

THE SERVANT

The Gospel of Mark

Thoughts come from a wide variety of sources. Some from messages I have heard from individuals, some from assembly Bible studies, some from home life and some from books I have read. The Holy Spirit is the Teacher who makes them real to me.

- "Studies in the Four Gospels," by G. Campbell Morgan
- "An Outline of Mark's Gospel," by C.A. Coates
- "The Life Application Bible." Tyndale House and Zondervan

MARK 1:1-3

THE BEGINNING

In my journey with God's people of the past, I found myself in Rome, when the mad emperor, Nero, had to face the fact that he wasn't immortal at all. He had a very exalted opinion of himself that not everyone shared. The best legacy he could leave behind would be to have buildings of stone, brick and mortar built in his name. So, in some unusual and unknown way, a whole section of Rome was burned to clear away the slums and make room for a building program he had in mind. Thousands of buildings were burned and many people died when Rome burned. Who could Nero blame for setting fire to the city? The Christians!

A small, despised minority group of Jews and Gentiles mixed together who believed in Jesus Christ who had died in Jerusalem on a cross, believed He was alive. They believed He was the Son of God and they worshiped Him. They also waited for Him to return as He had promised. These people were not liked by many Romans who were licentious, self-centered and materialistic people. They were charged with setting that fire. They were sought out and killed by being fed to lions and by gladiators in the arena. Some were covered with pitch and used as burning torches. Some hid underground in the catacombs under the city. In spite of that terrible persecution, Christians in Rome and throughout the Roman empire carried the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God. Thousands who heard the message believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and were saved by God's grace.

John Mark (John was his Jewish name and Mark his Latin name) was with Peter who was one of the few eyewitnesses of the life of the Lord Jesus when He was on earth. It was imperative that a written record be made before the first generation of believers passed away who had first-hand experience of the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. Peter had that and Mark must write for him the account to inform believers and readers of the facts of the ministry of the Lord Jesus. Not only was the writing to inform them but also to instruct them in the conduct and commitment to their new faith, and to inspire them to go on for the Lord in the face of persecution and hardship.

This message written in dark times as "glad tidings" was designed to have a happy effect on those who read the book. The book of Mark is full of the happy effect of the Gospel and goes straight to the Source, "the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." This joyous statement linked with prophetic words from Malachi and Isaiah, may have been written after the rest of the book was written and placed as a preface because it is the key to the whole book. These words, "the beginning," point to a clear starting point - the ministry of John the Baptist.

It is not uncommon for men to try to make themselves a god or to consider themselves their own god. "Up with man" is often how people think of themselves. There have been people who have set themselves up as cult leaders who claim divinity for themselves. Now it is a widespread thought among people of this nation that God is who we make him out to be. Man is really his own god. Truth to many is relative so if one says a thing is true, it is true simply because they believe it to be true. Existentialism is the new philosophy most gravitate to today with rampant materialism as its outcome.

The Gospel of Mark makes clear to us today, as it did to those when it was written, that there is One true God revealed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We received the blessings of glad tidings in this dark day, when we receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Savior. The whole message of Mark is identified in these opening verses.

Where would I start in telling the world the greatest story on earth?
Normally the place to begin would be to start with someone's birth.
But if people who listened were in imminent danger of losing their life that day,
I would need to get to the most important parts as quickly as possible in what I say.

The Spirit of God knew what was needed when Peter and Mark were in Rome.
Wickedness and evil were rampant in the city, days of persecution had come.
They got right to the point of the Gospel message, it is about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
A messenger was sent to introduce the glad tidings, and make straight the path of the Lord.

Jesus Christ came, sent by the Father to bring glad tidings to men.
Mark seems filled with urgency to tell in words the message of Him.
In rapid, vigorous enthusiasm the good tidings of the Gospel are told.
It is the same message entrusted to us that we are to teach and hold.

The Holy Spirit first tells in Malachi's words of a messenger God sent ahead.
Isaiah is quoted right after that speaking of Jehovah's Servant He would send.
Right away we can identify the messenger and message as Jesus Christ is named
As the starting point of the glad tidings to tell how the Gospel came.

Matthew told of the Christ to the Jews and introduced Him as the King.
Luke tells of Christ as a Perfect Man who came forgiveness to bring.
John exalts Him as the Son of God and the high glories of His nature.
Mark portrays Him as the Perfect Servant preparing saints for the immediate future.

What a wonderful beginning when Jesus Christ is the first name in the book.
He is identified as God's Son and right away we get a good look
At the messenger John and the One who would follow his path.
May I always be impressed with the glad tidings he gave, that I Gospel truth will grasp.

"I know Father, that sometimes I take the joy of the Gospel for granted. But I pray that I may be able to clearly define the Gospel whenever I have the opportunity and privilege to proclaim it. May this feeble servant be given the words to say and the ability to say them in a way that will glorify Thee and give light and understanding to those who hear. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

MARK 1:4-13

JESUS CAME

John the Baptist was quickly introduced into the Gospel narrative as the forerunner, similar to the way a great person would come into the city of Rome. There would be a herald go before him to announce the coming of a greater person than the herald. John dressed like the ancient prophet Elijah and did not come as a smooth talking, slick preacher. He wasn't dictated to by what was popular at the time. Nobody told him how to dress, what to eat or where to live. He was like a bridge from the Old Testament to the New Testament. There had been no prophet to Israel for 400 years, but now John came speaking about the past - God had predicted events that would happen. He spoke about the future - there is more to come because One greater, whose "shoe latchet I am not worthy to unloose," was on His way. John also had a message for the present: "Repent," turn away from your sins; "Acknowledge your sinfulness," be sincere; "Be baptized," show you are honestly willing to repent (he baptized *unto* repentance, not *for* repentance).

"Jesus came," the title "Jesus Christ the Son of God" was not used yet. He came as a man among men. He came as one "found in fashion as a man" who worked and lived in a despised town called Nazareth. He who made the world with a word and lit up the darkness with a word, worked as a carpenter fashioning homes and useful things with using tools and His hands. Now "Jesus came" to where there was a religious awakening, stirring the country under the preaching of John the Baptist. He came bringing the dawning of the day of the Gospel.

"Jesus came... and was baptized." John understood when he saw Jesus and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God which taketh (beareth) away the sin of the world," that the baptism others went through testifying to the sincerity of their repentance, was not why Jesus wanted to be baptized. The baptism of Jesus was in view of taking the burden of sin upon Himself when He "was made sin for us." His baptism was in view of the death of the cross. He came to "fulfill all righteousness." Righteousness is not fulfilled by repentance. His baptism indicated that "He was numbered with the transgressors, and bare the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." His baptism was an act of dedication.

"Jesus came... and the heavens opened." The coming of the Holy Spirit upon Him and the voice of the Father from heaven happened, and at that moment of consecration, the human life of the God-Man took a new direction. The Spirit was upon this Man as He moved among the nation in days to come. The Father's voice assured all the listeners: the representatives of a chosen earthly people, that "He came unto His own."

In that moment, the Father gave testimony of His divine approval of the One who had the "favor of God and men..."

"Jesus came... and was tempted." The Holy Spirit drove Him, not in a leisurely stroll, but hurried Him into the wilderness where for forty days He faced the forces of evil. The three areas of temptation that are recorded in the scripture, cover every avenue of temptation we will receive in our lives. The world, the flesh and the devil will test those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ again and again. These testing times and the temptations that come are to be expected. To be tempted is not sin. To yield to temptation is. We live in morally dark days and as those who are identified as Christians in the biblical sense, we must resolve in our souls to live lives faithful to the Lord and to what we have testified to as being important. Like persecuted saints in Rome who would have heard the words of this book first, we too must gladly identify ourselves with Jesus, and by yielding to the guidance of the Spirit, the Father will be able to say, "Well pleased."

When Jesus came, all things were changed, darkness yielded to light.
Four hundred years of silence was over, wrong was now to be set right.
The prophet saw and testified, the words he had spoke came true.
The Lamb of God was pointed out when Jesus came into view.

When Jesus came, heaven was moved, the Spirit came like a dove.
Into a world of self-centered people came the embodiment of love.
The Spirit brings conviction it is true, He also produces the new birth.
Because Jesus came and put away sin - the human life has worth.

When Jesus came, the Father spoke with a voice that sounded like thunder.
The sound of the voice, the events at that baptism would cause the people to wonder.
Something great was happening, dead spirits were coming to life.
The darkness was being penetrated, into the world came Light.

When Jesus comes today, those in spiritual death are awakened.
The Spirit of God through the Word urges people to the truth to hearken.
Some who in faith turn to the Lord and by His grace are saved.
And life for them begins anew, and they appreciate what God gave.

When Jesus comes today, and people gather to Him,
There are gladdened hearts rejoicing together gathered to His name.
He is the One Attraction, earthly pursuits there have no place.
All who gather to Him there are those who appreciate His grace.

When Jesus comes today and comforts those who suffered loss,
It helps us to rise above the pain when we remember what it cost
Him who willingly gave His all, when for us He died.
We are comforted by His presence when we close to Him abide.

When Jesus comes today, like in the past, He is the same.
All powers in heaven and earth bow to the authority of His name.
He is the same then and now as He will forever be.
He came to His own the times past and today He comes to me.

"Father, I am not wanting to sound disrespectful here in Thy presence. It seems like sometimes there is almost like the physical presence of the Lord Jesus here where I am. In my mind I can see Him coming towards the River Jordan, being baptized by John, see the dove giving evidence of the Spirit's presence - and in my ear, hear Thy voice speaking in testimony to Thy Son. What holy ground Thou hast called me to. I worship in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

MARK 1:35-45

I WILL

While others were sleeping, the Lord Jesus was awake speaking with His father and experiencing the fellowship and blessing of a Man being in the presence of God. If a man gives God first place in his spirit, personal ambitions - even in his home, then he will have power for service outside. There is an order in this account of the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ that we do well to follow. A solitary place where one is alone removes us from the distractions of a busy life. Included in this is a quiet time of day before "all men seek Thee."

Prayer, the attitude of fellowship and words expressed to a gracious God who knows all the thoughts and intents of the heart, is not some careless comments made in private, or flowing speeches made in public to

be heard by others. It is real, personal expressions of communion, thankfulness and supplications to our Father. He knows, and we know, when that conversation has real meaning. It may be more effective for one to make many short, specific prayers when it relates to our life and work. Appreciation and gratitude to God for who He is may take more time as we count our blessings and speak to Him from the emotions of our hearts.

Preaching was next in order of priority to the Lord, and it should be to us as well. Instead of going back to the dark city of Capernaum where people were wanting to see more wonderful works done on their behalf, Jesus went to the little towns that are often overlooked, and preached the Gospel to the people in those places. Capernaum sat in darkness when He opened His ministry there one day. The prophecy was fulfilled, "The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up." Quickly as befits the character of the Gospel of Mark, the Gospel reaches all of the area of Galilee and is preached in the synagogues. The powers of darkness (demons) were cast out of many and the will of God was done.

Power to heal is in the hand of the Lord Jesus and was used after prayer and preaching to bring physical blessing to the people. Jesus came forth from the Father to bring first the blessing of salvation. This is the greatest need people have. He enforced the heralding forth of the Gospel and its power over sin by the healing of disease and casting out demons. His relationship with God is affirmed by the fact of the necessity of prayer. Then His relationship with man is declared in the preaching of the Gospel. His relationship to evil is demonstrated when He cast demons out and took authority over the power of darkness. Prayer comes first; then service and work in preaching; then dealing with evil. We should never change that order in our lives.

Mark's Gospel speaks of an incident that illustrates the "I will" of Jesus' life and service. Just after giving the Sermon of the Mount, a leper comes to Him testifying as to his faith in the Lord Jesus and appealing for the mercy and grace he needs. This cleansing of the leper gives a clear picture of the desire and willingness of the Lord Jesus Christ to respond to the needs of those who call upon His name. His compassion towards this segregated, untouchable man, reveals the will of God for all men. "He will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth."

The "I will" of the Lord to go to pray in fellowship with His Father teaches us the urgency needed in effectual prayer. He wanted to preach in the next towns; that "I will" in a sense that motivates us to take the Gospel to others. The "I will" of meeting the needs of the helpless and hopeless is also in our hands and we should never forget those who lie in darkness and need the light.

I wonder if people really know who had come into their midst.
They could see the evidence of power that was uniquely His.
But even though miracles were done in that day -
He who knew the people, turned and went away.

Woes pronounced on Capernaum even though blessing had come,
They took all that He gave but never in repentance called on His name.
Other places were blessed as the Gospel message brought light.
But that city where Jesus brought blessing never got repentance right.

I live in a city where blessing one time came to this place.
The work of God for over 100 years I am able here to trace.
Now there is hardness and all interest in the Gospel is gone.
It may be soon when the testimony here is done.

There are other places where we hear of God blessing His Word.
Other places where there was darkness, now the Gospel is heard.
The "I will" of the Savior is not to some favored group -
But is received with gladness when at His feet they too will stoop.

There is a great relief when we know God's Word in power
Is being proclaimed and no doubt every hour
Some are responding to the "I will" of the Lord.
By prayer and preaching, blessings are being given all over the world.

"Father in heaven, this world seems such a sinful place and there is such an increase in people that I sometimes feel overwhelmed by the need that is around us. For this age and generation, I pray that You will have laborers in place in the harvest field to bring in the lost. I don't know many of the laborers, but I ask Thee now for them all -

please make them successful in seeing Thee work through them. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

MARK 1

PRINCIPLE OF SERVICE, v.7
God's Servant came to earth in lowly guise -
He was a servant though a Son.
The wilderness voice said there was One more wise -
The Heavenly Voice said Jesus is the One.

Satan tried to stake his earthly claim
As god over Him in while in the world.
Jehovah's Servant would ne'er defame -
His defense in each case was to quote God's Word.

PEOPLE OF SERVICE, v.17
Busy men, faithful at their chosen tasks,
Jesus called to follow Him.
None of them had to twice be asked;
They left their fish to fish for men.

PATTERN OF SERVICE, v.22, 27
At the right time and in the right place,
The doctrine of God, Jesus taught.
His authority was clear as God's Word He spake,
His words to men were easily caught.

PLACE OF SERVICE, v.29
Needs will arise, sometimes near at home;
One's service may not be far away.
Opportunities to serve God often will come,
Arising in some unusual way.

POWER FOR SERVICE, v.35
Wherever our Lord wants us Him to serve,
One fact is always outstanding there:
Any effort put forth is worth all we can give,
But the power to serve comes to us through prayer.

"O Holy God, I thank Thee for revealing the Lord Jesus Christ to us as Thy Servant while He was here on earth. The example He gave, motivates me to want to be like Him in my service. Keep me from being slothful and complacent in any work for Thee. Enable me to honor Thee, my Lord, in every deed and word of service, whether it be in the proclamation of the Gospel or in service to Thy people. I ask this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

MARK 1:37-38. *"And when they had found Him, they said unto Him, 'All men seek for Thee.' And He said unto them, 'Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also; for therefore came I forth.'"*

PERSONS TO CONSIDER.

JESUS CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD: The One the good news is about. He is the Source of the Gospel; the Subject of the Gospel; the Savior the Gospel is about. He is Mightier than the mightiest; the Worthy One for whom we are not worthy to touch the shoes of His feet. He is the Supreme Authority who can even send His Equal. He is the Invisible God made visible to man. He is the Inexplicable One publicly identified to men. He is the Son of the Father who brought Him pleasure. He is the Obedient Man who was driven by the Spirit. He is the Impeccable One who Satan could not move. He is the Serving One, teaching others to serve. He is the Holy One demons fear greatly. He is the Compassionate Healer responding to human need. He is the Committed Evangelist taking the Gospel to the next towns. He is the Solitary One praying in the darkness of the night.

JOHN THE BAPTIST: the messenger of the Messiah; the voice in the wilderness; the conscience of the nation; the zealot from the desert; the baptizer of the repentant; the preacher of righteousness; the prisoner for the truth.

SIMON AND ANDREW: Jonah's two sons; active fishermen; men who were not lazy; men filling their role in life; providers who were concerned for their family's welfare.

From all of these in Mark chapter 1, I learn lessons to apply to my own life. Whether it is the lofty, holy life of the Savior, the short blazing star of truth that John the Baptist was, or the beginning of long lives of service as in Andrew and Simon; God takes account of incidents that may seem small as well as those that are obviously important. I learn that whatever I am called to do, God knows, cares and is interested in.

“Father, I long to bring Thee joy as those of the past did. In the small things or large; in the things done in the day or dark; in efforts made in public or in private: give me the real understanding that I am not my own. I must be in the paths of righteousness. I must consider what brings glory to Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

MARK 2:1. *“And again he entered into Capernaum, after some days: and it was noised that He was in the house.”*

HE WAS THERE!

He entered into Capernaum ----- His public present.
He was in the house ----- His personal presence.
He preached the Word----- His preaching.
He saw their faith ----- His perception.
He said, “forgiven...” ----- His pardon.
He perceived in His spirit ----- His power.
He said, “Why reason ye these things ----- His persuasion.
He went forth by the sea side... He taught ----- His practice.
He passed by ...He saw Levi ----- His personnel
He sat at meat with publicans and sinners ----- His people.
He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners ---- His pleasure.
He went through the corn fields on the Sabbath day --- His provision.

“O Father of all grace: when I follow the daily life of the Lord Jesus Christ and see what was important to Him, it makes me ashamed that I think so little of “little things”. If they were important to Him, it sure should be important to me. In every act and action of His life, He seemed to be able to bring in something for God. I want to do this too. I need grace to listen to what people don't say as well as what they do say. They need Thee in every part of their life. Help me to help them understand the value of everyday things in everyday life. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

MARK 2:1-12

THEIR FAITH

In my walk with the Lord through the Gospel of Mark, I was reminded of the fact that even though Capernaum was a dark city interested mainly with what miracles Jesus was doing, He came back again and again. There are those people God has in mind to save. We don't know who they are and how God will reach them. Our responsibility is to remain where God would have us until He plainly shows us it is time to leave for good.

One needy man wasn't reached by God's grace the first time Jesus was in Capernaum. Even while the Lord was having a teaching meeting and was unfolding the truth of the scriptures in His crowded home, others who were late in coming, were seeking Him for a different reason. When I become aware of another person's need spiritually and physically, I need to move to meet that need. It may be that others also are aware of the same need and are waiting for someone else to take action. What we all may be able to see as a need in our eyes, may not be the basic fundamental problem. The care and urgency of a few people may open the way for the Lord Jesus to act on their behalf way beyond our expectations. These men let the paralytic man down through the roof for healing. The Lord went right to the root of the problem first. "Man looks on the outward appearance; God looks on the heart."

The Lord Jesus Christ had been teaching the word. Now He illustrates the word He had been teaching. There has to be an acknowledging of need first. Then we must seek Him with urgency and all our heart. That is repentance. God recognizes faith whether it is great or small. He does forgive sins and He alone can forgive sins. Evidence of His forgiveness is seen afterwards. "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins," isn't referring to a future time but immediately upon the exercise of faith in Christ, forgiveness is granted.

There will always be those who criticize a work for the Lord that earnest Christians seek to do. Some will say it is too little; others will say it is too much. Some will say we are doing the work of God wrong; others will tell

you to wait. Some will think you preach too long and others will say you didn't speak long enough. We can't allow the criticisms or disagreements of others to direct our service for God. Our work is to be done in the fear of the Lord and for His glory alone. If we do what God's will is, then we can leave the results with Him confidently and we don't have to worry about what others have to say.

There have been times in the past and doubtless will further be
Those who don't like what we do nor with our methods agree
As we seek to reach those who still in sin and darkness lie
And may not even have heard that Jesus is passing by.

So it is up to me and to others who teach and preach,
To find them and tell them the Gospel, so they may reach
In faith to the Savior for forgiveness of sins -
And when God saves them, a whole new life begins.

The Lord Jesus knows what faith is and where it is placed.
Whether in a person's own works or in Him and His saving grace.
He is able to declare plainly when the seeking sinner is forgiven -
And the healing of the soul is obvious when one starts for heaven.

Others looking on in smugness and self-complacency,
May look on with jaundiced eyes and comment critically.
Those words and those kinds of people are deliberately blind -
And will never be saved until in true repentance, they change their mind.

There is no problem to tell when a real work of God
Is done in one's soul, they have the assurance of the Word,
And though they look the same on the outside, the change within
Is what gives the confidence they have been forgiven of their sin.

When one walks toward home after meeting the Savior,
Often those they meet on the way will see the change of behavior.
They will know by expressions and words that we speak,
Something real has happened to those who the Savior meet.

It may be, they will understand that they too need forgiveness of sins,
And the Savior is waiting for them to be brought to Him.
When I realize that person has a real felt need -
May I always be ready the call of the Savior to heed.

"Father, there have been those calls from time to time that lead me to know Thy will. Give me the understanding, I pray, as to how best act on behalf of those in need. I confess I generally look only on the outward appearance. Thou who dost know the hearts of all men; please guide Thy servant in the work that I do, that it may be done always in fellowship with Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

MARK 2:13 - 3:6

OPPOSITION

It was quite unusual as far as the Jews were concerned, for one who is involved in religious matters, to show any interest in a publican. Those despised tax-gatherers for the Romans were known to be dishonest. They were considered to be consorting with the enemy and were looked upon with the same disdain as criminals. When Jesus called Levi to follow Him and then He and His disciples went to Levi's house for a great feast, that caused great indignation on the part of those who considered themselves holy. The Pharisees (separated ones) believed that was moral carelessness on the part of the Lord Jesus Christ. They would have considered God was like them, not like Jesus. We need to keep in our minds that "God is no respecter of persons." He is not unaware of the kind of person He deals with and calls to Himself. There is a tendency on our part to consider one's reputation before we present them with the Gospel. Those who most often respond to the Gospel are those who have been neglected by men. They realize their need of God and helplessness in themselves.

