachers. During our Lord's time they were called rabbi's. The Pharisees arose from them. They were very

positive and dogmatic, but unconvincing! They had more head than heart, and were as concerned about tradition possibly, more so) as well as with the Scriptures.

They were the main foes of our Lord Jesus Christ.

— From this now we can look at

## II. OUR LORD AS A TEACHER (Mark 1:21, 22).

Since Mark does not tell us here what He was teaching, it seems that he is telling us about the manner of our Lord's teaching.

This is not to minimize His message at all. But there was plainly an authority about what He said so that the people who heard Him "were astonished at his doctrine," i.e., they sat with such rapt attention it was like someone had hit them with something so that they were unable to move!

The people recognized immediately a difference between their regular teachers and the Lord. He spoke with authority. His words were convincing. They sat listening with fear and wonder and joy.

There has never been a great teacher than our Lord. Those who teach do well to study carefully His manner as well as His messages.

Again we see our Lord as superior to all others--as in the earlier parts of this chapter.

If Mark got most of his information from Peter, can you picture Peter and Mark together as Peter was telling him about that sabbath in the synagogue in Capernaum?

## III. OUR LORD AS A WORKER OF MIRACLES (Mark 1:23-26).

Thayer points out that there are 23 passages in the Gospels where demons are called unclean spirits. (Remember that there is only one Devil, but many demons. "Devils" is an unfortunate translation in the AV.) They are called "unclean" because:

- 1) They are utterly alienated from God.
- 2) They themselves are morally impure.
- 3) The effect they have on men is to degrade and defile anyone who is under their power.

— Note that it is not the demonized man who is talking to the Lord, but the demon himself. His words are very instructive!

- 1) He shows that he is afraid of the Lord.
- 2) He knows that at some time he is going to be judged by the Lord.

- 3) He knows who the Lord is, and wants to have nothing to do with Him.

The expression, "Jesus of Nazareth," indicates, Why don't you go back where you belong?

Why did the Lord silence the demon, and then cast him out of the man?  
(cf. v. 24)

There are probably many answers to this question. Often the Lord silenced men as well as demons. Two should be adequate for us this morning:

- 1) The Lord wanted to make it very clear that He and the demons were not on the same team. Redeemed fisherman could work with Him, but not demons! How important this was in view of the charge that was to be leveled at Him later that He cast out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of the demons. Cf. Mark 3:22 ff.
- 2) The Lord wanted those present to realize that He does not accept the testimony of demons, even when they are telling the truth, because basically they are liars.  
Cf. on this subject, John 5:33-47.

#### IV. THE RESULTS (Mark 1:27, 28).

There was amazement. There was discussion. The people were convinced that what they had seen was genuine. The report spread rapidly throughout all Galilee. BUT THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT ANYONE PUT HIS FAITH IN THE LORD TO SAVE HIM!

Concl: We are not reading things that were done before only one or two, but things which which hundreds of people saw-- not just once, but many times. And they saw many other miracles which the Lord performed, and ~~at~~ many other times He taught the people as no one else had ever taught them.

Where at any period in history do you find anyone who spoke as our Lord spoke, or did what He did by way of miraculous works?

This should all strengthen the faith of those who have trusted the Lord as Savior, BUT, OH, THAT IT MIGHT CAUSE OTHERS TO TURN IN FAITH TO HIM THAT THEIR SINS MIGHT BE FORGIVEN AS THE LORD BECOMES THEIR SAVIOR AND FRIEND!

FROM CAPERNAUM INTO ALL GALILEE  
Mark 1:29-39

Intro: As we come to v. 29, we must remember that it is still  
the Sabbath--the account of the day actually begins in  
v. 21.

We continue to be in the same Sabbath Day down through v. 34.  
It is important to notice this.

In order to get the import of this passage we must also remember  
the nature of the call which our Lord gave to Peter and Andrew  
and James and John. It was, "Follow me, and I will make you  
become fishers of men." Cf. v. 17.

The Lord is not only displaying His power for the glory of the  
Father, and meeting the needs of the people who came early and  
later to be helped by Him, BUT HE WAS TRAINING HIS DISCIPLES.  
One of the major points of importance in our passage this morn-  
ing is to see what the disciples were to learn from these exper-  
iences which would help them in their own lives, and prepare  
them for the ministry which was ahead.

We can see four divisions from v. 29 down through v. 39.

I. THE HEALING OF SIMON PETER'S MOTHER-IN-LAW (Mark 1:29-31).

This incident was very important because it is recorded in  
Matthew and Luke as well as Mark.

When you put the three records together you get certain  
details that you do not get when you read just one.

It seems that the Lord may have initially asked about her.  
Simon was glad to tell Him because his mother-in-law evi-  
dently was very sick, and had been sick for some time. She  
was burning with a fever.

We find the disciples doing what they would do many, many  
times in the future: "And straightway they tell him of her."

NOW--just read v. 31 and think about the impression that you  
get immediately from the verse. Is it not something like  
this? YOU ARE IMMEDIATELY STRUCK WITH THE EASE, THE COMPLETE-  
NESS, AND SPEED WITH WHICH OUR LORD MET THIS NEED.

Here was a need which Peter's mother-in-law could not meet  
for herself. Peter could do nothing about it. Neither could  
all four of these disciples with their combined strength!  
BUT THE LORD JESUS DID IT ALMOST QUICKER THAN IT TAKES TO  
TELL IT--CERTAINLY QUICKER THAN JOHN MARK COULD PUT IT DOWN  
IN WRITING!

Note especially the words, "And immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them." YOU JUST DO NOT GET UP FROM BED AFTER YOU HAVE HAD A HIGH FEVER FOR DAYS, AND GET DINNER!

But Simon's mother-in-law did!

What an illustration of the truth found in Mark 10:27:

"With men it is impossible, but not with God; FOR WITH GOD ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE."

The disciples were helpless, not only to meet the needs of the people of the city but, to meet the needs right in their own homes. BUT, OH, HOW EASY IT WAS FOR THE LORD JESUS!

Ill. Gary, when Toby was killed.

## II. JESUS' MINISTRY TO THE CROWDS WHO CAME TO HIM THAT NIGHT (Mark 1:32-34).

Why does Mark write, "And in the evening, when the sun did set"?

Because he wants us to know that the people waited until the Sabbath was over before they brought the sick and demon-possessed to the Lord.

What a commentary on Judaism in that day--that people must wait to bring their needs to the Lord for help!

Try to picture this crowd.

Think of the different physical problems that were out there. Mark says that there were "many," and the Lord healed them "all."

What is the point?

It is this: Regardless of how many people there were, and regardless of what the physical problems were, THE LORD JESUS WAS ABLE TO MEET THE NEED OF EVERY SINGLE PERSON.

Long ago, in Abraham's day, the Lord Himself had asked Abraham, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Cf. Gen. 18:14a.

Make the application to the spiritual needs of the people. Are there cases that are too hard for the Lord?

The disciples needed to learn this.

## III. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AT PRAYER (Mark 1:35).

We must not miss the tremendously important lesson in this verse. Note it carefully.

Amazingly enough, we are reading here, not about Simon or Andrew or James or John but, ABOUT THE LORD.

Mark does not tell us what He said, but simply that He "prayed." AND HE WAS STILL PRAYING WHEN SIMON AND THE OTHERS FOUND HIM.

But notice also WHEN He was praying:

- 1) It was after a very busy day. Most of His work had actually started after the sun had gone down.
- 2) It was very early in the morning. The words, "and in the morning, rising up a great while before day," could be translated, "And in the fourth watch of the night, when it was still very much night."
 

What time was it?

The fourth watch was from 3 to 6 a.m.

Very much night means that it was closer to 3 than it was to 6.
- 3) It was just before another busy time in other places. Cf. vv. 38, 39.

It goes without saying that, if our Lord needed to pray, how much more you and I need it!

Also, if we are to enter with the Lord into His work, prayer must have priority in our lives even when we are busy early and late.

How long did it take for the disciples to learn this lesson? Cf. Mark 9:28, 29.

But the point for us this morning is this: HOW IMPORTANT IS PRAYER TO US?

Is it so important that you pray regardless of how full your life may be?

#### IV. THE LORD'S MINISTRY "THROUGHOUT ALL GALILEE" (Mark 1:38, 39).

If you have read the Gospels you know that Peter is known for his ability to say the wrong thing! HERE IS THE FIRST EXAMPLE. But along with it there is a great lesson for those who would become servants of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Two things are especially important here.

First, Peter must learn that people, regardless of their numbers, and regardless of their enthusiastic response, are not the ones to determine the direction of the Lord's minis-

try--OR OF OURS!

Note the Lord's words, "For therefore came I forth" (v. 38).

This sounds like the Gospel of John. Cf. John 8:42b,  
 "For I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came  
 I of myself, but he sent me."

The mission on which the Father had sent the Son was not just for Capernaum; IT WAS FOR ALL OF ISRAEL, AND FOR ALL OF THE WORLD. Obviously the Lord's times in prayer with the Father helped to keep this purpose before Him as a man.

The Lord may get us to turn from what looks like a great opportunity to one that is completely uncertain, but, whatever, THE SERVANT OF THE LORD MUST GET HIS DIRECTION FROM THE LORD--not just from people!

But secondly . . .

We have an indication here as to what our Lord's primary ministry was. It was twofold:

- 1) It was preaching--the proclamation of the Gospel.
- 2) It was setting men free from Satanic power and dominion!

Have we forgotten our mission today? It is the proclamation of the message of the Book of books! It is NOT the correction of all of the social ills of our day, but it is preparing men to stand one day in the presence of a holy God!

But remember this! We cannot preach the Gospel and see men saved without seeing also a change brought about in their lives. To change men we do not seek to change their surrounding; we seek, by the grace of God, to change their hearts.

Concl: Would you not like to be able to read the thoughts of these men, Simon and Andrew and James and John, who were in training, learning what was involved in joining with the Lord Jesus Christ as "fishers of men"?

God's methods and God's ways have not changed. Therefore, how important it is for us to learn these lessons ourselves. It is only as we allow the Spirit of God to teach us these very same principles that we will be faithful to Him in reaching the people of our day!



A LEPER AND A PRIEST  
Mark 1:40-45

Intro: Cf. also Matt. 8:1-4; Luke 5:12-16.

Mark does not seem to have it in its chronological order, but Matthew does--just after the Sermon on the Mount.

But Mark does not use the word, immediately, here. His variation in the order has to be for another purpose. Mark seems to have selected a variety of miracles performed by our Lord to show the greatness of His power.

Leprosy is mentioned only 2x in Mark: here, and in 14:3, "Simon, the leper."

In Matthew--8:2, 3; 10:8; 11:5; 26:6.

In Luke--4:27; 5:12, 13; 7:22; 17:12. The last is the story of the ten lepers.

John never mentions leprosy, nor is it mentioned in any of the other books of the NT.

The main chapters on leprosy in the OT are Lev. 13, 14.

There are two outstanding lepers in the OT:

- 1) Naaman, the Syrian (2 Kings 5).
- 2) King Uzziah of Judah (2 Kings 15; 2 Chron. 26).

Remember also Moses' leprous hand (Ex. 4:6, 7) and Miriam's leprosy in Num. 12:10-15.

Leprosy is a type of sin.

One of the way the Lord simplifies and illustrates truth is through types which portray the truth. Such as:

- 1) Our Lord's baptism.
- 2) "As Moses lifted up the serpent . . ." (John 3:14, 15).

Leprosy <sup>the</sup> pictures defiling, deforming, fatal character of sin.

This is confirmed by the following:

- 1) Leprosy is discussed in the book of the Bible which discusses what is clean and what is unclean in God's sight.
- 2) The sin offering figured largely in the leper's cleansing, as did both water and blood.
- 3) The very nature of the disease:
  - a) It was contagious, or infectious. A leper could give his leprosy to other people.
  - b) It was defiling and deforming.
  - c) It was incurable, fatal.

d) Its effects were gradual, progressive.

Note: See how all of these details are illustrations of sin.

Now we are ready for this story.

