

A MIGHTY LEGION AND A MIGHTIER LORD

Mark 5:1-20

THREE MIRACLES IN MARK 5.

Intro: This morning we come to the seventh miracle, and the second specific case of demon possession which has been mentioned by John Mark. Cf. Mark 1:21-28.

Mark calls them unclean spirits, and he calls them demons. Devils is not a good translation since there is but one Devil, but there are many demons.

A demon is a fallen angel. He is capable of indwelling human beings. Our passage this morning indicates that it is possible for many demons to possess, or indwell, one person. When asked what his name was, this demon replied, "My name is Legion, for we are many." There were 6,000 men in a Roman legion. This, plus the fact that when they were cast out they went into 2,000 swine, indicates how amazing this doctrine of demon-possession can be!

There is nothing like this particular case in all of the Bible. Although Matthew and Luke also record it, Mark surpasses them in detail and graphic description. Matthew says that there were two--and there undoubtedly were. But the one was the leader, so surpassingly terrible and fierce, that Mark and Luke devote their comments to him alone.

The whole picture is Jewish. Even though this event took place on the southeastern shores of the Sea of Galilee, yet it was in the territory given to Manasseh. The destruction of the herd of swine, the particular names used by the demon, and "Lord" corresponding to the OT Jehovah, all point to a Jewish situation.

It is impossible to say which miracle called for the greatest display of divine power, but this would certainly have to be classed with the greatest of our Lord's miracles.

The wording of 5:1 ties in with that of 4:35. The Gospel writers do not always follow a chronological order, but it seems that Mark has in this case. If so, then it is interesting to compare the stilling of the storm with the stilling of the man who was demon-possessed!

What was the miracle designed to teach the disciples? What are we to learn from it? Let us notice three things:

I. THE DREADFUL POWER OF THE FORCES OF SATAN.

In re-reading parts of Dr. Chafer's book on Satan, I noticed that he refers to the fact that people have tried to make a joke out of Satan. But nothing about Satan or demons is a

joke! He is the worst person in the universe, and he has been joined by those who are terrible beyond description. Take a look, a close look, at the world today, and you will find plenty of proof.

What does this passage teach us?

A. Demons are unclean spirits.

They are called, "unclean," because "every trace of moral purity was gone and utter foulness had become this spirit's nature" (Lenski, p. 77).

There is nothing good about Satan or the demons. They corrupt and defile everything they touch. Nothing is made better by them; everything is made worse.

Satan and his forces are out to ruin every human being and drag them down to hell with them if they possibly can!

Do not be deceived! Read v. 5 very carefully.

B. ~~Demons~~ make men helpless.

This man could not even talk for himself. The demon does all of the talking.

C. All human help is futile where demon power is being exercised.

Read v. 4.

Personally I do not believe that a child of God can be indwelt by a demon, or demons. There is no Scripture which would indicate that this is possible. Nothing in this passage indicates that this man was a believer in Christ prior to his deliverance. But Christians do come under Satanic and demonic attacks. When this happens, only the Lord can help.

D. They are out to destroy.

Read v. 13.

But there are also brighter indications of hope in this passage.

E. They are powerless before our Lord Jesus Christ.

Read v. 6. "Worshiped" here simply means obeisance.

F. There are certain things they know about the Lord:

1. They know who He is (Mark 5:7).

No demon is ever confused about the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. "The most high God" is a term that goes back to Melchizedek, and it runs right through the OT. It speaks of the Lord's sovereignty, His Lordship over all, that He owns all the universe.

2. They know that He will judge them and that the time of the judgment has been set.

Matthew records it this way: "Art thou come here to torment us before the time?" Cf. Rev. 12:12.

Luke says that they did not want to be cast "into the deep," or, lit., the abyss--HELL! Cf. Rev. 20:1-3. Hell is "prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41b).

3. They know that they have to do what He says.

Read vv. 10, 12.

The first part ^{above} has to do with the second thing that this miracle was to teach the disciples:

II. THE PATHETIC WEAKNESS OF MAN.

He is absolutely helpless before Satan and his demons.

Read again vv. 3, 4.

Cf. 2 Cor. 4:3, 4. Also see Eph. 6:10-12, 18.

The latter part under "I." deals with our final and most important point this morning:

III. THE SURPASSING GREATNESS OF THE POWER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Cf. Phil. 4:13; Matt. 28:18.

The Lord could still the storm; could He still the tempest that was raging in this man's heart?

No sooner do the demons see "Jesus" than their tone changes completely. Read vv. 6-13.

And notice the result! Cf. v. 15.

But we see another result: the destruction of the herd of swine!

How could the Lord do this? Because it was in defiance of the Word of God (another indication that our Lord was dealing with Jews).

Concl: How did it all end? Two things can be said:

- 1) The men of the place wanted Him to leave--which He did! They were more concerned about their financial gain than their own obedience to the Word of God or than they were about the deliverance of those who were under Satan's power. The physical and the material always is more important to men than is the spiritual!
- 2) The Lord left a witness there! "The Lord" in v. 19 is the equivalent of Jehovah in the OT. Note the reference to "Jesus" in v. 20!

"All men did marvel." But no record that any believed!

Here are two mighty forces arrayed against each other--seeking to win the hearts of men! Man, because of his own sin, is more responsive to Satan and to demons than he is to the Lord.

These forces are the two forces at work today--greater than men, and greater than all other forces in the world. BUT THE ONE IS NO MATCH FOR THE OTHER. "Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4b).

With the many things included in the Gospel, it would be impossible for any person to trust Christ and be saved if the Lord had not been able to say, as He did, to the disciples, "The prince of this world is judged" (John 16:11).

The writer of the book of Hebrews says,

"Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, And deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:14, 15).

For the child of God we have this from the Apostle Peter:

"Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary, the devil, like a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world" (1 Pet. 5:8, 9).

A FAITH THAT WOULD NOT BE DENIED
Mark 5:21-34

Intro: We come to a miracle this morning which, in all three of the Synoptics, cuts in two the account of another miracle. Cf. Matt. 9:18-26; Luke 8:40-56.

Matthew probably gives us a better idea as to when these two miracles were performed--not immediately after the Lord returned from across the Sea of Galilee, but probably several days later.

First of all, Jairus, well-known in Capernaum as the ruler of the synagogue (one word in the Greek), came to our Lord with a very urgent request. While the Lord was hurrying with him to his home, he was delayed by a woman, not named by any of the Gospel writers. She had been fighting a hemorrhage for 12 years. She had seen every doctor she could. She had spent all of her money. Instead of getting better, she was getting worse. If someone did not help her, it was obvious that she was going to die.

For the Lord to have two requests, or two needs, confronting Him at the same time, was probably not unusual. But it is given to us in these two parables to teach us at least two things:

- 1) That our Lord was so mighty in what He could do, and so sovereign over the affairs of people, even when it was a distraction to Him, that He could perform one miracle while He was hurrying to perform another.
- 2) The affect that one need has in meeting another need. Mark and Luke make it very clear that the woman with the issue of blood may have delayed the Lord just long enough so that Jairus' little twelve year old daughter, his only child, died before the Lord got there.

It is similar in some respects to the raising of Lazarus--only there the Lord purposely delayed in going to Lazarus until he did die!

We will look more into this second point next week, but we need to recognize it as we look in particular this morning at the miracle involving the woman.

As we begin with the account, notice the times that Mark indicates that there was a large crowd with the Lord at this time. See vv. 21, 24, 27, 30, 31. This is very important in connection with both of these miracles--in the case of Jairus, because of his prominence; in the case of the woman, because it seems that she had something connected with her disease that she had been hiding AND HOPED TO BE ABLE TO CONTINUE TO HIDE!

The crowd was there!

But, in spite of the crowd, we see, first of all,

I. JAIRUS' URGENT REQUEST (Mark 5:23).

Think of this as a prayer, because any request made to our Lord had to be a prayer because of His Deity (whether the person making the request recognized Him as the Son of God, or not). Nothing would indicate that Jairus was a disciple. In fact, the evidence would tend to support the idea that he was not a disciple!

It is Luke (8:42) who tells us that Jairus and his wife just had this one daughter. Jairus loved her very much. He called her his "little daughter" as an indication of how dear she was to him.

The way Mark is recording this is like we would say, Do you know who came and fell before the Lord and poured out his heart to Him? Or, You would never guess who came to the Lord today with such an urgent request that he fell down at the Lord's feet right in front of the whole crowd of people! It was no less a man that Jairus! Can you believe it?

Does the Lord hear the prayer of people who are not His?

Yes, He does (although He is not committed to them), and He sometimes answers their prayers.

It is very interesting to see how men will disregard their position and their reputation and everything else when they really face a crisis.

And how gracious of the Lord to go with him--leaving the crowd to meet the need of a 12 year old girl!

But, as Jairus and the Lord with the disciples made their way through the crowd, there was an insignificant woman in the crowd who had been sick for 12 years and who was very hesitant about making her need known. But she had an idea.

She believed that, if she could get close enough to touch His garment, she would be healed! Luke says, "the border of His garment" (Luke 8:44)--the part which the Pharisees like to make wide and conspicuous! Cf. Matt. 23:5b, "and enlarge the borders of their garments. See also Num 15:37-40; Deut. 22:12.

And so we have,

II. A FRANTIC ATTEMPT--on the part of the woman (Mark 5:27).

Note the result in v. 29. Her confidence was expressed in v. 28.

But, with all of this we must also note, in the third place, that

she had,

III. AN IMPERFECT FAITH (Mark 5:28).

This is a very interesting example of what you sometimes see even today. People know that the Lord is able to save them, but they bring in other things which really do not have anything to do with His work in their hearts--such as, going to the right church, or being baptized, or taking communion, or giving their money, or a host of other things that are good in themselves, but are not basically the answer.

The garments of our Lord could not heal anyone! IT IS THE LORD HIMSELF, NOT HIS GARMENTS, FROM WHOM THE HEALING POWER CAME.

The Lord could not leave her thinking as she did, nor continuing to hide her problem--whatever that may have been.

And so next we must look at,

IV. WHAT THE LORD DID AND SAID (Mark 5:30-34).

- A. He stopped and turned around.
- B. He asked a searching question. See v. 31, "Who touched me?"

We cannot believe that the Lord did not know. Nor can we believe that this healing was done apart from the will of our Lord.

But He asked to give the woman an opportunity to bring out what she had been concealing and to give Him an opportunity to teach her and to bless her.

The same idea was behind our Lord's questions:

- 1) To Adam, "Where art thou?" (Gen. 3:9).
- 2) To Cain, "Where is Abel, thy brother?" (Gen. 4:9).
- 3) To Philip, "Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" (John 6:5b). The following verse says, "And this he said to test him; for he himself knew what he would do."
- 4) To Saul of Tarsus, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (Acts 9:4).

The Lord knew who had touched Him, but He wanted her to acknowledge it. It had to be brought out in the open.

HOW WONDERFUL THAT MARK COULD RECORD WHAT WE HAVE IN V. 33! She "came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth." What a relief this must have been for her!

And so finally we have the fact that

C. He spoke gracious words (Mark 5:34).

It was a fourfold message.

1. It was a word of tender affection: "Daughter."

We have mistaken ideas about Him, but, oh, how He wants us to come to Him. Only He can meet our needs!

2. It was a word of instruction: "Thy faith hath made thee whole," or, well.

It was not that the garment of our Lord had made her well, but it was her faith in the Lord. The Lord had performed the miracle; her faith had opened the door to Him.

3. It was a word of forgiveness: "Go in peace." This would add to the impression that we get from the account in the three Gospels that she was trying to hide something, and that she had a problem that was greater than her twelve-year old disease. It was a twelve-year old SIN!

There is no peace except the peace which He gives. Cf. Rom. 5:1.

4. It was a word of assurance: "Be well from thy plague." This is a promise that the trouble would not come back. (A "plague," or scourge, in this sense "was used for afflictions regarded as a scourge from God" (Robertson, I, 299)).

Concl: In addition to all of the wonderful things this tells us about the Lord, do we not have here a marvelous picture of man in his spiritual need, and what the Lord can do to meet that need:

- 1) A hopeless condition. We cannot help ourselves, nor can anyone else!
- 2) A thing we try to hide.
- 3) Mistaken ideas about Jesus Christ.
- 4) In our desperation, we come to Him with our mistaken ideas.
- 5) He graciously forgives us, dispelling our fears, and assures us that the trouble will never come back again.

We have it in the words of the hymn:

"I came to Jesus as I was--weary, and worn, and sad;
I found in Him my resting place,
And He has made me glad!"

MORE THAN WE ASK
Mark 5:35-43

Intro: This morning we want to complete a story which we began last week. We found that one story was interrupted by another story--and it is the same in Matthew, Mark, and Luke!

This probably happened many times during the earthly ministry of our Lord--He would start to perform one miracle, and be interrupted by someone else who needed help.

In the case before us here in Mark 5 we learn about a ruler of a synagogue who, forgetting his position in the city, came to our Lord with a desperate request where time was very important: His only daughter was "at the point of death" (Mark 5:23).

He presented his request, and the Lord agreed to go to his home.

They started off as fast as they could go through the crowd. We do not know how far they had gone when suddenly the Lord stopped and said, "Who touched my clothes?" (Mark 5:30). The disciples were amazed that He would ask such a question, but a little investigation proved that a woman who had been sick for 12 years did touch Him, believing that she could be healed--which she was!