Opposition at times arises because people have preconceived ideas as to who God is willing to save. We know He is willing to save "all who come unto God by Him." The Lord Jesus was not unaware of those with whom He was dealing, but He saw them as sick and in need of a Physician. He came to bring healing and life to those who are spiritually sick and diseased. The Physician was about His work, not following the man-inspired rules of the Pharisees who added their own laws to, "...and thy neighbor as thyself."

John's disciples fasted in view of a nation being called to face their sin and repent. Now some of those same men were feasting. This was because the One John had gone before, had come - the Bridegroom was here. It is a time to rejoice. We are sitting at a feast of eternally good things. The Lord opened a whole new area of faith and experience when He came. We sit at a feast of immeasurable blessings that are not bound by religious do's and don'ts. That is why we don't try to mix the old and new together. The new day of grace and the works of law-keeping do not go together. The charge of the lack of seriousness regarding the law made by the Pharisees was because they had not, nor were they willing to, come as ungodly sinners to Jesus like the publicans and sinners did.

The Pharisees had also self-imposed laws that went way beyond what God had given in the commandments. As far as they were concerned, picking a handful of grain and rubbing it between your hands to eat and satisfy your hunger, was both harvesting a crop and preparing a meal. They considered that to be a secular act was being done on the Sabbath day. The illustration Jesus gave of David (one of their heroes) eating the showbread exposed their hypocrisy. A cry for food is a sign of health. Health and holiness have the same meaning indicating a desire for food is a sacred thing. The day of rest was for man, not man for the day. It is possible to get spiritual things so mixed up that we are found in opposition to what God's intention is. And at that time the Lord again identifies Himself. Not now does He refer to Himself as the Son of Man who forgives sins, but is the Lord over the law that He Himself gave. The Son of Man is Lord over the Sabbath. The Pharisees could understand what He was saying but rejected it - and Him. We don't keep the Sabbath day but we do recognize our Lord Jesus Christ has authority over us regarding every action of every day. He died and rose that He might be our Lord.

By refusing to acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ as their Messiah, the Pharisees and those who followed them had set themselves against the authority of the Lord. Opposition often follows the path of jealousy. They were jealous over His popularity, His power to do miracles and His authority. We do well when the ugly head of jealousy rises, to take stock of ourselves, lest we be found in opposition to the Lord and what He is doing through others. The antagonism against the Lord followed Him because He made it plain that there is no middle ground; no half-way to fulfill what God's intention is. The Lord challenged them with His question. They had to know in their hearts - there is no middle-ground. He kept His eyes on them with holy anger long enough for them to know they were exposed for what they really were. Right there they broke the law by plotting His death in unity with the political branch of the nation.

The healing of the man's withered arm didn't make the opposition to stop and rejoice or even go away. It rather intensified and unified. There is the need to be aware of the fact there is in any of us the tendency to oppose, either outwardly or inwardly, the success of others. Let us rather go to God in humility and thankfulness and with grace, rejoice over what God is doing through others.

It isn't always easy to rejoice over the success of others.
But it can be a victory of ours when a multitude of sins it covers.
When I rejoice at the blessing God gives when others laborers have success -
And our tendency to be critical, is dealt with when our souls we do possess.

The Lord didn't stop His work because of critics who were against Him.
He had a higher responsibility than to try and keep fellowship with them.
All around were needy people who were in danger of being lost.
His role, and ours too, is to reach those people regardless of the cost.

We may lose popularity and important people may criticize.
A lot of that may come to us, because we don't value what they prize.
There can't be a stop to the work we're called to because of what people say.
Opportunities come to us, and we dare not linger nor delay.

It goes with the work of evangelizing that there are those who will oppose.
We can't change their minds, that is God's work, He knows those He chose.
Our responsibility is to preach the Word of God and be faithful.
If by any efforts we make God uses it, we can certainly be grateful.

"I thank Thee Father, for the encouragement these incidents in the life and labors of the Lord Jesus give me. There are going to be people who oppose - I know that. There will be times of discouragement and I know that too. But in the way the Lord got joy out of those publicans and sinners who came to Him, so I get joy when we can see results of Gospel work going on today. I praise Thee in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

MARK 3

Verse 1-5

For years – one hand with which to eat
One hand to feel the pain of double work
One hand with which to embrace and touch
One hand limiting his usefulness –

Then Jesus spoke –

And instant healing and therapy – on the Sabbath.

Verse 6-12

From many places – wanting people
Needy, their infirmities making them one –
A great multitude – then as now – unclean.
Unclean spirits with right words –

Then Jesus healed –

Putting to silence the power of darkness.

Verse 13-19

From different walks – twelve men came at His call
To be with Him, and learn, and be sent – the same today –
Appointed: not free lances on their own with personal agendas –
Men to represent the Master, and then as now, to herald His coming.

Then Jesus ordained –

Not the ordinances of men for position, but of God for service.

Verse 20-30

From deceptive critics – charges laid by men who deceive –
Making money for self in God's name – blind leaders
Binding burdens on blind people – all heading for a deep ditch –
Charging Jesus – calling Him lord of the dung heap.

Then Jesus challenged –

The voice of God silences even the blasphemers.

Verse 31-33

From family – staying away, outside the realm of faith and truth –
Calling for Him – needing His favor –claiming His time – not understanding.
Others sitting, listening and learning – hearing His words of life –
Preparing for the future – a kingdom in their heart – a King has claimed them.

Then Jesus explained –

A spiritual family commits to doing the will of God.

“O Holy God, the response of people to Thy Son reminds me that people are the same in every age. May I never take any one or any situation for granted as I learn that my Lord responded even to His critics in words they could easily understand. I want to be like Him in this way. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

MARK 3:14. *“And He ordained twelve, that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach.”*

BE WITH HIM.

The Lord had plans for some special men,
They had responded first when He called to them
To leave what they were doing and to follow Him -
The choice they made, made them different from then on in.

He called them aside from all the other folks
That to them and through them His Word would be known.
But before they could go out, they had to be shown
The ways of God - those ways had to be made their own.

They came from different walks and works in life -
A lot of people would have had a lot of strife -
But when the Lord called them to be living lights,
He had in His mind to send them out in His might.

Being with the Lord they would learn how He did things
They would learn how to help others who their problems bring -
They would learn how He prayed and how to make truth ring -
They would lead others to understand their need of faith in Him.

After the Lord died and had gone back to heaven -
The things they had learned they passed on to other men
And down through the years other men lead others to Him -
And the leadership process is repeated again and again.

“Heavenly Father, I have been speaking to these men about the role and work of leadership. They have the potential to lead others in Thy ways. I am not sure they want to. In these next days ahead as we study this subject, please give me wisdom to pass on some things that will help them understand the need of spiritual leadership and be willing to rise to that need and meet it. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

MARK 3:7-19

WHOM HE WOULD

Following along with the Lord Jesus and His disciples away from Capernaum, they came to a lake, generally a place of quiet reflection. But here there are people gathered from all parts of Israel, all with needs of one kind or another. There will be needs to meet wherever human being are found. Some are physical, some are emotional and some are spiritual needs. In ourselves we are never able to meet the needs we are made aware of. The Holy Spirit within us guides us to fulfill the work to which we have been called. We serve a Sovereign Lord, and He who knows every need is able to accomplish His will. When He chooses to use us, we are there to act on His behalf in whatever role or responsibility He has identified as our work at that time.

When He went into the small boat, He may have used that as a platform from which He could speak to the great crowd of people who were anxious to see and hear Him. He healed who He would and even those demon-possessed people were set at liberty from the evil power that kept them bound. His command to them to be silent was because their testimony as to who He was, was for the wrong reason. They were waiting for a mighty conqueror who would restore sovereignty to the nation and liberate them from the power of Rome. We may not agree with all that is going on in this nation in which we live. There are those who seek to get us to join them in rising up against the constituted authority. It is important for us to remember "the powers that be are ordained of God." He sets in office "those He will." We need to keep small in our own eyes in order to be used of the Lord as He will. He knows the circumstances, the misdeeds and the outcome - and guides all things "as He would."

From the small boat the Lord Jesus went up into a mountain where He deliberately picked out of those who followed Him, twelve men - "those He would." These were chosen to "be with Him." He elected them, not they chose Him. These were men of His choosing, so He assumed full responsibility for the choice. For His own reason, and by His own wisdom, He called them - not because they asked to be called. When God calls us to fulfill some responsibility, we cannot protest against that because of our inability. We are free from that responsibility because He calls "who He will." At the same time, He does give us serious responsibility to fulfill the purpose for which we are called. Not everyone who is called has the same abilities or credentials. There does seem to be certain capacities in those people that He wants to use. The use of natural talents and spiritual gifts in combination are directed by the One who calls us to do a work that is known only to Him.

These men are called "to be with Him." There needed to be times of preparation and learning. There was a training time that would enable them to see things through the eyes of their Master-Teacher. They would learn from Him to think like Him and how to act like Him. They would become men through whom He could act and carry out His purposes. They would be foundation stones of His Body, controlled by His intelligence, having His emotions and acting on His choices. During the time they were "with Him" they would learn so "He might send them forth to preach." They were able to preach with authority, have power over demons and evil. They were set aside from the rest by Him and for Him, and could speak with authority in His name. He had appointed them.

When we first heard the call of God it was in the Gospel when we were called to put our faith in Christ for salvation. The peace that was made at that time opened the way for Him to call us into service for Him. This is not a response to our need, but a thoughtful response to our devotion. Do I really love Him? Am I willing to set aside my own ambitions and ideas to obey Him and serve Him whole heartedly? His call is not based on

our skill although there is a sense in which He uses what He has endowed us with. Even our faith, like those twelve men, falters at times. But we do not have the liberty to disqualify ourselves, because we do not have the credentials we think we need or that others expect of us. We are called because of His will that we might send us out to do His will.

There may be times when we don't know what to do next.
The pressures and expectations of others our souls vex.
But when we stop to think it was for this work we are called,
And for a casual stroll through life on the way to heaven we have been spoiled -
Then we willingly take hold of our work for the Lord once again -
And follow on with His work like when we did first begin
To learn from Him and then in turn go out to preach,
That those who haven't heard the Gospel we will be able to reach.

It is not in us to understand why He at first did choose
Us to serve Him in the Gospel, but in a sense, bands were unloosed,
That we might go forth to places into which He would send
Us with a message to give and that the ultimate end
Would be people turned from darkness to light; from Satan to God
And in turn those people would pass on to others the power of His Word,
So that from them would go others the charge to diligently keep -
That others who hear them, will for the Savior earnestly seek.

A few "whom He would" started a work that still continues -
Although it seems small, still in a small work there are the sinews
Of earnest endeavor by those who pray the Lord of the harvest to send more
Into the great field, and so they are called to go to a distant shore -
That those still in darkness can see God's great light -
And through them come to Christ, and in turn have a sight
Of what God can do through them to bring others to Him -
That victories will be won, as many turns to God from their sin.

"Lord God of the great harvest field, I ask Thee today to send more laborers to the harvest here in North America. What a blessing it is when people reach out to others in a distant place. What a serious need we have here where the work we have been doing seems to be getting weaker rather than stronger. If we are to be used to stir others to rise up to labor, please give us the wisdom as to how to do it. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

MARK 3:20-35

ALL SINS SHALL BE FORGIVEN

Intense interest accompanies unusual event and activities that affect ordinary lives. Family members may not understand the motives behind your activities when you are involved in things pertaining to the kingdom of God. Faith that makes you act differently than those close to you may be misunderstood as criticism of them or what they do and don't do. We all fall short of being the ideal Christian and consequently you may be accused of being a hypocrite because of inconsistencies in your life. All one can do is love them and go on with your work for the Lord following the example of the Perfect Servant.

There may be those who criticize you in ways that seem so unreasonable and foolish that it is hard to take anything they say seriously. The criticism of the Lord Jesus Christ personally could be forgiven because He was still looked upon as only a man, "the carpenter's son," and they had not yet acknowledged the reality of His deity. The scribes who were teachers of the law were seeking to make the Lord Jesus out to be a sinful man by accusing Him personally of using Satan's power. They wanted those around to believe He was demon possessed and said so. He answered the second criticism as to His work by illustrating the foolishness of their argument as a divided kingdom - a king casting out his subjects. That would be like Satan rejecting those who serve him. In this illustration the Lord identifies Himself to be stronger than Satan and by His own power and authority can overcome demons and the powers of evil. God presently allows Satan in the world today, but in the future, he will be bound and cast into the lake of fire.

When the scribes charged Him of doing the work of God under the power of Satan, they stepped beyond the place of forgiveness. To attribute the miracles Christ had done by the "power of the Spirit of God that was upon Him," to the power of Satan, was unpardonable. That action was invading the realm of God's motives in bringing blessing to mankind. Those scribes were indicating the activity of the Lord Jesus was linked with the terrible filthiness and evil power of darkness. This is not a sin that can be committed today because the Lord Jesus Christ is not visibly here today doing miraculous works. Today He is willing to forgive all sins.

However, any today who refuse to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, will not be forgiven in their unbelief. To refuse and reject the Lord Jesus, even though the Holy Spirit is working in conviction of sin, righteousness and judgment to come is to refuse the forgiveness of sins provided for by the death of Christ on the cross. God is able and willing to forgive all sins that men commit by virtue of the value of the sacrifice He made for sin. We are not outside the bounds of the Gospel when we tell people, "...that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

The blood relations of the Lord, His own kin, came to take charge of Him because they thought He was out of His mind. Sometimes even family members cannot recognize the unique fellowship of those who are in the family of God. The passionate commitment to the work of the kingdom of God is often misunderstood by those who don't share that. People understand the wholehearted devotion of a military person to the defense of his country. They also understand the commitment of a person to the business they have or the company they represent even when one works 70 or 80 hours a week for the profit of their company. For some reason those who sacrifice their secular ambitions, time and maybe even their life for the kingdom of God, are either out of their mind or are being led astray by a cult.

The Lord went passed that opposition and when working on His disciples and those who followed Him, recognized those men as brothers born for adversity, and were committed to Him in spite of opposition. He saw those women who ministered to Him as sisters who could sympathize and were able to make easier, or as mothers who would give Him comfort and encouragement in the work He was doing - that of pleasing His Father.

How strange it is when one's faithful work is criticized as evil.
Can't those who see the benefits understand that not all work is equal?
Some are called to do great things; others are to stay by the "stuff."
Each does what must be done as to the Lord, He alone knows what is enough.

The strength for each day comes from Him who knows the end from the beginning.
There is needed the efforts of all in the service of soul-winning.
Whatever is my role to fill, of this I am most sure -
Opposition by Satan and his host against us can't endure.

Christ came to pay the price of sin and because of that can forgive
The deepest, darkest sins men can commit no matter where they live.
Any person who comes to Christ today in simple child-like faith -
Will find Him willing to forgive and to save them by His grace.

"All sins" men have committed have a price that must be paid.
By virtue of who He is, Christ was able to do this when God laid
On Him the iniquities of us all and cleansed us by His blood.
The cross-death of the Savior made possible peace between us and God.

We don't ever need to hesitate to tell people they can be saved.
It was the cost to ransom lost sinners Jesus met when His life He gave.
He is able to "save to the uttermost" all who come to God by Him.
"All sins" He does forgive for those who believe He died for them.

"Father, there may be those today who will come to hear Thy Word proclaimed. May the words spoken reach to the hearts of saints and sinners. May each take for themselves the truths that are presented. May there be much today that honors Thee. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

MARK 3:34-35. *"And He looked round about on them which sat about Him, and said, Behold My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."*

AWARENESS.

THE LORD AND HIS WORK IN PUBLIC: even when He was observed with suspicion, He acted in the best interests of His Father. Those around may form their opinion of my heavenly Father by what they see in me.

THE LORD AND HIS SERVANTS IN PRIVATE: to be associated with the Lord Jesus Christ as one of His followers, is the highest privilege a man on earth could ever have. Whether it is listening to Him while we rest in a desert place; are rebuked by Him because of lack of faith when we are on the sea; carrying baskets of food until we are tired; or are seeing His power working through us - it is a supreme privilege.

THE LORD AND THE POWERS OF DARKNESS: unclean spirits sent out of sick people have no right to testify as to who the Lord is. The scribes from Jerusalem with their mouthy words and jealous charges, speak for Satan. No matter what the charge or situation; no one speaking for the powers of darkness has a right to speak either good or bad in regards to the Lord.

THE LORD AND HIS TEACHING ON FAMILY: the original social structure God designed was a family. Adam and Eve forfeited the family privilege with God when they chose to do what they knew was wrong. The family unit, as blessed as it is when structured properly and functioning properly, still does not fill the original purpose of a family. The will of God is the important key in proper family life. Unless that is done by all members of a family, the family is less than God intended.

“All-knowing God and Father: what delight it must’ve given Thee when the Lord Jesus was here as a man among men. Finally, there was One who did what Thou didst want, it the way that pleased Thee, and was pleased that He pleased Thee. Thou hast been so patient with me in all my failure through life. I am truly sorry for not being aware of what was Thy will and ways. By the help of the Holy Spirit, I want to bring some satisfaction to Thee. I won’t go so far as to say, “pleasure” but even some awareness on a daily basis of doing Thy will would bring me joy too. To be able to say, “This is for God alone,” would be satisfaction enough. But I have this problem - in spite of myself, I want secretly to take some credit for myself. How foolish I am! How gracious Thou art! Amen.”

MARK 3: 35. *“For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my mother, and my sister, and my brother.”*

GOD’S FAMILY.

The family I am a part of is large. The Father is adopting children into it daily. The number increases constantly and yet the Father doesn’t change one bit towards those that are in the family. Some of my brothers and sisters have been in the family most of their lives and have experienced family life to such a degree that they bear similar characteristics even though they have never met each other. It is interesting that when we meet an older brother or sister, we can pick up a conversation just like we had known each other all our lives. We just have to mention the Father or His unique “one of a kind Son” and we are connected.

Perhaps the most impacting part of family life has to do with new family members. They hardly know how to talk the family talk, or walk the family walk, but there is a connection right away. All I have to do is mention the Father and the Son and their face shows the Holy Spirit is in them. Their interest is genuine, their appreciation of being adopted into the family is expressed, their new life shows and they want to be an active participant in the whole family dynamic.

I saw that recently in some new believers who had come from China and heard the Gospel for the first time. They listened intently to Gospel preaching. Even though they had never heard any one speak about God, they were interested in knowing about the family of Christians because they could see some family resemblances in people of the family in North America that they had previously seen in people in the family in China. In North America the family can openly meet and enjoy family life. In China they cannot but it doesn’t affect the similarity of family character. We are a large body but we are one, and I am enjoying it to the full.

“O Almighty Father of all that believe and are children in Thy family. It never ceases to amaze me how vast Your love is. It includes every one of Your children and yet doesn’t diminish in any way when another is added to the family. I praise Thee that such love includes me and every other person that has responded to Thy grace with gratitude and affection. All of us will have such a great time when the family reunion comes in Thy house. I can hardly wait! In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.”

MARK 4

HE TAUGHT

How can He know, this Man among men?
Who never failed – always finished what He began?
He pleased His Father in every way –
He knew what to do and just what to say.
His teaching was about many things –
His knowledge complete from fathomless springs.
From fishers and farmers, the question is –
“How does He know – what manner of Man is this?”

HE WARNED

With simple illustrations from a candle and a bed –
Come lessons to us who have heard what He said.
Be out in the open with what you believe –
To busyness or sloth never give heed.

Be out in the open – always let your light shine –
It may not be now, but at some other time
A person who had been wandering on in the dark –
Saw your light shining as you were doing your part

HE CHALLENGED

From what you give others, you will surely receive.
The blessings you get back are bigger than you can conceive.
Giving to others is like giving to God –
He takes account of each measure in your treasure lode.
It may seem small in your eyes and the eyes of men –
But nothing is small when it is given to Him.
Just make sure when you give you never hold back –
Or ever rob God or in your giving lack.

HE REVEALS

There may be times when you wonder if God cares.
It may seem at that moment He is not even there.
He may not be in full view – perhaps deliberately obscure –
Giving faith full reign to make you absolutely sure.
A storm doesn't mean He is not close at hand.
He has promised that you will make it safely to land.
The manner of this Man is so far beyond us –
The best we can do is move ahead – in Him trust.

“Eternal God, who knows every mind and heart: I am before Thee here with a sense of reverence at being able to address such a Great God as a son. I am in wonder at the manner of the Man who was here on this earth. It was evident that He was God and yet seemed so human. I am amazed at the God-Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

MARK 4:2. *“And He taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in His doctrine,”*

HIS DOCTRINE.

HIS DOCTRINE:

- The Parable of the sower: the principle and practice of furthering the Gospel.
- The parable of the candle: what to do with the light we have been given.
- The parable of the measure: what to do with the goods I have been given.
- The parable of the seed: His Word is to be sown and God will make what is natural in it to work and produce.
- The parable of the mustard seed: what seems little to men is great with God.

HIS AUTHORITY:

- His direction may lead into difficulties.
- His presence may not always be seen.
- His ear is open to the call of His servants.
- His power is able to meet every need.
- His desire is that we live in faith in Him continually.

“I understand Father, that the results of the teaching process are not always quickly discerned. Sometimes it seems like folks get what is said and want to act on it right away. Then after a short time begin to pull back and hesitate. I confess, Father, I get impatient in my heart with such people. I think I can keep from saying anything by the help of the Spirit, but the problem is when I think about it inside and wonder if I should keep on going. Thank You for reminding me not only of the doctrine, but of His authority. I can't make anything happen. It is the work of God to produce any benefit from teaching. Help me to be content to simply walk with the Lord and speak clearly what You have laid on my heart. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

MARK 4:1-34

WHY PARABLES?