## I. THE LEPER (Mark 1:40).

Some questions:

Who was this man?

How long had he been a leper?

Where was his home?

Was he married?

Did he have children?

Was he disfigured?

What kind of a person had he been before he got the leprosy?

What effect had the disease had on him as a person?

How and when did he first hear of the Lord Jesus?

How had he become so convinced about the power of the Lord to heal him?

Most of these questions have to go unanswered, BUT WE CAN BE SURE THAT THEY HAVE AN ANSWER. Luke gives us a little help when he refers to him as, "a man full of leprosy." Cf. Luke 5:12. This would mean that he had had it quite some time, that it had covered most of his body, and that he was greatly disfigured by the disease.

But v. 40 does tell us a lot.

He was desperate. It was amazing that he came. Matthew reflects the surprise of the people when he writes, "And, behold, there came a leper . . ." (Matt. 8:2).

His desperation is seen also in that he "came . . . beseeching him." He was calling for help, begging for assistance. The Lord was his last and only hope.

Note his humility. He kneeled down before the Lord. Both Matthew and Luke indicate that he prostrated himself before the Lord. Matthew says that he called the Savior, "Lord."

There is no expression to indicate that he felt that he was worthy of help. In fact, we could say that all of the indications point to the fact that he felt completely unworthy.

BUT PERHAPS THE MOST REVEALING THING ABOUT THE CHARACTER AND UNDERSTANDING OF THIS MAN IS TO BE OBSERVED IN WHAT HE SAID: "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean."

To the leper the question was not, Could He? The question was, Would He?

And note: The leper does not ask for healing; he asks for cleansing. This is always the case with leprosy in the Scriptures.

How interesting it is to try to contemplate as to how this leper came to this settled conviction about our Lord! There is no doubt here about the Lord. Lit., If you will, or, if you are willing, you are able to cleanse me.

## II. THE LORD (Mark 1:41).

- A. The effect that this had upon Him. "And Jesus, moved with compassion."

Spurgeon says that this expression in the original language means that the Lord was greatly stirred in every part of His being.

His heart went out in love to this unlovely leper. What a picture of His love for the sinner! Cf. John 3:16; Rom. 5:8--loving the unlovely!

- B. He "put forth his hand, and touched him."

This should not have been done with a leper. It was ceremonially defile the one who touched the leper, and it would run the risk of infection.

But not so with the Lord Jesus.

Sinners never defiled Him; He always cleansed them.

- C. The omnipotent words of the Lord: "I will; be thou clean." These are just two words in the original.

Oh, the power of the word of God! This is all that it took!

## III. THE RESULTS (Mark 1:42-45).

- A. Immediate healing for the leper--"and he was cleansed."

The flesh that was eaten away, the fingers and the toe joints that had dropped off, the raw sores that were spreading over the body were instantly restored sound and whole" (Lenski, p. 92).

He was not only delivered from the disease, but he was even delivered from the effects of the disease.

- B. The commands given to the leper.

Mark wants us to know that the Lord in vv. 43, 44 speaks very solemnly and very forcibly that the leper was NOT to do one thing, but he WAS TO DO another thing:

- 1) He was not to tell anyone what had happened.
- 2) He was to go the priest and offer what Moses had said to offer for the cleansing of a leper--"for a testimony unto them," i.e., the priests.

We can understand why he wanted to tell, but we can also plainly see that the Lord wanted him to be quiet. What a tragedy that he did not obey!

What confusion was spread, and how difficult he made it for others to get to the Lord!

Did he ever get to Jerusalem? Did he ever let the priest see what the Lord had done for him?

We do not know.

Did this cleansed leper ever learn that obedience to the Word must come before anything else--whether we understand it or not?

We do not know.

What do we know? That, in spite of the leper's disobedience . . .

C. The people continued to come.

Just as the Lord had power of the leprosy, so He has power over the leper's disobedience.

Note: Man may hinder and complicate the work of God, BUT HE CAN NEVER STOP IT. The people kept coming.

Concl: Whether you are a child of God, or not, there certainly are many things in this brief account for all of us.

Spiritually are you like this leper? You have given yourself to sin. Oh, it was just little things to begin with, but those things somehow grew. Now you know the tragedy, the heartache, the despair, the ruin that sin brings. You have tried every other remedy, but nothing has helped you. You have heard of Jesus Christ. You have heard others say what He has done for them. He is the only possible hope--and you know it! Will you come, undeserving as you are? He said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37b).

Christian, do you need to be reminded that obedience to the Word must have the greatest priority in your life. Then, and only then can there be the continuation of His blessing!

A PALSIED MAN'S SICKNESS--AND HIS SIN  
Mark 2:1-12

Intro: Out of the 35 miracles recorded in the Gospels, Mark includes 18.

This is #4.

Of the first 4, 3 are recorded in Matthew and Luke as well:

- 1) The healing of Peter's mother-in-law.
- 2) The cleansing of the leper.
- 3) The healing of the palsied, or paralytic, man.

The other 1, the deliverance of the demoniac, is found also in Luke.

John speaks of none of these that we have had so far.

It does not appear that Mark stays with the chronological order of events. He arranges the events in the life of our Lord to fit in with his purpose. ONE CONTRAST WE NOTE BETWEEN CHAPTERS 1 AND 2 IS THAT, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE OPPOSITION EXPRESSED BY THE DEMON IN 1:24, WE COME IN CHAPTER 2 TO THE FIRST OPPOSITION OUR LORD FACED FROM MEN. He was greatly accepted by some, but severely opposed by others!

As we begin chapter 2, we have, first of all,

I. THE TREMENDOUS RESPONSE GIVE TO OUR LORD (Mark 2:1, 2).

He is back in Capernaum, "his own city" (Matthew).

Remember what Simon had told Him in 1:37. The interest in our Lord does not seem to have died down at all.

His home was jammed with people. They were even standing outside around the door until it was impossible for anyone to get in or out!

And, it is important to note that our Lord was teaching them --not healing!

Mark has made it clear that our Lord was both a preacher and a teacher. His preaching was teaching--and you can see here how the people responded.

What a lesson this is for our ministry today!

Next, we see that there was

II. A SUDDEN, UNEXPECTED INTERRUPTION (Mark 2:3, 4).

Four men come carrying a pallet on which was lying a palsied, or better, a paralytic, man. Obviously, he could not walk, and probably he was unable to speak.

Seeking to get in by the door, but finding it blocked, they went up and lit. unroofed the roof. They believed that, if they could only get their friend to the Lord Jesus, the Lord could heal him.

Note that Mark does not record one word that was spoken by any of the men! Actions speak louder than words. BUT WHAT AN EXAMPLE THIS IS OF UNITED, IMPORTUNATE PRAYER. Cf. Matt. 18:19,

"Again I say unto you that if two of you shall agree on earth . . ."

(V. 20 should be included too.)

Think also of Luke 18:7, 8a,

"And shall not God avenge his own elect, who cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily."

### III. OUR LORD'S REACTION TO ALL WHO WERE PRESENT (Mark 2:5-11).

#### A. To the four friends of the paralytic (Mark 2:5a).

This does not mean that the paralytic did not have faith. He must have agreed for them to bring him, and even for them to put him down through the roof. Much had gone on in the heart of this man which is not recorded.

BUT THE LORD, INSTEAD OF BEING IRRITATED BY THE INTERRUPTION, WAS OBVIOUSLY DELIGHTED WITH THE EXPRESSION OF THEIR FAITH IN HIM.

HOW IMPORTANT IT IS THAT WE NOTE THIS! Do you ever think when you pray that you are interrupting Him? He loves for us to come and unroof roofs, if necessary, to get to Him with our burdens and cares.

#### B. To the paralytic (Mark 2:5b).

The Lord addresses Himself to the paralytic's greatest need: his sins which needed to be forgiven! The Lord always puts first things first! "In the Bible no sweeter word meets the sinner's eye" (Lenski, p. 101).

Evidently this man was a paralytic because of his sins. This is not always the case, but it must have been here. Possibly the Lord had spoken to him in many ways before, but he did not listen until the hand of God's judgment fell upon him!

But he comes to the Lord and hears that marvelous word, "forgiven"!

What did our Lord mean by this?

It meant that his sins were dismissed, sent away. The sinner was released from his sins. Cf. Psa. 103:12; Micah 7:10; Heb. 10:17.

And our Lord's expression, "Son," is expressive of the Lord's great love for him--in spite of his sin.

But there were some men present who did not like this, and so we see here also our Lord's reaction

C. To the scribes (Mark 2:6-11).

Is it not amazing that the religious leaders were the ones who needed teaching?

We see evidence of our Lord's Deity here because He knew their very thoughts even though not a word was spoken! Cf. Heb. 4:13; Jer. 17:9, 10; 23:24; John 2:24, 25.

The scribes were right in that only God can forgive sin, but what they did not realize was that the Son of God was standing before them clothed in human flesh!

And so our Lord poses a question to them. See v. 9.

The answer: It is easier to say, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," because no one can really check to find out if they really are forgiven!

But read v. 10: "But that ye may know," i.e., have visible evidence, "that the Son of man hath authority on earth to forgive sins . . ."

Now, let us be very careful to note the connection here between the healing of this man's illness and the forgiveness of his sins. The healing portrays the results of forgiveness. What were the results?

- 1) It was present, not future.
  - 2) It was immediate, not gradual.
  - 3) It was transforming.
- (Apply each to salvation, using John 3:16; 5:24; 20:30, 31; 1 John 3:2a, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God"; 5:12, 13; 2 Cor. 5:17.)

THE LORD TOLD THE PARALYTIC TO DO THREE THINGS WHICH HE COULD NOT HAVE DONE WHEN HE WAS LET DOWN THROUGH THE ROOF, AND HE DID ALL THREE!

And so, finally, in v. 12 we have

IV. THE EFFECTS (Mark 2:12).

- A. Upon the paralytic (Mark 2:12a).
- B. Upon the crowd (Mark 2:12b).

Lit. Mark says that they stood outside of themselves. We would say that they were beside themselves with wonder and amazement. They were practically insane with astonishment! Luke adds that they "were filled with fear" (Luke 5:26).

And then the three Gospel writers report three separate impressions that were stated by the people who were there:

- 1) Mark: "We never saw it on this fashion."
- 2) Matthew: They were amazed at God "who had given such power unto men" (Matt. 9:8).
- 3) Luke: "We have seen strange things today" (Luke 5:26).

Concl: But, did anyone else ask to have his sins forgiven? Any of the scribes? Any of the people?

Nothing is said, is it?

And we might say, How could anyone not come to the Lord seeking His forgiveness after such a display of His power? He proved that as the Son of man He had authority on earth at that very moment to forgive sins. AND YET THERE IS NOT THE RECORD THAT EVEN ONE CAME TO HIM TO BE FORGIVEN!

We say, This is amazing!

Remember Matt. 11:23:

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

But there is something else that is just as amazing!

It is this: How men today, possibly some who are here this morning, can know all that they know about the Bible, and see all of the evidence in the lives of people that the Lord has power to forgive sins and to transform lives, BUT WILL NOT COME TO THE LORD FOR THEMSELVES THAT THEY MIGHT BE FORGIVEN AND CHANGED!

Let me urge you, if you do not know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, to come to Him without further delay!



THE FRIEND OF PUBLICANS AND SINNERS  
Mark 2:13-17

Intro: This is the account of how the writer of the Gospel of Matthew became a disciple!

This is found in all three of the Synoptic Gospels, but Matthew is the only one who speaks of himself as, "Matthew, the tax collector" (Matt. 10:3). (For the other two accounts of this story, cf. Matt. 9:9-15; Luke 5:27-35.)

Some feel that Matthew was the last of "the 12" to be called. We cannot prove this, but it is the last one recorded. And we note that the others (how many, we cannot be sure) are referred to in v. 16 of our text. That is the first time that Mark uses the word, disciples, which basically means, a learner, or a pupil.

Obviously, the main reason for recording this about Matthew is twofold:

- 1) To give the disciples (and us) a lesson in the amazing grace of God.
- 2) To show how people like this were among the most responsive to the Gospel which our Lord was preaching and teaching.