We do not even know how long all of this took. But, however long it was, IT WAS TOO LONG! The next thing we read as we come to our text for this morning is that friends of Jairus, or possibly other members of his family, came with . . .

I. A VERY DISTRESSING MESSAGE (Mark 5:35): "Thy daughter is dead. Why troublest thou the Master any further?"

In a moment, every hope that he had had was gone!

Thoughts must have raced through his mind. Could it really be true? Why had he not come to the Lord sooner? And could he have made it if that woman had not stopped them?

Later on Mary and Martha were going to have a similar experience when Lazarus died!

There is nothing more distressing than think of what might have been done to prevent something like this that has happened. BUT, THE WORST PART OF IT ALL IS TO FEEL THAT THE LORD COULD HAVE DONE SOMETHING WHICH HE DID NOT DO!

And one think is clear: NO ONE EXPECTED THAT ANYTHING COULD BE DONE NOW.

But what has happened here is not an accident. Our Lord did

not get faced with so many needs that He was able to meet some, but not meet others. This is the main point in the story.

G. Campbell Morgan says,

"There was a method and a purpose in the halting of Jesus. There is always a meaning in His delay. Out of the delay will come help, out of the darkness will come light. It is always so with this Christ of ours" (The Gospel According To Mark, p. 127).

Back in Genesis 18 we find another example when it seems that God had waited too long to give Abraham and Sarah a child. It was humanly impossible, but at that time when Sarah laughed within herself and at God that the Lord said to Abraham,

"Is anything too hard for the Lord?" (Gen. 18:14).

On another occasion the Lord had to say to Moses,

"Is the Lord's hand become short?" (Num. 11:23).

Isaiah wrote later,

"Behold the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear" (Isa. 59:1).

Through Jeremiah we have that wonderful command and promise,

"Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not" (Jer. 33:3).

In Mark 10:27 Mark records for us that the Lord said,

"With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible."

Even Job told the Lord,

"I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withheld from thee" (Job 42:2).

The Apostle Paul gives us two verses which every Christian loves after he finds them in Eph. 3:20, 21:

"Now unto him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

It seems possible that the son of the widow of Nain had been raised before this (cf. Luke 7:11-18), but, if Jairus had heard about it, or if his family and friends had heard about it, there is no evidence here. But we can be sure that the Lord is always seeking to stretch our faith so that we will

see Him do things which we have never seen Him do before!

But what evidence is there that this situation was NOT hopeless?
We find . . .

II. A REASSURING WORD FROM THE LORD (Mark 5:36).

Before Jairus could answer, THE LORD DID! Only He spoke to Jairus.

How thankful we should be for the phrase, "As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken . . ."

He followed the word of men with His own Word.

Which means the most to you? When we look at our circumstances, the Word sometimes takes on a hollow ring. BUT WE MUST REMEMBER THAT JESUS CHRIST WAS (AND IS) THE SON OF GOD, AND THAT THIS IS HIS WORD!

What did He say? Just four words in the Greek; five, in the English: "Be not afraid, only believe."

To be afraid here means to lose heart.

There are often times in our lives when all we have is the Word of God. And in these times all we can do is, "Only believe"--but time will prove that this is enough!

III. THE LORD'S PLAN (Mark 5:37-43).

It is in these hopeless situations, whether they be large or small, that we learn the ways of the Lord. Those who have studied the Scriptures know that the Lord does not always meet the same need in the same way. He provided water for the Israelites in several different ways. BUT THERE ARE CERTAIN CONDITIONS PRESENT HERE WHICH GIVE US SOME INDICATIONS AS TO HOW THE LORD MAY WORK WITH US.

A. Most of the time people are going to be excluded from what He does with us.

See what the Lord does in vv. 37a, 40a. There may be someone like Peter, or James, or John around, but most people will discourage you, or be a hindrance, and so they are not included!

Sometimes the Lord says, "Bear ye one another's burdens" (Gal. 6:2a), but at other times He says, "For every man shall bear his own burden" (Gal. 6:5). The Lord knows who needs to be around, and who does not!

- B. The Lord has given us certain ones who can bear infallible witness concerning what He did, and can do.

That is why Peter and James and John were there!

One of the basic principles of the OT which finds its way into the NT is this:

"At the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established" (Deut. 19:15b).

Often, when you are going through a discouraging time, waiting almost hopelessly and endlessly for the Lord to do something, CONSULT WITH EYE-WITNESSES, AND READ WHAT MEN HAVE WRITTEN, IN AND OUT OF THE SCRIPTURES, AS A RESULT OF TIMES THEY HAVE HAD WHEN ALL THEY COULD DO WAS TO TRUST THE LORD.

They always encourage us to trust the Lord completely! And what strength this is for our souls.

- C. We need to be ready to accept His rebukes.

See vv. 38, 39.

The professional mourners were there. Matthew tells us that the musicians were there. And what a noise they were making!

How different it would have been if they had remembered Psa. 46:10,

"Be still, and know that I am God."

"They laughed Him to scorn."

How thankful we can be that Jairus and his wife did not seem to enter into the ridiculing of our Lord!

- D. Expect the Lord to give you what you ask Him for--OR SOMETHING BETTER!!!!

What a tender picture it is when you see the Lord taking these parents, followed by Peter and James and John, and going to be beside of this little twelve year old girl.

What the Lord was going to do had not been a part of Jairus' prayer. See v. 23. Perhaps he had hoped that the Lord would get there before she died. After the news came, there is no record that he said anything else to the Lord. The Lord was doing the speaking; he, the listening!

He speaks in Aramaic, Talitha cumi, and the little girl was raised back to life again. She "arose, and walked."

IS IT ANY WONDER THAT THE FIVE OF THEM WHO WERE THERE "were astonished with a great astonishment"? This was something that they had not expected to see, something which they had not even asked for!

We must never limit God to what we have seen Him do in the past.

But there is one more thing.

E. The Lord did not want them to talk about it.

They could not keep it from being known, but the Lord did not want them to be the ones to publicize it. You and I are to praise the Lord for what He has done for us, BUT BE VERY CAREFUL ABOUT WHAT YOU TELL PEOPLE.

There are several obvious reasons for this:

- 1) It could easily become a matter of pride with you.
- 2) You can easily give people the wrong impression. Just because our Lord did this for Jairus and his wife did not mean that this was His will for every little twelve year old who got sick.
- 3) You will not understand all that is involved until you get farther from the circumstance. Wait until the Lord teaches you even more from that experience. Talk about it when you are asked, but do not say any more than you need to say.

Concl: What an encouragement this should be to our faith! An unanswered prayer opened the way for one of those great and mighty things which they knew not!

Hudson Taylor used to like this verse, with which I close:

Enough, that God my Father knows!
 Nothing this faith can dim:
 He gives the very best to those
 Who leave the choice with Him.

IS NOT THIS THE CARPENTER?

Mark 6:1-6

Intro: This visit to Nazareth, "his own country" (v. 1), is generally considered to be his second after His public ministry began. Therefore, Matthew 13:53-58 records the same visit that we have here in Mark--His last one! But Luke 4:16-30 records His first visit. There are some similarities about the two visits, but there are many differences, too.

Another point of interest about this final visit to Nazareth is that, in the Gospel of Mark, this is the last event which Mark records before the disciples begin their ministry. Up to this point it seems that the disciples have been watching, and listening, and learning. In v. 7 of this chapter our Lord sends them out to preach, to heal, etc.

Mark may be referring to more than the twelve in 6:1, but he certainly includes all of the twelve. They went with the Lord, not to participate, but because there was something for them to learn--as there is for us! There is no mention in Luke's account of the disciples. In fact, it seems that our Lord's first visit to Nazareth was made before He had called any of the disciples!

What lessons are to be learned from a passage like this? How would it have been instructive for the disciples?

I. IT GIVES US AN AMAZING ILLUSTRATION OF THE GRACE OF GOD.

We say this for two reasons:

- A. When we remember the treatment our Lord received on His first visit. Cf. Luke 4:16-30. This is where they had tried to kill Him!
- B. When we remember what kind of a city Nazareth was.

Do you remember what Nathanael said to Philip when Philip told him about the Lord? He said, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46a).

Morally and spiritually Nazareth was about the worst in all of Israel! It was a part of our Lord's humiliation that He was brought up there, and that His sacred Name was associated with it.

Nothing is more amazing than the grace of God. If the disciples were to preach it, they had to see it manifested. This is one of the greatest examples we have of it in the Scriptures!

II. THIS EXPERIENCE TAUGHT THE DISCIPLES SOME IMPORTANT LESSONS

ABOUT MAN. Let us note what some of these lessons were.

- A. They were to learn that man can be very religious without really having his heart open to the Lord.

The synagogue was packed! This was evidently the case every Sabbath Day.

Often sinful men will be very religious. They turn to external ordinances and ceremonies as a salve for their conscience, but they do not really want the living God in their lives.

Such was the case then; IT IS STILL TRUE TODAY! Man has not changed.

- B. They were to learn that man can be very impressed with the Lord, and ask some very important questions, but not wait for the right answers.

There are no more vital questions than those we have recorded in v. 2. They have to do with:

- 1) Our Lord as a person.
- 2) His unique teaching.
- 3) His miraculous works.

THEY ASKED THE RIGHT QUESTIONS, BUT THEY DID NOT GET THE RIGHT ANSWERS! (We will see why in just a moment.)

The impression which our Lord made was encouraging. The people in the synagogue "were astonished," i.e., struck with astonishment--a very strong expression.

But the disciples had to learn not to be deceived by outward responses. Perhaps the tone of voice in which these questions were asked indicated that something was wrong!

- C. They were to learn that what people know about Jesus as a man keeps them from learning what they need to know about Jesus as the Son of God.

Look at the questions in v. 3.

These are a different kind of question from those in v. 2. Here they felt that they had the right answers. AND THEY DID! But their mistake was in not realizing that there was more to be learned about our Lord Jesus Christ than what they knew.

How many people there are who stumble over the humanity of Christ! They assume that, because He was man, He

could not be the Son of God, sharing completely in all of the attributes of God, the Father.

But how wrong they were!

And we must remember that astonishment with Jesus is nothing in itself to get excited about. In fact, it may be an outstanding sign for great alarm!

- D. They were to learn that, often, the people who know the most about the Lord are the very people whose hearts are the hardest against the truth. Cf. v. 4.

Who would you rather talk to--a Gospel hardened, unregenerate church member, or a person who has never heard anything about the Lord?

I would prefer the person who has never heard.

Perhaps there is someone here this morning who knows a great deal about the Bible and about the Lord. You may even be recognized by your friends as a Christian--because you always go to church, and have always gone to church. You know a great deal, but you do not know the Lord.

The disciples had to learn that there are all kinds in the synagogue, just as there are all kinds in the church today.

Then, in the last place, this experience was important for the disciples, and for us, because

III. IT TAUGHT THE DISCIPLES SOME AMAZING THINGS ABOUT THE LORD.

- A. It taught them that sometimes there are certain things that the Lord cannot do.

At this point it is instructive to compare what Matthew has written with what Mark has recorded. Cf. Mt. 13:58,

"And He did not ~~many~~ mighty works there because of their unbelief."

Contrast this with Mark 6:5,

"And he could there do no mighty work, except that He laid His hands upon a few sick folks, and healed them."

Could not do means, lit., He was unable to do . . . !

Let us be sure that we understand.

We saw last week in the latter part of chapter 5 that there is nothing impossible with our Lord; this week we find that there is something. This is probably one of the reasons that John Mark has put these two experiences together.

IT IS TRUE: "WITH GOD ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE." Cf. Mark 10:27b. But God so works that the exercise of His power is a closed door to the unbelieving heart. God can do anything to the heart that is open to Him, but He will do nothing when man closes the door.

There is nothing more heart-breaking than to know what the Lord can do for people, and yet see them turn away from Him as the people of Nazareth turned away!

The disciples had to learn this.

But there was another thing:

- B. This experience taught the disciples the second thing which made our Lord marvel!

He marveled at the centurion's faith (cf. Matt. 8:10; Luke 7:9). Mark does not record it.

He also marvels here at the unbelief of the Jews.

He found faith in the heart of a Gentile; he found unbelief in the hearts of the Jews.

How blind the heart of man can be even when it is exposed continually to the truth! Cf. 2 Cor. 4:3, 4. Our Lord called the scribes and Pharisees, "blind guides." Cf. Mt. 23:16, 17, 19, 24.

Men saw Him, heard Him teach, observed His miracles-- AND YET WOULD NOT BELIEVE! Is it any wonder that our Lord marveled? AND CAN WE EXPECT THAT THE HEART OF MAN WILL BE ANY DIFFERENT IN OUR DAY WHEN THE EVIDENCE IS NOT TO BE SEEN, BUT ONLY WRITTEN IN THE BOOK?

Concl: What impression do you think was in the hearts of the disciples as they left the Synagogue in Nazareth that day? I do not know. BUT I THINK THAT I KNOW WHAT THE LORD WANTED THEM TO LEARN. He wanted them to come away knowing that their hearts must never be closed to Him. We will never know all that it is possible to know about Him, and we will never see the ultimate of what He is able to do in the hearts of those who turn in faith to Him! Later Mark records (in 9:23b), "All things are possible to him that believeth."

THE FIRST MISSION OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES
Mark 6:7-13

Intro: When we come to a passage like we have this morning we need to remember that not all of the Bible is to us, but all of the Bible is for us!