I noticed a change in the teaching methods of the Lord Jesus Christ when the momentum of opposition to Him and His teaching kept increasing. The Lord from here on, in His ministry, taught the multitudes of

people in parables that made the people think, rather than give explanations that challenged them to act. As these common human stories were told by the Master-Teacher, those who heard would have to take time to consider their own reaction to the truth He taught. When people do not want to see with understanding, and do not want to act upon what they hear - their hearts are hardened. Rather than abandon such people forever, the Lord gave them a "candle" for light if they would use it, and a "basket" for the truth if they would be willing to fill it.

The Lord Jesus was not trying to keep people from knowing the facts of the Gospel, but was giving them a way to seek the truth of God. "Ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." There has been a lot of spurious activity in "Gospel preaching" that has deceived people and left them with the idea they are Christians. They have not understood the Word of God, the seed that has been sown. There is nothing at all wrong with the seed. The sower, the one who presents the Word of God, casts the seed on the whole variety of soil that speaks of the wide variety of hearers. The problem lies in the soil, not the seed. Some will hear the Gospel but it has no effect upon them because they are not interested in it. Others hear but have habits they want to keep along with their profession in Christ. Still others seem to start out well but their interests in life have not changed and they want God's salvation and the world too. Only one quarter of those who hear the Word of God responded in any way, and even among them, only one out of three reached the potential God had for them.

Parables, stories with a meaning and purpose behind them, make it a possible to present truth to people without forcing it on them. Those who are saved will understand why the parables are told and the message in them. Those who are seeking the Lord are given light they can act on without forcing faith or a confession of faith on them. Those who want to understand, who want to receive Christ as their Savior, who want forgiveness of sins and eternal life, are awakened by this method of teaching and can exercise personal faith in Christ alone without the demands of a persuasive instructor.

The Lord did not speak anymore to the multitudes without parables because the opposition was intimidating to those who wanted to hear the truth. The illustrated truth would be heard with interest by the seeker but would not incite them to act without conviction and confidence. The same holds true now. Opposition distracts people from the whole purpose of Gospel preaching. When one has to take time to think and consider what the truth means, then they will act in faith in Christ, not in some hurried response at the end of a Gospel meeting nor pressured into a confession of something that is not real.

I have often wondered if those who hear the Word understand -
Or even if a glimmer of light reaches into the heart of man.
What way should I use to speak or to illustrate a point?
Is what I say made clear enough, or do those truths seem out of joint?

The way the Lord Jesus spoke was surely the way to speak.
He gave great sermons when people, the kingdom of Israel, came to seek.
But people heard His words all right, it just wasn't what they wanted to hear.
They wanted their kingdom on earth, not the kingdom of God that was near.

The Lord used a different method of teaching to make people stop to think.
A well-told story as an illustration is often better than a nod or a wink.
One has to open their eyes to envision what that parable means.
After consideration will realize it is different that what at first it seems.

The hearing of the ear takes place, and a person applies the truth
To themselves and through understanding and conviction, find out the real worth
Of their own soul and life in the eyes of a thrice Holy God -
In repentance to Him and faith in Christ, they can now understand His Word.

A story is not just entertainment, but provides a window into the soul.
Some light penetrates the darkness through a parable that is told.
The hearer then takes stock and considers, "This truth applies to me."
And the point of a doctrinal truth becomes much easier to see.

If the Lord Jesus used the story method to teach people in His day -
Then I too will seek to tell some stories so people know what I say.
An illustration one can understand or maybe to it can relate -
By thinking about it and considering the point, it will open up a gate.

A mind can process a lot of things, but when it is called upon to act -
It is necessary for the hearer to recognize and grasp the fact

That when a person comes to faith in Christ, it is not by some coercion -
A personal act of faith in Christ alone, is the only way of God's salvation.

"Heavenly Father, for most of my life I have been telling stories to illustrate points of Gospel truth. I don't want to misuse or overuse this method of seeking to give light to those who hear. May I be kept by the Holy Spirit from going too far in this, and at the same time be effective in presenting Thy Gospel to lost souls that they might be saved. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

MARK 4:35-41

UNDERESTIMATED

As I followed the Lord in my mind through the pressures of a busy day of teaching and ministering to the multitudes, it seems perfectly natural that He would be tired. Also, following the teaching He gave, there was the process of training the disciples to grasp the truth for themselves. Unfelt truth given by unprepared people who have not made the personal effort to get the meaning of God's Word, will fall on deaf ears. The Lord knew the best way to address an audience of people, and He knew it was necessary to teach His disciples over and over what the point of a message is to be.

It seemed natural that He would find a place to rest while men who were used to traveling by water in their work, went about doing the tasks which would have been a second nature to them. We need to remember that Satan and his host often make a point of attacking us in areas of life with which we are most familiar. There is no place we can go where we are immune from the challenges of the enemy. However, there is a Person to whom we can go. I don't think the disciples had intended the Lord to calm the sea and rebuke the wind. They awakened the Lord Jesus just as they would any other man who was in danger of drowning in the sea. Their intention probably was to get Him to help bail water out of the boat because it was nearly swamped with water coming over the side. They underestimated His calmness of soul and spirit as they saw Him sleeping when they were afraid.

When the Lord Jesus got up and muzzled the wind and spoke to the water, then the disciples were really afraid to the extent of terror. It may have at first seemed like a manly thing to do to show bravery in the midst of danger by challenging the elements. The disciples may even have done something similar themselves in the past as a show of bravado. But when His word stopped the wind and the sea obeyed His voice, there was a far greater fear than fear of the elements that came over the disciples. This was no macho act and bravely spoken words. The reality of who the Lord really was, became plain to them. This was no ordinary man. He was no unusual miracle worker or knowledgeable teacher. This evidence of His deity and His humanity at the same time would have made them aware of the power of the Lord Jesus Christ over the forces of nature. The Creator and this Man, was the same Person. They would never have forgotten this lesson. They had fearfully underestimated the Lord Jesus Christ until this time. All day they had heard Him teaching in parables. Now this same night they experienced a parable themselves and the lesson was well learned.

For our learning it is important that we do not panic in the storms of life. Even if for some reason we wonder at why things happen the way they do, we need to remember there is no need to fear. In fact, there is no reason to go and desperately try to awaken the Lord and inform Him of our problem. He is already, and always, in control of the events that befall us. When Christ is with us, all is well. The storms may even continue but like the hymn-writer said, "With Christ in the vessel, I can smile at the storm." Another writer said we are far safer in the middle of a storm with God, than anyplace else without Him. A proper estimation of our Lord and Savior will make it possible for us to be at peace.

In the calm of the evening, when all is beautiful and quiet -
He is there.
In the busyness of work, and we are pressured to buy it-
He is there.
No matter what the testing is we are called to go through -
Even if old temptations don't affect us, now there's something new -
And the pressure comes upon us until we don't know what to do-
He is there.
When the winds of opposition get stronger and rise against us-
He is there.
The voices of those who know us mock and scorn our trust-
He is there.
When in the middle of laughter and others' derision-
In the times we are making life-changing decisions-

And we live in fast-declining moral conditions-
He is there.

When there is no question we are under satanic challenge-
He is there.

When everything in our life is thrown off-balance-
He is there.

Even though the storms of life do not cease-
There is available to me abundant grace-
And in the middle of the storm, I am at peace-
He is there.

"O God of earth and sea and sky, my Father: I am rejoicing this morning in the consciousness of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ as well as His perfect humanity. It gives me a sense of quiet rest to be able to experience the reality of the Savior in all of life's situations. May I never underestimate in any way, the Person, Power and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

MARK 5:1-20

THE UNSEEN

It is not for the purpose of arousing curiosity about the power of darkness that this incident in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ is recorded. I think it is rather told to make us aware of the fact that "we wrestle not with flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of this darkness, against spiritual wickedness in high places." But an even greater reason is it is a reminder of the power and authority of the One we serve. He is the One who "has all power in heaven and earth." He is the Supreme Authority in the universe and we are associated with Him. "He is Lord!"

Evil spirits need bodies to live in to carry out the plans of Satan who controls them. Those dark beings are dangerous, evil, powerful and destructive. When they controlled the man of Gadara, certain characteristics were obvious. He was in a place of isolation, probably living in caves where the people of the area placed the bodies of the dead. Isolation is a characteristic of one who is the center of his own life and thoughts. A self-centered, self-absorbed person is vulnerable to the power of darkness. Lawlessness was another characteristic of this man. He could not be controlled and would not submit to the authority of others. The physical strength to break chains came from power greater than is normal in a man. Another evidence of his possession by evil spirits was the restlessness that kept him moving about and crying out day and night. There was also evidence that self-inflicted suffering was part of the signs of evil spirits having their way with him.

We may not be very aware of evil spirits in this God-favored part of the world, or at least in the more affluent parts of society. But there is a growing fascination with evil spirits on the part of many young people. It may have started with seemingly innocent games like Snakes and Ladders or playing with a Ouija board. From there it moves its attraction to computer games that create interest in demons and satanic-like characteristics. Any of these, open doors to the power of darkness to make an entrance into a human body and mind. Those who resist and reject the Lord Jesus, and even the existence of God, are placing themselves on a course that leads in the same direction as the man of Gadara. Self-will leads to destruction. Submission to the Holy Spirit's conviction leads to the Lord Jesus Christ and forgiveness, cleansing and freedom to live as God intended.

The desire to control the life and destiny of a person is the ambition of an evil spirit. They do not have power over the Holy Spirit, the Lord Jesus Christ or our heavenly Father. They must submit to the power of Divine Persons. A person has the choice as to who or what power he or she is going to submit to. Demons know the supernatural power of the Lord. They know when one seeks the Lord with all their heart, they will find Him. So, they seek to isolate them from Christian influence by creating an unnatural resistance to the Bible, the Gospel and the righteousness which is by faith. Often, they restlessly try one thing after another to "have the experience." Drugs, movies, pornography, the internet and many other channels are used by the power of darkness to bring a person under its control. The great lawlessness and suffering that is brought about by the drug trade and alcoholism is evidence of what "spirits" can bring to a person and a society.

The casting out of these evil spirits from the man opened a whole new life to him. Now he began to tell his friends what the Lord had done for him. The change in the man and the good news he had to tell them about the Lord, brought a lot of people to consider the Lord Jesus Christ and their relationship with Him. When one comes to faith in Christ and puts their trust in Him, they are more than conquerors because "greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world."

Whenever the Lord Jesus comes to a place, there are choices to be made.
One can't avoid making a response to grace, there is a price to be paid
If one trusts the Savior, evil does leave, darkness and light do not mix.
One cannot both God and the devil please, these two cannot coexist.

The power of Satan is a binding one, that keeps captive those who follow him.
Of all the things one in life has done, under his power is only evil and sin.
The power of God sets one at liberty, chains and habits that once bound are broken.
A new life and creation begin and one is set free, when that person obeys the Word that is spoken.

There is no denying a work that is done by God, all is new, old things have passed away.
The desire is there to speak of and obey the Lord, darkness is gone, and we live in the day.
Others may mock and wonder and make remarks, but the reality is there to see.
The old life is gone and one has made a new start, as people start to read "the Gospel according to me."

"Father, what evidence of power and the glory of Christ was seen that day in Gadara. Would it not bring glory to Thee here if that man who comes to listen to the Gospel, would be reached by Thy power? Save him I pray, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

MARK 5:21-43

UNPARALLELED SYMPATHY

Large multitudes met Jesus when He stepped off the boat on the "other side." It is not unknown for crowds of people to want to be where when a time of visitation by God takes place. Some people come out of curiosity; others come to criticize as skeptics like to do. There are those who come in fearful desperation and others in despair looking for a glimmer of hope. It is the same today as it was in the days when the Lord was here.

It is a point of interest that twelve years before, in the home of an up-and-coming man was born a little girl. She would have been the apple of his eye and the source of great joy to both the mother and father. In another home around the same time a young woman had to face what would have been to her and those of her family, a terrible tragedy. Because of the sickness that plagued her, she would have been ostracized from society and made to leave her husband, family and friends. She was beyond the help of physicians, now poverty stricken and continually getting worse. These two people are united in this page of the scripture because of One Person of unparalleled sympathy - the Lord Jesus Christ, the Perfect Servant was here, doing the Father's will.

He responded to the anxious pleading of a distraught father knowing that no matter what station in life one may hold, to touch one's child is to touch the quick of his heart and emotions. "Jesus went with him..." The training process of faith does not always follow the same pattern. We can't expect that because God does a wonderful thing one way, that He is always going to carry out His will in the same way. That would eliminate the need for, and blessings of, faith. Personal trust in God is what pleases Him.

A woman who had faith in the Lord Jesus Christ was unknowingly being used by God as an object lesson of faith. Going against the laws of society, she presses her way close enough to Jesus to reach an arm through the pressing crowd and finally touch the edge of His garment. It didn't surprise her that she was healed. She had expected that to happen because her confidence was in the Lord Jesus Christ. The touch didn't heal her. The Savior did, and there came virtue from Him to her because of her genuine faith. Doubt and faith cannot exist in the same place at the same time. There are degrees of faith but the reality of faith is what pleases God. Her open confession of faith was important. "With the mouth confession is made unto salvation." To testify as to God's grace to us is expected as an evidence of salvation and appreciation to the Lord for His great grace.

Jairus would no doubt have been impatient at the delay of the Savior by this woman as the sympathy of the Lord towards the needy woman played out right before his eyes. The stop on the way to the ruler of the synagogue's house was to teach a lesson on the value and the ways of faith to one who had a preconceived notion as to how faith works. The Lord knew the child was dead. The messenger came with a word that would cause despair and hopelessness in the father's heart. He had his own idea as to how the desired healing would take place. Faith doesn't make demands because it is placed in a Person and trusts the outcome to His gracious and sovereign will.

In unparalleled sympathy the Lord Jesus speaks words of comfort to the grieving father and insists that only the five men go to the house of mourning. It is possible the distractions of curious and well-meaning people can get in the way of faith in action. The number of people who surround an incident in one's life has nothing to do with the importance of the moment. The laughing, crying, mocking, disbelieving crowd around have to yield to the authority and dignity of the Lord Jesus. When God chooses to work, we must put our faith in Him, and in Him alone. Others may only hinder a work that God intends to do. The father and mother, broken-hearted as they were, are the reason for this miracle of raising this little "lamb-child" from the dead, and bringing her back to the scene of sin and sorrow. The Lord brought her back from the place of comfort to bring comfort to her parents that only she could give.

What joy her request for something to eat would have brought to those parents as she got up off that bed at the touch and voice of the Lord, and walked into the arms of an astounded mother and father. The results of a work of God are not always the same for all people. Some millions of children are taken away to preserve them from the sins of the parents and the society they would have lived in. In sovereign grace God took away thousands of children in times past to save their souls. Perhaps that is why so many millions have been allowed to be taken away even before they are born in this country.

A lot can happen in twelve years of life.
A young Carpenter would be working with saw and draw-knife -
Assisting His "father" and meeting some needs
Knowing His Heavenly Father was with Him pleased.

In another home a child was born bringing parents great joy.
They probably taught her using the best methods they could employ
That she would grow up to be a person who could be well-used
In guiding another generation, in the way she would choose.

At the same time in another home things were breaking apart.
Disease had struck a woman who would have a broken heart
As she had to leave and from society was ostracized.
Year after year passed as her worst fears were realized.

But in one short day those three came together in one place.
Two with broken hearts and One filled with amazing grace.
A hurting woman in simple faith reaches out a trembling hand,
And virtue flowed into her body from a sympathetic Man.

The grief-stricken father standing by watched all this -
Not understanding purpose of the lesson learned was to be his -
So, he would get his eyes off himself and the sorrow he felt -
And in faith he would be able others of the Savior to tell.

The Great "Blessor" was there knowing the heart of each one,
He did for the woman what He knew was best to be done.
And He taught the anxious man to look away from himself and his need -
So, he would then in real faith to the Lord's word give heed.

By the end of that day there would have been great rejoicing.
A woman could go back to her family her faith in Christ be voicing.
A mother and father and their fully recovered daughter would be eating -
As the events of the day and of the Lord's grace they would be repeating.

The Lord Jesus and His disciples would continue on their way.
Peter, James and John would never forget this remarkable day -
When by His power and authority Jesus raised from the dead
A little girl and healed a woman by His virtue and the words He said.

"Father, some days seem very ordinary and others very special. For this day I ask that whatever is Thy will for me, I will do exactly what Thou dost desire. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

MARK 6

Familiar places we have known since young -
Secret spots and places in town,
Favorite vistas where I go to see,
Views that impress me with eternity.
Lessons were learned that I still use today,

From experiences that guide me along life's way.
Still, how strange it seems where I learned about God,
And truth became light through reading His Word -
To those who live here in this day and age -
Think it strange or unusual when I turn the pages
Of the Bible as I did long ago -
To teach God's salvation and pass on what I know.

But it is not just me, it happened to Jesus before -
When He came back to His country after His first Gospel tour.
His kin folks thought only of the works of His hands -
Thinking Him no more than a carpenter - not one who made land
And sea with His word, they thought Him a relation, not their Lord.
Even brothers and sisters, from His own house believed not His word.
Hearing of His wonderful works, didn't believe by their own choice.
The evidence was there but they lifted up their voice
Of unbelief in Him who gives blessings to those people of faith.
He left them alone, reaching out in grace to people in another place.
To those who won't listen though in a place of great blessing -
He moves on to other towns their needs then addressing.

To those who come asking, the Lord always has time -
In compassion and mercy, He moves to help them.
When comfort is needed the Savior draws near
To calm the torn spirit and remove all their fear.
When hungry for righteousness, He has promised to fill.
When life's road seems too steep, He levels the hill.
When He gives clear instructions as to where I should go -
He may not be seen but each event He does know.
When things seem impossible on the course set for me -
He makes Himself known walking over life's sea.
He speaks words of cheer setting my fears all aside -
And comes to where I am, willing with me to abide.

“Gracious Father, the Lord Jesus when He was here was so “in” with the people in cities and villages outside His own country, that it is startling when we read of the unbelief of His own kin. I have not been aware of this as a problem in my home assembly but I certainly know this to be true in my family. If it is better that I be somewhere else then where we live now, make that plain to us. Any move that we make, please make it a place where we can have some significant help to the people. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

MARK 6:2. *“And when the Sabbath day was come, He began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing Him, were astonished, saying, from whence hath this man these things? And what wisdom is this which is given unto Him, that even such mighty works are wrought by His hands? Is not this the carpenter?”*

AROUND HOME.

JESUS AND HIS OWN

The neighbors had doubts and His family too.
What was so different about this One they all knew?
His work was in town where all there could see;
But now mighty works from His hands came to be.

Works that affected sick folk that He knew;
But unbelief blinded, all but a few.
In other towns and places, much people did come
To Him who could heal and feed all, not just some.

The bread from His hand was more than enough.
The fish that they ate - all blessed by His mouth.
The extra was gathered so none went to waste.
And folks returned home with His food on their plates.

JESUS AND THE KING

Herod the king with fear in his heart;
Cut deeply by conscience from sin, now did smart.
John, he knew innocent, but killed just the same.
He thought had come back to convict him again.

JESUS AND THE DISCIPLES
And His disciples who followed and did what He said,
Out in a boat toiling with fear, while He prayed.
Now saw Him come by them on top of the sea,
"He's walking on water! Who can He be?"

JESUS AND US
They had to learn then, as we do today;
That Jesus is more than the other folks say.
He's Man, but much more, all power has He;
He creates food abundant, and walks on the sea.

He knows all men's hearts, meets every need;
He knows what is best before even we plead,
Before "Grace's Throne" where He hears every cry.
And He came here so led, that on Calvary He died.

But now this same Jesus is raised from the dead.
At His Father's right hand, for us now He does plead.
Because He was here as a man among men;
He's experienced our life, from His fullness does send.

He personally knows, rejection by kin.
He knows when men's laws, go right against Him.
He knows about people who will take and not give.
He knows weak disciples want for Him to live.

So, courage we take, and hearts filled with cheer.
Lord Jesus, our Savior once lived right down here.
And even though failure and doubts did abound;
He gives us assurance; He's walked on this ground.

A victory great over all He did win.
We too, overcome because we live in Him.
He looked down the road, past the cross He could see;
That we too with Him, all victorious will be.

"Father, as much as I enjoy home; I'm afraid I am not what I should be when I'm there. I am a bit of a slouch. I am not too neat when I should be; I am not too thorough when I should be; I am satisfied when a job is done less than is acceptable with Linda. And then I try to defend my laziness. I appreciate letting us know what the Lord was like when He was around those who knew Him from childhood. I want to be a better carpenter; a better citizen; a better friend to the neighbors. I am praying for a better view of things that are important around home. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

MARK 6:1-6

HIS OWN COUNTRY

The remarkable works of Jesus and the blessings that accompanied His work and teaching, did not have an effect on the people who knew Him all His life. There is a sense in which familiarity does breed contempt. When the Lord Jesus Christ came back to Nazareth this time, He brought along His disciples. These men had been eyewitnesses to the ways and works of the Lord and were probably expecting His own people and the community where He was raised to be excited and glad that one of their own had such an impact on the whole country. It appears however, that He brought them there to teach a lesson they needed to know in view of their future work for God. One who serves God will not be appreciated by those who are related to him, not even close family members.

