

THE LORD AND HIS DISCIPLES

Mark 1:29-45

Intro: In studying any book of the Bible, it is important that we seek to determine what is, or are, the main themes of that book. In a book like the Gospel of Mark, especially when comparing it with Matthew and Luke, to seek to determine what the writers had in mind beyond the fact that they seem to have written for different groups. It would be easy to feel that the writers of all four of the Gospel books simply selected certain events in the life of our Lord apart from any specific purposes. But that is not the case. All four men wrote under the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and yet the Holy Spirit did not ignore the character of the different writers, nor did He overrule each writer so there is a sameness especially about especially the three Gospels which we call *the Synoptics*. That term simply means that there is a similarity about Matthew, Mark, and Luke that we don't find in the Gospel of John, a similarity in the way in which they approach the life of Christ on earth, culminating in His death, resurrection, and ascension. To some extent we may see some of the same purposes in more than one Gospel, and yet how they go about attaining those purposes may be distinctly different.

We have seen, for example, in the very first verse of the Gospel according to Mark, that Mark placed a special emphasis upon our Lord's ministry of the Gospel. The first words of this book are, "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." He tells us that the Gospel is about Jesus Christ Who was the Son of God. Every book of the Bible is about Jesus Christ, but Mark wanted us to know that as important as the ministry of John the Baptist was, this is not a book about John the Baptist. He appears briefly with a most amazing influence upon the nation Israel, but this book is not primarily about him. It is about Jesus Christ. Further, he wanted his readers to know that Jesus Christ and the Gospel are inseparable. If Jesus Christ had not come, there would be no Gospel. In a very real sense, He is the Gospel! So this book written by John Mark is about Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the Gospel.

But we are also told that when the Lord Jesus Christ began His ministry, He "came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. This was His primary message. He did not come to set up a worldwide kingdom over all of the nations of the earth. His ministry had to do with salvation from sin. John Mark put an end to the present-day controversy over whether or not Jesus Christ can be a sinner's Savior without being

his Lord. This the Gospel of the kingdom of God, a work of God whereby sinners are saved from their sins and brought into the kingdom of God, making the Lord Jesus both the Savior and the Lord of every child of God. It may take some of us a little while before we understand this truth, but eventually the Lord will bring us to see and enjoy these great truths. The Jewish people who heard our Lord preaching and teaching in their synagogues, was “astonished” at our Lord’s teaching of the Gospel because their scribes had never taught the Gospel.

But this morning I want to point out another purpose that he had in writing this wonderful book. And you can see that Matthew and Luke stressed what I am about to point out as another major emphasis in the Gospel of Mark. It has to do with the men whom the Lord called to follow Him. At this point in Mark’s Gospel I am referring to the four men mentioned in verses 16 through 20: Simon, Andrew, James, and John. We are told in verse 17 that the Lord called Simon and Andrew, two brothers who were commercial fishermen with these words, “Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.” We are not told specifically what the Lord said to James and John, their partners, but I think we are safe in assuming that He said the same thing to James and John, the sons of a man named Zebedee.

The Lord did not call these men for what they could do for Him, but He called them for what He could do for them. He certainly did not call them to apostleships, or even disciples (although His call to them indicated that He had some things that He wanted to teach them about reaching men, or about reaching men, women, boys and girls. What developed later in the relationship of these men to the Lord, was not the subject at the moment He called them. They were simply called to follow the Lord that they might become fishermen, not for fish (they already knew that business), but fishing for people. And you will see that all four men responded immediately when the Lord called them.

Now how did their training begin? Did they start preaching immediately? No. Did the Lord teach them to cast out demons? No. Right away were they given the power to perform miracles? No. Well then, how did the Lord begin to teach them to become fishers of men? Read the rest of the chapter, and you determine if I am right when I say that the Lord got them started by letting them listen to Him as He taught, and by watching Him as He performed miracles before their very eyes. They weren’t ready to preach, nor were they ready to perform miracles. They got their start by

listening and watching as the Lord taught and as He performed miracles. They needed to follow the Lord in their daily lives, and they would learn that following the Lord was a process that they would be occupied with for the rest of their lives. They needed to be learners, and basically that is what a disciple is, a learner.

When I was just starting out in the ministry, I was told by some preachers who were older than I was, that the way to hand on to people when they start coming to any church that I might be the pastor of, was to give them a job right away. My friends advised me to tie them down so they could not get away from me.

I can honestly say that I never did subscribe to that method of working with people. In the first place, not everybody who goes to church is a true child of God. It takes time get acquainted with people and to see evidence in their lives that they really know the Lord. If we don't, we might have a lot of people working in our church who don't know the Lord as Savior.

Secondly, when people come it takes time to find out how much they know about the Bible, how much they know about serving the Lord. The professing church today is loaded with people who have no understanding of the ways of the Lord, and so they go about serving the Lord the way they think that He ought to be served. And so we have many things going on in our churches today which have absolutely no basis in Scripture. The Lord did not set Simon and Andrew, James and John, free to do whatever they wanted to do, whatever they thought that they ought to do. He called them, and then the Lord had them listen to Him as He taught, and watch Him as He worked.