When the Lord sent the Apostles out on their first mission, the instructions given were especially for them at that time. We have proof in Luke 22:35-38 that at a later time some of the things mentioned here in Mark 6 were changed.

Thus, what the Lord commissions His people to do at one time does not necessarily apply to all times.

In Matthew's account of this same story he quotes the Lord as saying,

"Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter not; But go, rather, to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 10:5b, 6).

But, just before the ascension our Lord gave the following words of instruction to His disciples,

"But ye shall receive power, after the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8)--

— which included both Samaritans and Gentiles!

The truth of the Word never changes. The principles upon which God works always remain the same. But the missions upon which He sends His servants and the means by which those missions are carried out often are as different as it is possible for them to be. A careful student of the Word of God will note these distinctions. Practically all false teaching arising out of the Scriptures fails to recognize these differences.

E.g., God has not given us the power to heal others today. He can still heal, but He has not been pleased to give that power to us as our Lord gave it to His disciples. And, if you will read your NT carefully you will find that even those who had the gift of healing in the NT had apparently lost it before the NT was completed.

Well, then, you might say, the only importance in a passage like we have this morning is its historical value--it tells us what the Apostles were able to do on their first mission.

— Is this true?

No! The passages which are not written directly to us nevertheless have something FOR us. Here we want to note THE PRINCIPLES WHICH THE LORD WAS SEEKING TO ESTABLISH WITH HIS APOSTLES.

The principles were to go with them throughout their lives and ministries, and they are just as important for us in our lives and ministries today.

Note what they are:

- I. THE PRINCIPLE OF FELLOWSHIP WITH THE LORD: "And He called unto Him (lit., the middle voice, unto Himself) the twelve" (Mark 6:7a).

This ties in with what Mark tells us about the original appointment of the twelve:

"And He appointed twelve, that they should be with Him" (Mark 3:14a).

Nothing is more important than our fellowship with the Lord. The effectiveness of our service will depend upon it. And every opportunity for ministry is a call for another step ahead in our fellowship with the Lord.

In coming to Him they would learn what they were to do, what they were to say, where they were to go, etc. Often we are at a loss in our service because of a lack of fellowship.

- II. THE PRINCIPLE OF A DIVINE CALL: "And (He) began to send them forth by two and two" (Mark 6:7ab).

Only twelve men were sent on this mission. NO ONE ELSE HAD THE RIGHT TO GO! The right of the twelve was entirely dependent upon the fact that the Lord was sending them. Their commission was from HIM!

We do not hear Him speak audibly today. And we cannot see Him in the flesh. Our call may not come along with a bright light from heaven. BUT THE LORD HAS WAYS OF GIVING US A DESIRE TO DO HIS WILL AND IMPRESSING US THAT HE WANTS US TO MOVE IN A CERTAIN DIRECTION.

In the Lord's work all the way down the line, it is not so much a question of volunteering, but of being drafted!

What a difference there is when we as the Lord's people are doing things because we know that the Lord wants us to do them! This principle never changes.

- III. THE PRINCIPLE OF DIVINE PROVISION (Mark 6:7b): "And (He) gave them authority over unclean spirits."

The verb, "gave," is an imperfect tense which Dr. A. T. Robertson translates, "He kept on giving them all through

the tour, a continuous power (authority) over unclean spirits" (I, 308). THEIR POWER WAS GREATER THAN THAT OF THE UNCLEAN SPIRITS AND WOULD, OBVIOUSLY, INCLUDE ALL OTHER POWERS, i.e., to preach and to heal.

Power is not a once-for-all gift; it must come to us continuously, day by day, moment by moment, or it does not come at all. We are to keep on being filled with the Holy Spirit (cf. Eph. 5:18). THIS PRINCIPLE DOES NOT CHANGE.

The next principle is closely related with #2.

IV. THE PRINCIPLE OF OBEDIENCE: "And commanded them" (Mark 6: 8a).

This is probably one of the most difficult of all of the lessons for us to learn. We are so defensive about doing our own will, so afraid of what the will of God might hold for us, that we hedge, and delay, and discuss, and even make a pretense of praying about the will of God. IT SEEMS LIKE WE WILL DO EVERYTHING BUT OBEY!

The practical instructions of Scripture are not suggestions, nor divine wishes, nor things offered for our consideration and approval. THEY ARE COMMANDS!

D. E. Hoste, who was the successor to Hudson Taylor as the Director of the China Inland Mission, got his early training in the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich, England. His biographer records the following about those days:

"On one of the stained-glass windows of the hall where the young cadets assembled for prayers and meals were the words, 'Through obedience learn to command.' Prompt and unquestioning obedience, erect carriage, precision and tidiness were amongst the things which he learnt; and his later experience in the wise and just treatment of men proved invaluable training for the life-work for which God was preparing him" (p. 17).

There is no substitute for obedience.

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V. THE PRINCIPLE OF FAITH: "And (He) commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey . . ." (Mark 6:8, 9).

This is ridiculous, is it not? When anyone starts out on a journey, they try to anticipate every need that they will have--and prepare for it!

The Lord was training His disciples to trust Him to meet their needs. He does not always work this way. And the fact that you prepare does not mean that you are not trusting. BUT IT IS OBVIOUS THAT IF YOU GO WITH JUST WHAT YOU HAVE ON YOUR BACK, so to speak, YOU ARE REALLY TRUSTING THE LORD. IF HE DOES NOT PROVIDE FOR YOU, YOU JUST WILL NOT MAKE IT!

Peter perhaps reflected on this very experience when he wrote,

"Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you" (1 Pet. 5:7).

If you are going to serve the Lord in any capacity, you are going to have to learn to trust Him.

VI. THE PRINCIPLE OF SATISFACTION.

This is really indicated in two ways, and both are very important.

- A. Satisfaction with what we have: ". . . except a staff only . . . be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats" (Mark 6:8, 9).

In Matthew's account (10:10) he records that the Lord said no staff and no shoes. How do we reconcile this difference?

It is simple. He meant no NEW staff and no NEW shoes!

Did you ever stop to realize how much you would be willing to do if only you had more than you have?

When Moses got all upset because he was afraid the Israelites would not believe him when he went back to Egypt to deliver them, the Lord simply said, "What is that in thine hand?" (Ex. 4:2).

The Lord is prepared to use us with what we have, and if we need more He can give it to us. Do not let this be a hindrance!

But there is another side to this satisfaction.

- B. Satisfaction with what He provides: "And He said unto them, In whatever place ye enter an house, there abide till ye depart from that place" (Mark 6:10).

Why would they look for another place? Because they might find a nicer house with a better bed and better food!

"In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thess. 5:18).

And then, finally,

VII. THE PRINCIPLE OF DISCERNMENT (Mark 6:11). Note: The second part of this verse is not in the best MSS, but it is included by both Matthew and Luke so we know that our Lord said these words at this time.

Cf. Mark 6:5.

The Lord did not promise them 100% success. In fact, He clearly indicates that some will reject them and their message.

What should they do? Just what Paul and Barnabas did in Antioch of Pisidia,

"But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium" (Acts 13:51).

The Lord does not waste the time of His servants. If the message is rejected, we are to move on--not even taking the city dust with us!

Concl: Bruce, a thorough student of the life and ministry of Christ, once wrote, "Men who carry out the spirit of these precepts will not labour in vain" (quoted in Robertson, I, 308).

What does Mark say? (Read Mark 6:12, 13.)

Not 100%--BUT BLESSING! Cf. 6:30.

The details may be different in our ministry, but the principles remain the same. Study these on your own. Seek to understand them as thoroughly as you can--trusting the Holy Spirit to teach you. He will show you how these principles are to be applied. The blessing of God is sure to follow!

Cf. the story given in Luke of the call of the first four Apostles (Luke 5:1-11)--"Nevertheless, at thy word I will let down the net."

THE HEAD OF JOHN THE BAPTIST
Mark 6:14-29

Intro: It is doubtful if any child of God can read our Scripture passage this morning without feeling real sorrow for John the Baptist. What an ignominious end to such an outstanding ministry! We feel compelled to ask, Why?

Could not God have stopped Herod? Could not even our Lord have stopped him? Why did the Lord let John the Baptist stay in prison until he sent his disciples to the Lord saying, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" (Matt. 11:3).

We sense discouragement, doubt, perplexity, in the heart of this faithful servant of our Lord Jesus Christ. WHY?

Our Lord does not explain. Neither do the writers of the Gospels. It is their task to record what took place, not to explain. OF COURSE GOD COULD HAVE STOPPED IT. BUT THE FACT THAT HE DID NOT IS AN INDICATION THAT HE HAD A GREATER PURPOSE TO ACCOMPLISH, A PURPOSE WHICH WILL ONLY BE FULLY KNOWN WHEN WE KNOW AS WE ARE KNOWN!

But let me ask another question: WHO WOULD YOU RATHER BE, JOHN THE BAPTIST, OR HEROD?

Can there be any hesitancy in asking that question? Was this not one of the many times when the winner has been the loser? Matthew, Mark, and Luke all refer to this incident. NOT ONE OF THEM IS CONCERNED ABOUT JOHN THE BAPTIST. ALL THREE ARE DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT HEROD, HERODIAS, AND HER DAUGHTER!

In fact, if you will read Matthew's account of our Lord sending out the twelve which is placed just before this account regarding Herod, you will find that our Lord said in Matt. 10:28,

"And fear not them who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

In other words, Do not fear Herod; God is the One who is to be feared! THIS IS THE MESSAGE OF THIS WHOLE PASSAGE. THE TRAGEDY CONCERNS HEROD, NOT JOHN THE BAPTIST!

The account does not give the record in its historical sequence. Vv. 14-16 go right along with vv. 1-13. Vv. 17-29 tell us what took place in the past. So, to begin with, let us note carefully . . .

I. THE HISTORICAL SEQUENCE OF OUR ENTIRE TEXT.

- A. Herod had married his half-brother's wife, Herodias (v. 17b).

- B. John the Baptist had charged him with breaking the Mosaic Law, with being an adulterer (v. 18).
- C. Herodias had made Herod cast John into prison (v. 17a).
- D. It was her intention to kill John, but Herod had protected him (vv. 19, 20m).

Note: The word translated, "observed," in v. 20 should be, preserved, or protected.

- E. Herod feared John and gladly heard him as often as he could (v. 20).

Herod knew that John "was a righteous man, and holy"--meaning right before God and set apart to serve God. He knew this!

- F. One day Herodias got her opportunity to kill John.

It was on Herod's birthday (cf. vv. 21-25). He gave a big party and invited everybody who was anybody--in government, in the military, in society.

After the usual drinking and feasting, Herod's step-daughter came in and danced, half naked, a very lewd dance. This was always considered to be below royalty.

Herod was so pleased that he promised to give her anything she wanted as a gift.

After conferring with her mother, she asked for "the head of John the Baptist" (v. 25b).

- G. Herod, unwilling to go back on his promise and his oath, granted the request (vv. 26-28).
- I. John's disciples came and buried his headless body. Cf. v. 29.

Then, going back to the beginning of our passage, we find that John Mark is bringing us up-to-date.

- J. Some time afterwards, when the ministry of our Lord and His disciples came to Herod's attention, he was certain that John had been raised from the dead with greater powers than before (vv. 14-16).

Having seen the sequence of events, we are now ready to note:

II. THE CONSEQUENCES FOR HEROD.

Obviously Matthew and Mark and Luke become evangelists at this point. Herod was a man who had political power, wealth, position--all that a man could ever want. In addition, he, being a follower of the Jews, had a greater-than-average knowledge of the Old Testament. And still in addition, he was personally acquainted with John the Baptist and had had numerous personal interviews with him about salvation--and he "heard him gladly" (v. 20b).

IF EVER A MAN WERE WITHOUT EXCUSE, HEROD ANTIPAS WAS!!!

What would Mark have us learn from this passage?

A. The high cost of sin.

Herod knew that he was sinning when he, according to tradition, eloped in Rome with his brother's wife. Did he feel that you can violate one of God's laws and not become involved in other sins? Did he not know that "sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4b)? Did he not know that, if "the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matt. 6:23 b)? Did he not know that "whosoever committeth sin is the servant," the bondservant, "of sin" (John 8:34b)?

Did he not know that a single sin never travels alone--that it always brings others along?

He learned all of these things--and they have been written here in our Bibles so that we will not have to learn the same lesson. MAN'S MORAL STANDARDS MAY CHANGE, BUT GOD'S NEVER DO! It is still true that "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23a). DO YOU KNOW THIS?

B. The tragedy when there is no repentance.

Repentance is what John was after in v. 18, and again in v. 20--many, many times.

A better rendering of v. 20b is: "And when he heard him, he was greatly perplexed." Robertson translates it, He was at his wit's end.

He knew that he needed to forsake his sin and turn to the Lord, BUT HE REFUSED TO DO IT! This is a mistake for which there is no remedy!

Is there someone here this morning who has heard the Gospel as much as Herod heard John the Baptist, but you have not yet trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior? Do you know that you can wait too long?

C. The blessing of a troubled conscience.

Time does not do away with our sins. Twenty years after Joseph's brothers had sold him into slavery they were still bothered by what they had done!

Why doesn't God let us forget our sins?

For two reasons:

- 1) To make us realize that we need forgiveness--if we have never come to the Lord.
- 2) And, even after we have been forgiven, to serve as a preventative so that we will not commit it any more!