The publicans (a better word to translate the original would be, tax collector):

The real publicans were wealthy Romans who personally paid the Romans government that which the government demanded by way of taxes from people in a certain area. Then they had the right to extract from the people any amount they wanted to in order to get back their own money plus a sizeable profit!

To do this, they hired tax collectors (like Matthew, or Levi) who knew their own people. Some of them were like Zacchaeus who, as a chief, would be over a whole district; others were like Matthew who would work under the chief in a more limited area.

Matthew was evidently assigned to tax the ships coming and going from Capernaum on the sea of Galilee. Therefore, it is very probable that he had taxed Peter and Andrew and James and John on more than one occasion.

Because of their collaboration with the Romans, they were looked upon as traitors!

They had to be able to speak Greek, so they were usually educated men.

But, because they had turned from all of the restraints imposed upon them by the Mosaic Law, they became men who were usually very low in character--greedy, selfish, deceitful, liars, money-mad, ambitious, harsh and cruel!

This is why they were classed with "sinners."

Therefore, the Lord was running a risk, not only with the people, but also with His other disciples, by calling such a

man.

Would this not make our Lord a Roman sympathizer? Could you actually have a tax collector disciple?

It is important for us to learn at this point that the Lord never passes up a person because of what he has been. Nor does the Lord call people on the basis of what they are when He calls them. He calls us "by his grace" (Gal. 1:15). **THUS, MARK IS GIVING US ANOTHER LESSON IN THE MARVELOUS GRACE OF GOD.** If God has a place in His heart for "publicans and sinners," then all of us can have hope!

But now to the story!

I. "BY THE SEASIDE" (Mark 2:13, 14).

Mark wants us to know two things:

- 1) The people, lit., came, and kept coming!
- 2) The Lord, lit., taught them, and kept teaching! "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple" (Psa. 119:130). **THE DISCIPLES NEEDED TO LEARN, AND WE NEED TO KNOW, THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING PEOPLE THE WORD OF GOD!**

But the Lord never lost sight of individuals because of the crowd. How interesting it is to read, "And as he passed by, he saw Levi . . ."

And here we need a verse from the OT: 1 Sam. 16:7,  
 "For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."

When you work with people you learn the truth of the third verse of Fanny Crosby's hymn, Rescue The Perishing:

"Down in the human heart, crushed by the tempter,  
 Feelings lie buried that grace can restore;  
 Touched by a loving heart, wakened by kindness,  
 Chords that are broken will vibrate once more."

**THE LORD KNEW JUST EXACTLY WHAT WAS GOING ON IN THE HEART OF MATTHEW--**how he hated his work, and hated himself, and was reaching out for help!

But notice: Levi (or Matthew) did not volunteer; the Lord called him. "Follow me."

- 1) It was a call to be with the Lord.
- 2) It was a call to learn from the Lord.
- 3) It was a call to be like the Lord.
- 4) It was a call to work with the Lord.

Luke (5:28) tells us that "he left all . . . and followed him."

And so we have another illustration of 1 Cor. 1:26-29,  
 "But God hath chosen (deliberately, knowing what He  
 was getting) the . . . base things of the world, and  
 things which are despised . . . to bring to nothing  
 things that are, that no flesh should glory in his  
 presence."

But now let us follow our Lord and His disciples as they reclined  
 at the table

## II. IN MATTHEW'S HOME (Mark 2:15).

Luke tells us that Matthew prepared a great feast to which  
 he invited publicans, sinners, and others. Cf. Luke 5:29.

Matthew wanted all of his friends to be able to hear Jesus  
because he knew the emptiness and despair that was in every  
 sinner's heart!

How touching it is that Matthew alone in the Gospels refers  
 to what some were saying about our Lord--that he was "a  
 friend of tax collectors and sinners" (Matt. 11:19).

The scribes and Pharisees would not have gone to Matthew's  
 house for fear of contaminating themselves. But not so with  
 our Lord!

## III. AFTER THE DINNER (Mark 2:16, 17).

Now the scribes and Pharisees are talking, not just thinking  
 (as in 2:6)--but they are not yet talking to the Lord; only  
 to His disciples.

Their question--one of unconcealed amazement! The feeling  
 behind the question is, "How could He ever do such a thing?"

Would you not like to know what the disciples were thinking,  
 and what they answered, if they did attempt to answer?

But the Lord Himself answered!

Cf. Rev. 3:17, 18,

"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with  
 goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that  
 thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind,  
 and naked, I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the  
 fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that  
 thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy  
 nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with  
 salve, that thou mayest see."

The Pharisees thought that spiritually they were well; they

even looked upon themselves as physicians.

The sick people who flocked to the Lord Jesus Christ were all illustrations of what every person is spiritually. No one will ever see any sense in the Gospel, any need for the Gospel, until he sees himself as a hopeless and lost sinner who needs a Savior!

Actually, the tax collectors and the Pharisees were just alike--except for the fact that one was political, while the other was religious.

But in the sight of God all men are the same, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). There is no one righteous, no, not one" (Rom. 3:10).

THE BIG DIFFERENCE AMONG MEN IS THAT SOME KNOW THIS; OTHERS DO NOT!

Concl: What a lesson for the disciples!

And what a lesson for the Pharisees and scribes!

Those of us who know the Lord must never lose sight of this truth. If we have not been like publicans and sinners, it is only because of the grace of God!

There was one former Pharisee who looked upon himself as worse than any publican because he called himself the chief of sinners. Cf. 1 Tim. 1:15.

For any here this morning who might be staying away from the Lord because of what you are, or because of what you have done--this account should give you hope. What you are and have done does not disqualify you for salvation; IT MAKES YOU STAND IN THE FRONT OF THE LINE OF THE VERY ONES THE LORD CAME TO CALL AND TO SAVE!

Amos

THE OLD AND THE NEW

Mark 2:18-22

Intro: We come this morning to the third objection to something about our Lord which was raised primarily by the scribes and Pharisees (although the disciples of John are included in the passage we have this morning). They are:

- 1) The first, in thought--against His claim to forgive sins (2:6, 7).
- 2) The second, by word to His disciples--against His eating with publicans and sinners (2:16).
- 3) The third, here, to the Lord about His disciples--against their failure to fast as did the disciples of the Pharisees and the disciples of John!

No ~~4~~ follows at the end of ch. 2 + begin. of ch. 3.

So, from v. 16 to v. 18 we have three kinds of disciples:

- 1) The disciples of our Lord (2:16).
- 2) The disciples of John (2:18).
- 3) The disciples of the Pharisees (2:18).

In John 9:28 we have a fourth:

- 4) The disciples of Moses--probably another term for the disciples of the Pharisees.

It is important to keep in mind that a disciple is "one who follows one's teaching" (Thayer, p. 386). (Apply to each group.)

I. THE OBJECTION (Mark 2:18).

Our Lord and His disciples had just come from a feast. This was evidently on one of the fast days that the Jews had set for themselves. Why did the disciples of our Lord not conform?

It is stated as an objection to the disciples, but it actually was against the Lord who was their Teacher!

"Used to fast" = were fasting.

Only one day in the entire year was established by the Mosaic Law as a fast day: the Day of Atonement. Cf. Lev. 16:29 and Isa. 58:3, 5, noting the expression, "ye shall afflict your souls." The context shows that this has to do with fasting.

The Pharisees fasted two times each week: on Mondays and Thursdays. It was thought that, when Moses went up into the mountain to get the Law the second time, he went up on Thursday, and came down on Monday.

In the Lord's parable about the Pharisee and the publican who

went up to the temple to pray, our Lord says that part of the Pharisees prayer was, "I fast twice in the week" (Luke 18:12a).

So it is clear that this had become a matter of pride with them, and that they did it to obtain favor with God. They were legalists!

With the disciples of John and the disciples of the Pharisees we have two different situations:

- 1) The disciples of John wanted to get back to the old ways because the people had departed so far from it. This, they felt, was the meaning of John's message, "Repent."
- 2) The Pharisees had a corrupted form of Judaism. They had accepted so many traditions that they did not know what was from Moses and what was not. But they wanted to keep people in bondage to their traditions.

These disciples of John had evidently failed to follow John in his latest preaching, "Behold the Lamb of God . . ." Therefore, they had slipped back and found themselves companions of the Pharisees.

It was a case of their light becoming darkness! How strange it is to see these two groups of disciples joined together!

## — II. OUR LORD'S ANSWER (Mark 2:19-22).

There are three parts to His answer:

- 1) First, concerning the bridegroom.
- 2) Second, concerning the garment.
- 3) Third, concerning the wine.

The first answer stands by itself and seems to apply mainly to the disciples of John; the second go together, and apply to both groups of disciples.

### A. Concerning the bridegroom (Mark 2:19, 20).

The last recorded preaching of John the Baptist spoke of our Lord as a Bridegroom:

"He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice; this my joy, therefore, is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:29, 30).

John's disciples had objected because the people were going to the Lord to be baptized instead of coming to them!

This expression had its roots in such OT passages as

Isa. 54 and Hosea 2. In view of John's earlier declarations concerning the Lord, this meant:

- 1) That our Lord was the Messiah.
- 2) That His coming should be an occasion of great joy. Even the Rabbis released the bridegroom and the bride from many religious ceremonies during their wedding week--including fasting!
- 3) That it was time for them to turn to the Messiah as a Person, and not be concerned with the figures and shadows which pointed to Him!

"The sons of the bridegroom" = his friends who escorted the bride to the wedding. This is what our Lord was training His own disciples to do.

A wedding is no time for fasting!

BUT . . .

Our Lord sounds an ominous note! "But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away," i.e., snatched away--with the thought of tragedy, violence. We know from what follows that even here our Lord was thinking about the Cross!

"Then shall they fast in those days."

Note: Men will never see the difference between the OT and the NT, between the Law and the Gospel, until they come to know and to understand the Lord Jesus Christ!

But there is more--involving also the Pharisees.

B. Concerning the garment and the wineskins (Mark 2:21, 22).

Although these both teach approximately the same thing, yet the approach is from opposite points of view. With the garments we have the preservation of something old; in the wine and wineskins we have the preservation of something new. In both cases, to do either only makes matters worse!

1. The garment (Mark 2:21).

What does the garment represent? It represents man's fitness to stand in the presence of the Lord. Cf. Isa. 61:10,

"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bride-

groom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels."

But the Pharisees were seeking to adorn themselves with salvation by the Law--something which the Lord never intended for man to do BECAUSE IT CANNOT BE DONE!

"Beware of the scribes, who desire to walk in long robes" (Luke 20:46a). By their works they insisted on making the old garment of corrupted Judaism the garment of salvation, but every patch they put on it only made it worse, i.e., more apparent that they were working at a hopeless job!

Fasting was a patch! But they knew that it was not sufficient, and it only pushed salvation farther and farther from them!

2. The wine and the wineskins (Mark 2:22).

What is the significance of wine in the Scriptures?

Cf. Psa. 4:7,

"Thou has put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased."

In Psa. 104:15 the Psalmist speaks of "win that maketh glad the heart of man."

Therefore, wine pictures the joy of the Lord--the joy that is to be found in salvation!

You cannot pour the "new wine" into the old wineskins of the Mosaic Law! If you do, the old wineskins will burst, AND YOU WILL HAVE NOTHING LEFT. You cannot mix Law and the Gospel unless you want to come up with nothing at all!

Concl: How gracious the Lord is in dealing with the disciples of John and the disciples of the Pharisees--making the truth just as simple as He can. He wanted them to see that it was not a matter of what they did--either of holding on to the corrupted form of Judaism, or of going back to the original--if they were concerned about salvation, BUT IT WAS A MATTER OF SEEING THE PERSON WHO WAS STANDING BEFORE THEM. Christ is the Friend of publicans and sinners and only He can forgive sins!



THE LORD OF THE SABBATH  
Mark 2:23-28

Intre: This morning we come to the fourth instance in which the Pharisees objected to something that either our Lord or His disciples said or did.