When the Lord taught the Word of God in the synagogues, they criticized instead of responded to His teaching. They knew Him as "the Carpenter" who labored with them and for them. They knew His brothers and sisters - the family history. Now they knew He was the One doing miracles and was recognized as a teacher all around the nation. They heard His wisdom in teaching and were amazed at this Man. In essence they were saying, "He is one of us, raised here among us and worked among us. Where did He get this understanding? What power is behind all this He is doing?" There is the underlying conclusion that He is not any different from us, so this must be done by the powers of darkness. He couldn't be God or God's Servant because He was raised right here with us all of His life. We are not from God, so He can't be either.

The cause of their unbelief was envy. Their criticism was because He was obviously superior to them because of the miracles He did and the wise teaching He gave. It was impossible for them to think, and is to people to believe today, that a person who is one of us can be our teacher or can be used of God in a way that is different from us. Really, this is a form of condemnation of themselves and their limitations. The learned teachers of the law in Jerusalem had a similar problem. They thought their higher learning in the "schools" qualified them to give all the answers until they heard the True Teacher give the meaning of the Word of God. Their ignorance was displayed by the wisdom of God given by the God-Man, the Perfect Servant. Instead of wanting to do the will of God, they wanted to please themselves and exalt themselves. They were blinded by their own unbelief.

Unbelief effectively stops the work of God in a people and the area where they live. When God is excluded from the motive of living, people are left to themselves and their impotence. The Lord marveled because of their unbelief. He was fully aware of where unbelief comes from. "If our Gospel be hidden, it is hidden to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the mind of them which believe not lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto the." The effect of unbelief is a paralyzing of the power of God to bring great blessing. There were a few people around Nazareth, even as there are a few around here, "a few sick folks," who God heals from sin and its consequences.

People today generally will not believe what they cannot explain in the context of their own experience. They even seek to make truth to be limited to what their own preconceived ideas are. As far as most people are concerned, if the Gospel doesn't give me some unusual feeling, some instant power to bring world peace, the ability to overcome the binding power of addiction instantaneously and makes me rich - then I won't believe it. Even if it written in the Bible, I won't believe it. The refusal to believe the scriptures of truth stops the work of the Gospel because of that unbelief.

Jesus taught God's Word with wisdom and power because He is God. He was sent from God, by God, for the work of God. Even though His own kinsfolk saw Him only as a man, we know Him as the God-Man who is the Savior of the world.

Much as we appreciate those of our flesh and blood -
It is much more important for one to be a child of God.
The few years of living on earth soon will be gone.
All we will have to show for living is what for Christ we have done.

I shouldn't condemn those who don't understand me.
All they can grasp are the things they can see.
What is inside me and Holy Spirit's motivation -
I think they may believe is an act of ostentation.

It is hard to explain how God has chosen to bless
What He has placed in my heart is not done under duress.
It is prompted by God's grace that through me He has used
To bring about blessing in those He did choose.

Those things have been done for the glory of God alone.
It may never be accepted by those who live here at home.
But God can and will use that which is done for Him.
And I can't worry too much about the effect upon them.

"Father in heaven, in Thy abounding grace it has pleased Thee to use this weak servant to fulfill some things in Thy great plan. May I always give Thee all the glory for anything that is of value for the furtherance of Thy Gospel and the benefit of Thy dear saints. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

MARK 6:7-34

SEND THEM FORTH

With compassion towards the needs of the people of the villages, the Lord went from place to place. The disciples would have heard His words and seen His methods of dealing with those who were demon-possessed. They would have observed how He adapted to the needs of those around. They would have learned by being with Him for over a year that the onus is on the messenger to fit himself into the situation rather than have a template they try to fit people into. These lessons are not always easy to learn because we have a tendency to want people to be like me and mold themselves into my mold rather than be transformed into the image and ways of Christ.

But they had learned and now were sent on their first mission as apostles to call the whole nation to repent. The Lord's compassion would be obvious to the people even though they had to be called upon to stop, change their mind and turn to Him. These men were sent out in pairs for a reason. When the opposition came and the pressure was on, they could strengthen and encourage each other. Rejection of the message is often directed at the messenger and the fact of another person to share in this and to comfort each other is very important. Rejection is to be expected in Gospel activity from those who live in darkness. When it comes from those who profess to be Christians, it is difficult not to argue or retaliate. A third reason for going out with another person is, by talking over a situation each, each can pass on their evaluation and view of events and with joint discernment, they would make fewer mistakes. "When shall we wipe the dust off our feet and move on?" "Is this boarding house the right kind of a place to stay?" "Have we reached everyone in the area so they have an opportunity to hear the Gospel?" There definitely is personal safety in working alongside another fellow-laborer. It also keeps us from laziness and the tendency to not press ahead with the work in our hands.

Going forth in faith is not always an easy thing to do. Taking nothing along and trusting God for daily food, for guidance to shelter, to open and close doors of service before us is not always easy to do. When confronted for the first time with a demon-possessed man or an angry mob of people can be quite daunting. Faith enables us to "keep on keeping on" when fear and doubt would say, "Stop." This whole work is not only physically taxing but is emotionally and spiritually draining. In the process of training His disciples, the Lord demonstrated personally what this whole effort would be like before He sent them out to cover the nation with the Gospel message.

The whole point of that mission was that the nation would know the Person John the Baptist had been preaching about, was here. The time to repent was now. The blessing of changed lives and healed bodies all over the country at the same time by these men would have been "front page news" in every village and town. Even the evil king who murdered the prophet, John the Baptist, was awakened because of his bad conscience. Events had happened in his palace that probably gave him some very unhappy hours, with an unhappy woman, and a whole lot of unhappy subjects who knew John was a great prophet.

The report of the successes of the mission are not given as these tired men return to give their account of the work to the Lord. Success or failure can only be determined by the Lord Himself. It is only right that we recount the events of a work we have been sent to do to those who sent us. But to publicly broadcast what we think has been accomplished by our efforts may really be an exercise of the flesh to get the praise of men.

It is well that we look upon all people with the compassion of the Lord, because they are wandering in the darkness of sin. They need to be made aware of their need. They need to hear the good news of the Gospel and they need to repent and be saved. We are called to do this, and then we can rest.

They are there, in every town and city of God's great harvest field.
It seems a very daunting task, because so few to the Gospel yield.
All people seem to want, is to be considered successful in life.
They want their religious beliefs to be soothing, with no strife.
Success to them is measured in dollars and material gain.
Their desire is to live with the least possible amount of pain.
Comfort and pleasure are far more important to them than integrity.
The most possible amount of profit with the least amount of energy,
Is what to most people in this area consider to be evidence of success.
To be called upon to repent of sin that their soul they may possess,
Is a cause for the rejection of the messenger with God's message.
Of believing the Gospel and living by faith, there is no vestige.
Grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ is rejected out of hand.
They want to think these things come under the definitions made by man.
In their minds they want to make decisions without fundamental standards,
So, they can with a seared conscience unaffected by moral parameters.
When they hear the Gospel that first calls on people to repent -
They reject it out of hand not caring for the God who it sent.
So, the messenger has to take stock as to when to move on.
It is not in our mandate from the Lord to try to right every wrong.
Our work is to take the message and proclaim it far and wide.
The Spirit of God uses that so individuals will no longer try to hide
From his conviction, but will repent and make every effort to seek
The Lord Jesus Christ as Savior as from the Word of God we teach
Truth that responds to that person's deeply felt inward need -

And to the message of God they will give earnest and attentive heed.
Light shines in the darkness of the soul who in simple faith -
Reaches out the hand of trust to the Savior who saves them by His grace.

"I thank Thee Father, for the privilege of being put in trust with the Gospel. It is always a great joy when I see one repenting and believing the Gospel, and a far greater joy in the Lord as they draw near to the end of their life. What a blessing for them! What glory for Thee! I praise Thee in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

MARK 6:31-56

GIVE YE THEM

Again, in this journey through Mark and seeing the training of the disciples, I am made to learn that what is an impossibility to men is an opportunity to God. Even in the desert place where the Lord has taken these travel-weary men to rest, the Lord Himself was busy teaching the people who were like sheep without a shepherd. Without a shepherd sheep cannot find good pasture. Without a shepherd they would have no one to provide safety for them. The resting apostles would have seen from where they were resting, a large crowd of people wanting to see what He was going to do. The needs of people are great. Some needs are spiritual, some are emotional and some are physical. The Lord was able to meet all of these needs and the watching apostles would learning lessons that they would need to apply in years to come. There are, and always will be, needs wherever we go. Some people may respond to what the Lord says and does, and others may be just seeking to get their curiosity satisfied. No matter what the need is, the Lord is able to meet that need. Those who believe will be eternally blessed. Others may only have temporal blessings.

To feed 5000 men beside the women and children calls for a lot of food. To more than satisfy the hunger of everyone of them calls for more. This was an opportunity for the Lord not only to show to men His creatorial power that they might by faith believe on Him. But it was also a teaching time for those twelve men who were called upon to participate with their Master in doing this wonderful work. The Lord is concerned with every aspect of the lives of people, and He intends those of us who serve Him to do the same. To minister to spiritual needs often involves meeting physical needs.

Linked with the great miracle of feeding the 5000 was the incident that happened later that same night. The disciples saw and participated in the distribution of the food to the hungry people, but only had seen the work of the Lord Jesus through the same eyes as the multitudes who were fed.

He was alone on the land praying. They were together on the lake "tormented in rowing" against a contrary wind. They had obeyed His command to go to the other side but had to learn personally and practically how impossible it is to do God's will without God's presence and power. When Jesus walked on water and was passing them by, they still did not recognize who He really was even though they could see Him and hear His words, and He identified Himself to them. These disciples had to truly believe He was the Son of God before they could be used by God to do the work of God. The passing of time doesn't change that requirement. It is still the same today. When we recall the evidence that we have as to who the Lord Jesus Christ is, then we have confidence that what we can never do, He can. He can use us if He chooses, to assist in His work the same way He used those twelve disciples. He can act entirely outside human participation like He did when He walked on the water on the lake. Whatever way things are done is up to His sovereign will. We are blessed when He allows us to represent Him in any way and be used by Him to carry out some aspect of His work. We need to be conscious of the fact that it is the Son of God who is our Lord. It was His sovereign will that chose us to follow Him. He came to seek and to save the lost and He has given us the commission to tell His Gospel to the world. It is His power that enables us to do this and it is His power that brings the results He desires.

We may want to rest and then God opens the way
For us to go someplace nice for a holiday.
But even there we may find people with problems to face,
And it is only right that we speak to them of God's saving grace.

Hunger of spirit and soul is real -
And it may be that if they are filled the body will heal
Faster and better than just by taking some pill -
For the fullness of God's grace is sufficient still.

Actually, when we take time to taste that the Lord is good,
We will find out that what we really never understood
Is that God allows difficulties whether hunger or pain,
To come upon us that He might give us a greater gain.

When we learn of Him by taking His yoke upon us -
Then we find when we are under pressure, we can safely trust
Him to bring out of what seems a need or a danger -
A lasting result that brings both God and us, pleasure.

Whether it is the common things of life or things most dramatic,
I can honestly say to those in need by words emphatic,
That from God's heart of love, He has to give to them
Blessings that far exceed those blessings from men.

He knows what the need is, so He knows what to give.
Those who know Him have learned to believe -
That He will abundantly supply what is best -
And in the sufficiency of what He supplies, we in comfort rest.

"Father and God of all grace, the provisions Thou hast given us are certainly way more than we deserve. The way Thou dost calm our fears and answer our prayers never ceases to amaze and bless me. I praise and thank Thee from my soul for such blessings, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

MARK 7

Not hard to be found if you are looking for it - fault
With a person's friends and where he goes
With a style of hair or with the type of clothes;
With another's politics or the kind of his religion;
With the wife he married or the behavior of children;
With the way he spends his money or how he saves,
With the kind of dog he has, and how the dog behaves.
They looked so hard at Jesus but found no fault or sin,
They scrutinized His followers and blamed their faults on Him.

Not from the heart if you demand it - tradition
With pressure to conform to someone's own opinion,
With an eye to pleasing others, you ignore your own decision.
With elders watching on, you fear men more than fearing God,
With the short view of tomorrow, you compromise God's Word.
With traditions of men important, you begin to follow men,
With lips that say one thing, and deeds that don't match them.
With someone's man-made tradition you soon may make it yours,
And you soon fall into following men, instead of following the Lord.

Not from without but from within - defilement
With allowing thoughts to flow unchecked from within an active mind,
With sights that appeal to an evil heart that seeks and soon will find.
With fleshly lusts that never sleep and war against the soul,
With covetous desires to want and have, for which you did not toil.
With listening to others talk and beginning to speak like them,
With pride rising up success's ladder, you look down on other men.
With foolish talk, suggestive words and a life-style that suits others,
That defilement won't go away until you are cleansed like sinners.

Not from self but from God Himself - faith
With opened ears she heard from far of One who could meet her need.
With anxious steps she made her way and in faith fell at His feet.
With voice so plaintive she spoke so clear of the problem with her daughter.
With words that tested her firm resolve, the Lord Jesus explained an order.
With words of humility and faith she replied taking a low position.
With a heart of love and tenderness the daughter was healed by the Great Physician.
With a heart that responds to faith in Him, Jesus saves each one who comes.
And every one who comes to Him rejoices in all He has done.

"O Gracious Eternal God, in reading this chapter I can see how quickly one problem like finding fault can lead to another. Give me the conviction that living by faith and looking for faults never can go together. I need to be like Him of whom it could honestly be said, "He hath done all things well," the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

MARK 7:6b, 37. *“This people honoreth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from me---- And they were beyond measure astonished, saying, ‘He hath done all things well...”*

THIS PEOPLE – HE!

CONTRASTS

He. THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD: He makes them because He is God and has all authority in heaven and in earth; He gives them because knows what is best in the eternal view of things; He gives them because He knows what is best for us; He gives them because He knows the result of commandments carried out in the fear of God; He gives them because His Word is effective in guiding us in every phase of life; He gives them because when they are carried out in God’s way, all are blessed; He gives them because they do what is needed in the best possible way.

This people. THE TRADITIONS OF MEN: they are imposed because frail mortal men want to feel important; they are imposed because men want control of their own lives; they are imposed because they look good to others; they are imposed because of convenience; they are imposed to maintain a conduct by which actions can be controlled by others.

He. THINGS FROM WITHOUT: air, food, water all comes from without. Sounds of music or discordant noise come from without. Smells of cooking food, of burning wood and a thousand other smells come from without. All that I see comes from without and enters the filter of my mind. I cannot avoid many of the things from without that enter my mind and body, but I can filter them all and determine, for the most part, what is good or bad for me. Yet by these entrance channels I am defiled by what comes in from the outside. The processing of information takes place within the mind of a man. We cannot avoid temptations, but we can avoid yielding to temptations. We cannot avoid the attraction that evil might have, but we can avoid doing the evil. We cannot avoid looking at something we like and do not have, but we can avoid coveting that thing.

This people. THINGS THAT COMES FROM WITHIN: the words that we hear; the sights that we see; the thoughts that we have; when they come out without the restrictions of the Spirit, defile a man. The thoughts expressed and actions done come from within and can defile a man. The pride of the heart, the foolishness of careless words, the wrong look of the eye come from within and defile a man. The desire to have and then to take, the wickedness of the deed because it seems acceptable, defiles a man.

He. THE CHILDREN FIRST: He knows His own; He came to them, and they received Him not. He was one of the Jews; He was the Lion of the tribe of Judah and His interests were in their well-being. He wanted to feed them, to nourish them, to meet their need. He had food for the soul of the nation and for the heart of every individual. He had what they needed; He offered it to them; all the blessings He had for them could’ve been theirs; but they chose to reject Him. The children could’ve been fed for these 2000 years but they would not receive Him.

The people. DOGS UNDER THE TABLE: the need was there and admitted to by the Gentile woman. The inability to meet that need was not covered or ignored in any way. The total need of the help of the Savior was recognized.

He. THE MAN IN NEED: The Lord knew the curiosity of the multitude was superficial. He took the man aside privately. He identified the man’s need. He took personal interest in each aspect of the man’s need when He put His fingers in the man’s ears and spit and touched his tongue. There was no question that the Lord’s interest was genuine. The impaired man could feel His fingers in his ears and the touch on his tongue. The Lord identified Himself with that man and fully met his need.

The people. THE MULTITUDE: their interest was superficial. Their need was not admitted to. Curiosity was the drawing attraction. Their astonishment was because His blessings were outside the bounds of their experience. They saw the results but never felt the need.

“Father of mercy to those of us who don’t deserve it: Thanks for giving such insights into the ways of God with willful men. It passes anything that mankind can produce. Thy mercies abound in small things as well as the large. I see evidence of Thy mercy in a large company of souls saved here in El Salvador. I see evidence of Thy mercy in a bag by a bed of my brother in the hospital. Thy mercy endures for ever. Amen.”

MARK 7:1-23

IN OR OUT

In all of the variety of religious beliefs today there have been established by men traditions of their own making. The reason behind these is to be able to enforce a code of outward conduct that separates people. The Pharisees’ traditions that were interpreted in a local context by scribes, was to keep the Jews from intermingling with the Gentiles around them during the silent years between the end of Malachi and the beginning of the New Testament. People are inclined to want a series of laws rather than live by faith,

because someone else has made the decisions for them. Their motivation for living the way they do is to appear righteous before others.

Some of those traditions, like washing the dishes between each serving of food, washing hands between each serving, how many steps a person can walk on the Sabbath day and many other traditions were extreme so people could feel and look religious. By their traditions anyone who didn't follow this prescribed pattern was considered unclean. The Lord Jesus pointed out very plainly they were wrong in thinking they were acceptable to God because they looked like that to men. Because one is clean on the outside does not mean they are clean on the inside. This is a common problem today. Some have certain clothes they were to try and visibly express their "holiness." Some "dress up" to appear very righteous on the outside. Others deliberately "dress down" as an attempt to impress onlookers with their perceived inward piety. Both may be acts of hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is pretending to be something I am not nor intend to be. We are hypocritical when we pay more attention to our reputation and what people see, than we do to our character. It also reveals itself when we are careful to follow religious practices of a group and remain at a distance from God. That is seen when more attention is paid to what appeals to the people than what God says in His Word. Usually there is a deliberately casual attitude toward holy things and great enthusiasm toward that which is entertaining. The hypocrite also often emphasizes what is wrong they see in others and what is right they think is in themselves. We need the Word of God to tell us what is true, and that reality will come from the heart.

The Pharisees even used a man-made tradition to avoid meeting their responsibility towards their family. The need of others calls for some action on my part to meet that need. It is not enough for me to stand by without getting involved. We ourselves need to be concerned with what we take in and allow to fill our thoughts. That defilement will soon find a way to express itself outwardly. We need to be more careful about what we allow our mind to feed on than the kind of food we eat.

Not all traditions are bad, but when the traditions of men take the place of obedience to God's Word and will, then those traditions are not to direct our lives and commitments. No matter how often a person washes themselves on the outside, unless there is inward cleansing of the soul and spirit it is useless activity. A tradition only has value if it supports the truth of God it is designed to uphold. If in any way a tradition interferes with our freedom of life in Christ and our privilege of obeying what His will is, then it becomes a hindrance to our fellowship with God. Traditions of any kind are only valid when they uphold God's intention for the church and the individual.

One dresses up out of respect for the Lord, the other to make impressions on men.
Another, dresses down as an act of resentment, so that when people look at them
They will think they are holy within and thumb their noses at those who follow tradition,
Whatever reason a person acts thus, it is not an act of consecration.

Men only can see what is without, so whether one dresses up or down -
It is not in this way our testimony is made or the inward man is shown.
The character formed by what we take in will in time be revealed without.
Attitudes will be expressed in expressions and deeds that show what we are about.

Grace from our lips makes it easier for people to attend to the message of God's great
grace.
Faith under pressure lets people actually see what it is like when the just live by faith.
Love without dissimulation is love indeed and by our love others will see God is love.
Those things that come from within are the ones that count, that make others want what
we have.

To look one way and act another doesn't really leave a false impression.
We only serve to turn people away by promoting what is a deception.
What I take in and what I give out should be that others be blessed.
And if it seems real to those who observe, they may want what I possess.

'Father, please keep me from pretension and hypocrisy. I really do not want either to be seen in any way or form. At the same time, I do not want to be conformed to the world and its ways but to be like Christ in every place and situation I may be found in. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.'

MARK 7:27. *"Let the children first be filled, for it is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it unto the dogs. And she answered and said unto Him, 'Yes Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs.'"*

CHILDREN AND DOGS.

The children hold a special place in the heart of the Father. "He came unto His own..." Yet how often the children overlook the place they hold in the heart of God. We have all things in Christ to enjoy and yet take so much for granted. The children hold a unique place in His heart. The children hold a special place in His plans. The children have been made the focus of His love. The children are heirs of all He possesses. The children are known by His name. The children expect their needs to be met by Him. The children expect to share with Him in all His glory.

And yet, from what they cast off or forget, others are blessed. Those of us who have no claim on any of His mercies; those of us who do not deserve to even be considered as recipients of His grace; those of us who were outside the realm of divine favor, have been favored with provision from His table that can meet every need.

The Greek woman with the needy daughter knew who to come to in her great distress. She came to Him who fed His children until they were filled. She came to Him in who was all the fullness of God. She came to Him who is able to satisfy with every good thing. Out of His fullness came all that was needed to bring the blessing she desired – the healing of her daughter. The restless daughter was resting at last. The anxious mother was at peace. The hungry children were filled. Surely "He is able to do exceedingly abundantly, above all that we ask or think."

"Father, I am grateful that there is enough crumbs to feed the hungry dogs. We have tasted and seen that the Lord is good. But far more than that, I am so glad to be now numbered among the children and we too are fed to full satisfaction. And even more than that, to be placed among the sons with a share of all the fullness of God far surpasses all that we could expect or even dream of. I am enjoying Thy fullness now, but I reverently say, "Keep it coming. It is so good." In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

A balm for the soul of the disappointed and weary -
A song for the heart of the sorrowing and teary.
A peace for the troubled in the middle of strife -
A rest for the weary in the drudgery of life.