Is it not amazing to see that Herod knew that he had not heard the last about John the Baptist? He was wrong in what he thought was going to happen, BUT HE WAS RIGHT IN HIS FEARS ABOUT IT!

D. The grossest kind of error.

Herod was right in many things.

- 1) He believed in resurrection.
- 2) He believed that we will be more powerful after resurrection than before. "John did no miracle" (John 10:41). But Herod expected that John could do them now.

But Herod was tragically wrong about one thing--the most important thing of all: He thought that Jesus Christ was John the Baptist raised from the dead!

Who do you think Jesus Christ is? Do you think he was John the Baptist? Do you think that there are others who are just as important, or even more important, than Jesus Christ?

This is where behavior like Herod's will lead you. YOU WILL BE SO CONFUSED ABOUT THE TRUTH THAT YOU COMPLETELY LOSE SIGHT OF THE FACT THAT THERE IS NO ONE WHO IS LIKE JESUS CHRIST!!! He, and He alone, is "the way, the truth, and the light; no man cometh unto the Father but by" Him (John 14:6). John the Baptist said, speaking of Jesus Christ, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

Our hope is not in John the Baptist, but in Jesus Christ!

Concl: Luke gives us a P.S. on Herod in Luke 23:6-12. Pitiful Herod wanted to see a miracle, but from our Lord he did not even hear a word. Oh, that this might awaken our hearts to the absolute necessity of responding to the Gospel of God's grace.

OUR LORD'S MOST FAMOUS MIRACLE
Mark 6:30-44

Intro: You might say, What right do you have to call this our Lord's most famous miracle?

It seems to me that that is very easy to prove.

In the first place, more people saw it performed than witnessed any of our Lord's other miracles.

In the second place, this would naturally mean that more people would hear about it because there were so many people to tell what they had seen.

Thirdly, it is the only miracle which has been written about by all four of the Gospel writers; therefore, more people have read about it than any of the other miracles.

What was the reason for it?

The Apostle John makes it very clear that the miracles which he recorded were to prove the Deity of Jesus Christ.

This would be true of all of the miracles.

As we read the report in all four of the Gospels we can see that the Lord did it because He was concerned about the people who were hungry.

BUT IT ALSO BECOMES VERY CLEAR THAT THE LORD HAD SOME VERY IMPORTANT THINGS TO TEACH HIS DISCIPLES. They had been out serving Him; He wanted to teach them some things which would make them better servants.

Remembering that we are all servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is from this standpoint that I would like to approach this passage of Scripture this morning. What was our Lord seeking to teach the Apostles which we need to learn, too?

Let us notice, first of all,

I. THE OCCASION WHICH LED UP TO THE MIRACLE (Mark 6:30, 31).

This is the only time that Mark uses the term, "apostles," in his Gospel. Mark picks up the story here from vv. 12, 13. Now the twelve were ready to bring their report to the Lord. We sense their excitement. They had experienced great blessing. But as we read v. 30 carefully we seem to detect that the emphasis with them was not in the right place. They told the Lord "both what they had done, and what they had taught."

Their power to perform miracles seems to have delighted them more than the privilege of teaching.

This idea is strengthened when we read in Luke (the only other Gospel writer to refer to this), that "the apostles, when they were returned, declared unto him what things they had done" (Luke 9:10).

Luke says nothing about what they had to say about their teaching.

When the seventy were sent out, Luke also tells us that they came back "with joy, saying, Lord, even the demons are subject unto us through thy name" (Luke 10:17b). To this He responded, "Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20).

How had their names been written in heaven? Through the preaching of the Gospel, and their faith in the Savior of that Gospel.

SO . . . THIS IS ONE THING WHICH THE LORD HAD TO CORRECT. NOTHING MUST EVER TAKE THE PLACE OF PRE-EMINENCE IN THEIR MINISTRIES WHICH ONLY THE WORD OF GOD CAN HAVE!

Nothing is more important than this!

But there was another thing which they need to learn. We have it in v. 31: THE IMPORTANCE OF REST AND FELLOWSHIP WITH THE LORD.

"Beware of the barrenness of a busy life."

They were so busy that they did not have time to eat. They needed to eat. They needed to be quiet. They needed to be able to think. They needed to pray. They needed to be alone with the Lord.

AND SO DO WE!

II. THE RETREAT (Mark 6:32).

V. 33 sounds a little like the crowd beat the Lord and His apostles around the lake, but a reading of all four Gospels would indicate that the crowd did not arrive until after the Lord had had some time, possibly a few hours, with His disciples before the crowd arrived.

We are not told what happened, but what follows seems to emphasize the two things we have already been talking about:

the Word of God, and fellowship with the Lord.

III. THE INTERRUPTION WHICH LED TO THE MIRACLE (Mark 6:33-44).

A. What the Lord saw (Mark 6:33, 34).

Read esp. v. 34, "as sheep not having a shepherd."

This is an expression which Mark has taken, possibly from the Lord, but also from Num. 27:15-17 where Moses was told to prepare for death. We read:

"And Moses spoke unto the Lord, saying, Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, Who may go out before them, and who may go in before them, and who lead them out, and who may bring them in, that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep that have no shepherd."

What did the children of Israel need in Moses' day, and in our Lord's? A teacher.

Therefore, let us notice,

B. What the Lord did: "And He began to teach them many things" (Mark 6:34b).

He did not start to perform miracles; He began to teach them.

Cf. Paul in Acts 20:28-31.

A shepherd, a pastor, must teach His people, or he is no shepherd. THIS IS A LESSON THAT THE DISCIPLES HAD TO LEARN, AND THIS IS A LESSON THAT WE HAVE TO LEARN. THE FOUNDATION OF EVERYTHING IS THAT WE ARE BEING TAUGHT THE WORD OF GOD. IF WE FAIL HERE, WE FAIL EVERYWHERE ELSE ALONG THE LINE.

But notice . . .

C. The reaction of the apostles (Mark 6:35, 36).

We can understand this.

They had come here to be with the Lord and had been interrupted. The Lord had given much time to the people, but now the disciples felt that it was time for the crowd to go. It was after 3 p.m., and they needed to go get something to eat.

Then it was that the Lord dropped a bombshell!

- D. What the Lord said (Mark 6:37a): "Give ye them to eat."

This had not even entered into their minds, any more than they had seen this as an opportunity to teach the people.

Then again we have . . .

- E. The reaction of the apostles (Mark 6:37, 38).

It is John who tells us that v. 37 are the words of Philip, and that v. 38 are the words of Andrew. The first expresses frustration; the second, hopeless--"but what are these among so many" (John 6:9b).

THE LORD WANTED THEM TO THINK ABOUT THE PROBLEM AND THEN COME TO THE PLACE WHERE THEY HAD TO RECOGNIZE THAT THERE WAS ABSOLUTELY NOTHING THEY COULD DO--THAT THEY WERE HELPLESS!

- F. The miracle which the Lord performed (Mark 6:39-44).

Every detail here is important, and has lessons in us regarding our own ministry.

1. He made the people "sit down by companies upon the green grass" (Mark 6:39).

The Lord does things "decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40).

They obeyed Him (cf. v. 40).

2. They gave what they had to Him (Mark 6:41a). As long as they kept it, it would only feed one boy.

How important this is! We are always inclined to determine what we can do for the Lord and for people but what we can do with what we have. Nothing we have can be used at all until we give it to Him.

3. He blessed what they had given Him, and then gave it back to them (Mark 6:41m).

How amazing it is to see how He works through people!

4. The disciples gave to the people what the Lord had given to them (Mark 6:41b).

All we can give to others for their blessing is what

we have received from Him.

Can you see from this the importance of our personal fellowship with the Lord where He teaches us, where He gives to us--for ourselves, and then for others?

G. The results (Mark 6:42-44).

1. Everyone ate, and was filled (Mark 6:42).

"And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth in me shall never thirst" (John 6:35)-- words spoken by the Lord the following day.

Only Jesus satisfies the deepest needs of our hearts.

A very precious verse follows.

2. Every disciple had a basket full left over (Mark 6:43).

The more we give, the more we have. In ministering to others, the Lord ministers to us.

3. The statistics (Mark 6:44). Just counting the men there were 5,000. The crowd was closer to 10,000 in all likelihood.

But just taking the men--1 loaf fed 1,000 men; 1 fish fed 2,500 men! And these were small fish--like sardines!

Concl: Let me ask you a question? Can you serve the Lord unless the Lord is doing the work through you and for you?

Absolutely not!

How does He work? He works through His Word, and He works as we bring what we have to Him for Him to bless and break and give back to us to give to others that He might meet their needs too.

Oh, that the Lord would impress these two great truths upon our hearts that we might see the Lord do things which we could never do and which we do not even think possible.

SENT INTO A STORM
Mark 6:45-56

Intro: We come to another step in the ministry of our Lord with His disciples. In order to understand why the Lord did what He did here, we need to notice, first of all, verse 52.

The disciples' hearts were hardened, calloused, unimpressible. They had not learned what the Lord had wanted them to learn about His omnipotence in seeing the miracle of the loaves and fish, AND SO HE HAD TO SEND THEM INTO A STORM!

The Lord is always seeking to teach us, to lead us into a life of closer fellowship with Himself, to make us more effective as His servants. IF we do not have our hearts open to Him, we can be led through the most wonderful experiences, but not learn anything. THEN it is necessary for Him to lead us through other circumstances so as to teach us what He wants us to know.

Life is full of storms of various kinds. Our passage this morning is designed to help us understand many experiences through which we go.

I would like to direct your attention to seven verbs in our passage this morning--all of which have the Lord as the subject. Note them carefully as I point them out:

- 1) In v. 45, "He constrained."
- 2) In v. 45, "He sent away."
- 3) In v. 46, "He departed . . . to pray."
- 4) In v. 48, "He saw them."
- 5) In v. 48, "He cometh to them."
- 6) In v. 50, "He talked with them, and saith unto them."
- 7) In v. 51, "He went up unto them into the boat."

Everything that the Lord did in this passage is important if we are to learn what this was to mean to the disciples, and what it is to mean to us!

- I. "HE CONSTRAINED HIS DISCIPLES TO GET INTO THE BOAT, AND TO GO TO THE OTHER SIDE BEFORE HIM UNTO BETHSAIDA (Mark 6:45a).

The word, "constrained," means that He forced, He compelled His disciples to get into the boat. They had no choice. It was evidence, clear evidence, of His will for them at this time.

At the moment there was no storm; the sea was calm. BUT THIS FACT BECOMES EXTREMELY IMPORTANT ONCE WE GET INTO THE STORM.

Do not think that a storm means that you are out of the will of God. It can mean that you are exactly where the Lord wants you to be, regardless of who may be involved in it!

The disciples did not have a great deal to encourage them in the midst of the storm, but at least they knew two things:

- 1) The Lord had made them get into the boat.
- 2) The Lord had told them that they were going to the other side.

When we are in the Lord's will we can always be sure that He knew about the storm when He sent us out on calm water, and we can be sure that He will see us through!

II. "HE SENT AWAY THE PEOPLE" (Mark 6:45b).

It is the Apostle John who tells us what is behind this. In John 6:15 we read that "Jesus . . . perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king."

This was not the right time for that.

The Lord had faced this with Satan at the time of His temptation. Cf. Matt. 4:8-10.

Men are often mistaken about what the program of God is. They are constantly trying to do the wrong thing, or trying to do the right thing at the wrong time!

The disciples would probably have been very sympathetic with this movement. BUT THE LORD JESUS CHRIST SENT THE DISCIPLES TO SEA, AND SENT THE MULTITUDES AWAY. He is perfectly capable of taking care of all of the disruptions which men cause in His work.

III. "HE DEPARTED INTO A MOUNTAIN TO PRAY" (Mark 6:46b).

When you put all of the circumstances of this passage together, it is not difficult to see what He was praying about, is it?

The Lord knew what the disciples needed, and He knew that they were heading into a storm!

Later on Peter was to go into a storm which he did not know about, but the Lord knew, and so He said,

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22:31, 32a).

Before Peter's storm ever got started, or before Peter even knew that it was coming, THE LORD HAD ALREADY BEEN PRAYING ABOUT IT!

Will you remember this the next time a storm strikes your life? If you are in one now, will you believe that this is

just as true of you as it was of the Apostles. Cf. Heb. 7:25; Rom. 8:34,

"It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

How significant that the Lord went into a mountain to pray!

IV. "HE SAW THEM TOILING IN ROWING" (Mark 6:48a).

They could not see Him, but He could see them. This was "when evening was come" (v. 47)--about sundown!

But notice . . .

They were "in the midst of the sea" and the storm had started. It was too far for a mere man to see with the naked eye in such circumstances, but we never get too far away for the Lord to see us.

Cf. Hagar in Gen. 16:13, "Thou God seest me."

Also, "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous" (Psa. 34:15a).

The Word of God assures us that the Lord is never ignorant of our circumstances at any time. He always sees us, and even knows the thoughts that are going through our minds!

V. "HE COMETH UNTO THEM, WALKING UPON THE SEA" (Mark 6:48b).

But will you notice something here that is extremely important.

In v. 47 it says that He saw them at sundown; here we read that He did not come to them until "about the fourth watch of the night."

The first watch was from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.
The second watch was from 9 p.m. to midnight.
The third watch was from midnight to 3 a.m.
The fourth watch was from 3 a.m. to 6 a.m.