The four are:

- 1) When the Lord forgave the sins of the paralytic. This was objected to only in their hearts, but the Lord knew what they were thinking!
- 2) When our Lord and His disciples ate with publicans, or tax collectors and sinners. This objection was made to the disciples about the Lord.
- 3) When the disciples failed to fast like the disciples of the Pharisees, and the disciples of John. This was made to the Lord about His disciples.
- 4) The one for this morning--when the disciples picked grain and ate it on the Sabbath Day.

This is where the Lord had His most serious conflicts with the scribes and Pharisees.

Edersheim writes: On no other subject is Rabbinic teaching more painfully minute and more manifestly incongruous (contradictory) in its professed object" (II, 52).

The Sabbath is not Sunday, but Saturday--the seventh day.

What the Scriptures teach about the Sabbath is stated in Exodus 20:8-11:

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

"Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work.

"But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates;

"For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore, the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it."

Thus, the Sabbath Day is related to the seventh day when the Lord rested after the six days of creation.

When the Law was given through Moses, God made it binding upon His people, Israel, that the seventh day would be a day of rest--not even for worship or service.

Over the years the Jews had gradually added various rules and regulations to the Sabbath Day--rules too numerous to remember, and many too ridiculous to take seriously. But, nevertheless, the Pharisees sought to enforce them!

As examples of how ridiculous they could be, let me cite two examples:

- 1) You could not bear a burden on the Sabbath day--if it were any heavier than a dried fig. If you did, you sinned when you picked it up, and you sinned again when you put it down!
- 2) In the case of the disciples and the picking of grain it was stated:

"In case a woman rolls wheat to remove the husks, it is considered as sifting; if she rubs the heads of wheat, it is regarded as threshing; if she cleans off the side-adherences, it is sifting out fruit; if she bruises the ears, it is grinding; if she throws them up in her hand, it is winnowing" (Quoted by Edersheim, II, 56).

Therefore, we have to remember that the Pharisees were accusing the disciples of violating Rabbinic Law, not the Law of Moses!

Let us note first, then,

#### I. WHAT THE DISCIPLES DID (Mark 2:23).

This was permitted by the Law of Moses. Cf. Deut. 23:24, 25:

"When you comest into thy neighbor's vineyard, then thou mayest eat grapes to thy fill at thine own pleasure; but thou shalt not put any into thy vessel."

"When thou comest into the standing grain of thy neighbor, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbor's standing grain."

Luke says that they rubbed them in their hands--so this meant that they had committed two sins! They were harvesting and threshing!

#### II. THE CHARGE MADE BY THE PHARISEES (Mark 2:24).

It might be right to do it on any other day, but not on the Sabbath Day!

Evidently the Lord had not done this, but, since His disciples had, He was responsible, and the Pharisees thought that they deserved an explanation.

On the question of what is lawful in Mark's Gospel, cf. v. 26; 3:4; 6:18; 10:2; 12:14.

#### III. OUR LORD'S THREEFOLD ANSWER (Mark 2:25-28).

##### A. The first part of His answer (Mark 2:25, 26).

In answering any question it is always wise to see if the Scriptures have anything to say on the subject.

The question has to do primarily with eating. Is it right to eat on the Sabbath if it involves something which is permissible on other days.

The Lord's answer has to do with something more restrictive than the Sabbath. IT HAS TO DO WITH THE TEMPLE!

The passage we are concerned with here is 1 Sam. 21:1-6.

The Lord speaks here of Abiathar, while the 1 Sam. passage speaks of Ahimelech. The explanation is that both father and son evidently had the two names. In some passages Ahimelech is called the son of Abiathar, and vice versa.

David actually did three things which to be "lawful" he should not have done:

- 1) He went into the house of God.
- 2) He requested bread, got the showbread, and ate it.
- 3) He also gave it to his men.

By the Law, the showbread was only for the priests.

And Matthew makes an addition which Mark omits:

"Or have ye not read in the law (cf. Num. 28:9, 10), how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless?" (Matt. 12:5).

They did this by working to offer sacrifices--on the Sabbath day, in the Temple! Could anything be worse? But they were "blameless."

Even a Pharisee would have been in trouble if he had even intimated that doing something like eating grain on the Sabbath Day was worse than desecrating the Temple--if that is what it was!

So, by Scripture, the Pharisees are proven wrong.

But we are standing here in the presence of One who is more than just a man. This is "Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (1:1). Now He makes a declaration--just as binding as anything that was ever written by Moses. This forms:

B. The second part of His answer (Mark 2:27).

Mark is the only one who records this statement for us.

Of the two, which is the more important--man, or the Sabbath?

Here, again, Scripture helps us.

Lit. translated this verse could read:

The Sabbath became, or began, on account of man, not man on account of the Sabbath.

Under the Law, God gave man the Sabbath so as to keep him from working all of the time, to give him one day of rest out of seven.

It was not primarily a day of worship, but a day of rest.

Everything that God has done for man, He has done for man's blessing. So that when even the Sabbath Day stands in the way of that which is necessary for man, it obviously has been corrupted and its original purpose has been defeated!

It is not a question, here, of what is morally right, or morally wrong, but of what is ceremonially right, or ceremonially wrong!

This point will come up for further emphasis as we get into ch. 3. But to cite another illustration, cf. Luke 13:15, 16. When the Lord healed a woman who had been sick for 18 years, the ruler of the synagogue was indignant. And so the Lord responded in the following words:

"Thou hypocrite, dost not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?

"And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?"

Religion makes men merciless in favor of their ceremonies; the Lord never had such ideas in mind any place in the Law.

But nothing could have been more important than

C. The third part of His answer (Mark 2:28).

One thing is certain: If you are involved in a religion of works, your eyes are blinded to the most important truth in the Word of God. THAT IS THE TRUTH OF THE PLACE WHICH OUR LORD HOLDS IN THE SALVATION OF MEN AND IN ALL OF THE PURPOSES OF GOD.

The thought is this: IF MAN IS GREATER THAN THE SABBATH, THEN THE SON OF MAN IS EVEN GREATER, GREATER SO THAT HE "IS LORD ALSO OF THE SABBATH."

Matthew states it this way:

"But I say unto you that in this place is one greater than the temple" (Matt. 12:6).

"The Son of man"--our Lord's favorite title for Himself. He used it over 80 times. It speaks of His true humanity. It identifies Him with all men--not just Israel. It designates Him as the head of the human race, one who is the pattern of man's perfect and of the one who came seeking man's greatest good.

If eating on the Sabbath Day would have hindered the blessing of His disciples, He would have stopped them. But it did not!

Concl: All of these things were said to make the Pharisees realize two things:

- 1) They had their attention centered on the wrong thing.
- 2) They needed to realize Who it was Who was speaking to them. The Lord never disregarded the Law, but He had not regard for the traditions of the scribes and Pharisees!

Mark wants us to understand these things also. As a man told me recently, "I had to sweep all of these things aside so that I could see CHRIST!"

A PICTURE OF CONFLICT AND CONTRAST

Mark 3:1-12

Intre: We come to the final conflict this morning between the Pharisees and the Lord in the series which Mark has recorded for us. The Pharisees are not mentioned again until we get to chapter 7. They are also mentioned in chapters 8, 10, and 12. They may be involved in other circumstances, but these are the only places in Mark's Gospel where they are mentioned.

This present series began in chapter 2, verse 6. There are 5 incidents recorded by John Mark in the conflict:

- 1) They opposed our Lord's claim to be able to forgive sins.
- 2) They did not like for Him to eat with publicans and sinners.
- 3) They objected because His disciples did not fast.
- 4) They claimed that the disciples had broken the Sabbath because they picked grain and ate it on the Sabbath Day.
- 5) In the passage this morning we see that the Sabbath is again the issue when the man with the withered hand is healed.

But following this miracle, we have a sharp contrast when we see the tremendous acceptance that the Lord had with the multitudes who literally came from everywhere!

I. THE CONFLICT WITH THE PHARISEES OVER THE SABBATH (Mark 3: 1-6).

This is the fifth miracle recorded by John Mark.

All three of the Synoptics include this miracle, but Luke mentions that it took place on "another Sabbath" (Luke 6:6). He also tells us that the Lord was teaching just before this happened. Another detail which Luke includes is that it was the man's right hand that was affected.

Mark's perfect passive participle indicates "a process, and not simply a state, and hence, an effect produced by disease, and not an original defect" (Gould, p. 52)--"withered," or paralyzed.

Just what it was, how it happened, or why--we are not told. We do not know how old the man was, nor if he had been planted there by the Pharisees, or if he had come of his own accord hoping to be healed.

What we do know is that the Pharisees (which are not actually mentioned until v. 6) were watching His every move, hoping that He would heal so that they could bring formal charges against Him before a judge.

BUT THE LORD KNEW WHAT WAS IN THEIR HEARTS AND SO HE SAID TO

MATT. SAYS  
"BEHOLD."  
WHERE BUT  
IN THE WORD  
ARE THE  
LOWLY, THE  
NEEDY, ETC.  
GIVEN THE  
PLACE OF  
HONOR, OR  
PROMINENCE?

THE MAN, "Stand forth." This meant for him to stand up right where he was so that everyone in the synagogue could see him.

Then the Lord turned to the Pharisees and asked them a question:

"Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? To save life, or to kill?"

Note the question carefully.

THE LORD DOES NOT LEAVE ANY ROOM FOR A COMPROMISE BETWEEN THESE TWO. IT MUST BE EITHER ONE OR THE OTHER.

Note this same principle in other statements our Lord made:

- 1) "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon," or money (Matt. 6:24).
- 2) "A good tree cannot bring forth bad fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit" (Matt. 7:18).
- 3) "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:6,7).
- 4) "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son" (2 John 9).
- 5) "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad" (Matt. 12:30).

ALL OF THESE SAY THE SAME THING AS TO THE PRINCIPLE: IT HAS TO BE EITHER ONE OR THE OTHER, BUT NOT BOTH!

What the Lord means here is this:

If I have an opportunity to do good, but do not do it, then I am doing evil.

If I have an opportunity to save a life, but do not do it, then I am killing.

Matthew tells us that the Lord first asked what they would do about a sheep that had fallen into a pit on the Sabbath Day. Cf. Matt. 12:11. Their traditions allowed them to help an animal in such circumstances even on the Sabbath Day, but they could not help a man!

Now it was His turn to look--and He did--at each one of the Pharisees, waiting for even one of them to give Him the obvious answer. "But they held their peace." They took the

## FIFTH AMENDMENT!

The Lord was seeking to teach them what James later taught in Jas. 4:17,

"Therefore, to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

NOT ONLY WAS IT RIGHT TO HEAL THIS MAN ON THE SABBATH DAY, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN SIN NOT TO!

The Lord was "grieved" because they were so calloused that they had lost the ability to understand what He was saying to them!

The silence was deathly! And no answer came!

Our Lord did not touch the man; He just told him to stretch forth his hand. The healing was immediate.

This was all that the Pharisees were waiting for. And so they went out to plan their strategy with "the Herodians"!

Who were the Herodians?

This was a political group, partial toward Herod, and accepting him as the one to sit upon the Jewish throne! They were outwardly friends of Rome, but ambitious for the supremacy of the Herods!

What the Pharisees were religiously, the Herodians were politically. Normally they were enemies of each other, but they joined hands to make sure that Jesus Christ died!

And then Mark leaves this situation abruptly! He turns to a contrasting picture.

## II. THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE PHARISEES AND THE PEOPLE (Mark 3: 7-12).

Notice where they came from, and why! Cf. vv. 7, 8.

See what precautions the Lord had to take. Cf. v. 9.

Note what the people were doing to Him. Cf. vv. 9b, 10. There was actually a danger that He would be crushed!

Even the demon-possessed came, and we have a repeat of the situation described earlier in 1:24, 25, 34. Thus, our Lord had an entirely different kind of opposition from the demons. Whenever demon-possessed people saw the Lord, Mark indicates that:

- 1) They always fell down.
- 2) They always cried out. (The verbs are imperfects.)
- 3) They always said the same thing.



Concl: What lessons are we to learn from this section?