MARK 7:24 - 8:26

DONE ALL THINGS WELL

In the process of training His disciples, the Lord has some lessons for them to learn that had to be taught, and experienced, in another way and place. Most Jews would not have considered Gentiles to be able to be accepted by God. They were considered as human scavenging dogs, marauding across their nation. It is not uncommon for us to think people from a different background, a different culture, a different race and a different nation are less in importance than we are. There is a tendency on our part to look down on such people as inferior to us. The disciples had to learn the value of every person. They had to learn that motherly concern is the same in every place. A mother's heart yearns for the comfort and well-being of her children. There is in a mother by nature, an overflowing desire to protect her young at any cost. The mother whose daughter was demon-possessed came in faith to Jesus having heard of Him fame and already having placed her faith in Him. It is important for us to assess a situation and a person's interest as precisely as possible. A whole lot of dialogue was not appropriate here. Faith in Christ and love together are irresistible. Her love for her daughter, her faith in Christ and her proper estimation of herself put her in a position for blessing from the Lord Jesus. This principle holds true today and calls for discernment on the part of the one who serves the Lord.

There are two more incidents in these concluding reports of the proof of the Savior's identity before the great testimony of Peter. In each of these there is friendly sympathy on the part of some to bring a needy person to Christ. One could not hear and speak. The other was blind. It is interesting and, I believe, important to notice the Lord Jesus Christ adapted His actions in every case as He discerned would be the best way to accomplish His purpose. We learn for ourselves to expect the unexpected. "Be ready to give an answer to every one that asketh of the hope that is in you." There really is not a set pattern to follow in meeting the needs of the people. The Holy Spirit can guide us into a suitable way to adapt to the need of the moment.

Even when it is obvious the Lord is doing a work and we are involved in something significant, there will be criticism from those who want everything done within their frame of reference. When challenged as to our work and right to be thus engaged, it is incumbent on us to remain loyal to the Lord and His Word. When hungry people are fed and hurting people are helped; when lives are changed by the power of the Gospel and God is doing a work through you - it may be that deep within you a resentment arises and you will have

to dismiss both it and the critics as quickly as possible. Conflict usually has adverse effects and doesn't produce anything that is lasting at the end.

People you thought would understand what God is doing because they are with you and even assisting in the labors, may only be going through the motions. They may have a problem grasping the value of what God is doing and look at issues and events in almost the same way as unbelievers. Don't hold back from presenting the truth even though there seems to be failure. When one is loyal to the Lord and His truth, we need to remember His "Word will not return to Him void."

The fields are white, the world is big, the laborers in the harvest are few.
Often the lack of response to God's call is because most have only a short view.
It is up to those who pray to ask God to send laborers into the field -
And we have a responsibility in teaching people that to God's call they yield.

There are people out there who are broken-hearted although you would never know.
The difficulties at home with family life, very seldom to the public shows.
But the Spirit knows the truth of the matter and prompts you to meet the need.
It may be to minister to them through the Word, or for them to do some deed.

Around us are many helpless people who have not heard or don't understand -
The compassion of the Lord can be seen and experienced through efforts of their fellowman.
It may be all that is needed is for some interest to be shown to their situation.
By bringing that person to the Lord Jesus may result in their salvation.

It is almost considered to be inevitable that there will be those who criticize.
What we preach and teach is different than the forms they so greatly prize.
When those testing times come, don't despair, our God is forever the same.
Stay loyal to Him and the truth of His Word, continue on in the power of His name.

"It has happened, Father, and I expect it will again. We will be criticized for doing what we do in the work of the Lord. I know there is much to do here, but the interest in the Gospel and Thy Word is not to be found. I pray that by helping others as best we can, these two older servants may be able to strengthen the hands of the younger laborers in the harvest field. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

MARK 8

COMPASSION OF CHRIST

Thousands gathered listening, learning - hungry in soul and body -
Wanting something that was missing - not quite sure what it was.
A rescuer for those who are ready to fall -
A helper for those who are willing to call.
A giver of sight to those who are blind -
A listener who really cares for the troubled in mind.
A restorer of life for those about to die -
A dryer of tears for those left to cry.
A Savior from sin for those who are lost -
A provider of grace to pay sin's great cost.
In compassion the Lord reaches us in our need -
In love He gave all when for us He did bleed.

CONFESSION OF CHRIST

A few following, learning, practicing - willing to be identified with Jesus
They heard what people said, watched what Jesus did - and chose.
John the Baptist, calling a nation to repent -
Or the Messiah, from heaven He was sent?
Elijah the great prophet, challenging a nation on a mount -
Or the Messiah, our Lord Jesus - His blood a cleansing fount?
Isaiah the intellectual, seeing down through coming ages -
Or the Messiah, the lad Jesus, confounding learn`ed sages?
Jonah the evangelist, like one risen from the dead -
Or the Messiah, the Church's risen glorious Head?
Jeremiah the weeping prophet, seeing a nation's darkness loom -
Or the Messiah, the Man of sorrows, who rose up from the tomb?
Daniel the wise seer, with predictions past and future -
Or the Messiah, Creator in control of the universe and nature?

Malachi the last, with a final word from God -
Or the Messiah, Sun of Righteousness, fulfilling all God's Word?

CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST

Disciples confessing who He is - now must learn what He came to do.
Far removed from their expectations - a restored Israel? A hope for all mankind?
The Son of Man must suffer? Hadn't He already suffered much?
The Son of Man must suffer more to fulfill all righteousness.
The Son of Man must be rejected of the elders, priests and scribes,
The Son of Man must be killed and after three days will arise.
The Son of Man must be lifted up and die upon a tree,
The Son of Man must be made a curse for us on the cross at Calvary.
The Son of Man must be made sin for us to make us righteous before God in Him,
The Son of Man must pay with His death the awful cost of sin.
The Son of Man must bear our sins to bring us unto God,
The Son of Man must thus be charged and bear sins' heavy load.
The Son of Man must the law fulfill to legally meet sin's claim,
The Son of Man must die and rise to bring us unto Him.
Because He's the only sinless One, He defeated death by dying,
He liberates repentant ones who come to God on Him relying.

CONCERN OF CHRIST

What of those who chose to save their life? What then? Eternally lost, undone, hopeless.
Ashamed now of Him - concerned about their reputation - looking for gain - losers.
What profit if I am a friend to everyone - popular - sought after
What profit if people look at me and think my religion makes me good?
What profit if I am successful in business, rising higher and higher each year
What profit if my learning, opens doors to the intellectual pursuits I longed for
What profit if I travel the world and millions know my name as a leader
What profit if I have prepared everything for my family's well-being and my retirement
What loss when I am young, I excel in every endeavor and lose to greed
What loss when I am middle-aged and my life consists of my possessions
What loss when I am old and have no peace, contentment or comfort
What loss when all people have to measure me by is, "He was a good man"
What loss if I have never been saved from sin and hell
What loss if I leave this life alone, without God, without Christ, without hope.
Because the worth of a soul is greater to God than the world - I must be saved!
Because this life is my only time of preparation for the eternal future - I must prepare now!

"I learn lessons as I read Thy Word, O God, and I am convicted even by the things I write. Surely this is all true and yet I seem to accept them without an inward fire. Light me up with the compassion and concern of Christ. Stir me with thoughts of His crucifixion that I may live out mine. Let me consider again the value of confession with my mouth the Lord Jesus. Amen."

MARK 8:31. *"And He began to teach them, that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again."*

THE WORLD AROUND.

Jehovah's Servant was abounding in the work of His Father, and yet even in the case of the Master-Teacher, there were many who didn't understand Him, His words and His work. It seems that even though evidence is clearly seen and truth is clearly presented, there is a part of each person that must be humbled and surrender, before God can work in the soul.

The world around has become so much a part of us, that we hardly consider there is such a thing as the kingdom of God among us. Consider the variety of need and responses in a short period of time and a small part of the harvest field when the Lord was here.

THE HUNGRY: for three days they had been with the Lord; for three days they had nothing to eat; for three days, they had listened to His words and observed His miracles. His compassion reaches to the basic need of men and women – food. The provision from the hands of the Creator, more than meets the need of all. HE IS THE COMPASSIONATE CREATOR.

THE OPPOSITION: there were those then as there are today who resent the presence of true righteousness among them. The righteous living Pharisees did not want the presence of One among them whose

righteousness was from within. They only wanted the outside to look good. The necessity of reality evaded them. HE IS THE OMNISCIENT ONE.

THE SLOW TO UNDERSTAND: the miracle of the seven loaves and a few small fish was only just past. They had only one loaf of bread. And even as the Lord had given warnings to them of the falseness of the teachings and practices of the opposition, the disciples missed the point completely. How often we make judgments on the spur of the moment that miss the point of the lesson God gives us. HE IS PATIENT ONE.

THE BLIND: the man without sight was brought by others who wanted Him to repeat what they had seen and touch him. Each person is unique to God; each need is personal. He knows each one and does what is appropriate to the need, not as an answer to the demands placed on Him. HE IS THE UNIQUE ONE.

THE INSIGHTFUL: the evidence was all before the disciples. They couldn't miss the fact that everything He said, and everything His did bore testimony as to who He is. Their eyes and minds were open and they knew the Messiah was with them. HE IS THE ANOINTED ONE.

THE TEMPTERS: how scary it is that the same person who knows the Person of Christ, and knows of His authority and power, would dare to question and rebuke God. Can it be that a man, even after worshipping can question God? Can it be that Satan can influence one of His own followers? HE IS THE HOLY ONE.

THE FOLLOWERS: the cross is not made to be an easy load. The yoke is what is easy, but the cross demands that all else be set aside. There is no room for the cross and other things at the same time. In whatever calling I am called: the cross is there to pick up and carry. Identification with Christ is to be there in every life situation. HE IS THE LEADING ONE.

“O Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: I know it was a delight to Thee to follow the life of the Lord Jesus in every situation. It certain is a delight to me. His adaptability, His approachability without rancor of any kind, is such an example for me to learn from. Even when opposed and tempted, He used the minimum words needed. He didn't go on and on about all the wrongs. He dealt with the issues as each case arose, with absolute wisdom and discretion. Please help me to follow that pattern with insight from Thyself. Amen.”

MARK 8:27- 9:1

HE SPOKE PLAINLY

The teaching of the Lord had made plain to the Jews that their Christ had come. There was evidence of His authority and power in the miracles He did. Now the Lord Jesus Christ begins to tell the disciples what it will mean to them to be in the kingdom of God. There is now, and will be in the future, suffering and death before glory. And it began with the suffering and death of the King Himself. In the area of Caesarea-Philippi the idolatry of the Gentiles was in full bloom. This was a most fitting place for the Lord to open up this teaching to His disciples, as they could see illustrated what He meant by the contrasts around.

In that place with evidence of the false gods all around, He asks the question, "Whom do men say that I am?" The answer was obviously varied although they all had in common the knowledge that the Lord Jesus Christ was uncommon and had been sent by God as a prophet. The Lord then made the question personal by asking, "But whom say ye that I am?" It is not enough to know what other people say or think about Jesus. There must be a personal acceptance of Him as the Christ of God, the kingly One anointed to fill the office of the Supreme Ruler and Authority of the Kingdom of God. This supremacy recognized by Peter is what makes the few words, "Thou art the Christ," so important. Probably Peter and others thought the Lord was going to restore Israel as a nation among nations. The disciples then had to learn that this kingdom living was not one of ease but of suffering before victory. There will be deprivation, hard work and persecution on this kingdom road.

Then He told them the startling revelation of His coming suffering, rejection, death and resurrection. This plain speaking must have so alarmed the disciples that Peter immediately resisted that message. Up until this time the kingdom was revealed in power: power over evil, disease - even over nature. Now this new unfolding of what it means to be in the kingdom of God, seemed just the opposite. The Lord spoke of the first being last, getting and giving, saving and losing. Now He speaks of rejection before acceptance. The illustration of carrying a cross would have brought fear instead of joy. A life built on pleasure and possessions is a lost life. To follow the Lord Jesus will mean abundant living now in the midst of suffering and rejection as well as in the future.

To reject Christ now may help one escape the humiliation and embarrassment that may temporarily come, but it will mean that one is lost forever. To give the proper view of what it means to be forever in the kingdom of God, He gives a view of the physical aspects of the kingdom of God. The Lord now spoke plainly about the kingdom of God. He had shown powerful evidence of His authority over all that would oppose that kingdom. Now He prepares them for what is ahead.

Sometimes there are words spoken and we are not sure what they mean.
Later on, when time passes, we learn they didn't say what it seemed.
Plain speaking needs to be done with grace and with truth -
And we will be able to understand the meaning and the worth
Of a message contained in a few words fitly spoken -
Recognizing this to be far more than just a token
Given to vaguely put us off until some later day
When we will learn what the speaker really meant to say.

To speak truth means I make sure the listeners understand -
The message the words convey shouldn't seem trivial or a form of slight of hand.
But it should be given with compassion and empathy, and the salt seasons the grace -
So, the importance is not overlooked nor misleads anyone from the path of faith.
Not everything we hear will make us feel happy or content,
Because there are warnings to give when a messenger is sent.
Kingdom living today does not mean everything is easy and smooth.
When we bear the cross of identification with Christ, the world thinks we loose.

The big picture of what is going on in the kingdom of God today,
Is very different from what some unfaithful religionists say.
Things are not getting better and they will continue to get worse -
Until the full fruit of evil has spent itself on this earth that is cursed.
It is well from our place in history to remember suffering brings glory.
Righteousness will be under Messiah's reign at the end of the story.
Until that time comes it remains a call and a challenge to me -
To "rightly divide the truth" to hearers, that by faith, Christ they will see.

"When the Lord Jesus Christ, was here, Father: I know He spoke plainly about some things and in parables about others. I am thanking Thee for the privilege of being able to serve Thee in the Gospel. I ask Thee to keep me from saying anything that is wrong or inappropriate. May Thy name be glorified in every message I give. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

MARK 9

Transfigured means changed - it happened right before their eyes.
Brighter than the brightest orbs that were placed in the skies.
The brightness of His glory brings all men down to size -
Yet He wants us transfigured by renewing our minds.

A voice from above, God is speaking to men -
Calling them to listen, paying attention to Him.
Bringing a message that forever changed them -
We must listen whenever God speaks.

Elijah the prophet called a nation back to their God.
Moses the greatest prophet and leader gave them God's law.
Three watchers, eyewitnesses of the glory of the Lord -
And then - they saw Jesus only.

He had told them before He must suffer and die.
Talking with two on the mount of what before Him did lie -
He tells His disciples twice more it is drawing nigh -
The time when He would suffer for sin.

A father came with a son out of control.
Others had tried but could not make him whole.
When one truly believes that all things God can do -
Jesus does the impossible then.

When one wants to be first, God puts him last in line.
The servant of all, God lifts up such a one.
Receiving a child is like what must be done -

By one who is a servant of all.

A cup may seem small, but in Christ's name it's large.
Giving to others small things is part of our charge.
Those who do this will not lose their reward -
When it is done in the name of Jesus.

Salt, by its nature gives taste and preserves.
When its qualities are gone it is useless to serve.
We must constantly maintain good salt in ourselves -
To have something to give to others.

Peace is a blessing when it is in the ways of the Lord.
Peace between us and God came at the price of Christ's blood.
Peace between believers is like a treasure to hoard -
Let us always be found in the way of peace.

“O God of all grace, how powerful are the lessons learned when one walks with the Lord. From the mind to the walk; from listening to telling - it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful. I so want to be a faithful steward of all Thou hast given me. May I always do what I do in the name of Jesus. May I make it a point of having something to give to others, and may I always be found in the way of peace. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

MARK 9:2-13

LIGHT FROM WITHIN

There was probably a lot of uncertainty and a certain amount of sadness for six silent days. The disciples had been told of the immediate future and of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. No doubt they truly believed He was the Messiah of Israel who had been promised. The restoration of the kingdom and the thunder of His power was what they had been anticipating. Perhaps the Lord knew they needed those six days to consider the "bomb-shell" He had dropped and the challenge that immediately followed. Then on the seventh day the Lord took Peter, James and John with Him up the mountain to reveal more of the future to them.

Being transfigured wasn't having a brilliant light shine on the Savior. There wasn't a light ray from heaven that singled out the Lord Jesus from all the others. He who is "the Light" was brilliantly lit up before the eyes of the watchers from within Himself. It was a metamorphosis that took place. Even the clothes He was wearing could not hide the light of glory that was coming from within Him. The inherent glory of His nature was unveiled for a time as two representatives of Jewish history, Moses - the giver of the law, and Elijah - the great prophet stepped into human view. That seemed to be a glimpse of what it is like to live in an "eternal now;" when time is not measured. They knew about, and talked about, the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, with Christ before it happened. According to Luke's account the conversation also included the fulfillment, or the accomplishments, of the cross-death.

The impression made on those disciples never left them. When John saw Him in the "Revelation," he saw Him among the churches "like the Son of Man." Peter remembered the scene in later years as an "eyewitness of His majesty." They saw the remarkable evidence of the inherent glory of the Lord and the realization that it was not some strange vision of the mind. This is the reality of the One we call "Lord." Those brief moments of the life of the Lord on earth never left them. The impact of that scene recorded by Mark on us today is that we can see future evidence of the One we represent and serve in our day. The three disciples were not to speak of that incident until after Christ rose from the dead. Now we are able to tell people in our time - of the life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension and coming again of our glorified Lord.

We have to face the fact that most people in our day will not believe what they cannot physically see themselves. They pride themselves on being thinkers who must compare evidence before they will accept a thing as being true. Faith is a stranger to most people. It was to those disciples but as the evidence mounted, they realized that what the prophets foretold actually happens. Now we respond in faith to the written Word of God, not only telling of prophecies to be fulfilled, but of incidents in the life of the Lord given by eyewitnesses who have given us assurance of what we most assuredly believe by faith.

I never saw the radiant light that came from in His Person.
But what I learned and believe with my heart is this important lesson-
The One I know as my Savior, is the embodiment of light -
And His holiness doesn't keep me away from Him who is my life.

Instead He tells me and all who believe on Him, we are light as well.
It is our privilege and responsibility to those around us tell
Of His grace that saves the soul and of the need of faith to receive
The One who is Light and died for our sins, is the One in whom we believe.

There are around me on every hand multitudes who do not know
Why they are here, what life is about, and where after death they go.
For some reason they find it hard to believe that spiritual things are real.
They want their so-called Christianity to be something they see and feel.

God's way of dealing with this problem is for believers to be transfigured.
When a believer in Christ is not conformed to the world, his faith is thus invigorated
To be a living faith that works in the trials and events of life.
People watching one who reflects God's light from within, seems to have it right.

By observing a person of faith moving through normal life each day -
Those who know me may pay attention to the words I have to say
About the Lord Jesus, and the light He gives within us to live life to the full.
When inner darkness gives way to light, a person can find rest to their soul.

"Father, thanks so much for the visible and audible testimony given to those men on that mountain. I don't think I would have had a problem believing on the Lord Jesus Christ if that event wasn't recorded, but I get great joy in reading and meditating on it. That mountain-top experience assures me the mountain-top experiences I have are not just the dreaming of a fertile mind, but are experiences of faith with Thee. I praise Thee for this great blessing. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

MARK 9:14-29

FAITHLESSNESS

When they were on that mountain, the three watching disciples caught a glimpse of the glory, power and supremacy of the One they had called Jesus. Now more carefully understanding who they were following, Peter spoke to the Lord Jesus as "Master." Now as they descend into the valley where a great crowd of people surrounded the other nine disciples and those who followed with Him, there was an awareness those three never had before of who the Person they followed was. They had just come from glory and now came into gloom. Mountain-top experiences prepare us for what we will face in the valley. Fellowship with God prepares us for the failures of men. A view of what is ahead of those who love the Lord, enables us to keep a proper perspective regarding those who love the world. "The love of the Father is not in them."

A cross-section of faithless humanity was waiting for the Lord Jesus as He drew near to where His waiting, embarrassed disciples stood in perplexed sadness. The disputing scribes were questioning the disciples about things of which they were not sure of. The Lord Jesus quickly silenced them with His own question and charged them with faithlessness (actually the whole generation). It is not a simple task to win an argument. Generally, a well-posed question that cannot be avoided, exposes the real motivation behind an argument and those who want to dispute over spiritual matters. Most argumentative questions are not given to get the real answer but to get a point across. To personalize a matter is most often accomplished by a genuinely thoughtful question. In that way a person is confronted with what faith is and why it is needed.

The distracted father had brought his son to the disciples who were powerless to heal the boy. Any true father would do whatever was possible to see his son delivered from the bondage of the powers of darkness. The battle with sin and evil is a relentless one. The disciples had experienced the exhilaration of seeing demon-possessed people delivered on their mission trip. This time there was failure. The father was comforted when the Lord Jesus healed his son by the power that was His and only His. Efforts to carry out God's work on our own fleshly energy will fail. They had been commissioned by Him to do this previously. Apparently, the disciples thought they were permanently able to do this even when acting on their own. We have not been given the right to act arbitrarily. Our limitations will not allow us to see all the consequences of our actions. Only God knows that. Our responsibility is to make sure every action we take is in accordance with God's revealed will and is in fellowship with Him. Our faith is to always be placed in Him, not ourselves.