From the time the Lord saw that they were in trouble until He went to them was from 6 to 8 hours!

Why did He wait so long? Mark says that they were "toiling in rowing"--meaning physical torture and mental distress. Matthew indicates that the boat was even about to break up. John tells us that they had only gone between three and four miles in these 6 to 8 hours.

The Lord waited until the disciples had done everything that they could do and until they realized that the situation was completely hopeless--that all human strength and wisdom had not been enough!

Then He came!

But there are two things to notice here in the manner of His coming:

- 1) He came "walking upon the sea." They never expected this! He was standing on the very forces which they could not control.

How often we get into trouble because we expect the Lord to do what we have seen Him do before, or we limit Him to what men can do!

They thought He was a ghost! We often mistake the very things that are a manifestation of the Lord's presence with us!

- 2) He "would have passed by them."

What does this mean?

It means that He wanted them to call to Him for help!

How often we get to the place where even prayer seems to be a waste of time and energy! BUT IT NEVER IS!

This is like Moses at the burning bush!

Matthew tells us that they cried out, "It is a ghost" (Matt. 14:26).

Our faith may falter, and we may cry out the wrong thing, but, oh, how the Lord is delighted when we cry to Him!

Then we see a very precious thing.

- VI. "HE TALKED WITH THEM, AND SAITH UNTO THEM, 'BE OF GOOD CHEER. IT IS I; BE NOT AFRAID'" (Mark 6:50).

In reading this passage, have you asked yourself, Why does Mark say "talked" and "saith"?

Archbishop Trench says that when you have these two verbs together, the first means that He spoke, instead of being silent; the second, what He said.

How good it is to know that the Lord speaks to us--that He speaks to us through His Word! HOW DREADFUL IT WOULD BE IF HE WERE SILENT! David wrote in Psa. 28:1,

Unto thee will I cry, O Lord, my rock; be not silent to me, lest, if thou be silent to me, I become like those who go down into the pit."

What did the Lord say?

HE TOLD THEM WHAT THEY MUST START DOING, AND NEVER STOP!
AND HE TOLD THEM WHAT THEY MUST STOP DOING, AND NEVER START
AGAIN! AND THEN HE TOLD THEM WHY!

- 1) "Be of good cheer"--a word of hope and encouragement.
- 2) "Be not afraid." This is what they were doing.
- 3) "It is I," or, lit., I AM. This is exactly the expres-
sion in John 8:58.

Finally,

VII. "HE WENT UP UNTO THEM INTO THE BOAT: AND THE WIND CEASED"
(Mark 6:51a).

Those waves, perhaps 20' high, and that wind, which had kept them from making any headway, stopped just as miraculously as it had started--at the Lord's time, and in the Lord's way.

Is it any wonder that we read what we do in the latter part of v. 51?

The Apostle John adds, "And immediately the boat was at the land to which they went" (John 6:21b). This was a miracle which we do not count!

How unnecessary their fears were--as they always are!

Concl: They John Mark adds one of those general statements of our Lord's healing to show that the display of His omnipotence continued. The power of the Lord had not been exhausted by what He had done in the storm.

What do you suppose the disciples learned from all of this?

What have we learned? How are the storms going with us?

As I close this morning let me read a passage of Scripture which I just read again yesterday morning in the course of my morning Bible reading. It fits right in with this incident in the life of our Lord, and says practically the same thing. It is found in Psa. 107:23-32, and I am reading from the New American Standard Bible:

"Those who go down to the sea in ships, Who do business on great waters; They have seen the works of the Lord, And His wonders in the deep. For He spoke and raised up a stormy wind, Which lifted up the waves of the sea. They rose up to the heavens, they went down to the depths; They soul melted away in their misery. They reeled and staggered like a drunken man, And were at their wits' end. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and He brought them out of their distresses. He caused the storm to be still, So that the waves of the sea were hushed. Then they were glad because

they were quiet; So He guided them to their desired haven. Let them give thanks to the Lord for His lovingkindness, And for His wonders to the sons of men! Let them extol Him also in the congregation of the people, and praise Him at the seat of the elders."

With us, many things are impossible, but, not with God, for all things are possible with Him! May the Lord enable us to believe it and to rest in it right in the middle of the storm!

THE WORD OF MEN VERSUS THE WORD OF GOD
Mark 7:1-13

Intro: Mark has not mentioned the Pharisees since chapter 2 when he recorded the call of Matthew and the dispute with the scribes and Pharisees which followed over eating with publicans and sinners.

He last mentioned the scribes in chapter 3, verse 22, when they accused our Lord of casting out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of the demons.

Now we are back to them again--and they always mean trouble!

Notice, first,

- I. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CHAPTERS SIX AND SEVEN. It is brought out by comparing Mark 6:30 with Mark 7:1--the two gatherings: the apostles, as compared with the Pharisees and the scribes.

The first were our Lord's friends; the second, His enemies. The first were for Him; the latter, against Him. The first were anxious for His approval; the latter expressed to Him their disapproval. The former wanted to help; the latter, to hinder. AND THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT BUT THAT THIS WAS AN AN OFFICAL DELEGATION SENT UP FROM JERUSALEM.

Like so many other places in the Word of God, blessing is followed by opposition and trouble. It is interesting to see that it was even this way with our Lord.

- II. THE ISSUE (Mark 7:2-4).

It might seem very incidental to us, but it was of the greatest importance to the Jews in our Lord's time here on the earth. In the traditions of the Jews great attention is given to purification. The Jews were more concerned about this than anything else.

And it was important!

BEFORE THEY
ATE, THEY WASH.
ED. IF THEY
HAD BEEN TO
THE MARKET,
THEY
TOOK A
BATH.

Originally anything that defiled a person would render him unfit to worship God, to approach Him with sacrifices; while a purified person could enter into all of the privileges of Tabernacle or Temple worship.

But gradually the holiness (which is purification) deteriorated into something outward, something external. This is explained for us in the two parenthetical verses--vv. 3, 4. Therefore, from what we know of the Scriptures, past and future, we can see that the REAL ISSUE was not immediately

apparent in what the scribes and Pharisees were saying. The real issue was that here were religious leaders who were blinded themselves as to how a man could come to know the Lord and live in fellowship with Him, and they were intent on keeping the nation of Israel in subjection to their rules and regulations, many of which had their origins in the Word of God, but which had been distorted and misinterpreted beyond all recognition.

The result was that the people did not have any opportunity to know what the Word of God really meant. They heard it read in the synagogues, but they were told that only the scribes could interpret it for them.

WHAT HAD HAPPENED IN ISRAEL ALWAYS HAPPENS WHENEVER PEOPLE ARE MADE TO TAKE THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO THE LORD THROUGH A CLERGY OR THROUGH ANY SECOND-HAND AUTHORITY.

This is a problem today as much as in any other day. People leave their knowledge of God, His Word, His will, up to some pastor or priest, instead of realizing that the Lord wants to deal directly with them through His Word.

The scribes and the Pharisees did not really believe that God can speak to people directly through His Word, and so they began to interpret it for them--with disastrous results!

This is really the issue.

III. THE QUESTION OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES (Mark 7:5).

They had come all the way from Jerusalem to Galilee to ask this question???

You see, their concern is not for the Word of God, but for their commentary on the Word of God: "the traditions of the elders."

You can tell by their question that their own understanding was all wrong.

IV. OUR LORD'S ANSWER (Mark 7:6-13).

All of these verses contain the words of our Lord Jesus Christ in answer to the question of verse 5.

Basically, His answer has four parts, and the greatest emphasis is on the fourth part.

A. Their question exposed their hypocrisy (Mark 7:6).

The Lord quotes from Isaiah 29:13 saying that what Isaiah said about Israel in his own day was true of Israel 700 years later!

One of the Psalmists of Israel said,
 "Nevertheless, they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant" (Psa. 78:36, 37).

And he was writing about Israel in Moses' day--1500 years before Christ.

In Jer. 12:2b, Jeremiah told the Lord, just before the captivity of Judah that,

"Thou art near in their mouth, and far from their heart."

And even Ezekiel, the great prophet of the captivity, said,

"And they come unto thee as the people come, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness" (Ezek. 33:31).

In view of all of these verses, is it not very likely that this is a great problem today?

A man can give lip service to God, but God knows and he knows, too, if it comes from his heart. If it does not, he is a hypocrite--just an actor, going through the motions.

So, it is not surprising to see what follows.

B. Their worship is vain (Mark 7:7a).

This means that there is nothing to it! To pretend to be worshipping God, when you are not, is blasphemy!

How important it is to remember this when we come to the communion table!

C. The teachings (doctrines) of men take precedence over everything else (Mark 7:7b).

Sometimes it seems, even in our evangelical circles that we know more about the latest books than we do about the greatest Book!

Do we not need a re-affirmation of the teaching of the

Apostle John when he wrote,

"But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; . . . (1 John 2:27a)?

Even this can be carried to extremes, but have we become so dependent upon men and their books that we know more about what they say than we do about the Word of God? Paul was concerned that the people of God know the Word of God,

"That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, by which they lie in wait to deceive" (Eph. 4:14).

When Paul left the Ephesian elders, he said,

"And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace" (Acts 20:32a)--and that is all we really need!

D. They had gotten rid of the Word of God (Mark 7:8-13).

You cannot receive your information about God second-handed without running this risk!

Three times the Lord mentions this--in vv. 8, 9, 13.

And then He gives an illustration in vv. 10-12.

The Lord uses three different verbs to intensify the meaning of what they had done. They had laid it aside, covering it up; they had rejected it, acting as though it had been annulled; they had deprived it of all of its power and authority.

What had originally been started to preserve the Word of God had resulted in taking it away from the people altogether!

The illustration: vv. 10-12.

Concl: What is the solution?

Three things:

- 1) People need to read the Word of God for themselves, and to hear it preached as it is. All preaching and teaching needs to be examined in the light of the Word of God.
- 2) People need to know that a right relationship with God is established for us by the Lord Jesus Christ, by grace, and that it is not of our own doing.
- 3) The people of God need to continue to read the Word, depending upon the Spirit of God to teach them.

GOD'S X-RAY OF MAN'S HEART
Mark 7:14-23

Intro: Our passage this morning follows closely the passage we had last Sunday in vv. 1-13. It is all concerned with the greatest problem that faces man: How can I make myself, or how can I be made, acceptable to God?

The scribes and the Pharisees said that it was a matter of obeying "the traditions of the elders"--which were concerned with outward forms and ceremonies, and which, not only had no foundation for the most part in the Old Testament, but, were in contradiction to it. Cf. what the Lord said about, "Honor thy father . . ."

Three times the Lord charged them with "laying aside the commandment of God," etc. See vv. 8, 9, 13.

This is what religion, as such, always does. It may start with the Word, but it will not be long before it is denying the Word.

Bringing this down to today, we are concerned in this passage about how a person can be saved, how can I be sure that my sins will be forgiven, that some day I will be in heaven?

That Pharisees said, It all depends upon you! They said nothing about what God would do for them; they just talked about what men had to do for God.

Let us think about this for a moment before we turn to the passage we have this morning.

Does it help you to be a better person if you wash your hands the right way, or if you eat the right food? Do eating and drinking in certain ways solve moral difficulties, and cleanse the conscience from guilt?

Granted, it is important to be clean, and you will probably have better health if you eat the right kind of food--BUT IS THE WAY WE ARE ASSURED OF HEAVEN?

Let us note what our Lord has to say on this very important subject.

We have, first of all . . .

I. AN IMPORTANT DECLARATION (Mark 7:14-16). This is followed in vv. 17-23 a simple explanation.

The importance of what our Lord has to say is indicated both in v. 14 and again in v. 16.

First of all, our Lord "called all the people" unto Himself --a common expression in Mark's Gospel. Cf. 6:7; 8:1, 34.

Such heresy must be corrected. The people must know the depth of their need. It is a matter of life and death, of heaven and hell! AND THERE IS NO GREATER AUTHORITY THAN OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Note: "Hearken unto me, every one of you" (goes with "all" earlier in the verse). They must hear clearly exactly what the Lord says. So many times we have mistaken ideas because we do not hear well, or we do not read well what we read from the Word of God.

But it is also necessary to "understand"--an interesting word which means to put things together in your mind.

It is like putting two and two together, as we say.

First we must have the facts, and then we put the facts together.

But, let us digress for a moment . . .

In other places in the Word we know that it is taught that men cannot understand the things of God. How do we reconcile that with what our Lord is saying here?

WE MUST NEVER CONFUSE MAN'S INABILITY TO UNDERSTAND THE TRUTH WITH THE ILLUMINATING POWER OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD BY WHICH HE WILL UNDERSTAND. WE DO NOT KNOW HOW THE LORD WORKS, BUT WE DO KNOW THAT IT IS THROUGH CLEAR, SIMPLE TEACHING THAT MINDS ARE OPENED TO THE TRUTH OF GOD SO THAT THEY CAN UNDERSTAND. THEREFORE, IT IS IMPORTANT FOR US TO NOTICE CAREFULLY WHAT OUR LORD IS DOING BY WAY OF TEACHING.

See also v. 16.

What, now is the declaration? We have it in v. 15.

As our Lord carries on with the idea of eating, He makes it very clear that there is nothing which a man puts in him which defiles him; HE IS ALREADY DEFILED. The evidence, the proof, is seen in what comes out of him.