1) The pre-eminent place which the Lord has.

There are 7, possibly 8, individuals or groups mentioned in these two accounts:

- a) The Lord.
- b) The people in the synagogue--not mentioned, but obviously there.
- c) The man with the withered hand.
- d) The Pharisees.
- e) The Herodians.
- f) The great multitude--of Jews, and of Gentiles.
- g) The disciples.
- i) The demons.

But out of all of them our attention is always directed to the Lord:

- a) The Pharisees watched Him . . . they wanted to accuse Him . . . and then to kill Him.
- b) The man with the withered hand obeyed Him.
- c) The multitudes came to Him.
- d) The disciples protected Him.
- e) The people wanted to touch Him.
- f) The demons fell down before Him, and identified Him.

As interesting as the others were, none is as important as the Lord Jesus Christ. What a tragedy if we miss this! HE ALWAYS IS AND ALWAYS WILL BE GREATER THAN ALL!

- 2) The man with the withered hand - typical of man's spiritual needs. AND WE ARE EITHER DOING HIM GOOD, OR DOING HIM EVIL!
- 3) The hardness of the hearts of the Pharisees.

HELPLESS,  
USELESS,  
HOPELESS!  
HE COULD NOT  
DO WHAT HE  
WOULD.

Who can tell how many time the Lord had sought to reach them, and how many times they had turned away from Him. And here again, they turn away to destroy Him not realizing that they are the ones who will suffer eternal loss.

Oh, that men would listen to Him and come to know Him!

- 4) The great concern that people had for their physical needs, but the absence of anything to indicate a recognition of spiritual needs!

LUKE DOES SAY THAT THEY "CAME TO HEAR HIM, AND TO BE HEALED OF THEIR DISEASES" (LUKE 6:17).

Do we want the Lord just so that He can take away our troubles, and meet all of our needs--physically, materially? What do you suppose the people thought who heard the demons say, "Thou art the Son of God"?

How far would you go, what effort would you put forth, to have your sins forgiven? You do not have to go any place or do anything except to open your heart to the Lord right where you are!

THE APPOINTMENT OF THE TWELVE  
Mark 3:13-19

Intro: We come to a very important passage this morning.

— It appears that in time this took place about one year before the death of our Lord.

We can assume that the work of the Lord had increased to the point that He was in need of help from a chosen group of His disciples.

BUT, AS WE CONTINUE TO GO THROUGH THE NEW TESTAMENT, WE CAN SEE THAT THE LORD WAS LOOKING AHEAD TO A TIME WHICH THE DISCIPLES DID NOT AT THIS TIME KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT: THE TIME WHEN HE WOULD BE RETURNING TO HIS FATHER!

And so we can begin to see how important this choice was.

Luke tells us that just before this our Lord  
"went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God" (Luke 6:12).

Luke follows this with his account of The Sermon on The Mount, and so this may be the same mountain which Mark mentions in v. 13 of our Scripture reading.

— We know that "the Twelve" were chosen to minister to Israel.

We also know from Eph. 2:20 that they, with the NT prophets, were to be, or lay, the foundation for the Church which was not yet in existence.

And Luke also records for us the words of our Lord to the effect that in a still future day the twelve apostles would "sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:30).

What does our passage indicate?

I. THAT THE CHOICE WAS SOVEREIGN WITH OUR LORD (Mark 3:13).

This was not something which they volunteered to do. He "calletth unto him whom he (emphatic) would." They had nothing to do with the choosing; it was His sovereign will which was being done!

Cf. John 15:16.

— Even Paul says that the Lord put him into the ministry. Cf. 1 Tim. 1:12. Every believer is "chosen in him (Christ) before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4). We speak

too little about the sovereignty of God in His own work!

II. THAT HE HAD A REASON FOR HIS CHOICE (Mark 3:14, 15).

Actually it would be more accurate to say that He had reasons!

No hint is given in any of the Gospels as to why He chose twelve, but the relationship with Israel is immediately apparent. THE LORD HAD MANY DISCIPLES, BUT HE WAS ONLY GOING TO CHOOSE FROM AMONG THEM TWELVE APOSTLES.

Mark does not use the word, apostles, until we get to 6:30-- and that is the only time he uses it. But both Matthew and Luke use the term. An apostle is one who is sent forth from a person as an official representative. A disciple is a learner. IT IS OBVIOUS FROM WHAT MARK INDICATES HERE THAT AN APOSTLE WAS FIRST OF ALL A DISCIPLE, AND HE DID NOT CEASE BEING A DISCIPLE WHICH HE BECAME AN APOSTLE.

Mark mentions three reasons for our Lord's choices:

A. "That they should be with Him."

That they should be chosen, is amazing enough; that they should be chosen for this reason primarily goes completely beyond our ability to comprehend!

Think of the significance of this, and think of what would be involved in this--being with the Lord.

THIS IS THE PREREQUISITE FOR ALL MINISTRY! We need to learn of Him. We need to learn from Him. We need to become more like Him. We need to learn to take all of our needs to Him. We need to learn to trust Him for all things. We need the peace of heart and the comprehension of the truth which comes only from being with Him.

Cf. Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38-41.

Cf. Psa. 91; Psa. 46; Psa. 16:11.

This is what heaven will be--being with Him. Cf. John 14:3; 1 Thess. 4:17.

B. "That he might send them forth to preach."

Their right to preach and the authority for their message came from Him. And how much they needed to learn! They needed to learn of Him and His Word in order to be

faithful and true ministers of the Word of God. Their message was not theirs to make up. They were to proclaim the Word of God.

This is what our Lord had been doing, and now they are entering into His work. They will be workers together with Him!

C. "And to have authority to cast out demons."

This is the way the best MSS read. Casting out demons was the greatest of miracles, and stands here as a representative of the others.

What mighty power was committed into the hands of the Apostles! It was obviously true that "greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4b).

### III. THE NAMES OF THE MEN HE CHOSE (Mark 3:16-19).

Will you please keep in mind that HE chose them?

Do you suppose He knew what He was getting? Absolutely! He deliberately chose them KNOWING just what they were, and how much He was going to have to do for each one of them to meet their needs.

But God's choices are always this way. Cf. 1 Cor. 1:26-29.

A. "Simon he surnamed Peter." Cf. John 1:42.

Peter always is mentioned first. He was the leader. We know more about him than we do any of the others. But would you have chosen him--a fisherman, a man who talked a lot, but had a hard time backing it all up?

But, while you think of Peter's problems, think of what God did for him and how mighty he became as an Apostle of Jesus Christ!!!

B. "James, the son of Zebedee,

C. "And John, the brother of James," } He surnamed Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder."

They probably had this name lit. placed upon them because of their fiery temperament (Luke 9:54) and driving ambition (Mark 10:35-37).

They caused trouble among the other disciples. Would you have chosen them?

D. "And Andrew." What a dear man he was! He had been a disciple of John the Baptist. He was the one who brought Peter to the Lord. Cf. John 1:35-42, 44. See also John 6:8; 12:22; Mark 13:3; Acts 1:13.

E. "And Philip." He is always mentioned after the first four in the lists of the apostles.

He is not mentioned again in any of the Synoptics, but cf. John 1:43-48; 6:5, 7; 12:21, 22; 14:8, 9.

He was the one who brought Nathanael, another of the apostles, to the Lord. He spoke up when the Lord wanted to feed the 5,000. When the Greeks came who wanted to see Jesus, Philip took them to Andrew first, and then the two of them took the Greeks to Jesus.

Philip was the one in the Upper Room who said, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us" (John 14:8).

F. "And Bartholomew." This means, son of Tolmai. His real name was Nathanael. Cf. John 1:45-49; 21:2; Acts 1:13.

He is not mentioned again in the Synoptics.

G. "And Matthew," or Levi. Cf. Mark 2:14-17. He is not mentioned again until Acts 1:13.

Matthew was a tax collector, a friend of Rome, one who would have been considered a traitor to his people, the Jews. But, in spite of all this, the Lord called him.

H. "And Thomas." He was also called, Didymus, the twin.

He is not mentioned again in the Synoptics, but he is quite prominent in the Gospel of John. Cf. John 11:16; 14:5; 20:24-29; 21:2; Acts 1:13.

He was the one who had to be shown, but how responsive he was when convinced of the truth!

I. "And James, the son of Alphaeus." It seems that he is the one who is called in Mark 15:40, "James, the less"--either because he was shorter and/or younger than the other James.

Some have taken him to be either a cousin, or even a half-brother of the Lord, but this cannot be positively established.

J. "And Thaddaeus." Matthew (10:3) calls him Lebbaeus, and

Luke (6:16) speaks of him as Judas, the son of James.  
Cf. Acts 1:13.

Beyond this we have no other references to him.

- K. "And Simon, the Canaanite." Luke records, "Simon, called Zealotes" (Luke 6:15), i.e., the Zealot. See also Acts 1:13.

He would have been Matthew's political enemy. And there was a time when he would not have hesitated to kill Matthew, if he were a true Zealot (as he seems to have been). The Zealots were radical patriots, men who hated Caesar and Rome, who were inclined to take justice into their own hands, and who would not hesitate to use arms for their cause. Alford (I, 101) says, "This sect eventually brought upon Jerusalem its destruction."

What a mistake it was (it seems) to call him. However, we must remember that he was already a disciple. It would be interesting to know what caused him to turn to the Lord.

- L. And always mentioned last--"and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him." This is what Matthew says, too. Luke writes, "Who also was the traitor" (Luke 6:16).

Why the Lord chose him continues to be one of the greatest mysteries of Scripture. His story is known too well.

He was the first of the Apostles to die--and he died by his own action, a suicide. Only Matthew (27:3-5) and Luke (in Acts 1:16-20) record his death.

One thing is certain: Judas will never be able to say that he did not have a chance!

Concl: "And they went into an house." Thus begins their life together.

What a picture this is of the people of God at any time! You can always wonder why the Lord has chosen the ones He has. IT IS CLEAR THAT NEITHER A MAN'S CHARACTER OR HIS BACKGROUND EXCLUDES HIM SALVATION OR FROM SERVING THE LORD, BUT WE MUST REMEMBER THAT THEY WERE DISCIPLES FIRST, AND THAT THEY CONTINUED TO BE DISCIPLES!

The fact that we do not hear much of some of them does not mean that they were not used.

The story of Judas should cause us all to ask the Lord to search our hearts so that we will know that we really belong to Him!

FALSE EXPLANATIONS VERSUS THE TRUE

Mark 3:20-35

Intro: Our Lord continued to live a very busy life. The situation in our passage this morning compares with that in 1:32 and 2:2. (Read 3:20.)

It was all so unusual that people felt forced to attach some kind of an explanation to what was going on. Here we find two:

- 1) Some were saying that He was insane. Cf. v. 21.
- 2) Others were saying that He was, not just demon-possessed but, Satan-possessed! Cf. v. 22, and then v. 30.

His family, i.e., His mother and brothers had come to the first conclusion. (Show how verses 20 and 21 go with verses 31, 32.)

The scribes from Jerusalem had come to the second conclusion. "Beelzebub" (sometimes, Beelzebul) was a contemptuous term which the Jews used for Satan. It seems to mean, the god of filth, from the contaminating work of Satan in afflicting people with disease, etc. As "the prince of the demons" Satan is their ruler, their leader. They always do what he wants them to do.

And so, if the scribes are right, you have a most unusual situation in which Satan is working against himself. To show how ridiculous this is, our Lord asks, "How can Satan cast out Satan?"

And so we have, first of all,

- I. TWO FALSE EXPLANATIONS OF CHRIST AND HIS MINISTRY (Mark 3: 21, 22).

Then we see what our Lord did.

- II. HOW HE SOUGHT TO CORRECT THE SCRIBES (Mark 3:23-27).

For the first time John Mark mentions parables. A parable is: The placing of two things side by side so that one helps to explain the other. The explanation becomes clear through the similarity or comparison of the two things.

Our Lord takes the explanation of the scribes and places it along side of the same situation in a kingdom and in a home! See vv. 24, 25.