The demon-possessed son was healed by the power of God. The distracted father was confronted by a Person, not just an event. When he finally placed the measure of faith he had in the right Person, his request was granted. The defeated disciples learned a lesson as they were instructed in the life of faith. At first they seemed confused, even after the healing had taken place. They, and we, have to learn that healing isn't just positive thinking. We cannot have everything we pray for. By faith in Christ we can serve Him in reverence

and godly fear. Faith is not something we store up in a cupboard to use when needed. Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ is maintained when we communicate with Him and trust Him to do what is needed through us or even without us. Prayer and the denial of self-interest and self-exaltation are essential in any work God allows us to be engaged in. "It is God who worketh in you to will and to do of His good pleasure."

If I am not careful, I will think I can live in the mountain all day.
That whatever goes on in the valley, I will from all that keep away.
God did not leave us here to live to ourselves, but to live life unto Him.
One of our most serious responsibilities is with the Gospel to confront sin.

Sin raises its evil head in many ways that it may capture the souls of men.
Disputing, disgruntled people will complain over and over again.
A quiet comment or question is the best way to deal with that -
Because their comments and complaints are best dealt with by stating the facts.

There are some things I cannot do, and that is not a cause for blame.
Other things I must commit myself to, and do it heartily in Jesus' name.
The only way I really know what I should or should not do -
Is to make sure I'm on biblical ground and allow the Spirit to guide me through.

The powers of darkness will align against anyone wanting to do God's will.
When I am walking in the light with the Lord, He my hands will always fill.
Anything that is accomplished whether unseen or a public victory -
Is a work of God alone who is willing to use this frail piece of humanity.

Usually every incident in life is a "teaching moment" if I am willing to hear.
His voice may be heard in the peace of my heart, and other times be loud and clear.
My choice is whether to pay attention or not to what my Lord has to teach.
In faith I rest my soul and life on Him, that through me others He'll reach.

"Father, this morning my mind, and I think my heart, is directed to India. Please give Thy servant a clear understanding of truths to be taught to the saints there. I would like to know they are being built up in their "most holy faith." If there is assembly teaching to give, may Thy servant be able to "rightly divide the word of truth." May this day be profitable and may the fellowship with Thy people this evening be strengthening and encouraging to them all. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

MARK 9:37. *"Whosoever shall receive one of such children in My name, receiveth Me; and whosoever shall receive Me, receiveth not Me, but Him that sent Me."*

THE TESTIMONY OF OTHERS.

The Testimony of the Father [v.1-10]
The Testimony of John [v.11-13]
The Testimony of His power over darkness [v.14-29]
The Testimony of His words [v.30-32]
The Testimony of a child [v.33-50]

The Father has spoken with words from on high.
The disciples are trembling, fearing to die.
For this mountain is holy, for on this high place,
Two prophets of old, here speak face to face
To the Lord there transfigured, and clothing so white.
Many years later, remembering that sight;
John wrote of His glory, of His grace and His truth.
He had been at the mountain, the cross and the tomb;
And the impression left deeply carved on his mind;
Was - "Jesus only!"

Elias had come, but they didn't know him.
He came out of the desert with warnings for men.
He warned them of sin, and of wrath yet to come.
He preached of repentance and the wrongs they had done.
He told of Messiah, the One promised by God;
His life he laid down for the truth that he told.
We remember John's message of warnings and pleas.
But of all that John said, most remembered are these,

“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,”
When he saw - “Jesus coming unto him.”

The powers of darkness have so many faces;
Their presence is felt in so many places.
There are pressures and pain, there is suffering and fear.
Where the powers of darkness are, Satan is near.
There are lies and deceit, and all that brings down
Men and women who never the Savior have owned.
But when the Son of God comes, the darkness must flee.
For cleansing, forgiving and saving will be
Given to those who in their deep need, feel the power of His touch
“When Jesus took him by the hand.”

It's strange about words, because all that is said,
Is not what's expected, and is misunderstood.
When He taught His disciples, they couldn't believe,
That the One who could save others, Himself would not save.
It is never an option to question God's Word.
If you don't “get it” now, maybe later you could.
You don't need to rebuke others, because they're not “us.”
Just tell the truth clearly, and it always does
What He wants it to do, in His own special time -
And so - “Jesus said, ‘Forbid him not.’”

And the children so guileless, what about them?
Are they important, can they bring glory to Him?
A thousand times “Yes,” because trusting, are they.
When He bids them to come, they do what He says.
They're not innocent nor guileless, but quick to believe.
And when He shows interest, they want to receive
Him who calls them with love - and they willingly come.
So too, all others who receive them, He welcomes them too.
The Father is received by each, when he
Responds as Jesus did - “Suffer the children to come to Me.”

“Thank You, O Father in heaven for making it plain what people in the past thought of the Lord Jesus and how He responded to them in the everyday living of His day. It is not always easy to remember that in everything we do, there are those being influenced by us. Please help me to be alert today. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

MARK 9:30-50

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

The process of teaching and learning can take many forms. To follow the exact same pattern leaves many lessons untaught. The Lord Jesus took His disciples on the long way to Capernaum on the tour through Galilee to privately teach things to them were personally affecting to them, not just to pass on information. Again, He told them of the coming fact of His betrayal, death and resurrection. Some things have to be repeated several times because they are beyond the area of the learners' experience and belief. Crucifixion was for evil-doers, not for a Person who blessed others. One who teaches may wait for, or even ask for, questions from those being taught but may not have any person respond. That doesn't mean everything is understood. Often it is easier to answer a question than to ask one. A person may feel stupid if they ask a question because they think they should already know the answer but honestly don't.

A good teacher-leader will find a “teaching moment” either by responding to an event or initiating one by observation. The Lord used the last method when He challenged them with a simple question based on observation. Places of authority and leadership in the kingdom of God are not based on one's pedigree, education or skill. It is based on the willingness of a person to serve others. This is not just token servant-hood either. The bent and practice of service is not something that can be faked. Most of us would rather be served than serve. In most cultures the role of a servant is near the bottom of the ladder of society and is not an occupation that most want to be involved in.

The illustration of the child in the middle of this group of men would have had a serious impact on them because they would have been like many today - “O yes, but he is only a child.” Real service for God involves a passion to be a blessing to others. John saw this principle right away as they had made a mistake in thinking they had exclusive rights of serving God using the authority of Jesus' name. Apparently,

he knew they had done wrong. Whoever the person is who serves the children, whoever the person is who does their service for the Lord is going to be rightly rewarded because of their willingness to serve Him. In the same way, whoever leads one into sin or the path of sinfulness, will experience serious consequences. Neutrality is not possible in the service of the Lord and yet not everyone who serves will be identical. There are now, and always will be differences in those who share a common faith.

Our measure of successful service is not personal achievement but devoted, unselfish labor for the blessing of others and the glory of God. That is why the serious caution against leading others astray is illustrated by making sure there is the cutting off of sin in ourselves. The condition of the individual who serves must be with real intolerance for evil in ourselves. We can compromise the truth we preach and the service we do by wrong deeds (the hand); the wrong approach to the efforts we may put into the work (the foot); or the motivation and desire of accomplishment we have (the eye).

We must have "salt" in ourselves first. The desire for being the greatest has to be dealt with. Overlooking the value of every person, young and old, has to have the salt applied. The jealous defense of our own work has to be looked at in the context of the big picture of the kingdom of God before we condemn the work another person does. The salt causes pain and agony that will not accommodate evil in our lives. The "fire" of salt can actually bring peace to the servant-leader.

We use it for flavor enhancement in much of what we eat.
Gracious words seasoned with salt are helpful when people we greet.
The salt of fire is needed to purify whatever action we may meet -
When we have salt in ourselves.

People are willing to listen to and follow faithful men,
When they know, on their good will they can depend.
Even though the truths they teach will challenge them -
When we have salt in ourselves.

One with salt in himself will not overlook the value of children.
He has the heart of a servant to all without an agenda that is hidden.
It is his desire to use in the best possible way what has been given -
When we have salt in ourselves.

It won't be our desire to condemn another person's labor.
We will be glad to rejoice when another is shown divine favor.
The salt that is in us will give to God's work a good savor -
When we have salt in ourselves.

Gracious Father, I thank Thee heartily for putting up with my manners in the wilderness. I am embarrassed at times to think how little credit I give to those who serve Thee outside of our "group." This morning I do honestly praise Thee for what Thou art doing through the efforts of all that do service in Thy name alone. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

MARK 10

From distant places or close by here,
Those who will come to Jesus, He bids draw near.
The teaching He gave then is the same for us now -
Mean what you say when you're making a vow.
Don't say one thing and mean another -
Whether it is to your wife, or your sister and brother.
God sees and hears if your word is true -
Never blame another if the fault is in you.

Children are never to be despised.
It is in our hands to teach how to live their lives.
They listen and trust what is said to them -
Those who in child-like trust, enter the kingdom of heaven.
The Lord Jesus urges us to let them come -
And those will come, He receives every one.
He didn't only touch them, but took them in His embrace -
And blesses old and young with His abounding grace.

To have eternal life is a good and great desire.
When a person comes to Christ, His words will inspire

Or condemn - depending if one comes in faith,
And He is willing to do things impossible to men.
Delivered to the priests; condemned by the judge -
The Jews and the Gentiles against Him allege
Things He taught were against the laws of the land,
They will mock and spit, and strike Him with their hands.
Again, He explains how He will die and will rise -
Giving His life a ransom - a true sacrifice.

Jesus was passing, the blind beggar could hear.
When he found out it was Jesus, he called loud and clear.
His need was great, and for that he could do nothing -
But knowing of Jesus, he knew He could do anything.
He kept calling aloud in spite of pressure to cease.
Jesus stood still and said, "What is your need?"
Any sinner that hears and calls from his heart-
Jesus will stop and give a new life and new start.

"Holy Father, in the affairs of men, I know Thou art fully aware of anything that honors or dishonors Thy Son. From marriage to raising children, from prayer life to facing serious physical needs, I am so grateful that all things are known to Thee. I hope I am really living life as an open book before Thee, Father. I don't want to be deceptive for my own sake, because I know I can't in any way, fool Thee. Amen."

MARK 10:1-16

THE FAMILY IN GOD'S EYES

Leaving Galilee for the last time before His death, on His way to Jerusalem the Lord was confronted with a social problem that affects us today. He answers the question by taking the subject of divorce from being only a legal concern according to the laws of men, back to the beginning. The family is in God's eyes a spiritual issue, not just people who happened to come together. There is a fundamental unity in humanity called marriage. The Lord Jesus took the scheming Pharisees back beyond the law, to the origin of marriage when God gave Eve to Adam to constitute a "whole" when they became "one." Marriage is not a unit comprised of two parts. It is a unity in which two become one. So, there is a "duality." When "God made man in His own image," He created them male and female. In order for there to be divine likeness, there had to be a oneness of this dual personality - marriage. The institution of marriage cannot be defined by the Supreme Court or a legislative body. It is defined by God who has all the qualities He expects to be seen in the unity of a marriage of a man and woman.

In order for a family to properly represent God there needs to be the commitment to the institution of marriage even before the commitment to another person. The fundamental unity of a family begins when two become one. Divorce happens as a result of human sinfulness. Marriage between a man and a woman is always to be considered permanent. Sadly, divorce happens. Marriage is an expression of God that typifies the love of Christ and the Church. "Any cause" divorce was not accepted as a reason for that separation. The adulterating of seed was indicated as an exception to the permanence of the marriage union. In order for a family to function right, the unity of two who become one is essential for the normal life of children to be maintained. Womanhood was raised from being almost that of property ownership, to equality in the context of Jesus' teaching. Two equal persons, each with their own unique features, become one and into that dual unity come others born with features of both parents.

As the disciples were questioning the Lord further about this matter, children were being brought to Jesus. These same disciples still hadn't learned the true value of a human, until the Lord indignantly rebuked them and gave the true value of personhood in a few words. He was not teaching that children were perfect but that every one has great potential and are teachable. They were not hardened into a social mold. For a couple to divorce for any cause is unthinkable because of the effect it has on the children. They look at the parental model and take the form of the example of the parents. To hinder a child from being what God intends because of the self-interest of parents is a cause for divine indignation and outright anger from God.

We may deceive ourselves into thinking our children turned away from God in spite of what we taught them. And this may be partially true. The modeling of family life by husband and wife cannot be overlooked as the ordained way God uses to visibly show His love to the children. Let the children see what God is like in our marriage. They may not understand all the teaching of the Gospel but will decide whether they want to come to the Lord or not by what they see in the marriage of their parents. When parents are united in one in love and purpose with commitment to the permanence of marriage, and when children see this expression of love and acceptance, then the family is fulfilling its purpose.

I know Father God, I have not always been
The proper embodiment of fatherhood when
In impatience and busy-ness and self-will,
The children were waiting for me until
Later than I should have, I finally did appear,
And sought to impress them that to me they were dear -
But alas, I think they felt less than important
Because of my neglect or ways of deportment.

I am glad Father God, that Thou didst save them by Thy grace.
And it is evident to me that in their lives, faith has a place.
For they do have a desire to serve Thee and make Thy name known,
And to their own children the way to God they have shown,
Give them wisdom and grace, Father, and fill them with faith
So, they will seriously want to do what the scriptures of truth saith.
Their own families behind them may teach their own children -
The way to God for themselves and that generations coming will love Him.

I am vaguely content, Father God, that in some small way
I have tried with my wife to show them something each day,
That would recommend to them this wonderful and gracious fact;
It is God's will for each generation to, in child-like faith act
To meet Thy expectations and fulfill life's main goal -
The salvation and spiritual growth of each individual soul.
And then as a fundamental unity and a family of faith
We will be able to honor God wherever the path of life we all trace.

"I thank Thee, Father, for my family. May we all share in unity as we meet together in days to come. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

MARK 10:18. *"And Jesus said unto him, 'Why callest thou Me good? There is none good but One, that is God.'"*

"...BUT ONE, THAT IS GOD."

THE PHARISEES AND MARRIAGE: it has always been a way of men to complicate what God's intention is in a matter. It is clear that God intends marriage to be for life. It is clear that He intends all vows to be kept. It is clear that marriage is to be one man to one woman. The facts are, that not all God's intentions are kept. His desire is not always fulfilled in any area of life. The standard remains because it is sinless. Sinful man has never, since the fall in Eden, kept all that **God intends**.

THE DISCIPLES AND YOUNG CHILDREN: too often we overlook the value of simplicity. Children can be hard on each other, vindictive, and just plain mean. But that doesn't last like it does in adults. In the presence of One who is sinless, they had no trouble responding to His interest. They knew that He cared for them. I too will find, that if I truly care for children, they will respond to me and my interest in teaching them **God's truth**.

THE RICH YOUNG MAN AND HIS POSSESSIONS: there are serious barriers in life that hinder people from getting **God's blessings**. To those of us who do not have a lot of things that we hang on to, it seems like this young man must've have been an extremely self-centered person. The truth is, if there is anything that I am holding on to and claiming it is mine; that is a hindrance to my spiritual life with Christ, just as it keeps an unbeliever from Christ.

PETER AND FOLLOWING CHRIST: when it comes to the paltry things that we claim and then say we give up for the Lord, it really doesn't amount to much. And yet, even the little that we do forfeit is recognized in a positive way by the Lord. He promised so much in return when we give so little. How humbling is His grace. **God knows**.

THE SAVIOR AND HIS SUFFERING: this is the third time in three successive chapters where the Lord speaks clearly of His coming sufferings at the hands of men, His death on the cross and His resurrection. Yet, the disciples didn't really grasp what He was saying. This is not uncommon among us today. We can read and hear spoken about, things that are **important to God**, but if they don't fit our preconceived ideas of what should be, we reject or ignore them.

THE SONS OF ZEBEDEE AND THE KINGDOM: the promises that relate to the future always intrigue us. We wonder what it's going to be like and in a way, like James and John, we wonder where we will fit and what we will be involved in. In a way, I don't fault them. The Lord didn't rebuke them, but reminded them that there are things we don't need to know now. What He did though, was to use the situation as a "teaching moment." He explained the fact that things are different in **God's kingdom**. To serve is the highest privilege of all in God's kingdom.

BARTIMAEUS AND THE SON OF DAVID: this blind man knew his history. He knew that One who could do what Jesus did was no ordinary Jew, and yet He was one of their own. David's Son was **God's chosen One**. To have insight like this is not always seen among those who are apparently not in the mainstream of society. It may be there are more insightful people around us than we realize. May we bring them to Jesus rather than ignore them.

“O God who knows all that is not seen nor heard by us: give me the needed spiritual eyesight to look beyond the externals that are seen in the people around me in everyday life. I need to be more observant of the issues in the lives of others. In a way, part of me hardly wants to be bothered and in another way, I want to draw near to them like the Lord did, and meet some needs. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

MARK 10:17-31

ONE THING MISSING

In the heart of every person whether they want to admit it or not, is an awareness that is part of our humanity. "This life is not all there is to my existence." The writer of Ecclesiastics indicates that "Eternity is in the heart" of every one of us. Even those who have been successful in completing in life what they wanted to accomplish, or gaining all they wanted materially, when they look beyond their dying day, are afraid. When people seek for eternal life in the sphere of their humanity alone, they find it impossible to get the relief they long for. The most pious, noble person, like the young man in this passage of scripture, knows something is lacking.

The first question he had to deal with was, "Who is the Lord Jesus Christ?" When this question in Mark is linked with the second question in Matthew, it becomes clear to us the Lord in His love for this young man, is getting him to face the reality of the deity of Christ. He then addresses the second table of stone on which six of the 10 commandments are written which deal with standards of life in human relationships. These six that relate to our interpersonal relationships, seemed to resonate with this young man. He must have been a real paragon of virtue. His answers seemed to have been honest, not empty boasts.

The first table of stone in the Decalogue deals with man's relationship with God. It is in this area of life that most people ignore the truth. This man, as do we all, had to understand who was "good." That word has been so diluted by human reasoning that it misses the whole origin of its meaning - God Himself. First in order of priority in the life of this young man was his wealth. The Lord Jesus with authority and without equivocation of any kind took His place as the true "Good Master." He told him plainly to rid himself of that which was first place in his life. It was not a gentle, quiet suggestion, but a command of supreme authority that anything taking the place of "God first" had to go. That is the first of the commandments. The second law is to remove anything that comes between an individual and God. The young man had to decide as to who he thought Jesus Christ really was. If he were to follow Him, it would mean he would acknowledge the Lord Jesus as God. He would have to submit to His authority entirely and forfeit his own self-interests. If we want to find eternal life, we must follow what is of God by following the Lord Jesus Christ.

I have to ask myself, "What does money mean to me?" "What is first in my life?" "Am I a servant to it, or to the Lord?" "What would I really give up to follow my Savior?" The honoring of the name of God is a command of God. The honoring of the name of God is a command of God. The honoring of our time in the way that God sees it will lead us in our work for God and worship of God. The rich young ruler who wanted eternal life did not get that nor did he enter the kingdom of God. When one will not respond to the call of God, he is actually refusing to enter the kingdom of God. Love gives the truth in clarity and responsibility, by explaining the consequences. Any self-sufficient person who trusts in themselves, even though they want what is right, will not receive eternal life. But it is possible with God, not to God, but with God. Peter seemed to understand this teaching and learned that those who trust the Lord Jesus Christ and obey Him, have greater wealth than anything they might have left behind when they began to follow the Lord Jesus. Eternal life, when one truly has it, calms the spirit, challenges the soul, conforms the life to be able to consistently and gladly follow our Lord Jesus Christ.

The process seems to challenge the will of many a man.
Following Christ is not impossible, in fact any who want to - can.
The problem is the ability, but what to me is most important -
The path the Savior walks isn't affected by my past deportment.

There are some men who followed Him who made their living from the sea.
When they responded to His call, He trained them constantly -
That they might be able to articulate divine and holy truth.

Their effectiveness was not based in any way by their financial worth.

Others from various walks of life were willing to obey.
When the Savior called them, it was that they with Him would stay
Until they had learned from the "Good Master" who they knew was God.
And to His Word and will, they submitted, He truly was their Lord.

The need to do the right thing has an inherent cost.
Those who give up all for Christ, will find all is not lost.
What they have forfeited in obeying Him is of little consequence.
All that really counts with God is placed at His own expense.

A relationship with God affects our relationship with men.
What we do for the welfare of others is done as unto Him.
We can hallow His holy name from the worship in our heart.
Our work can also be hallowed when it is for God right from the start.

May I never hold what I think is mine with clenched fist or hand.
All belongs to the "Good Master" whether it be house or land.
My Lord is God eternal and He intends me to follow Him.
When that first step of faith is taken, is when life truly begins.

"Father in heaven, hallowed by Thy name. I know Thee as the God of eternity and the Giver of eternal life. I thank Thee for such a gift and ask of Thee that as Thy servant, I might yet be trusted with the unseen things that are eternal and that bring blessing to man. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

MARK 10:32-52

CAME TO SERVE

The Perfect Servant on His way to Jerusalem gave the key to His life and service: "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many." The unfolding of the service of Jehovah's Perfect Servant gives principles of service to guide us who have been called to serve. The path of service led the Lord Jesus right to the center of opposition by religion that was controlled by the destructive powers of darkness. Satan knew from the prophetic scriptures and from the previous statements of the Lord that if Christ died for our sins on the cross, then redemption's price for sin would be legally paid and he would be forever defeated. In the statement of the Lord Jesus to His disciples regarding His death, burial and resurrection, He gives more details than on previous occasions. For men who were expecting Him to be the conquering King, this was hard for them to understand. The path of service for any who will follow the Son of Man will lead us to places where we normally would not go. It is incumbent on us to recognize that even as the Perfect Servant was going into the place of opposition and destruction, He was going in full cooperation with God. We can act in faith in our service when we realize this is the way the Lord has led me. The objective of the Lord Jesus was to provide for eternal salvation for mankind. Opposition from enemies, cooperation with God, and salvation for sinners is on the path of service.