Men start in the wrong place. They assume that they are good until they do something to defile themselves; the Word teaches that men are bad to begin with and need to be cleansed.

This is the basic error of socialism, and this is the basic error of the social gospel (which is not a gospel).

The Lord just throws this out as bait. Remember that the Lord was teaching His disciples to be fishers of men. Would He have any takers?

What does the rest of the passage indicate?

II. A SIMPLE EXPLANATION (Mark 7:17-23).

He goes into a house, possibly Peter's house, and the disciples ask Him about "the parable," or riddle. Matthew says that Peter asked Him.

With all of his faults, Peter had a heart that was always reaching out! The explanation is prompted by . . .

A. The disciples' question (Mark 7:17).

This is followed by . . .

B. Our's Lord's answer (Mark 7:18-23)--in two parts:

1. Concerning that which enters into a man (Mark 7:18, 19).

He deals with this by asking His disciples two questions.

- a. The first question: "Are ye so without understanding also?"

The disciples were a long time in getting past this. Cf. Peter in Acts 10:14; Paul and Trophimus in Jerusalem, Acts 21:28.

It is so hard for us to get past heresy that we have been taught in our youth. THIS BASIC TRUTH WAS STILL NOT CLEAR TO THE DISCIPLES THEMSELVES. THEY HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO PUT THESE THINGS TOGETHER, i.e., to understand.

- b. The second question: "Do ye not perceive," i.e., with your power to think, can you not understand this, "that whatever thing from outside entereth into the man, it cannot defile him; Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the stomach, and goeth out into the draught, purging all foods?"

The reason it does not defile is because "it entereth not into his heart." Cf. Prov. 4:23; 1 Sam. 16:7; Matt. 12:35,

"A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things."

It is the heart of man that counts, and it is there that we have the source of the difficulty.

2. Concerning that which comes out of a man (Mark 7: 20-23).

A man is defiled, not by what goes into him, but by what is already in there, and comes out!

Then the Lord gets very specific. We have man's heart--as God sees it. And the picture is not very pretty. Here is God's x-ray of man's heart.

Our Lord does not say that every person does all of these things, but He does indicate that every person is capable of all of these things--even those who know the Lord!

The Lord makes it clear that there are three things here that we need to know:

- a. The source: "For from within, out of the heart (sing.) of men (plural).

All men have the same kind of a heart, so our Lord speaks of it as one "heart." You would not be any better off if your skin were a different color, or if you lived in a different country, or spoke a different language. ALL HEARTS ARE THE SAME. And this is what is wrong with us. Cf. Rom. 3:23; Isa. 55:6.

- b. The start: "proceed evil thoughts."

In the Greek, this is definitely set off from the remaining sins. It is the start that produces all of our sins--"evil thoughts."

What are "evil thoughts"?

They are reasonings which lead to opinions which develop into purposes and which result in action.

They are thoughts which lack those qualities which can ever make them good.

Sin begins with thoughts.

CF. JER. 17:9

- c. The sins: 12 of them mentioned; 6 in the plural, 6 in the singular. More could be added. This is a sample. The others are just like them.

They appear in different orders in different MSS, but we will take them as they are in the KJ.

- 1) "Adulteries"--illicit relations between people who are married.
- 2) "Fornication"--the same as the above, but between unmarried people.
- 3) "Murders"--arising out of the sins it is here mentioned with.
- 4) "Thefts"--to take on the sly that which belongs to someone else.
- 5) "Covetousness"--it includes people as well as things. It is as impossible to satisfy the greedy heart of man as it is to fill a sieve with water!
- 6) "Wickedness"--a person who not only delights in evil, but he is not happy unless he is corrupting someone else. He is described in Prov. 4:14-16, esp. v. 16,
 "For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall."
- 7) "Deceit"--a person who traps people by setting bait.
- 8) "Lasciviousness"--wantonness, completely unrestrained, undisciplined, lawlessness.
- 9) "An evil eye"--defined in Matt. 20:15,
 "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?"
 It is envy. "If looks would kill, I would be dead."
- 10) "Blasphemy"--speech which is "injurious to another's good name" (Thayer, 102). It is a sin of the tongue. Cf. Rom. 3:13, 14a,
 "Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness."
- 11) "Pride"--not only an exalted feeling for one's self, but contempt for others.
- 12) "Foolishness"--which seems to be a summing up

--moral senselessness in thought and deed
and word!

Concl: Did you ever see a person who liked his photograph?

— Do you like God's picture of you? It has to be an x-ray because you cannot always see these things from the outside.

This is what is wrong with the world. The world will continue to get worse and worse as long as men are the way they are. The only way you can be changed is to turn to the Lord.

For people who do not know the Lord--2 Cor. 5:17.

For those who do know the Lord--we have a new nature, but we still have the old. It takes the same Savior who delivered us from sin's penalty to keep us from sin's power. Cf. Psa. 119:11. Also, Jude 24, 25.

THE LORD OPENS A NEW DOOR

Mark 7:24-37

Intro: We come this morning to miracles #12 and #13 out of the 18 that are recorded in the Gospel of Mark.

The deliverance of the daughter of the Syrophenician woman is found also in the Gospel of Matthew, Matt. 15:21-28.

The account of the healing of the deaf and dumb man is found only in Mark.

However, we are not just interested in them as miracles our Lord performed, **BUT WE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE PLACE THAT THEY HAVE IN MARK'S GOSPEL!**

We can begin to see their purpose when we notice . . .

I. THE PLACES WHERE THEY WERE PERFORMED.

A. The deliverance of the Syrophenician's daughter.

Note in Mark 7:24 that our Lord went "into the borders of Tyre and Sidon."

This was just north of Galilee--outside of the borders of Israel! The Lord was in Gentile country. It was

"a strip of territory on the Mediterranean, noted for its antiquity, wealth, and civilization, which had remained practically independent of Jewish, Greek, and Assyrian rule, though subject to the Romans since the time of Augustus" (Gould, ICC, pp. 134, 135).

B. The healing of the deaf and dumb man.

This was in the area known as Decapolis--to the east and south of the Sea of Galilee (Mark 7:31). The Lord had been there before--in Mark 5:1-20.

Edersheim says,

"Although Jesus was now within the territory of ancient Israel, the district and all the surroundings were essentially heathen," or Gentile, "although in closest proximity to, and intermingling with, that which was purely Jewish" (II, 45).

So, again, we are in Gentile country.

This is the factor that brings these two miracles together, and it also shows how serious the situation was with the scribes and Pharisees earlier in the chapter.

II. THE PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THE TWO MIRACLES.

In both cases people were responsible for coming to the Lord on behalf of others.

In the first case it was a girl; in the second, a man.

In the first case the girl's mother came, but she was not there; in the second a man's friends brought him to the Lord. The second should remind us of the healing of the paralytic in Mark 2:1-12.

While we know in both cases that we are concerned with Gentiles instead of Jews, we know a great deal about the Syrophenician woman, but very little about the deaf and dumb man, or his friends.

Taking Matthew and Mark together we learn about the woman that she was a Greek (or, actually, a Gentile), a Syrophenician, a woman of Canaan. "The Phoenicians were descended from a colony of Canaanites, the original inhabitants of Palestine" (Bruce, Ex. Gk. Test., I, p. 216).

III. THE NEEDS TO BE MET IN EACH CASE.

Both clearly called for a miraculous work. The daughter of the Syrophenician woman was demon possessed. The man was deaf, and because of his deafness, was not able to speak so that other could understand him.

IV. THE RESULTS OF WHAT THE LORD DID.

A. With the Syrophenician's daughter: Her mother went home and found the demon gone, and her daughter was resting quietly on her bed.

B. The deaf and dumb man: It is told in v. 35--"And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plainly," or correctly.

The problems which caused such great concern were no longer there. The Lord did a perfect job of healing in both cases.

V. THE LESSONS TO BE LEARNED.

A. That you can expect to find the Lord working in the most unusual places.

This applies especially in the case of the Syrophenician woman. Here is a woman, a Gentile, who manifests that she already believed in the Deity of the Lord, and that He was the Messiah. Matthew (15:22) tells us that she

said to the Lord,

"Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David."

How she learned this, or when, we do not know, BUT SHE KNEW IT!

Never underestimate the power of the Lord or the extent of His work. Cf. Melchizedek, the 7,000 in Elijah's day, etc.

When we think, too, of Decapolis, remember that this was the place where they had asked the Lord to leave, and now He finds great acceptance with the people!

B. The evidence of the grace of God.

When the Syrophenician woman appealed to the Lord, Matthew tells us that the Lord said,

"I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 15:24).

This had been His instruction to the disciples when He sent them out. Cf. Matt. 10:5, 6).

Then note the conversation about the children, the table, the bread, and the dogs. She did not want to take away what Israel had, but felt that just crumbs from Israel's table was all that would be necessary to meet her daughter's need.

She knew that she did not deserve anything, but came imploring Him for mercy and grace.

What a picture of us, too!

C. About our Lord Jesus Christ:

1. His wisdom--in going to the right places at the right time to be with the right people.
2. His power--over Satanic forces, over human needs.

It is interesting to see this in both cases:

- 1) All the Syrophenician wanted was "crumbs." That would be enough.
- 2) The people in Decapolis (v. 37) were convinced that He could make any deaf and dumb person hear and speak anytime He wanted to! That is the meaning of the verse.

TOUCHED BY THE URGENCY AND PERSISTENCE OF THE WOMAN WHO TOOK HIM IN HIS OWN WORDS!

3. His compassion--"And looking up to heaven, He sighed." Cf. John 11:33; Rom. 8:23, 26.

Concl: All of these truths were there for the Gentiles (although they applied just as much to the Jew). How this

ought to open our eyes to the glories of our Lord and to the fact that no one is beyond the reach of His wonderful grace and power.

And the depth of our need is such that no one but the Lord Jesus Christ can meet our need.

WHY ANOTHER FEAST?

Mark 8:1-9

Intro: If we were reading through the Gospel of Mark, we might be inclined to ask ourselves here in chapter 8, Why another feast? We just read of one in chapter 6, and there does not seem to be enough difference between the two to warrant having both of them in this Gospel.

Besides--Luke and John do not record it! Why should Matthew and Mark?

Some critics of the Gospel say that these are two records of the same miracle, but the differences between the two passages make that point-of-view so ridiculous that it hardly deserves an answer. Any child reading these two accounts could tell that they are different!

BUT--can we not just pass it over, and go on to v. 10 where we do have something new?

Not if you believe that the Bible is the Word of God--ALL OF IT! Mark had to have reasons for putting this in his Gospel, and the importance of those reasons is increased an hundredfold when we remember that the Spirit of God was directing him in his writing.

Let me point out what some of those reasons are.

I. WE HAVE EVIDENCE IN THIS PASSAGE OF THE RELIABILITY OF THE WORD OF GOD, OF THE GOSPELS (in this case), AND FOR THE TRUTHFULNESS OF WHAT THEY HAVE RECORDED CONCERNING THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Remember that only Matthew and Mark record this miracle.

Keep in mind, too, that we have strong evidence for the fact that Mark is writing for the Apostle Peter, i.e., that he basically got the information contained in this Gospel from Peter.

Let us just suppose for the moment that what Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John wrote about Jesus of Nazareth was just a hoax --that is, that these stories about Jesus' miracles are not true! DO YOU REALLY THINK THAT THEY WOULD HAVE TOLD THESE TWO STORIES IN THE ORDER IN WHICH THEY HAVE, AND THAT LUKE AND JOHN WOULD HAVE OMITTED THE SECOND ONE?

You say, What do you mean?

I mean this: IF THE ACCOUNT WERE FALSE, WOULD YOU NOT GO FROM A GREAT MIRACLE TO A GREATER MIRACLE, INSTEAD OF TAKING THE GREATER ONE FIRST AND THEN RECORDING THE ONE WHICH IS

NOT AS GREAT?

Of course you would! You would save the best to the last. BUT JOHN MARK HAS NOT DONE THIS! He has taken the greater one first!

Why do I say this?

Compare the details in the two miracles:

- 1) In the first you have five loaves to feed 5,000; in the second you have seven loaves to feed 4,000.
- 2) In the first you have two fish to feed 5,000; in the second you have "a few small fish," which "means more than just two as was the case in the other miracle" (Lenski, p. 318).
- 3) After feeding 5,000 the Lord had 12 baskets full of food left over; after feeding the 4,000 He had only 7.
- 4) And, as indicated in each of the above, we have the feeding of the 5,000 first, and then the 4,000.

WHEN YOU COMPARE ALL OF THE DETAILS OF THE FIRST WITH ALL OF THE DETAILS OF THE SECOND, THE FIRST IS THE GREATEST IN EVERY WAY!

If the Gospels of Matthew and Mark had been written as a hoax, this would not be true! They would save the greater to be second--working up to a climax!

But think of this also . . .

In both of these miracles the number given applies only to the men: 5,000 and 4,000. When you add the women and children to this you could easily double that number to 10,000 and 8,000--and possibly more!

What does this mean?

Are you looking for evidence that the Lord really did perform these two miracles? There were approximately 20,000 people who could testify that HE DID!!!

And, it is very, very likely that John Mark checked this out for himself because most of them were still living when he wrote this Gospel!

Is it any wonder that we can say that the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ has the greatest proof of any fact of history?