The application is made in v. 26. The NASB has, "But he is finished," for, "But hath an end."

Then the Lord, with another parable, attempts in v. 27 to show the scribes what He was really doing.

Satan is the strong man.

The Lord has gone into Satan's house to "spell" it, to plunder, and to ransack.

Before He does this, He must "bind the strong man"-- thus showing Himself to be:

- 1) The strong man's enemy.
- 2) Stronger than the strong man.

This being done, He begins to "spell his goods." "Goods" here refers to Satan's instruments, i.e., the demons.

This makes sense; the explanation of the scribes did not! Besides, the scribes had placed themselves in the precarious position of opposing the work of Satan. Lenski says, "Opposition to Jesus upsets men's logic" (p. 151).

To show, however, that what the scribes had done could not be passed over lightly, our Lord proceeds to issue . . .

### III. THE MOST SOLEMN OF WARNINGS (Mark 3:28-30).

Another first in Mark's Gospel: "Verily, I say unto you." This establishes:

- 1) The truthfulness of what He is about to say: "Verily."
- 2) The authority: "I say unto you."

Matthew is the only other Gospel writer who records this warning. Cf. Matt. 12:31, 32:

"Wherefore, I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this age, neither in the age to come."

Note several things:

- 1) The hope that the Lord gives for the forgiveness of sins (things men do) and of blasphemies (things men say).
- 2) He does not say that these scribes had done this; He does indicate that they were close to doing it.
- 3) Our Lord draws a distinction between blaspheming Him as compared with blaspheming the Holy Spirit. The former can be forgiven (cf. Luke 23:34); the latter cannot!
- 4) It would take a great deal of knowledge to commit such a sin. E.g., it would mean the recognition that our Lord did perform miracles. It would also mean a belief in the existence and power of Satan. It would also indicate some understanding of our Lord's claim that the Spirit of God was upon Him. Cf. Matt. 12:27, 28.
- 5) This sin can only be committed by one who has never received the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior.



But some of you will be asking, Can this sin be committed today? My answer: It is possible, but very unlikely because it would be difficult in view of the circumstances which must precede such blasphemy.

But the Scriptures do indicate that there is a danger in resisting what God is doing in our lives to show us the truth concerning our Lord Jesus Christ and man's need for salvation.

Cf. Pharaoh, and cf. Judas among the disciples of our Lord. How important it is for us to listen when the Lord is speaking to us--and we usually knew when that is!

And then, finally, we come to see . . .

#### IV. HOW THE LORD SOUGHT TO CORRECT THE MULTITUDES (Mark 3:31-35).

Please do not take this as a discourtesy on the part of our Lord. He is seeking to bring more emphasis to what He has just been saying: The most important relationship which men can have to Him is not a blood relationship. Cf. John 1:13.

"For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother" (Mark 3:35). Our obedience to the will of God (as is seen in His Word) is the great proof that we are in the family of God. It has to be more than just a vocal claim!

Concl: We conclude here where we concluded last Sunday in speaking about Judas. How important it is to see that being a disciple does not make you a child of God! And it is also important to see that, even being the mother of our Lord, did not make Mary a child of God, nor did it help our Lord's half-brothers and sisters!

Nothing but personal faith in Jesus Christ can bring us salvation, and the reality of that faith will be established by the obedience we give to the Word of God.

This is a very solemn passage. Our Lord is speaking to the hearts of all who will hear. Let Him speak to your heart, and to mine.

What do you think of the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you think He was insane? Do you think He was Satan-possessed? He was neither! He was, and is, God's only begotten Son who would go to any lengths (as He did when He died) to get men to see their need for salvation, and the only way it can be received.

Cf. Acts 16:31.

THE SOWER, THE SEED, AND THE SOIL  
Mark 4:1-9

Intro: Mark does not tell us a great deal about the messages which the Lord brought to the people of His day. In fact, just two chapters have any extended sections where we have His teaching. They are chapters 4 and 13.

In chapter 4 we have some of His parables.

Mark does not include all that Matthew does (in Matt. 13), but he gives more than Luke does (in chapters 8 and 13). Obviously, the choices of each writer were determined by each individual purpose.

We have already learned from chapter 3 of Mark that a parable does not have to be a story. It can be any statement where one thing is laid along side of another thing for the sake of comparison.

But parables like we come to this morning are reserved for the Gospels and for the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. None of the Apostles preached like this; none of them wrote like this. We do have passages like 2 Tim. 2 where Paul likens the Christian life to that of a soldier going to war, or like the writer of Hebrews comparing our lives with a race, or James saying that the Word of God is like a mirror. All of these are parables. But we do not find in the epistles anything like what we have in Mark 4.

So, the very uniqueness of the parables should indicate how very important they are.

Let us note, first of all,

I. THE SETTING OF THIS PARABLE.

It is very similar to what we had in Mark 3:7-10.

In both cases:

- 1) There was a great crowd following the Lord.
- 2) Jesus was down by the sea of Galilee.

But there are also some differences:

- 1) Mark indicates that this was the greatest crowd that had so far come to the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 2) In the previous passage our Lord was healing; here, He is teaching.
- 3) Before, a boat was waiting for Him in case He needed it; here, He is in the boat.

Teaching! Why did He teach?

He taught:

- 1) Because there were many things the people did not know. This obviously must come under the category of a divine revelation. Our Lord taught things which men could not discover by themselves--as is true of all revelation.
- 2) Because it was extremely important for people to understand these truths. We cannot imagine that our Lord would take time talking to people about unimportant things. Nor can we imagine Him wasting a word. Every detail is important.
- 3) Because His disciples had a special need to know the truth of God so that they would know the ways of the Lord. Cf. Isa. 55:8, 9. What a lot of wasted time and effort we would save if we only knew more about the ways of the Lord better than we do!

The parable of the sower will give us tremendous insights into the ministry of the Word for teachers today.

Secondly, let us notice

## II. THE NATURE OF THE PARABLE.

The first thing that strikes us is

- A. Its simplicity. Is it possible that the Creator would talk like this--in language that children can understand? Yes, it is!

True wisdom is not complicated. Men love to impress others with the big words that they know, and if they can leave people wondering what they have said, they get a great deal of satisfaction out of it. OUR LORD WAS NEVER LIKE THIS! HE WANTED PEOPLE TO UNDERSTAND. SO HE SPOKE SIMPLY. As a result, people "were astonished" and went away saying, "From where hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?" (Matt. 13:54b).

One of the reasons we get complicated and difficult to understand is because we do not really know what we are seeking to teach. The Lord had perfect knowledge, and people had no trouble understanding His words.

- B. How realistic our Lord was.

There was nothing fanciful about this story. Every person present knew that this was what had happened to every farmer in the area. Some expositors think that the people may have even been able to see a farmer sowing his seed as the Lord was speaking!

This would tend to inspire confidence in what He said.

This leads to another thing.

C. The implication that life is full of parables.

And this is true!

The birth of every baby is a parable of the new birth.

The wonders of nature are a parable pointing to the existence of a Creator.

A tornado is a warning of coming judgment.

War pictures man's conflict with Satan and with sin.

Suicides speak of the fact that there is such a thing as sin, and that men would rather die than to live with it upon their conscience.

Clouds remind us of the presence of the Lord for the Scriptures say that "the clouds are the dust of His feet" (Nahum 1:3).

Even the sand on the seashore is evidence of the mighty power of God. The next time you are at the beach think of Jer. 5:22,

"Fear ye not me? saith the Lord. Will ye not tremble at my presence, who have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it; and though its waves toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they rear, yet can they not pass over it?"

Do you remember how the Lord sought to teach His disciples to trust Him when He referred to "the birds of the air" or to "the lilies of the field"?

The weeds in your garden are a parable showing the truth of Gen. 3!

### LIFE IS FULL OF PARABLES!

And this leads me to my final point this morning. We will get to the reason for this parable and its meaning next week, the Lord willing. But, as we conclude this morning, notice

### III. OUR LORD'S MAJOR CONCERN.

It is brought out at the beginning of the parable, and again at the end: "Hearken . . . He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." By this the Lord is seeking to make the crowd realize the importance of what He was saying!

He is pleading for their attention.

Listen to the way the Apostle Paul reflects the concern that our Lord had when he wrote the following words to the Thessalonians,

"For this cause also thank we God without ceasing because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it, not as the word of men but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."

AND YET, WILL YOU LISTEN TO THIS? Apparently, as you read the record of this account as given to us by Matthew and Mark and Luke, NOT ONE PERSON SAID TO THE LORD, WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY TELLING US THIS STORY?

His disciples asked Him. THE PEOPLE DID NOT!

Concl: Some of you here this morning have read the Bible every day this week. But have you been listening as you have read. Is it possible that you have read right over the very thing that the Lord wanted you to see, AND YOU DIDN'T SEE IT?

Have you closed your eyes and ears to the very parables in life itself which the Lord has been using to stop you in what you are doing, or are about to do?

Some of you here this morning may not have touched the Bible since last Sunday. But you know that God has spoken to you through His Word in past days, and you have been aware that He has been seeking to get your ear all week. Have you listened? Will you take His warning? Has the lack of satisfaction in all that you have and all that you have done ever been a parable to your own heart that, as our Lord said,

"A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15b)?

Or, that

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4)?

On one occasion our Lord told the story of "a certain rich man" and "a certain beggar, named Lazarus." (Review the story in Luke 16:19-31.) When the rich man wanted Lazarus to go back to warn his five brothers, Abraham replied,

"They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them . . . If they will not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

Does it matter? It matters more than anything else. Our joy now and eternal destiny depend upon our willingness to hear what God is seeking to say to us.

THE MYSTERY OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD  
Mark 4:10-12

Intro: This morning I would like for us to devote our time to just two verses: vv. 11, 12!

It is doubtful if the Lord spoke these words after He told the parable of the sower. It seems rather to have been after the crowd went away and He was left alone with His disciples.

But it is indicated in all three Gospels that the disciples (not just the twelve) asked Him why He was teaching in parables, and it always comes just after the parable of the sower.

In these two verses we have three very important truths--important, not only for our understanding of the Gospels, but also for our understanding of all of the purpose of God in the world.

Let us note what they are.

- I. THE FIRST IMPORTANT TRUTH: CONCERNING THE WORD OF GOD.  
It has to do with the expression, "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God." Or, lit. "unto you is given the mystery of the kingdom of God."

The Lord had been teaching them--teaching them things that they had never heard before. This was A REVELATION to them --just as much of a revelation as anything else in the Word of God. God has to reveal certain things to us because they could never be known or discovered in any other way.

It has to do with "the kingdom of God." Matthew calls it, "the kingdom of heaven." Therefore, we know that, at least here, the terms are synonymous!

This has to do with the Messiah's kingdom. It is anticipated throughout the Old Testament. It has its literal significance in that an actual, earthly kingdom was promised, BUT IT ALSO HAS SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE. This is what the Jews were overlooking!

The people of Israel were thinking of this as simply a national kingdom, but all through the Old Testament the Lord keeps the spiritual aspect before His people--often with little response from them. THE MESSIANIC KINGDOM WILL BE MADE UP OF THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN SAVED, REDEEMED, FORGIVEN OF THEIR SINS--not just by those who are Israelites by birth. The King has to be a descendant of David, and He will reign over Israel primarily, but His kingdom will also include all of the nations of the earth. He will be King of kings, and Lord of lords!

John the Baptist had heralded the coming of this kingdom with his, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Cf. Mt. 3:2.

Cf. what our Lord said in Mark 1:15.

Even after the crucifixion and the resurrection of Christ this was in the thoughts of the followers of our Lord. Cf.:

- 1) On the road to Emmaus, "But we had hoped that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel" (Luke 24:21a).
- 2) Just before the ascension: "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6b).

But returning to v. 11 . . . What did our Lord mean by "the mystery of the kingdom of God"?

NOTE VERY CAREFULLY!!! A mystery in the Bible IS NOT something which is impossible or hard to understand. It is a secret which God had never revealed before. It is a secret, but it is a secret revealed--and the Lord intends that it should be understood.