Participants in this service depends on the call of God and what He calls us to. The Lord knew what He was called to do in His service. Our service today is opened up to us by the Holy Spirit who "guides us into all truth." James and John were looking forward to being associated with the Lord in glory. They were not rebuked for their desire to be useful servants to the King. The rebuke came to all the disciples because they misunderstood servant-leadership. It is necessary to be "made conformable to His death" in our service for God. The "power of His resurrection" follows the cost of glad service for God. The Lord Jesus came here to serve God as the Son of Man. He willingly took the role of God's Perfect Servant and did that great work with eternal blessings as the result. In a similar way we, as servants of God do the same in our day. When we serve others, we serve God knowing that glory follows suffering and death.

The practice of service is found wherever there is people. Some people are in need and don't know it. They live their lives oblivious to the fact that it may end at any moment. They may not even be aware of the fact that "now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation." Many mistakenly believe that their eternal future will be decided on after they die. However, there are those who are in need of our service and we must listen for their cry. Sometimes it is loud and trusting like the call of the blind man. He knew Jesus was the son of David, the Messiah. He had full confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ. We may at times have to listen for the weak cry of one in despair. The true servant must listen. The servant who cares also looks for the cause of the call. The Lord knew the man was blind but the confession of faith was part of the proof

of his faith. We listen for the cry of repentance, look for the confession of faith and then lead the searcher to the cross where the Spirit of God and the Word of God reveals the way and Person of salvation to them.

The Perfect Servant, the Son of Man, the Lord Jesus Christ - has left us the perfect example of bond-service. It is one of the greatest privileges of a child of God to be able to serve Him with reverence and godly fear.

What is the Lord is saying about what is going to take place?
Why is there such determination seen upon His face?
Who can really understand this life of holy, obedient faith?
The One who came to serve:

What is going to happen if we follow Him?
Is the promised kingdom about to begin?
What does this mean about a ransom for sin?
Is this all part of being a Servant?

If we become servants, what will happen to us?
Is it really practical to put in God all our trust?
Can't we serve quietly without such a fuss?
If we commit to being a servant?

The path of service seems to be a hard one to travel.
All my previous plans and hopes are beginning to unravel.
I had hoped for a smooth path, not one with hard gravel
When I first wanted to be a servant.

Now as the years of service are almost gone -
And what we wanted to do is almost done.
Looking ahead I can see the lights of home -
I am so glad God let me be a servant.

When I think of the people who have come from darkness to light -
And now as God's people they are walking by faith not by sight,
Knowing that what we sought to do was scripturally right -
Gives me peace in my life as a servant.

It is not my place to keep account of results.
I know I have served unworthily with many faults.
By God's grace I will pass on until He tells me to halt -
From the responsibilities of being His servant.

"Father, I know I have been an unprofitable servant. This is not just false humility. I have failed in many ways but I am so thankful that Thou art able to take even these feeble efforts and bring something good out of them. I praise Thee for this assurance, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

MARK 10:43. *"But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be you minister."*

YOUR MINISTER.

Keep me down, Father, so I can get up.
Make me want the bottom instead of the top.
Help me be honestly wanting to serve.
I want to be like Christ in all ways that I live.
A servant has to be with the people.

Others have needs far greater than I.
Others need the help that they cannot buy.
Give me grace to act; not in bye and bye;
But that God through His servant will truly draw nigh.
A servant has to be with the people.

"O God my Father, I do want to be a servant in a genuine way. I do not want to be called the Lord's servant and not really serve in the way I should. I know that serving people is serving Thee. I am willing for this and I really do enjoy it for the most part. My desire is to be aware of places and ways to do this service effectively. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

MARK 11

It was only a small animal with not very much speed -
Lowly, never ridden - not at all like a king's steed.
But the Lord of lords and the King of kings chose this colt
That the prophecy of Zechariah would be plainly fulfilled.

Sitting on that beast of burden, "Hosanna's" all around,
The Lord of glory in quiet grace, entered David's town.
The nation didn't know that their final call had come -
Jehovah had come looking for some fruit, alas He findeth none.

At the first of His ministry, religion had turned into business.
Now once near the end of His life, the temple was for the covetous.
We are warned again the Lord knows well what is in the house of God
And it is highest wisdom on our part, to this lesson pay good heed.

It is the same in prayer, if only words, not faith does characterize.
I can pray all I want, but without true faith, that prayer doesn't even rise.
If a barrier is there, some little hurt, I am told I must forgive.
I am forgiven by my Father Himself, in freedom my life I live.

The Lord Jesus cleansed the temple that day, He truly had that right.
His authority questioned by sinful men, what He did was in God's sight.
That authority is His today, the house of God is not our own -
What He allows us to do, always remember, the authority is His alone.

"Father, even when the Lord moved into that city as a Man among men, there was a dignity and honor evident as He fulfilled Thy Word. May I never think of any activity of God in my life as less than significant. May I never assume a place or work of authority under the influence of my own opinion. May I always be a man under authority, Thy authority. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

MARK 11:1, 15, 27. *"And when they came nigh to Jerusalem... and they came to Jerusalem... and they came again to Jerusalem."*

JERUSALEM!

There is a place that is special to the heart of God. "The city of Peace," "David's city," "Jerusalem the Gold" is the place where the Lord wanted His people to come. At that place He received their tithes and offerings, He received their worship and acts of consecration, the people of God dedicated their children to Him at that place. But it was not a perfect place. There was a lot of counterfeit activity going on in the name of God. There was covetousness and greed there.

However, at Jerusalem was the place where His kingship was to be seen by His own people. So as he came near to the place of His choosing, He found that animal which belonged to another, and it was made clear in one sentence as to whom it really belonged. "The Lord hath need of him." The Master/King has a right to what ever I might think is mine. Not only what I try to claim as my own property, but also my own person. "Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price."

"Not that I have, mine own I'll call,
I'll hold it for the Giver.

My heart, my strength, my life, my all;
Are His and His forever."

When they were come to Jerusalem, we see what it was really like inside. From afar it would be an awe-inspiring sight to see such a place of renown and ancient glory. Its history would impress our hearts as the glow of the sun turned the towers and domes into shades of gold. But inside where the holy things should really overwhelm us with its consecration, types and fore-shadowing of things yet to come, and our sinfulness contrasted with God's holiness; inside it was not at all what it should be. Greed, covetousness, selfishness, anger, malice, even the plotting of murder by those who "hated their brother" was going on right in the place where "prayer was wont to be made." Can it be that such things can go on in a place and yet it still be called "My house?" This place was to be a "house of prayer for all nations." His teachings cut right to the heart of things and doesn't leave room for man's manipulation for his own advantage.

He came again to Jerusalem and back again to the temple. Again, His authority was questioned and again He answers them with the wisdom of a well-worded question. When those who would challenge His authority refused to answer, His parable of the Owner of the vineyard sending His well-beloved Son caught them right in the openness of their hypocrisy. The opportunity was there in front of them to repent and accept Him but they left Him. The place we are called to is a holy place and we must never underestimate how God looks upon it. A holy place, demands a holy people and a holy priesthood.

“O Holy God and Father of all them that believe. Please help me to keep a clear understanding of the place of Thy name and the importance of Thy choosing this place. May I ever be conscious of being before Thee and called by Thee to this holy ground. May my mind never entertain the thought that what goes on here is of little value, no matter how weak or far away from what Thou hast intended it seems to be. May I remember that the Lord “came near”; the Lord “was come to”; and the Lord “came again” to that place even though it was so far from what Thou hast intended it to be. Amen.”

MARK 11:2. *“And He saith unto them, ‘Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye are entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him.’”*

BRING HIM.

Unused before - but now, no higher work than his.
Despised before - now honored by the King of kings.
Owned by man before - now claimed for God's use.

Bound before - now at liberty to walk where God wants him to walk.
Untamed before - now controlled by the Lord God Himself.
Overlooked before - now able to focus the attention of the crowd on his Rider.

Another had owned him.
Another had died for him.
Another had tied him.

A new claim is on him.
A new Master needs him.
A new work lay before him.

“I am thankful Father God, that You are willing to use a person like me. I want to stay useful in Your service. Amen.”

MARK 11:1-26

TO JERUSALEM

The time of "observation" of the Lamb of God for three and a half years had passed. Like the Passover lamb that was carefully watched for three and a half days before being sacrificed, so the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our Passover, now comes to Jerusalem to be offered. He entered the city in just the way the prophets had said in their writings hundreds of years before. He came in a public way riding on the "foal of an ass," never ridden before, into the city as the King - majestic in His meekness in the middle of a procession of poverty. Right up to the temple He went to investigate the manner of so-called worship that was going on. It was plain to see the practices there were not what was meant to be - "they that worship the Father must worship Him in Spirit and in truth." The nation had rejected God for the form of religion they had made and for profit in business. These are the same issues that are being repeated today. People are looking for a place where they can be "comfortable" and "interface" with other people for material profit and/or pleasure. We need to remember God knows what is going on even if He does nothing to stop or change it at the moment.

Interesting it is to note that when He came to the city that second day, the fruitless fig tree was used by the Lord to illustrate what had happened and what was yet to happen to a faithless nation. The purpose of a fig tree is to bear fruit. A faithless nation had turned the "house of prayer" into something very different from its original intention. Prayer is an expression of faith. Faith in God produces fruit. Prayer-less people are faithless people. Faithless people are fruitless people. Fruitless people become rootless people. Rootless people are lifeless people. Even as the dead tree left a visible testimony to the disciples as to the nation of Israel, so our fruitlessness is a warning as to what is ahead.

The Lord Jesus used this whole illustrative event to press upon the disciples the principles of faith, of fruit-bearing and of forgiveness. Driving the hucksters, who were profiting in the name of God out of the temple, exposes the hypocrisy that accompanies the man-made forms that are developed for the convenience of those who accept religion without faith in God and His Word. That is followed by the principle of fruit-bearing that is taught by the negative - by what it is not. Fruit is not there because a tree looks like a fruit tree with big "fig leaves." It is what is hidden from the casual observer that is important. "Man, looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart." Under those leaves there was no fruit. Faith does produce fruit. Perhaps it is the "peaceable fruit of righteousness." It may be "the fruit of the Spirit" seen in the nature of a person, not just in visible actions.

"Faith in God" is the key to fruitfulness and true forgiveness. One must be a believer when praying and not be holding a grudge against others. Prayer without selfish motives means that I direct my prayer to God for His "answers in peace." If my focus in prayer is upon the request, the things I ask for, rather than God and His will, the request has no reason to be granted. Everything is possible with God but His will in a matter, not mine, is what counts. Forgiveness is necessary for fruitfulness and answers to prayer. A heart that truly forgives can appropriately handle blessings received as answers to prayer. Pride, vengeance and disharmony must be replaced by forgiveness, grace and love.

To watching eyes, they would have seen holy tears
As the Mighty King came into the city.
Those who the truth would have been filled with fears -
As they listened to the Savior's words filled with pity.
The outward forms they so prized were just that -
There was no substance, no reality, no faith
That the Perfect Servant representing God could catch;
Business and profit had taken over even that holy place.

Is it possible in the interest of pleasing everyone;
To compromise or abandon what God intends.
Much is happening but the most important left undone
When we try to bring God down as being simply one of our friends.
He is infinitely holy in His character and His Being -
He is of holier eyes than to "look upon sin."
It is the inward thoughts of human hearts He is seeing -
And He knows exactly what people think of Him.

One may say, "I think you are making God out to be severe.
I am sure He wants me to have lots of fun."
Those who think that, need to listen and hear
What the Lord said about the prodigal son.
We need to consider carefully once again
What God meant when He said His thoughts are higher than ours.
To "have faith in God" is where prayer begins -
The fruit of the Spirit over sin empowers.

There are consequences to faithlessness we can't miss -
If continued in, abundant life will soon be gone.
It always has been God's practice to heal and to bless
Those who come in faith to Him in the name of His Son.
From the tree of my life there can be produced -
Fruit that can bring God honor and glory.
Forgiveness that by faith is induced -
Can make victorious living the end of faith's story.

"Father, I do have faith in Thee. My problem is sometimes it is weak. For Thy Word which increases my faith, I thank Thee and will seek to read and understand the truths contained in it and live them out in practical application in life's events. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

MARK 11:24. *"Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."*

WORDS DO COUNT.

TWO MEN WITH A MISSION: *"Loose him and bring him hither."*

Who would think the Lord would use an untried donkey! Yet even the most useless creature in the sight of men, has value in the sight of God. All it had ever done before was to take and never give. But the first act of usefulness was for the King of kings. The first useful act of my life was when I was loosed by men with a mission and brought to the Savior.

A MUTITUDE WITH A MANTRA: *"Hosanna, blessed is He that cometh..."*

It's a funny thing about a crowd. In spite of ourselves we can get caught up in words that sound good but we are just repeating what someone else said. "Buzz words" that come and go in a short period of time or for some special occasion, are generally not sincere words. It must've sounded wonderful and it impacted some people in one way or another, but it didn't last. Words that are copied are not usually thoughts from the heart.

THE MASTER AND A FRUITLESS TREE: *"No man eat fruit of thee...forever."*

To some who don't think much, it might have sounded peevish. But when the Master-Owner-Creator-Sustainer of a tree is looking for fruit, He has a right to expect something from it. It was His possession and was created to bear fruit. When anything of God's creation, be it a tree or a man, does not produce fruit for His glory, He has full right to deal with it as He sees fit.

THE LORD AND FAITHLESS MEN: *"My house... ye have made it a den of thieves."*

To desecrate any thing that is holy, is a personal affront to God. He is the Holy One who seraphim fear with extreme reverence. For mere men to question God and by actions, call into question His very being, is rank and obvious unbelief. His House, His Word, His name, His works all bears testimony as to who He is and why we should follow Him without reservation.

THE TEACHER AND THE DISCIPLES: *"Have faith in God."*

The practice of faith and the principle of faith are really inseparable. Faith by its very nature produces action. The doubts in the heart can paralyze a person and leave us timid and helpless rather than strong in faith, serving the Lord. Confidence because of God's evident dealings with us in the past, enable us to ask in confidence with the appropriate attitude of forgiveness and expectation.

"Father, I have experienced all of these things in one way or another. Being loosed, makes me feel less useless. Words without heart, make me feel guilty. Fruitlessness scares me in the sense that I know it can happen. Irreverence comes at times so quickly and I am ashamed. Faith is still being learned but I am glad to be able to be used in any way that seems fitting to Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

MARK 11:27- 12:34

FOUR QUESTIONS

There are various reasons for which people ask questions. Some are asked to remove ignorance about a matter and often are from a sincere desire for information. Others are asked to determine interest and the degree of commitment. Some people ask trick questions just for the fun of it. Three out of the four questions asked the Lord Jesus Christ in one day had a deceptive calculated intent behind them. The questioners wanted to find a reason to condemn Him - hopefully to death - and regain their unquestioned authority they had profited from before. The fourth question was quite spontaneous and revealed a degree of honesty in the man.

"By what authority doest Thou these things? And who gave Thee this authority?" This was a question of unbelief. They probably thought He would answer He was acting on His own authority. If that was the case, people who listened to Him might think He was an independent free-lance who could not be counted on to lead the nation to freedom from the Romans. If He said His authority was from God then they had an excuse to condemn Him to death because of the law. The Lord's answer in the form of a question put an end to their question. John the Baptist said Jesus was greater than he was. The ordinary people believed John was sent from God. The Pharisees could not answer because they were unfit to receive an answer from Him. They had been dishonest regarding John and they knew the Lord saw through their scheming question to their plan to have Him killed. There are those we will meet who think more of their religious life than they do of the truth of God and God's will. It is up to us who believe on the Lord Jesus to represent Him as the eternal God who has all authority in heaven and in earth.

To clarify the whole event and awaken their consciences He told the story of the husbandman and the vineyard. In this way He let them know He read their intrigue and murderous intention. He gave the background clearly. Israel was the vineyard. The owner was God. The laborers were the religious leaders. The messengers were the prophets who were ignored, despised and killed. Now God made His final move - He sent His Son. Then the Lord gave the rest of the story - God was not done with them. Payday was coming!

"Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not? Shall we give or not give?" This second question is one with evil intent behind it. The coalition of Pharisees and Herodians united in their opposition to the Lord Jesus indicates what we are up against when we follow Him. People are prepared to bury their deep-seated differences when it comes to opposing God. "We wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers..." The question was obviously a loaded one. If He said, "No," then He would be taken by the Roman authorities. If He said, "Yes," then the people would consider Him a traitor to the Jews. By asking for a coin and identifying the coin as belonging to Caesar and yet being used by them to meet their obligation to pay for the benefits they received, they were submitting to him. Now He challenged them to give God what they owed Him. The emperor claimed to be divine and they were going against their own law that condemned

idolatry. There were demands the state makes that really do not infringe upon the rights God has on us. We must meet those demands. The question really is answered in relation as to who has the supremacy. The questioners knew that God is supreme. His claim to being the Messiah which they had recognized when He came into the city the day before put things into proper perspective. It is right to give Caesar what is his right which they did. It is right to own Christ as the Sent One from God, which they did not. They had not given God what was God's.

"In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be?" To trivialize what is important is not uncommon among those even today who consider themselves rational thinkers. Sadducees denied the immortality of man, the resurrection, the fact of men having a spirit and the existence of angels. These are the "If I can't see it, I don't believe it" people. This is a widespread opinion among so-called educated people today. There is a flippant cynical attitude towards holy things now and a fatalistic view of the future. They really have no real purpose in living, so would just as soon die (they say!) because there is nothing after life. These aristocrats used the law of Moses, the scriptures, to form their foolish question. It was a very absurd question which showed their ignorance of the scriptures. Similar questions are asked by people when they ask where Cain got his wife or blame God for the bad results of a sinful life. The Lord Jesus answered their question by quoting Moses' writing of the Living God being the God of those who had lived on earth hundreds of years before. God used the present tense in speaking of those ancient men who knew Him personally. He is the God of living people even now. His answer showed their ignorance of the scriptures and the foolishness of their imaginations.

"Which is the first commandment of all?" The man who came out of the crowd and asked this question, asked this as an honest and sincere question. He wanted to know what was the real greatness of the law, not just to compare one law with another. The Lord responded to this man without rebuke, but by quoting the central principle of the law from another place in the scriptures rather than the 10 Commandments. "Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind ... and thy neighbor as thyself." This answer stopped and amazed the man who realized this was the final answer. The law was inspired by God and we are to obey it. The Lord Jesus Christ could sense the sincerity and reality of the man's comment and let him know he was near the door of salvation. No one asked questions after that because it was clear to all questioners, the Lord read them like a book.

It is not uncommon for mortal men to misunderstand God's mind.
Most think within their own intellect is where the answers to their life they will find.
Occasionally someone will ask a question that seems so removed from faith,
That we scarcely know whether to answer them or how the question we should face.

We can learn from the Lord by listening and watching how He did respond.
He didn't seem resentful to them or felt He was being put upon.
But with insight He knew the reason such questions were being asked.
To look beyond the words, is the responder to questions first task.

Then it is right to give an answer, but avoid the argumentative way.
Listen to what the question really means, then be careful as to what you say.
In as few words as you possibly can, answer with honest clarity.
The attitude and tone of voice will show up the obvious disparity.

Some answers can be illustrated by showing similar situations in life.
Evil intended questions deserve short answers that cut off the tendency to strife.
Foolish, cynical questions can be exposed when to them scriptures we apply.
It is hard to argue against the written word even though they might give it a try.

When a sincere question is asked and we know the person's intent
Is to try and find the right answer as to the problem or the event -
Then take all the time that is needed to give the answer needed,
And God can add His own blessing when the answer you gave is heeded.

"It has happened a lot of times in my life, Father. People do have questions. Some are genuine and some are skeptical. Some want a true answer and others want an argument. Give Thy servant I pray the understanding needed to discern the reason for a question, and by Thy Spirit give through clay lips an appropriate answer. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

MARK 12

Stop! Let us labor together that we all might enjoy the fruits of our labor together.
I have planted a vineyard - I have built protection - I have prepared everything!

Your labor is needed - your participation is all I ask to give you abundant blessing.
We will share in these blessings - we will enjoy them - we all will be benefited.
What have you done? He was my servant. I sent him to bring to Me My portion.
Do you not understand what I expect from My vineyard? I expect profit - benefits.
The servants I sent, provided you an opportunity to repent - and you abused them.
Again, and again My servants came and you killed some - My expectations are dashed.
This is My Son - My well -Beloved Son - I am well pleased with Him!
Show Him reverence - show Him honor - let Him bring Me what is due Me.
"I called and you refused." You killed Him! This charge is laid against you.
There are consequences. Your fear will come. Recompense is sure. Justice will prevail!

Look! This Stone here - among the other stones; it is the right size and shape.
Its texture is solid. It can stand the weight and start the walls of the house properly.
Why look anywhere else? Can you not see this One stands out among the whole pile?
This Stone will not need the work of hammer and chisel. It is perfect in itself.
You other builders - come here and see! Scrutinize, examine, test it for soundness.
The very fact that you can do nothing to make it better speaks for itself. It is perfect.
What is wrong with you "expert builders?" Why would you ignore this Stone?
Why would you pass this One by and reject it? Would you cast off what God made?
You want your own handy-work to be seen by men - your own fleshly imprint
That mars a stone and makes a work of your own sin-polluted hands - man's work.
Your cheap stone-work will fail and fall when the pressure comes on your works.
The Stone which you rejected is the Corner-Stone of a massive work of God.