This certainly must be one reason why Matthew and Mark have given us the story of the feeding of the 4,000 as well as the feeding of the 5,000.

Now let us move on to another reason.

II. ADDED PROOF OF THE GRACE OF GOD.

We really do not need any more proof, but we have it anyway.

How?

Where was the Lord Jesus in the passage which we had last week at the end of chapter 7?

He was in Decapolis!

What was Decapolis? It was territory in Israel, east of the Jordan, south of the Sea of Galilee, which was predominantly Gentile!

Where had the 5,000 been fed?

North of Decapolis, in Bethsaida Julias, which was predominantly Jewish!

When you put the two together, what do you have? You have the Lord doing for the Gentiles what He had done for the Jews. He is no respecter of persons. The Gospel may have come for the Jew first, but it was also for the Gentile!

And one thing in both accounts is certainly similar. He fed both groups until they were filled!

The Lord is still the same way today.

Paul wrote in Rom. 10:12, "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him." He satisfies our needs COMPLETELY!

But there is another reason.

III. IT GIV S THOSE OF US WHO ARE CHRISTIANS A HUMILIATING PICTURE OF OURSELVES.

Can you think of a more stupid question than that which we read was asked by disciples? See v. 4.

Matthew's account reads like this:

"From where should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude?" (Matt. 15:33).

Had they not seen what the Lord did with less food for a larger crowd?

Archbishop Trench, in his Notes On The Miracles Of Our Lord, pp. 387, 388, has the following excellent comment:

"At first it excites some surprise that the disciples, with that other miracle fresh in their memories, should on this later occasion have been as seriously perplexed how the multitude should be fed as they were on the former. Yet this surprise rises out of our ignorance of man's heart, of our own heart, and of the deep root of unbelief which is there. It is evermore thus in times of difficulty and distress. All former deliverances are in danger of being forgotten; the mighty interpositions of God's hand in former passages of men's lives fall out of their remembrance; each new difficulty appears as one from which there is no extrication; at each recurring necessity it seems as though the wonders of God's grace have come utterly to an end. He may have divided the Red Sea for his people, yet no sooner are they on the other side, than they murmur against Moses, and count that they must perish for thirst, crying, 'Is the Lord among us, or not?' (Exod. xvii. 1-7); or, to adduce a still nearer parallel, He who opens his hand and fills all things living with plenteousness may have once already covered the camp with quails (Exod. xvi. 13), yet for all this even Moses himself cannot believe that He will provide flesh for all that multitude (Num. xi. 21, 22). It is only the man of a full-formed faith, of a faith which Apostles themselves at this time did not possess, who argues from the past to the future, and truly derives confidence from God's former dealings of faithfulness and love (cf. I Sam. xvii. 34-37; 2 Chron. xvi. 7, 8). Only a strong unacquaintance with the heart of man could have led any to argue that the disciples, with their previous experience of one miracle of this kind, could not on a second similar occasion have been perplexed how the wants of the multitude should be supplied; that we have therefore here an illustration of the general inaccuracy which prevails in the records of our Lord's life, of a loose tradition, which has told the same event twice over."

Have you ever been in a position like this--failing utterly to argue "from the past to the future"? We forget what the Lord has done, or we assume that He will not do it again. The only conclusion that we can come to is that we are so deeply rooted in unbelief that it is always going to be a struggle to believe God, and to rest in Him.

Finally, let us look at . . .

IV. WHAT IT TEACHES US ABOUT THE LORD.

A. His great power. Two things stand out:

1. It is inexhaustible.

The feeding of the 5,000 did not exhaust His power. He could feed 4,000 more--and more and more and more after that.

Do you suppose the disciples had forgotten that the Lord fed 1,500,000 to 2,000,000 children of Israel in the wilderness--FOR FORTY YEARS?

Is He not now keeping, sustaining the whole universe?

2. It is sufficient, i.e., He did not need any help at all from His disciples. He did it all by Himself!

Later on, shortly before our Lord died on the cross, He asked His disciples,

"When I sent you without purse, and bag, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing" (Luke 22:35).

B. His great love.

One significant difference between the story of the feeding of the 5,000 and the feeding of the 4,000 is that the Lord brought up the need of the 4,000 while His disciples brought up the need of the 5,000--with one difference: They wanted to send the crowd away; our Lord wanted to meet their needs.

"I have compassion on the multitude." Cf. 1:41; 6:34; 9:22.

The people had been with Him for three days. They loved to be where He was. One great reason must have been because of the way His love was evident to them.

Especially in times of testing can we not say, "He who spared not his own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him freely give us all thing?" (Rom. 8:32)?

Concl: Aren't you glad that Mark and Matthew did not leave this story out. It helps us to

- 1) Believe the Word more.
- 2) See more of the grace of God.
- 3) Know ourselves better.
- 4) Love and trust our Lord more completely.

A REQUEST AND A WARNING

Mark 8:10-21

Intro: We come this morning in the Gospel of Mark to two incidents in the life of our Lord--the first having to do with the Pharisees, and the second with His own disciples.

Both events took place in the vicinity of the Sea of Galilee.

The first event is placed by Mark in Dalmanutha. Matthew calls it Magadan. These are apparently one and the same place, but neither name gives us much help in locating it. It seems that it had to be on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, probably south of Capernaum--but we do not know for sure.

The second event took place on the Sea of Galilee as they were headed for Bethsaida. See Mark 8:22. This is in all likelihood the Bethsaida that was on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee.

The first event is important because in it we have . . .

I. A REQUEST (Mark 8:10-13).

Matthew (16:1) tells us that the Sadducees were in on this too--the first time these two opposing groups are brought together against our Lord.

At first it looks good.

But then we see that their request caused great distress to the Lord because "He sighed deeply in his spirit," meaning that it came from the depths of His heart. It is an intense expression, not found elsewhere in the NT.

They appeared to be in search of proof that Jesus was the Messiah. They had entered upon a discussion. Mark uses a verb translated "to question" which means "to search or inquire in company" (Gould in the ICC).

The Lord asked a question (one of about 10 in this passage) and then refused to grant the request.

Note the emphasis upon "this generation"--this above all other generations!

What did they want when they asked for "a sign"?

They wanted proof!

The reason the Lord "sighed" was because they had had more signs than any other generation that had ever lived. Three of the outstanding signs were:

- 1) The Lord Himself.
- 2) His teachings.
- 3) His miracles.

But, in addition to these, Matthew, in his account, mentions "the sign of the prophet, Jonah" (Matt. 16:4). This points not only to the coming death of Christ and His resurrection, but to the evidence of Old Testament prophecy---prophecy which was fulfilled in His first coming.

People who will not accept all of the evidence that we already have would not believe "though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16:31). The words of Abraham begin, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

We need to know this in these days.

We have absolutely everything that is needed in the Word of God to bring men to know the Lord. If they will not receive that, their searching is only a cloak to hide their unbelieving hearts!

If that generation were without excuse, ours is even more!

So the request was denied, and the Lord left.

This leads to . . .

III. A WARNING (Mark 8:14-21).

We might speak of the warnings here because there actually are two! The Lord starts out with one and it leads to another.

And remember the contrast: in vv. 10-13 we see the problem with those who were not the Lord's people; in vv. 14-21 the problem concerns those who are His people, His disciples!

V. 14 tells us the situation regarding food so that we will be in a position to understand what follows.

Both of the imperatives in v. 15 are in the present tense indicating that this is something which the disciples needed to be doing continuously.

Matthew (16:6) brings in "the leaven of the Sadducees," but Mark mentions "Herod" instead. The reason is very probably that the Herodians were probably more of a threat to the Gentiles (to whom Mark was writing) than were the Sadducees.

The dangers were twofold:

- 1) Religious: "the Pharisees."
- 2) Political: "Herod."

Both had answers for men, BUT NEITHER GROUP HAD THE RIGHT ANSWER.

The Lord called their teaching, "leaven."

Why?

For at least three reasons:

- 1) It was evil.
- 2) It will spread, leavening the whole lump.
- 3) It eventually becomes what people eat, i.e., what they believe.

And, oh, how the people of God need to be on their guard against these leavening doctrines of religious leaders and of the politicians.

BUT NOTE: THE MOMENT THE LORD MENTIONED LEAVEN, HE LOST HIS DISCIPLES. THEIR THOUGHTS WERE ON ANOTHER TRACK ALTOGETHER, AND NOT UNTIL THE VERY LAST DID HE GET THEM BACK. "Leaven" reminded them of food.

And when they checked, they found that they had only "one loaf." And Mark wants us to know that from this moment on their food became their chief concern!

What did they think?

Was it that the Pharisees or the Herodians might offer them some food, and He was warning them not to accept it?

There is perhaps no answer to these questions. We just see how quickly their minds could be turned from what the Lord was trying to teach them.

To bring them back to what He meant our Lord asked 9 questions! See them in vv. 17-20. Only 2 are answered--the last two.

- 1) Question #1: Why were they concerned about the bread that they would eat?
- 2) Question #2: This really has two parts. Why were they trying to figure out something which they should already have known?
- 3) Question #3: Why did they not understand, i.e., bring together the things which they had seen so that they could apply it to their present need? The same very is used again in v. 21.

Although spiritual truth is revealed by the Spirit of God, He does not by-pass the ordinary way we learn things, i.e., our eyes, our ears, our hearts. But cf. 1 Cor. 2:9, 10.

- 4) Question #4: "Having eyes, see ye not?"
- 5) Question #5: "And having ears, hear ye not?"
- 6) Question #6: "And do ye not remember?"

Note: On these last three questions, cf. 4:11, 12.

No answers are given to the preceding questions. But the next two are answered.

- 7) Question #7: In this and Question #8 the Lord is checking to see if they knew one particular thing about both the miracles in which multitudes of people were fed. How much was left over from the feeding of the 5,000? Twelve baskets. So they had more than enough, even though at the beginning they had next to nothing.
- 8) Question #8: How much was left over from the feeding of the 4,000? Seven baskets full.
- 9) Question #9: "How is it that ye do not understand?"

The whole point of the questions is to show the disciples that if they had profited from the miracles as they should have, they would not have to be concerned now about where their food was going to come from so that they had missed what the Lord really wanted to teach them.

Concl: Mark leaves it here. Matthew (16:12) adds:

"Then understood they that he bade them not to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees."

How well are we learning our lessons from what we are seeing and hearing and from what we remember from the Word?

Do you remember the circumstances out of which Phil. 4:19 was born when Paul received a gift which he knew the Philippian could not afford to give?

And so you see that out of lessons there are even greater lessons? The Pharisees and the Sadducees and the Herodians were trying to feed people too. People are being fed from many different directions. But only the Lord has the truth. Let us pray that the Lord will give us the understanding we need so that we will not be deceived, or allow others to be deceived, by the false, empty doctrines of men.

TWO KINDS OF BLINDNESS
Mark 8:22-33

Intro: We come to a very important part of the Gospel of Mark this morning because we come to the end of the first major division of the Gospel, and the beginning of the second and last division. The division begins in v. 27, but the nature of it is seen in v. 31: "And He began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected . . . and be killed, and after three days rise again."

Vv. 27-33 are included also in Matt. 16 and Luke 9--with more or less information than is given by Mark.

But neither Matthew nor Luke includes the miracle which we find at the end of the first section--in vv. 22-26.

This is Miracle #15 (out of 18 in Mark's Gospel), and it is the second of the two that are found only in Mark's Gospel. The first is in Mark 7:31-37.

Why is it here (apart from the fact that it was a miracle performed after our Lord and His disciples crossed the Sea of Galilee)? Does it have any connection with what happened later in Caesarea Philippi?

Yes, it does!

If you will think about them both, i.e., the miracle in Bethsaida and the discourse in Caesarea Philippi, you will see, I believe, that the first is an illustration of the second.

They give us pictures of two kinds of blindness: physical and spiritual.

This is emphasized by the fact that this is the only miracle which is recorded of our Lord's ministry in which the healing went through a process--even though it was very short in time.

And the discourse reveals a process. The Lord was beginning something which He had not done previously.

Let us look at the two in the time we have.

I. THE FIRST KIND OF BLINDNESS: THE PHYSICAL (Mark 8:22-26).

What happened here must have taken place hundreds of times.

These people not only brought "ablind man," but they told the Lord just how He should heal him. How often we are like this in our praying. We tell the Lord what to do, and how!

Then the Lord did something which is very significance in view of our entire passage this morning. He "led him out of the town."

Obviously, the Lord was not after the publicity. He was not performing the miracle for the effect that it would have upon others, BUT HE WANTED TO IMPRESS UPON THIS BLIND MAN THAT HE WAS INTERESTED IN HIM!

Then He put "spit on his eyes" (as He did to the tongue of the man mentioned in Mark 7:33), and then He touched His eyes.

After that He asked him a question--"He asked him if he saw anything."

(Note that the Lord asked the disciples a question after He had them to Himself in v. 27.)

The response of the man indicated that he was able to see but he was not able to distinguish between things as he should. The only way he could tell the difference between men and trees was by the fact that the men were walking around!

Then HE touched his eyes again, "and he was restored, and saw every man clearly."

Points in the miracle:

- 1) The spit, thought to have some healing power, represented the things available to man.
- 2) Even the first time the Lord touched the blind man's eyes it was evidence that sight could only come for the Lord--even though available means were used.
- 3) The second time indicates that the sight could only become clear if the Lord were to touch him again.