You check the rest of Mark chapter 1 and see if I am right in what I have just said.

In the passage we had last Sunday morning, we considered the Lord as He taught in the synagogue in Capernaum, and then as He delivered the man who was demon-possessed. Neither Simon nor Andrew, nor James nor John assisted the Lord in His teaching. Nor did they do anything to help the Lord deliver the man who was indwelt with many demons. They did no teaching, nor did they have any part in setting free from Satanic bondage the man who was demon-possessed. They heard what the Lord said in His teaching, and they saw the man delivered from the demons.

But that is all that they did. They listened, and they watched. Obviously they had a lot to learn not only from what the Lord taught, and what He did, but they had much to learn about what kind of a Person the Lord was.

Now as we come to our text for today, we come to:

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

I want you to notice that Simon Peter, who the Catholics say was the first Pope, had a wife because you can't have a mother-in-law if you don't have a wife.

But the Lord and these four men, Simon, Andrew, James, and John all went to Simon and Andrew's home, and there Peter's mother-in-law was sick, very sick. The language that John Mark used tells us that she had a raging fever which was out of control, and probably could have led to her death. But who did they talk to about her with the idea of helping her. Simon and Andrew didn't look to James, or John, as though they might be able to help her. Who did they talk to about Simon's mother-in-law? John Mark tells us at the end of verse 30, "and anon," or immediately, "they tell Him," the Lord, "of her." Neither Simon, nor Andrew, nor James, nor John could help her. All of them together were totally helpless. But they did not lose any time in talking to the Lord about her.

What did the Lord say? He didn't say anything. Well, then, what did He do? He "took her by the hand, and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her" (v. 31). John Mark does not tell us that she began to feel a little better, but he said, "and immediately the fever left her." A whole bottle of Tylenol could not have done that. Those four men were totally helpless, but they saw what the Lord did, and she was immediately healed.

But then we must recognize that the Lord performed a double miracle here because after the fever left her "she ministered unto them." What does this mean, "she ministered unto them." It means that she prepared a meal and served it herself, in honor of their special guest, the Lord Jesus Christ! If you have ever had a high fever, you know that it takes days to recover from such an ordeal. But our four men, right in Simon and Andrew's home, saw the Lord do something that no mere human being could possibly have done. But He not only cured her fever, but restored

her strength in a moment of time. What man cannot do, even today, the Lord did without saying a single word!

But we are not through with this series of lessons which the Lord was teaching our four men.

II. THE LORD'S WORK AFTER THE SUN WENT DOWN (Mark 1:32-34).

This had been a very long day for our Lord. And yet even after sundown the people continued to bring their sick and demon-possessed. In what had to be great weariness of body, there wasn't a sickness that He did not heal, nor was there a demon-possessed person who was not delivered. To no person did the Lord have to say, "I am sorry, but that is beyond what I am able to do. The Lord healed them all.

The demons could neither help nor hinder our Lord. No person had to be turned away. There is nothing too hard for the Lord to do, nor is there ever too much for Him to do. And our four fishermen were there taking in all of this amazing work that the Lord did. They, under the blessing of the Lord, were learning some outstanding lessons.

All of this must have taken our Lord's whole evening, plus into the early morning hours of the next day.

But then we come to a most instructive part for the four men whom the Lord had called to follow Himself, to pattern their lives after His, to give priority to the things that were most important to Him. What am I talking about? I am looking at verse 35, and thinking about:

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

And notice the setting. We often use our busy-ness as an excuse for our lack of prayer, but here it was after our Lord had had a most busy day which went far into the night, that He arose a great while before day (the language that Mark used suggested that it was probably around three o'clock that the Lord arose from sleep, went out of the city to a place where He could be alone with His heavenly Father, and there He prayed. In this instance the four ex-fishermen were not watching, and it is certain that they were not listening, but they knew what the Lord was doing even though it took them some time to find Him.

Bishop Ryle, in his commentary on the Gospel of Mark, summarizes the times in Scripture (at least most of them) when we see our Lord praying. The Bible tells us that our Lord was praying when He was baptized (Luke 3:21). Before He finished choosing the men who were later to be His apostles, “He continued a whole night in prayer” (Luke 6:12). When the Lord was transfigured before Peter, James, and John, Luke again is the one who tells us that “as He prayed, the fashion of His face was altered” (Luke 9:29). When the people wanted to make Him King, Matthew tells us that “He went up into a mountain apart to pray” (Matt. 14:23). And who can forget our Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane where He told His disciples to stay at a short distance from Himself while He went farther into the Garden to be alone with the Father where He could pray (see Mark 14:32). And we could add to this list the praying that our Lord did, the praying that He did even as He was dying on the Cross.