Note the following verses:

- 1) Matt. 13:34, 35.
- 2) Rom. 16:25, 26.
- 3) Eph. 3:5.
- 4) Col. 1:26.

So, all of this means that our Lord is in the process of revealing a secret which had never been revealed before--some truths heretofore not found any place in the Word of God.

Note: This is announced following the passage in which the scribes and Pharisees had rejected Christ, attributing His works to Satan. THUS, IT POINTS TO ISRAEL'S OFFICIAL REJECTION OF CHRIST AS THEIR KING!

And . . . it marks the introduction of something new which had not been announced before, but which fits perfectly into the plan of OT prophecy. Cf. 1 Pet. 1:10-12.

So it is not an after-thought, but a part of a carefully prepared plan which the Lord only gradually has unfolded in the Word of God.

"The mystery" speaks of the nature of the kingdom of God between Israel's rejection of Christ and her future acceptance of Him when He comes to reign upon the earth--this present Church age.

How marvelously accurate is the Word of God!

But there is a second great truth here:

II. THE SECOND IMPORTANT TRUTH: CONCERNING THE PROVIDENTIAL SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD.

This means two things:

- 1) That with great detail the members of the Godhead determined in eternity past, before creation, the course that world history would follow, and what the outcome would be.
- 2) That God possesses the sovereign power to see that that purpose is carried out, in all of its detail, in spite of the opposition of men and demons!

Notice the words: "Unto you it is given . . ." This means that sometime in the past God had decided that these very men would be the recipients of the very truth the Lord was giving them in the parables.

It might look like things were going against the Son of God (and they were), but it was all according to the divine plan and right on schedule! Cf. Matt. 13:16, 17,

"But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."

Also remember 1 Pet. 1:12,

"Unto whom it was revealed that, not unto themselves but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, which things the angels desire to look into."

What a privilege it is to be living in this age! And what grace God has manifested to us! How we should praise God for the sovereign way He is working all things out according to the counsel of His own will. Cf. Eph. 1:11.

But there is another important truth here--completely different from the first two!

III. THE THIRD IMPORTANT TRUTH: THE DEPRAVITY OF MAN.

Here we are concerned with Mark 4:11b, 12, "But unto those who are without," i.e., outside--outside of salvation, religious, maybe, but lost, unbelievers!!!

They have turned away from Christ, and they are wholly incapable of understanding the Word of God. What the parables revealed to the disciples, they concealed from the world.



V. 12 is a reference to Isa. 6:9, 10. It is quoted in full by Matthew (13:14, 15).

The multitude (including the scribes and Pharisees) could understand the story, but they did not get its meaning. They could hear what was being said, but they could not put it together. It did not make sense to them.

Cf. 1 Cor. 2:14.

"Lest at any time . . ." Is there some connection here between this and what we had in chapter 3 about the unpardonable sin?

It sounds like a permanently closed door, does it not? They had rejected the truth that they had heard; now they were not going to be allowed to understand the truth that would make them turn around so that their sins could be forgiven. They could not understand even the simple truth of how God could and would have forgiven their sins!

Concl: There is a lot of truth in these two verses, is there not?

To see the sovereignty of God and the glory of His Word ought to strengthen our faith as much as anything possibly can.

And how it should make us pray for people who do not know the Lord. Only He can make them see! Only He can make them hear! And what dire consequences follow for the person who turns away again and again from the message of the Gospel!

May the Lord use these truths in all of our hearts as He sees we have need of them.

THE KEY TO GOD'S LONG-KEPT SECRETS  
Mark 4:13-20

Intro: This explanation of the parable of the sower is in answer to the question referred to in Mark 4:10. In giving it, the Lord indicates that this parable is

I. THE KEY TO ALL OF THE PARABLES (Mark 4:13).

How wonderful it is to have this explanation given by the Lord Himself! It is recorded in Matthew and Luke as well. Cf. Matt. 13:18-23; Luke 8:11-15.

Two other parables are explained in Matthew's Gospel: The parable of the tares and the parable of the fishing net. Cf. Matt. 13:36-43, 49, 50.

BUT, IN SPITE OF THESE EXPLANATIONS, IT IS AMAZING HOW MANY DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS MEN HAVE GIVEN TO THESE PARABLES!

What is the reason for this?

Three possible explanations can be given:

- 1) It is easy for us to come to the Scriptures to read into them some preconceived ideas we have. We see, in other words, what we want to see.
- 2) We fail to take into consideration the explanation of all three Gospels, as well as the teaching of the rest of Scripture which may apply.
- 3) An intangible matter, but nevertheless, very real: WE ARE NOT TAUGHT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT. Cf. John 14:26; 16:12-15.

But, returning to our subject, Mark 4:13 indicates that, if we are right in this first parable, we are on our way to a true interpretation of the others. But, if we are wrong in our interpretation of this parable, then we can hardly expect to be right with the others.

II. THE USE OF THE KEY IN INTERPRETING AND APPLYING (Mark 4:15-20).

A. Some preliminary observations.

1. Let us keep in mind that the Lord is telling things that have never been revealed before. These are a part of "the mystery of the kingdom of God" (v. 11).
2. The word, mystery, indicates that the Lord is speaking about a period of time, unannounced in the OT, which they were just about to enter.

Without going into the details again, the mystery age, or secret age (in that it was not known previously), is the present Church Age which we are still in.

The outstanding characteristic of this age is that the Gentiles are being moved into the center of what God has been doing. Before it was predominantly Jewish. Gentiles were saved in the OT, but God was working primarily through the Jew; today Jews can be and are being saved, but God is working primarily with the Gentile world. After the Rapture, things will turn again to God's program for the Jew.

Because of the truth of these things,

3. This parable has to do with the subject of evangelism--things to know when preaching the Gospel to either Gentiles or Jews.

But, you may say, how do you know that this parable has to do with the preaching of the Gospel? Mark does not indicate this!

No, but Luke does! Cf. Luke 8:12,

"These by the wayside are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved."

This is an excellent illustration of the need to compare Scripture with Scripture when seeking to arrive at the meaning of any passage.

4. We must bring to this passage one particular truth which can positively be established by the Word of God concerning salvation.

It is this: THAT ONCE A PERSON IS GENUINELY SAVED, HE CAN NEVER LOSE HIS SALVATION! Therefore, our Lord is not teaching that a man can be saved, and then lost again. BUT HE IS GIVING US SOME TRUTH TO SHOW THAT MANY TIMES WHEN A PERSON PROFESSES TO BE A CHRISTIAN, AND EVEN MAY LIVE LIKE A CHRISTIAN FOR A TIME, HE HAS NEVER REALLY COME TO KNOW THE LORD AS HIS SAVIOR!

Those of us who know what the Word of God teaches on this subject can often be very unrealistic and very wrong in our dealing with people because we do not know the truth of this parable. There is more that

enters into winning people to Christ than we would realize if the Lord had not given us this parable.

Now let us give our attention to:

B. The interpretation of the parable (Mark 4:15-20).

1. The seed. It is "the word." Luke says, "the word of God"; Matthew says, "the word of the kingdom."

Therefore, it is established right at the outset that, as many problems as there might be in reaching people with the Gospel, THE ONLY WAY FOR PEOPLE TO BE SAVED IS THROUGH THE WORD. They need to hear the the Word, they need to understand it, and they need to believe it!

Cf. 1 Pet. 1:23,

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever."

Note: Nothing is said here about the sower. This can be any child of God. But an interesting bit of light is given in the parable of the tares: "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man" (Matt. 13:37b). (Comment.)

2. The soils.

There are four different situations indicated by our Lord. We would take these to be exhaustive. They represent four people, or groups, who outwardly respond to the Gospel. THREE OUT OF THE FOUR ARE NOT REALLY SAVED. The point of the parable is to tell us why! The Word is the same in each case, but the results and their reasons are different. Therefore, we need to be just as concerned about the circumstances in a person's life as we are that we are giving them the Word of God!

- a. The wayside (Mark 4:15). Here we see Satanic opposition to the Gospel--a subject we do not hear a great deal about.

It has to do with the hardened person, and it takes place immediately. And it happens because he "understandeth it not" (Matt. 13:19).

Cf. 2 Cor. 4:3, 4.

How do we combat Satan? Cf. Eph. 6:10-20.

- b. The stony ground (Mark 4:16, 17). This is the superficial person. He responds quickly and enthusiastically, BUT ABOUT ALL THAT IS TAKING PLACE IS WHAT YOU CAN SEE--THE OUTWARD!

He may have been led to make a profession of accepting Christ as his Savior because he felt that it would lead to a happier, more trouble-free life. BUT "afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake," he leaves it all just as quickly as he accepted it in the first place.

He was never really saved!

A superficial person can be saved, but you need to know the dangers.

- c. The thorns (Mark 4:18, 19).

Our Lord tells us what the thorns are.

- (1) "The cares of this age." This may have special emphasis for the poor, but all people have things they worry about.

Cf. Luke 10:41, "Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things."  
Cf. 14:17-20 in Luke--the excuses men made as to why they could not come to the supper.  
Also, Luke 21:34.

Contrast 1 Pet. 5:7; Phil. 4:6, 7

- (2) "The deceitfulness of riches." This may have special emphasis for the rich, but all men can be deceived by riches.

Cf. Mark 10:17-27; 1 Tim. 6:9, 10, 17. Also Psa. 63:10.

- (3) "The lusts of other things." In Luke 8:14, Luke refers to these as "pleasures."

This is for the pleasure-loving person, the sinner. He is not satisfied and so he turns to Christ, but not really.

- (4) "Good ground."

Our Lord said on one occasion, "The tree is known by its fruit" (Matt. 12:33b).

The only way you can be sure that a person has really come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior is when, after some time, you see the fruit, the evidence, in his life.

Cf. 2 Cor. 5:17; 1 John 3:9--"Whosoever is born of God doth not (habitually, continuously) commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him, and he cannot (habitually, continuously) sin, because he is born of God."

Concl: Do you see how practical the Lord was and how practical the Word of God is? It always takes the Word of God to see people saved, brought to Christ for salvation. But we cannot ignore what the people are.

In seeking to win people to Christ let us always remember the following:

- 1) Salvation is a work of God. People are not saved just because they do what we want them to do and/or say. They are saved when they do business with the Lord from the heart.
- 2) You always bring the same Gospel to people, but the presentation may be very different from person to person.
- 3) Do not be so quick to count your "decisions." You wait, and work, and pray--AND NEVER BE SATISFIED UNTIL YOU SEE THE EVIDENCE OF LIFE.

How we ought to thank the Lord for the teaching He has given us here, but what a tragedy that it has been neglected by sincere but ignorant Christian. As a result we offend people, we push them too hard, and we have hundreds (perhaps it would be better to say, thousands) of people today who are saying, "I have tried that, but it doesn't work!"

Oh, may God make us wise in the use of His Word, and wise in dealing with people--that many more might be reached with the transforming power of the Gospel!

PRINCIPLES AND PARABLES

Mark 4:21-34

Intro: Most of Mark 4 is devoted to our Lord's parables.

This simple form of teaching was used by the Lord for two reasons:

- 1) To conceal the truth from those who did not know Him as their Lord.
- 2) To reveal the truth to those who did.

But even to the disciples it was necessary that an explanation of the parables be given. Some of these explanations are recorded, and some are not.

For those that are recorded, cf. 4:13-20; for those that are not, cf. 4:34.

All of these are given by the Lord to make know secrets (or, mysteries) which God had never made known before about the Kingdom of God. The secrets apply to this age in which we are now living.

In the parable of the sower (or, the soils) we see how the Lord was preparing His disciples for evangelism, and the responses that they could expect from men--along with the reasons for those responses.

Beginning with v. 21 we have four parables down through v. 34.

The first two are explained; the second two are not.

The first two deal with this method of teaching--with parables.

The second two deal with the Kingdom of God.

All four of them contain principles that we must understand.

I. CONCERNING THE LORD'S METHOD OF TEACHING (Mark 4:21-25).

A. THE PARABLE OF THE LAMP, AND ITS PRINCIPLE (Mark 4:21, 22).

There were three things that were to be seen in every home: a lamp with its lampstand, a vase for measuring, and a bed on which to recline while they ate their food.