V. 26 parallels v. 30.

As we think of the miracle, the Lord was not interested in publicity. The man might attract attention to the miracle so that it would become an end in itself. He wanted him to go home, to have time to think about it all, and to realize that the miracle meant something very wonderful and significant about the One who performed it.

Now from that John Mark moves immediately to . . .

II. THE SECOND KIND OF BLINDNESS: THE SPIRITUAL (Mark 8:27-33).

Caesarea Philippi was 25 or 30 miles north of Bethsaida, at

the foot of Mt. Hermon, near the source of the Jordan River. The city itself "was enlarged and beautified by Herod Philip, tetrarch of Trachonitis, to whose territory it belonged, and was given its new name in honor of the emperor and of himself" (Gould, ICC, 151). Here the Lord would be away from Herod Antipas and the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Luke (9:18) says that the Lord was praying when suddenly He asked the disciples this question: "Who do men say that I am?"

The emphasis upon the identity of our Lord is not prominent in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, like it is in John, BUT QUITE OBVIOUSLY THE WHOLE POINT OF THE FIRST PART OF MARK'S GOSPEL HAS BEEN TO GET MEN TO COME TO THE RIGHT CONCLUSION REGARDING THE LORD JESUS CHRIST!

Who is He?

Note the answers:

- 1) John the Baptist. Cf. Matt. 11:9, 11--what the Lord said about him.
- 2) Elijah. Cf. Mal. 4:5; Mark 9:11-13.
- 3) One of the prophets.
Matthew adds, Jeremiah.

In the answers we see:

- 1) He was considered to be only a man.
- 2) But He was considered to be a great man.
- 3) And, He was considered to be unlike anyone living.
- 4) He was thought to be a resurrected man.
- 5) All thought that He was a prophet of God.

ALL WERE, TO SAY THE MOST, COMPLIMENTARY, BUT ALL WERE WRONG!

This is what people were saying.

But what did they say? "Who say ye that I am?"

Peter's answer--straight and true: "Thou art the Christ"--He was not just a prophet, but the One about whom all of the prophets spoke, the One for whom all Israel was waiting. He was the Son of the Living God. Cf. Matt. 16:16.

But notice the amazing statement of v. 30! WHY?

Because, as vv. 31-33 will indicate, a man is not ready to talk, to teach others, even though he is right about the Person of Christ if he is wrong concerning the Work of Christ,

We have not read anything like v. 31 so far in Mark's Gospel.

"The Son of man" comes out of Daniel's prophecy (7:13). It points to His humanity, but even more to His representative humanity, and to the fulfillment of the OT prophecies which said that the Messiah would be a man.

Note the word, "must." Cf. John 3:14, 15.

The road from here was to be down to the grave, not up to a throne.

Their Lord would suffer . . . be rejected . . . be killed . . . and . . . rise again.

And the whole Sanhedrin would agree to all but the latter (over which they had no jurisdiction). Mark mentions three divisions of the Sanhedrin: The elders (judges), the chief priests (Sadducees, of the family of Caiaphas), and the scribes (Pharisees, interpreters of the law).

WHEN WE GET
MAD AT THE
LORD IT'S BE-
CAUSE YOUR
SIGHT
NEEDS
TO BE
IMPROVED!

Peter could not stand to hear this. It was not in the picture that he had of the Messiah, and what the Messiah would do. So he strongly rebuked the Lord, telling Him not to talk this way any more!

And then the Lord rebuked Peter in the strongest possible way.

He is not saying that Peter is Satan, the adversary, the opponent, the enemy of all enemies, but He detects in what Peter is saying the voice and the words of Satan himself. THIS APOSTLE WHO HAD BEEN SO RIGHT ABOUT WHO THE LORD WAS IS NOW SO WRONG ABOUT WHAT THE LORD HAD TO DO.

The Lord says, "Get out of my sight, Satan, for you are not siding with the interests of God, you are not seeking the fulfillment of God's purposes, but you have the thoughts of men!"

This reminds us of Matt. 4:10.

How amazing, and how tragic! SPIRITUALLY PETER COULD SEE A LITTLE, BUT HE STILL SAW "MEN AS TREES, WALKING." HE NEEDED TO COME TO THE LORD AGAIN TO HAVE HIS EYES TOUCHED AGAIN SO THAT HE COULD SEE THINGS CLEARLY. THIS IS WHY THE LORD GOT THEM ALONE. HE WAS NOT NOW CONCERNED ABOUT THE CROWDS. HE WAS CONCERNED ABOUT HIS DISCIPLES--EACH ONE OF THEM. HE WANTED TO HAVE THEIR SPIRITUAL SIGHT PERFECT!

Peter (and the other apostles) could not have understood the Gospel at this time.

They did not know the great issues involved in the death of Christ.

The next time you read the epistles of Peter and come to those wonderful words that "God . . . hath begotten us unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," or when he writes of the prophets who "testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow," or, "Who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed," or, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but made alive by the Spirit" . . .

remember that Peter did not know these great truths when he was with the Lord at Caesarea Philippi--just months before the Lord was to die!

Concl: The physical blindness pointed to the spiritual blindness. You can see part without seeing everything the way you should. And, just as you have come to the Lord for the sight you do have, so come back to Him again and again and again so that you will be able to see more truth and to see more clearly what you have already seen.

Do you know what you are not seeing clearly?

The Lord knows. And if you will only respond when He seeks to take you aside, to take you to your Caesarea Philippi, then He will reveal your blindness, and open your eyes to see the truth which you need to know.

GAIN OR LOSS
Mark 8:34-38

Intro: One interesting feature about our Scripture reading this morning is that there was a "multitude" with our Lord and His disciples.

They were up in Caesarea Philippi where they had gone to get away from the crowds, but the multitude soon gathered as people seemed to do wherever the Lord went.

The Lord seems to be speaking primarily to the disciples, as Matthew indicates, but He was not excluding the multitude! Our text deals exclusively with words spoken by the Lord Jesus--important words, extremely important words!

We have no record of any response that was made. The Spirit of God evidently wants us to get the full force of our Lord's words.

We can divide these 5 verses as follows:

- I. TWO CHOICES (vv. 34, 35).
- II. TWO HEART-SEARCHING QUESTIONS (vv. 36, 37).
- III. TWO TRAGEDIES (v. 38).

I. TWO CHOICES (Mark 8:34, 35).

And do you know that you only have two?

We would agree that there are two possibilities, but men usually have trouble believing that the alternatives are as the Lord described them.

BUT WE WOULD ALL AGREE THAT WE CAN MAKE OUR LIVES PROFITABLE --OR WORTHLESS! We can lose our lives, or we can save them. And the Lord is talking about how choices which we make result in either one way or the other!

The decisive factor is a person's relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

And how important it is to remember that the Lord was in pagan territory. But there is no attempt to water things down. He does not make a glamorous promise of a happier life, nor of a successful life, nor of a more influential life--as we so often hear today. HE STATES EXACTLY WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A DISCIPLE OF JESUS CHRIST WITHOUT ANY TRIMMINGS. Note His words in v. 34 and weigh each word carefully.

Coming after, or following, evidently arose from the fact that disciples followed their teachers as they went from place to place--as our Lord's disciples followed Him.

But there is much more involved in following the Lord than just traveling with Him. It meant:

- 1) A desire to be taught.
- 2) A willingness to obey, to do what the teacher said, and to follow the teacher's example.

Perhaps before we go any farther we ought to stop and ask ourselves how we would tell others how they can get the most out of life. How do our lives reflect what we believe about this?

Now note what the Lord said.

The most wonderful life that you can live includes three things:

- 1) "Let him deny himself"--say "no" to himself, to his own interests, etc. BUT EVEN MORE THAN THAT IT IS TO DENY THE PERSON, TO REFUSE TO ASSOCIATE WITH HIM, TO DENY THAT YOU EVEN KNOW HIM OR RECOGNIZE WHAT HE WANTS.

This is what Peter did to the Lord in Matt. 26:72, where we read, "And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man"--referring to the Lord!

- 2) "And take up his cross."

This is not the Lord's cross, but the disciple's cross.

The picture is of the Lord bearing His cross followed by His disciples doing the same thing--bearing their own crosses. This is not something disagreeable, but it indicates a believer's steadfast determination to do the will of God, regardless of the cost, remembering always that the will of God must be the determining factor in all that we do.

Cf. Phil. 2:5-8.

The cross is an instrument of death.

- 3) "And follow Me."

We tread the same path of submission to the will of God, obeying the Lord always and in everything!

In other words, the Lord is directing your life and leading you in your decision. You have handed that all over to Him.

THEN in v. 35 our Lord makes it clear that the person who spends his life doing what he wants to do, doing what seems best to him (and it may be a very good life), will not only waste it; HE WILL "LOSE IT."

BUT, ON THE OTHER HAND, the person who gives up his life to the Lord, to do His will, and for the Gospel, this is the person who will "save it."

The Lord and the Gospel are never separated. It is "the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1).

The Gospel never has been popular among men, and it never will be. The only time men love it is when their eyes have been opened by God Himself to see what their real need is. THEN THEY LOVE IT. But man naturally hates the Gospel because it reveals what man really is and absolutely denies that man can do anything at all to help himself.

You see--this is the reason the Lord brings in the Gospel. Men are not saved by denying themselves, but this is the way a man will live who has trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior and who knows what the Word of God has to say about the way he is to live.

If you know these things, believe them, and do them, your life will be saved. IF NOT, regardless of whatever else may be said of that person, his life is LOST!

How do you measure up by these words of our Lord?

Illus. Often in preparing for a funeral service for some person I have not known, I wait to hear that all-important statement, "Yes, he (or she) knew the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior." But so often you hear everything but that!

II. TWO HEART-SEARCHING QUESTIONS (Mark 8:36, 37).

How easy it is for us to slip over these familiar statements in the Word of God without really thinking about them! Let us give these some time this morning. THEY HAVE TO BE ANSWERED, AND EACH ONE OF US HAS ANSWERED THEM, OR WE ARE ANSWERING THEM (whether we know it, or not).

- A. Question #1: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

What is your soul?

It is you!

Do you notice the choices again?

Think: "The whole world." Cf. Satan with our Lord in Matt. 4:8-11.

Satan never has to pay this great a price, because everyone is willing to settle for less than "the whole world." But the Lord gives us the greatest possible choice.

What if you could have "the whole world"--its money, its power, its applause and honor--everything? BUT THERE IS

A PRICE. THE PRICE IS YOU--YOUR SOUL, YOUR HOPE OF HEAVEN. WOULD YOU GIVE UP ALL HOPE FOR THE FUTURE FOR UNLIMITED POSSESSION OF THE WORLD NOW?

Some would say, "Yes." But in saying, "Yes," you are making the worst deal that it is possible for a man to make, because you are making a decision from which there is no recovery.

Cf. Heb. 12:14-17. If you do not know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, a verse like this ought to keep you awake at night! It did not take the whole world to destroy Esau; it just took "one morsel of food."

- B. Question #2: "Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

This is looking at the question from the opposite point of view?

The Lord may have had many thoughts in mind when He asked this question, but He surely must have been thinking about the person who has realized that he has a need in his relationship with God because of his sin; WHAT WOULD HE GIVE TO GET HIMSELF RIGHT WITH GOD. How could he possibly give or do something that would make it unnecessary for him to need to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior.

The man who really sees his need knows that there is nothing that he can give.

These questions need to find their way into all of our hearts

III. TWO TRAGEDIES (Mark 8:38).

The disciples were, by their opposition to what our Lord said about His death, in need of the warning issued here.

Note how the Lord describes this world: "this adulterous and sinful generation." Because it has no place for the Lord, and because it is so deeply affected by sin, it is "pre-eminently sinful, especially wicked" (Thayer, p. 31). It is sinful beyond description. NO WONDER THAT PEOPLE IN THE WORLD DO NOT LIKE TO TALK ABOUT SIN!

The man who is ashamed of Jesus Christ is the one whom Jesus Christ, our Lord, will be ashamed of in the day of His coming--"when He cometh in the glory of His Father, and with the holy angels." Cf. John 1:14.

Could anyone possibly be ashamed of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Concl: In our hymnal, #408, is a hymn I want to read in closing this morning, because it seems to express what our Lord was saying here in our Scripture passage this morning.

"Jesus, and shall it ever be, A mortal man ashamed of Thee?
Ashamed of Thee, whom angels praise,
Whose glories shine through endless days?

"Ashamed of Jesus! Sooner far Let evening blush to own a
star;
He sheds the beams of light divine
O'er this benighted soul of mine.

"Ashamed of Jesus! that dear Friend
On whom my hopes of heaven depend!
No; when I blush, be this my shame,
That I no more revere His name.

"Ashamed of Jesus! yes, I may, When I've no guilt to wash
away;
No tear to wipe, no good to crave,
No fears to quell, no soul to save.

Till then, nor is my boasting vain,
Till then I boast a Saviour slain;
And O, may this my glory be,
That Christ is not ashamed of me!"

Do we not all know enough about our own hearts to realize by now how prone we are to make the wrong choices? Here the Lord is pointing out for disciples, for those who are not, the only right way to take. BY THE GRACE OF GOD, LET US TAKE IT THAT, INSTEAD OF LOSING OURSELVES, WE MAY GAIN THAT WHICH WE COULD NEVER BUY, AND WHICH IS WORTH MORE THAN ALL THE WORLD PUT TOGETHER!