Among all of the lessons that the Lord taught His followers by His own example, none was more important than the example that He gave them by His own praying. Here in Mark 1:35 Mark used the most-used word for prayer that we find in the NT to show that our Lord in prayer was seeking the Father, seeking His guidance, seeking His fellowship, seeking His blessing. The four men that we have been thinking about needed to learn that in the life they had been called upon to live, and in the work that they had been called to do, they were to learn that nothing was more important than the time that they spent in prayer. And as many have said, if the Son of God needed to pray, how much more do we need to pray, seeking the Father for Himself, and seeking His blessing upon the work that He has called us to do. And if our days get so busy with legitimate things that the Lord has appointed to do, then we need to deny ourselves sleep in order to pray. Luther regularly spent three hours a day in prayer. The history of the church records the praying of the servants of the Lord whose ministry continues to influence the Lord’s people today by the place that they gave to prayer. This was probably the hardest lesson for the apostles to learn, and regrettably our lives reflect how little we appreciate the prayers of the Lord Jesus.

But when Simon and Andrew and James and John found the Lord, they told Him that the people were still seeking for Him. More people needed to be healed. More people needed to be delivered from the demons. And who knows what other needs about which they were seeking the Lord. But it must have surprised the disciples when they heard His response. It was then that we see how the Lord expressed His own priority on preach-

ing. Look at verses 36 through 39. Here we see:

IV. THE LORD'S EMPHASIS UPON PREACHING (Mark 1:36-39).

Notice especially verse 38. He came to heal. He came to deliver people from the forces of the Evil One. But prayer came first, and preaching was close behind. And He didn't just talk about preaching, but that is what He did, according to verse 39. He was still being accepted in the synagogues of Israel.

But as He preached and continued to perform miracles, Mark tells us about an interesting encounter that the Lord had. It had to do with:

V. THE LORD AND A CERTAIN LEPER (Mark 1:40-45).

This man had obviously heard about the miracles that the Lord had been performing throughout Galilee, and he had become convinced that the Lord was able to do for him what no other person had been able to do. The only question he had in his mind was, Would He? Would the Lord heal him?

In those days there was no cure for leprosy. Those who had it were separated from the public, and they had to go around saying, "Unclean, unclean!" It was a living death.

At this point the disciples did not need to be told that the Lord was moved with compassion toward people. They had seen hundreds of examples of His compassion. But the Lord did something that none of our men would have done. He touched the leper, and then said those wonderful words to him, "I will, be thou clean." And Mark tells us that when the Lord said these words, "immediately," not gradually, but "immediately the leprosy departed from him."

Most Bible teachers believe that leprosy is a clear picture of sin. Its main effect upon lepers was that it defiled them; it made them unclean. And it always led to death. For the Lord just to speak the words, "I will; be thou clean," is an illustration, a wonderful illustration, of the truth that the Apostle Peter gave us in 1 Peter 1:23 that we are "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." And this helps us to understand why preaching is so important IF we are preaching the Word of God. Nobody is ever saved apart from the Word of God.

But then the Lord told the cleansed leper, first, what he was not to do, and secondly, what he must do. He was not to tell anyone what had happened to him, but he was to go show himself to the priest so that he could go through the ceremonial cleansing prescribed by the Law of Moses. We can be sure that no priest had ever had to do this. But the Lord wanted the priest to have this testimony of the power of God.

Why did the Lord tell the former leper not to tell anyone what had happened to him. It was because of what actually happened when this cleansed leper disobeyed the Lord. It closed the door that the Lord had previously enjoyed of having access to the synagogues and to minister in the cities of Galilee. This is what aroused the jealousy of the scribes and Pharisees, and the move was initiated among the Jews to put the Lord Jesus Christ to death.

The Lord had previously shown that His followers were not to enter into any alliance with the forces of evil. Here at the end of chapter 1 we see that those who had experienced the healing, transforming power of Jesus Christ, had as their first responsibility, to do the will of the Lord. There is a time to speak, and a time not to speak. We are to speak to some, but not to others. The former leper's disobedience did not put an end to the ministry of the Lord Jesus, but it did cause the Lord problems. An overly zealous child of God, can do more harm than good.

Concl: Let me conclude with words which the Lord spoke to His disciples in the Upper Room during His final time with them before His arrest, trial, and death.

The Lord had just washed His disciples' feet. Then He said this:

14 If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

15 For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you (John 13:14-15).

And then He added two verses later: "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:17).

The theological liberals have tried to take away from us a very important truth of Scripture. Actually they have tried to do this with more than one truth. But the one I have in mind here is that the Lord is our Example. He is not just our Example. He must be our Savior first, but then as our Savior, He is our Example. We can talk about all that the Lord was teaching Simon and Andrew and James and John, and what He wanted them to learn. But all that we have in Mark chapter 1 was written for us to emphasize what we also need to learn. The question is, are we going to learn what the Lord wanted the disciples to learn, or are we going to say these were important for those four fishermen, but let the whole matter drop there. How carefully are we watching the Lord on the pages of Scripture, and how intently are we listening to His Words which are printed in our Bibles. The truth is not just written to inform us, but to transform us. So let us ask the Lord to give us the grace, not just to be hearers of the Word, but to be doers. It is a blessing to hear the Word, but the blessing grows when we do what the Lord wants us to do.