When it got dark and you were preparing to eat, you would light the lamp (not, candle). You would not put it under the bushel because, not only would that hide the light but, it would put the light out! Neither would you put it under the bed because it would set the bed on fire! No, you would put it on the lampstand so that it could

give light to all who were in the house. This is the PARABLE.

THINK HOW ANXIOUS YOU WERE AS A CHILD TO LEARN A SECRET AND THINK HOW IMPORTANT YOU FELT TO BE ABLE TO TELL A SECRET.

THE PRINCIPLE: Secrets are kept with the purpose that eventually they shall be made known. This is why God is giving light through parables--to make the truth known ("manifested") and to see that it is understood, explained ("come to light," or, revealed).

B. THE PARABLE OF THE BUSHEL, AND ITS PRINCIPLE (Mark 4: 23-25).

Before He tells it, in v. 23 we find Him seeking their attention!

Then He tells the parable.

He wants them to consider very carefully, to turn their minds toward what He is saying, to contemplate, to look at it: "Take heed what ye hear."

The reason for this is that, the more you want the more you will get, and the reverse will be true also.

And so we have the principle in v. 25.

The more you want, the more you will receive. But if you do not come expecting and wanting to receive, prepared to receive, THEN YOU WILL LOSE WHAT YOU HAVE.

The light we have once had can become darkness--and "how great is that darkness."

This is what makes the difference between Christians. Some come prepared to receive the Word, and wanting to receive it. They are reading it during the week. They study it on their own. Others come, but without any special desire toward the Word. No only do they not receive; they begin to lose what they once had, and soon they do not come any more.

Summary: Thus, in these two parables the Lord is seeking to show that His purpose in the parables is to make the truth known to them, but that they are going to be the ones to determine what they will receive.

Let us always remember these two things about the Word (and this applies to those of us who knew the Lord):

- 1) The Lord has given us His Word because He intends for us to understand it.
- 2) How much we understand depends upon how we approach it. Do we bring our vessels like the widow for whom Elisha



provided the oil? Cf. 2 Kings 4:1-7.

## II. CONCERNING THE KINGDOM OF GOD (Mark 4:26-34).

Now the Lord is ready to proceed with His main parables following the parable of the sower.

### A. THE PARABLE OF THE GROWING SEED (Mark 4:26-29).

ONLY IN MARK

What we have learned in the parable of the sower helps us to understand this.

The seed is the Word. The soil has to be the good soil. Fruit results.

The sower sows, and he reaps. BUT HE DOES NOT HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE GROWTH. He does not need to understand it. And He does not need to stay awake in order for it to take place.

Why?

Because He has complete, absolute confidence in the seed!  
THIS IS THE MAIN POINT IN THIS PARABLE.

We must never lose faith in the Word. We must never employ substitutes. The Word alone will do the work, and it is the Word which men need to hear.

We do not need to understand all of the details of salvation in order to see men saved anymore than a farmer has to be able to explain germination and growth before he can have a harvest.

Note the following verses which speak of the power of the Word of God:

- 1) Isa. 55:11, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."
- 2) Jer. 23:29, "Is not my word like a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?"
- 3) Heb. 4:12, "For the word of God is living, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."
- 4) 2 Tim. 4:1, 2a, "I charge thee, therefore, before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the living and the dead at his appearing and his king-

dom, Preach the word . . ."

The most important thing that is going on today is the sowing of the seed, the Word of God, and we must never lose our confidence in the seed so that we sow it and something else, or something else altogether.

Do you believe that God works through His Word alone?

B. THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED (Mark 4:30-32).

In v. 30 the Lord is after their attention again. He has been taking parables from their daily lives to illustrate His teachings? Could they see any? Can YOU?

Here we are back to a seed again--a "mustard seed."

It evidently was an annual.

In a matter of weeks it would grow to a height of 10 to 12 feet! Its growth was all the more miraculous because of its insignificant size as a seed.

Two things are pointed out in particular by our Lord:

- 1) It out grows all other herbs (and remember we are talking about His Kingdom).
- 2) The birds sit under the shadow of it.

Where did we hear about birds? Cf. Mark 4:15. Therefore, we see that one reason for the great size is the fact that there is good and evil in the Kingdom. It has not been purged as yet. This is a picture of Christendom. Many profess, but not all possess. We learned that from the parable of the sower, did we not?

If we as servants of the Lord Jesus Christ are not aware of this we will not be wise servants of our Lord. Never be overawed by numbers. Cf. Matt. 7:21-23,

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father, who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out demons? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profes unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

The child of God must understand this.

Concl: There were many other parables. Matthew and Luke give more, but Mark stops here this time.

Note two things: 1) Even here, the Lord could only give to men

as they were, lit., able to hear it. 2) He only used parables,  
BUT HE CAREFULLY EXPLAINED TO THEM EVERY PARABLE HE GAVE.

THEY COULD ONLY UNDERSTAND WHAT HE EXPLAINED TO THEM, AND THEY  
COULD ONLY GIVE TO OTHERS WHAT HE HAD MADE THEM UNDERSTAND.

Cf. John 16:12-15; 1 Cor. 3:2; Heb. 5:11-14.

A MIRACLE WHICH ANSWERED A QUESTION  
Mark 4:35-41

Intro: Twice in the Gospels we have the record of our Lord stilling a storm on the sea of Galilee. Mark records both of them, and so does Matthew. Luke records only the first; John, only the second.

In the first storm, the Lord Jesus was there; in the second, He was not.

In both cases it was the Lord who sent His disciples out into the sea in a boat.

Both followed very busy days of ministry.

In each case the storm was unexpected. In each case the disciples were afraid.

In the first case it seems that the teachings of the Lord seemed to be contradicted by what the Lord was doing: sleeping. In the second, the disciples failed to apply what they had just seen in the feeding of the 5,000.

The second miracle of stilling the storm is in Mark 6:45-52.

But now let us devote our time to this first instance of our Lord stilling a storm. We need to remember that they are seeing a kind of miracle they had never seen before, and probably had not even thought possible.

I. THE MAIN FEATURES IN THE ACCOUNT.

- A. A clear indication of the Lord's will: "He saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side." Note carefully the statement. He told them they were going over to the other side.
- B. An unexpected trial. Many of these men were fishermen and used to storms--but not to a storm like this one (although they were known). It has been described as: "a storm breaking forth from black thunder-clouds in furious gusts, with floods of rain, and throwing everything topsy-turvy" (Schmidt in Thayer, 368). Aristotle called this kind of a storm, "a whirlwind revolving from below upwards" (Ibid.). The word used for "evening" in v. 35 may mean any time from 3 in the afternoon to sundown. But it became dark with wind, high waves, and heavy rain.  
Our guide on the sea of Galilee told us that there have been waves 22' high in some of their storms on the sea.
- C. A confusing silence. The Lord Jesus was asleep. He was doing nothing, and apparently knew nothing at all about the storm. He must have been very, very tired.

- D. A frantic call for help. The kind of confusion that prevailed is seen if we notice what each of the Gospel writers record:
- 1) Mark: "Master (or better, Teacher), carest thou not that we perish?"
  - 2) Matthew (8:25): "Lord, save us; we perish."
  - 3) Luke (8:24): "Mater, master, we perish."

Everybody must have been saying about the same thing in a slightly different way.

Mark let us know that the disciples were more bewildered by the Lord than they were by the storm. They found His apparent lack of concern impossible to take.

- E. An amazing miracle--never before witnessed by any of the disciples!

His word is not as meaningless as they might have thought. He simply spoke, "Peace, be still," and the sea was muzzled (the meaning of the expression). It actually means, Be quiet, and stay that way.

There had been a great storm; now there was a great calm. "The wind ceased."

- F. A gracious rebuke: "Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?"

All three Gospels record this, BUT NOT ONE OF THEM GIVES AN ANSWER.

Instead, we have,

- G. An interesting question. This, in part, reveals the reason for the experience. The Lord taught some things through parables, BUT HE TAUGHT OTHER THINGS THROUGH PROBLEMS!

Why did the Lord put His disciples through this experience? And what is the experience to mean to us?

The lessons to be learned from this miracle and the conditions surrounding it are so many that the passage is soon recognized as being inexhaustible! Let us notice some of them.

## II. SOME OF THE LESSONS TO BE LEARNED.

- A. Concerning the will of God and trouble.

Have you had the idea that these do not go together. Then read again Mark 4:35-37. It was the Lord who said that they should go to the other side of the sea. And, if you believe in His omniscience, i.e., that He knows all things, then He had to have said this knowing that there was going to be a storm!

The Bible is full of illustrations of this. Think of Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, Daniel, John the Baptist, Peter, John, Paul, and a host of others!

Let me say this: If someone is here and thinking about becoming a Christian because you feel that that will put an end to trouble, then you had better change your mind. If you are a Christian and wondering about doing the will of God in your own life, thinking that it will put an end to your troubles, then you had better think again.

The most dreadful illustration of this is our Lord Himself. For Him the will of God meant the Cross!

It would be dreadful if we had to stop here.

B. The silence of God and prayer.

Even worse than the storm is the thought that our Lord may be asleep. Nothing is so baffling as His silence at such times.

Cf. Psa. 77:3, 7-9.

At such times the Word seems hollow and empty. We feel frantic and we cry out in alarm, wondering if it will do any good.

But here we come to one of the main reasons for the storm and the silence of the Lord. He is seeking to get us to pray like the disciples did. They may have cried out in dismay and alarm, but they cried out to the Lord!

Oh, how we need to learn to pray!

What happened?

C. The power of God and peace.

His Word is not so meaningless after all. This probably was not even in the thoughts of the disciples when they cried out to the Lord. They may have felt that He could do something to get them out of the storm, BUT IT IS DOUBTFUL IF ANY OF THEM FELT THAT HE COULD DO ANYTHING ABOUT THE STORM ITSELF!

The Lord muzzled the storm. He told it to get quiet, and to stay that way. AND IT DID!

Now we are coming to the glorious part of this experience. Just because you have not seen the Lord do a certain thing is no reason He cannot do it! AND PERHAPS THIS WAS THE MAIN REASON THE LORD ALLOWED THE STORM TO COME RIGHT AT THIS TIME. When the Sea of Galilee is calm, it is just like glass.

The storm stopped faster than it started!

The Lord does know. He does care. He does hear us when we cry. It may be in fear and terror, but He hears us when we pray. Never forget that!

D. The Son of God and glory.

Note His gracious rebuke. "Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?" He met the need, and then asked the questions.

And, as the chapter ends, we find them talking in amazement about the Lord and what He could do!

This is what storms and trials do for us--they turn us to the Lord and we begin to think more about Him and to talk more about what He is able to do. Until then, we may think that we can usually handle the troubles for ourselves.

Concl: Perhaps you are in the midst of a storm this morning. You may look peaceful outside, but have dreadful turmoil inside. What an encouragement this should be to you! Do not give up hope. The Lord may still be silent. But He hears, and He will meet your needs--very probably in ways you have never seen Him work before.

Perhaps the sea is calm for you this morning. But remember: It can change without warning. How reassuring it should be to all of us to know that, whatever may arise, the Lord is able to deliver us and to meet any need.

Does Jesus care when my heart is pained  
Too deeply for mirth and song;  
As the burdens press, and the cares distress,  
And the way grows weary and long?

Does Jesus care when my way is dark  
With a nameless dread and fear?  
As the daylight fades into deep night shades,  
Does He care enough to be near?

Does Jesus care when I've tried and failed  
To resist some temptation strong;  
When for my deep grief I find no relief,  
Though my tears flow all the night long?

Does Jesus care when I've said "good-by"  
To the dearest on earth to me,  
And my sad heart aches till it nearly breaks,  
Is it aught to Him? Does He care?

(Over)

O yes, He cares; I know He cares,  
His heart is touched with my grief;  
When the days are weary, the long nights dreary,  
I know my Saviour cares.

Peter stated it this way:

"Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you"  
(1 Peter 5:7).