Listen! The murmurs of the hypocrites speaking behind their hands to each other -
Something sinister is going on there when their backs are toward the Lord.
They are voting - picking out certain ones they think are the "best,"
They are sending unscrupulous men to deceive and catch the Lord in a bind.
Interesting isn't it? Those who hate the government and those who love the government,
Have united together against the One whose words are always true and right.
Their sly and simpering words belie their intent - they want to put Him in a box.
How wise is the Lord when calling their bluff, He asks them for a penny!
Pharisees, you hate the government but use its money - you give Caesar his tax.
Herodians, you love the Romans and drink at its trough. Put your money there.
Jesus is from a Higher Government - and gives God what God has a right to expect.
Now you two - do the same - it is time for you to give God what you owe Him.

Think! Can it be the Sadducees are so uninformed that they ask stupid questions?
They are so tripped up and blinded by their own philosophy they don't reason right.
Foolish questions usually get foolish answers or sarcasm but not this time.
They know how to read but don't read - they know how to reason but don't reason.
Their illustration to support their belief is so off the wall, most would walk away.
The Lord's quiet reply as a question, indicates their dilemma may have been genuine.
The scriptures are plain - there is life after death, but not the same as life is here.
The power of God is not limited - He who creates life at the beginning of life,
Is fully able to restore that life back into a new, incorruptible body like that of angels.
The God of the Jews is the God of the Gentiles - the God of the Bible has not died.
The brief glimpse of our future state indicates personality is there - a place is there.
The answer to the dilemma of the ignorant is in the scriptures of truth - unchanging!

Come! There are those who really want to know: intellectuals, common people, poor.
To the intellectual: the law of God is plain - forms do not fulfill the demands of the law.
Love for God must come from the very essence of a man's being - complete - real!
To the common people: God is supreme - no king can compare with Him -
No throne or dominion can share in the glory that belongs to God's kingdom alone.
No enemy can put down nor usurp God's place - enemies will be the place for His feet.
To the lovers of preeminence: their love for publicity will be their down fall.
The adulation they long for will ultimately be a cause for their dire condemnation.
Their demand for the possessions of others and prayers of pretence will damn them.
To the poor: look at the widow with her love for God's house and love for God.
Learn from her - she has little and gives it all - her living is not important to her.
God is the object of her love; her simple giving makes her the object of God's love.

"I learn from the example of others Father God, what is important and what is not. All that I call my own is not my own. All that the flesh thinks is important is not important. Love for Thee is of supreme importance. Common sense and a desire to give Thee my best is important. Please never let me lose sight of what is important to Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

MARK 12:29-31. *And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."*

RIGHTS.

If I love the Lord and my neighbor; I will give Him His rights to all the labor of my life. He has the right to receive from the investment He has made in this vineyard. It will be my occupation to see some on-going benefit for my labor for His glory.

If I love the Lord and my neighbor; I will give our nation the respect and tribute that is due. I am receiving benefits from living where I live. I owe allegiance and I owe it the taxes that I complain about – because all in the nation are my neighbors.

If I love the Lord and my neighbor; I will recognize and submit to the moral instructions of the law. It is my privilege to go beyond what the law demands and as a Christian to live by the spirit of the law. The expectations of law are to give clear understanding as to orderly living and the conduct of an individual in a community.

If I love the Lord and my neighbor; it will keep me with an eye to the supreme authority that is above all others. His throne, His honor, His interest will mold all my decisions to adapt to the interests of His kingdom authority.

If I love the Lord and my neighbor; I will learn from the poor widow, that nothing is mine. He has the right to everything because it came from Him in the first place. It is my privilege to give to Him from the abundance that He gave to me. The motive of my giving is more important than the amount.

"There are times, Father, when I think all the good things You have given us are mine. Today I am reminded again, that in every way and in every thing, all is Yours. It is all Yours by divine right. My hands are open (at least now). Help me to avoid the tyranny of the grasping hand. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

MARK 12:37. *"David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence then is he his son?" And the common people heard Him gladly."*

COMMON PEOPLE.

There are a number of things we have in common;
Faith is one that means much to me.
There is also salvation that is offered to everyone,
And many more common things I may not see.

But the common people who heard Him, I understand.
They're like me, plain folks who work each day to live.
We are uncomplicated as we work the sea and the land;
But we know all we receive is God's to give.

So, when Jesus spoke back then - and now;
They listened and obeyed when they felt their need.
When God speaks to me here today, I will hopefully know,
Things that will do me good when His truth I heed.

"I am slow to learn Father, but I do know when I hear Thy voice. Speak to me this morning and I will listen. Amen."

MARK 12:35-44

WHEN NO ONE IS LOOKING

The scribe who asked about the law understood the difference between the outward forms of a law-keeper and what only God can see. Love, true genuine love from the heart, soul, mind and strength, is hidden from the eyes of humans. We can see evidence of it but not the reality of it. In the silence that followed that conversation, the Lord Jesus asked a final question Himself to enforce the teaching contained in the answers He had given. The quotation from Psalm 110:1 was given so those religious leaders would know the Christ was more than a descendant of David. He was God in human form. This delighted the common people in the multitude. Christ would be one of them. Only God knows who among them truly believed Jesus was the Christ of God. Every true believer will confess with the mouth audibly the fact that Jesus is his or her Lord, and believes with the heart that the One who died for our sins, lives forevermore. Jesus Christ is Lord!

Sometimes we see people dressed in a certain way that goes beyond modesty, dignity and respectability. With a near-sad countenance and showy spirituality, their flowing robes or some distinctive type of apparel is to make them noticed or honored. There is a certain awe they expect people to show toward them and the impression they hope to create is they are of a higher stature and greater importance than those around them. It is true we are to "give honor" to those to whom honor is due. That is because of the position they hold in society, a group or a family. When it comes to prayer, fasting, claiming of priority and financial giving, only God knows the heart. Our actions should be consistent with what we believe. More than that, the Lord said we are to beware of those who exalt themselves. God is determined to put the proud person down, and is determined to lift the humble person up.

Illustrating this principle, the Holy Spirit put into the pages of scripture an incident that took place at that time when Jesus was in the temple. Jesus saw what no one else saw when a poor widow gave all she had in an act of worship and honest appreciation. Only God knew what she had, and only God knew she gave it all to Him. The amount she gave wasn't what gave value to the act. It was that she gave from her heart, soul, mind and strength - she gave it all!

We can learn from this that the Lord is observing our motives. There is nothing of the "thoughts and intents of the heart" that He does not know. The poor widow woman probably never knew she was being watched by the Lord until after she died. God's watchful observation is unobserved by men. He knows when we have done something for Him that is from the heart. He knows how much we have withheld that we could have or should have given. He knows the degree of appreciation each gift I make has. When a person gives "all that she had," there is true value there. The Lord appraises our giving and knows when it is spiritual, grateful, thoughtful and "hilarious" giving. The quality of this woman's giving is she gave her life - "all that she had." Her giving is a true sacrament. It was a symbol of a full heart and true faith. She had nothing left so her trust was completely in God when it came to her own need.

Much in our lives we will never be able to remember. Very little that has been done will we recall, even things done recently. But there is One who appraises every action, every motive, every thought and intent of my heart. Those things done for God when no one is looking are the things of value in our lives. The life of faith is not one in which we calculate everything in percentages or what I might get out of it. What may be important one time may be valueless another time. The omniscient God knows what is behind every gift, every prayer, every action taken. When no one else sees, we need to remember - "Thou God, seest me!"

Not everything done in the open can be evaluated by man.
No one can estimate the worth of an action, really - only God can.
He looks upon the heart of each person, we only see the outside.
Whatever is done, He knows it all, and the motive we cannot hide.

Some things may seem insignificant, to us they seem so small.
Whether they be little or big, the all-knowing God evaluates them all.
He is not doing that just to plan out some future reward,
But the motive behind an action should be appreciation for the Lord.

Some things we want to be seen, but not that praise will be given.
A true motive may be that others may believe and bless the God of heaven
For meeting their need through your gift and know you gave it as to the Lord.
It was a sacrifice of material goods given with no thought of reward.

Other things are done very privately like alms-giving, prayer and fasting.
The reason for secrecy is this is for God alone, not to be seen by those who are passing.
God knows the heart and what is done out of appreciation for Him alone,
Is a spiritual service that is gladly given, not by others to be known.

I really don't want the deep things that are just between God and me,
To be put out in the open where everyone else is able to see -
And make comparisons as to how much something is worth.
The purpose behind what is done for the Lord is His honor by an act of faith.

I'll try to keep my right hand from knowing what the left is doing,
And when people wonder at what I do, where I've been or where I am going -
I'll just leave the explanations to the Spirit of God who guides.
He knows what needs to be made public and what is best to hide.

“Father, I praise Thee today for making plain to me the value of privacy in the things of God. It would be a serious mistake to advertise what should be for Thy eyes only. Please keep me from wanting the praise of men. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

MARK 13

See the cutting of those stones! Their shape fits them. See the result of mans' effort.
What? Once a beautiful building - then a pile of stones.
Sitting on a hill looking across a valley at that building,
The watchers ask their Teacher; “When? What?”

Deceivers will come - counterfeit “Christ.”
Wars and threats - increasing greater troubles among nations -
Then closer still - public opposition against believers.
The Holy Spirit will give suitable words for defense.

Family members turn against each other -
Believers are hated by everyone for the Lord's sake.
Physical dangers are everywhere -
And then the worst comes - “anti-Christ!”

A world in turmoil such has never been seen -
No relief - all of humanity is in danger of extinction.
The warnings were given, but ignored - the inevitable happens!
Then nature itself - the creation of God “malfunctions.”

God has spoken and what He has said has come to pass.
But look! Lift up your eyes and see! He comes!
As He promised - the Son of Man is seen in great glory!
Not despised! Not rejected! Coming - our glorified Lord!

“O God, we watch and listen today - not for the clouds of riders on white horses and the world seeing the King coming in His glory to earth, but for the face of Jesus. The first look at Him will surely make water out of my heart that has become used to the world around. I will be so glad to look on His face and He His voice. Come Lord Jesus! Amen.”

MARK 13

TAKE HEED...WATCH...PRAY

The journey of His-story through Mark was nearly over. His teaching had been given and for the most part, rejected. Blessings had been poured out on the people which they gladly received but took them for granted, and the nation was still in unbelief. The disciples had understood vaguely what He was teaching about the religious leaders and the nation. But there was the beautiful temple in front of their eyes. People were coming and going there because the Passover was nearly upon them. In their questioning minds the future was unclear. What about the temple? The Lord plainly said it would be destroyed. That had happened twice before when Israel turned away from God, and it was going to happen again. The prophecy was clear. Destruction follows departure. Payday always comes. Reaping follows sowing. The look ahead was bleak.

It is only natural for people to want to know when predicted events will take place. The Lord Jesus, in the first of the "take heed" statements, told of the deceivers who would claim they were Christ. This has happened even in our day and is not too unusual. Wars and turmoil make people think "this is it. The end is here. It can't go on like this any longer" - but it does. These are not signs, of His Coming and the end of the age. Other Gospels give three views of the future but Mark just gives one. He looks at the future through Jewish eyes. The constant trouble Jews have experienced since that time of prophecy is not a sign of the end.

Another of the "take heed" statements isn't a warning about those who counterfeit the truth, but is a statement regarding those who are loyal to the Lord Jesus Christ. The early church experienced the kind of persecution the Lord predicted. Those disciples experienced all that first-hand. All down through the years since there has been opposition and persecution towards those who take a stand for the Gospel. In many parts of the world today Christians are experiencing persecution, imprisonment and death for the sake of the Gospel. In this country Christendom has taken a different tack - "don't preach the Gospel. Stop making people uncomfortable with warnings of sin, righteousness and judgment to come. Keep it quiet and have "seeker friendly" meetings where people are taught there is an easy way into the kingdom." Being "born again" to many is not becoming a "new creature in Christ Jesus." It is changing one's life-style to be more

gracious, friendly and attractive. This is very different from "all that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." The Lord warned the disciples to take heed to themselves because there will be opposition from unexpected sources, for unreasonable causes, resulting in unpredictable persecution.

The increasing intensity of natural disasters make some think the end of the age is here. These are like shadows on a wall. They seem so final because the effects are so destructive. The storms and hurricanes have, and will continue to take their toll on the cherished property of people. Tornados, tsunamis and cyclones will continue to create a fear of nature, but people still refuse to turn in repentance to God for salvation. To many their "savior" is the government they look to, to restore their life-style to the way it always was when we lived comfortably and at ease.

Not referred to in this portion of the scripture but is in Matthew's account, is a view of the events that have happened in the past, and can be expected in the present and future. As far as the nation of Israel, and the nations of the world for that matter, things will continue to get worse. There will be a short time under the deceptive wiles of the anti-Christ, when people will think the kingdom has come and that deceiver will fool the world for a season. Following his takeover of power there will come a time of unprecedented trouble and then Christ will come in His power and glory.

We are to take heed. When false teachers make predictions, do they come true or do they revise them to fit events that have happened? Do they pick out small portions of the Bible to teach or do they teach the Bible as the whole counsel of God? Does what they say contradict the Bible? Is Christ the one honored or is the teacher glorified? What is the effect of the teaching and does it strengthen the faith of Christians?

We are also to watch as we wait. Do not be misled by people who speculate about spiritual things and interpret the scriptures to meet a position they want to take. Do not be afraid to speak for Christ and make plain the way of salvation no matter what people say or how it makes them feel toward you. In your watching, stand firm by faith, in the faith. Don't be surprised if you are despised, ignored or persecuted by not conforming to what is popular. Live for God by staying alert morally, scripturally and obediently.

In view of all the Lord taught, continue to pray. This is not the kind of prayers that makes requests. Rather this is prayer for our own convictions to be maintained by God's help; prayer for consistency before people we know in the world; prayer for courage to press forward in the mandate we have been given; prayer for continuance in the things of God in spite of what others may do. There is no timetable for us to go by. This promise of the Lord's coming made by the Son of Man Himself.

I really can't see coming events and I think I know the reason why.
If I knew what was about to happen, perhaps I wouldn't even try
To press forward in faith in my calling knowing danger was just ahead.
And I fear I might ignore the needs of those who are spiritually dead.

But I can take heed to what is around me as I hear false teachers proclaim,
"The end of the world is at hand," and some even say that in Jesus' name.
Those who deceive are people who never bother to read God's Word.
They want to make a name or money for themselves and willfully deceive the world.

I need to take heed to myself, lest I become casual and blasé -
People need to know I am consistent in what I do and say.
They have a right to expect me to be morally and spiritually sound -
Before they will listen to the Gospel and seek Christ while He may be found.

To be aware of the times I live in is not something I should ignore.
However, to worry about the times is wasted effort, rather I should be giving much more
Effort and time to my calling, and to further the Gospel of peace.
The turmoil and wars will continue until the Son of Man comes - then they will cease.

I need to watch as well for opportunities to bring blessing to others.
This means those who are in darkness, as well as my sisters and brothers.
By speaking truth from the Bible, I have something to say that they need.
With grace in my lips, I should speak so to God's truth they will give heed.

Prayer is not just asking for things or of making earnest supplication.
It also involves knowing what God says, and for others making intercession.
By being in the presence of God, my prayer is an act of communion.
Awareness of events as God sees them challenges me to sincere consecration.

"Father, may this look into the future this morning, affect me in my worship and service today. Keep me from trivializing in any way the holy things of God that are revealed and will come to pass. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Mark 13:33. *"Take ye heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is."*

YE KNOW NOT.

TAKE HEED

This is not a minor issue. God intends me to be aware of events around me and those that we know are coming in the future.

WATCH

Observe all that I can see around, and seek to discern how to act in view of all that is going on in the news, in the world, in families, and see do they correspond to statements in the scriptures.

PRAY

A lot I cannot see, but I know God is in control. So rather than worrying about all that is unknown; in prayer – I rest in God.

THE TIME

Something is coming, of that I am sure. The Rapture: I look forward to with joy. The Tribulation: I look forward to with sadness knowing how many who have heard the Gospel and rejected, will be lost at that time. The Millennium: with holy anticipation I look for this time, for I know then that it will be the Lord Jesus Christ Himself who will bring peace on earth.

"I bow my head and my heart Father, as I think here today of what is coming. One part of me says, 'Even so, come Lord Jesus.' Another part says, 'Wait a little longer, please Jesus.' But I know that there is an order to all that You have done in the past, so there is an order in all that has yet to be done. I will quietly wait and work with a restful spirit, because I know You. Amen."

MARK 13:34. *"For the Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left His house, and gave authority to His servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch."*

THE FUTURE.

THE SHADOWS

Thrown down - violent destruction!
Deceivers - they will not be satisfied with grace!
Wars and rumors of wars - we see them already like dark clouds!
National and international turmoil - it is happening in many parts of the world!
Earthquakes, famines and troubles - natural disasters are taking a high toll!

THE BEGINNING

The shadows darken - reality begins to set in!
Justice gives way to hatred - believers are abused and killed!
The saints flee - hidden in order to be saved!

THE DESCENT INTO DARKNESS

The Abomination of desolation - the embodiment of evil!
Desecration of the holy things - a clenched fist against God!
Fleeing people - heading for the hills to hide!
People dying violently - humanity is in danger of extermination!
Darkness in nature - the light goes out everywhere!

THE COMING LIGHT

In the darkness of ungodliness - evidence of supreme power!
The Son of Man coming - He is not dead; He is not asleep!
Great power and glory - earth hadn't seen anything like it!
A nation comes together - travelers moving home after thousands of years!
The Drawing Power - David's Greater Son!

THE WARNING

What day and hour - We don't know: be ready!
What to look for - Don't waste your time: be ready!
What should we do - Keep working: be ready!
Watch for Him - He has promised: be ready!

"I know it is all going to happen, O Mighty God: yet in spite of all the shadows, I am content. My eyes are open and I am watching the events and know the signs can be seen, and yet I am content. Thanks for making the future known clear enough that I can live assured. In Him, Amen."

MARK 14

She heard and believed what Jesus said was coming -
She went and prepared to give.
From her heart the best - the spikenard for His anointing -
For some it was a waste.
But not the Lord, He knew the motive behind it,
She broke the box, no more to be used.
The Lord knew the cost and her motive for giving -
He knew her heart was right with Him.

Her love for the Lord and wanting to give her best -
Contrasts very sharply with Judas.
His motive was "selfish" - the absolute worst -
"The betrayer" is what he is known to us as.
One loved the Lord, the other loved money -
How different can two people be.
My I ever be ready to give to Him freely -
Little recompense, for what He gave me.

Two men looking carefully for a sight unusual -
A man carrying a pitcher of water.
Following, preparing - having learned to value
Any word the Lord said to them.
Sitting and eating - then watching a new thing,
The Lord giving thanks for the bread.
The cup soon followed - they received it from Him -
New emblems - the Passover was done.

When we remember Him, we worship and praise -
The Lord is the theme of our thoughts.
We proclaim forth His death - we honor His name,
While considering redemption's cost.
In audible praise, or in silent worship,
Our minds and hearts we employ.
With the bread and the cup - expressing fellowship -
And hymns too - we our Lord adore.

Poor Peter, how sad that such a good man,
Could quickly stumble and fail.
It reminds me it is possible, anyone can
Under pressure weaken and fall.
He walked on water, he publicly confessed His Lord,
He was there in the garden to pray.
But when I am alone, I can easily get cold -
And there warm at the world's fire.

The Son of Man in the glory of His Person,
Told them to the cross He would go.
He told them to watch and pray there in the garden -
Then betrayal - others took Him away.
He testified of the day the Son of Man comes in power -
He was abused and rejected by them.
We also who watch and pray, are watching for the hour,
The Son of Man will come again.

"O God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, how the thought of Him with His own people in that short period of time, moves my heart to consider. Have I ever worshiped like that woman? Have I ever obeyed unusual requests without question? Have I recognized the real worth of the bread and the cup as having been given to me from Him personally? Have I failed like Peter because of self-confidence? Give me a view of myself, O Lord, lest I think I am more than a poor weak man. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

MARK 14:4. *“And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, ‘Why this waste of the ointment made?’”*

WASTE?

What people say, often reveals their heart.
From within come the thoughts that were there at the start.
It's not what looks right that really counts,
But what is within is the source of the matter.

She saved and prepared, she knew what was coming.
She had planned ahead for she heard His warning.
His death would come soon and so she was showing,
How important the Lord was to her!

The leper was cleansed, but he still didn't know.
The disciples were there, but they didn't show;
That the Lord was so important, as her gift did go -
Right to the heart of her Savior.

Don't let me look too hard at what is easy to see,
There might be much more to her than to me.
So, the Lord Himself judges the value to be -
What really is important to Him.

“Please give me the wisdom Father, to keep my mouth shut, if I don't have the right words to say. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

MARK 14:1-21

THE POWER OF EMOTIONS

As the message Mark wrote unfolds the climatic last days of our Lord's public life and ministry, I was impressed with the variety of emotions that rose to the surface from different people and groups of people. The deep hatred of the chief priests and scribes seems to have become so polarized because the teaching of Jesus and conversations He had with them personally, exposed the fact their conduct was not consistent with their ideals. What they thought was hidden, was known, and if the Lord Jesus was truly God, they recognized they were condemned before Him. The greatness of a person is not only realized by their friends but also by those who oppose him. Those who are against us sometimes give the best reference as to what is right about us and our work. Fear was also in the hearts of those who opposed the Lord Jesus. They were afraid of the people around. If they were to carry out their crafty treachery and put Jesus to death, they feared the people who had been blessed by Him, would riot. The fear of doing evil is a good thing. Fearing the consequences of an action is a wise thing. There was an evil gladness in these men when Judas came to them giving them an opportunity of acting with stealth. We do have power over our emotions and can bring them into captivity when we control our thinking. Unrestrained emotions lead to acts of passion that can ruin one's life in a very short time. How necessary it is that we commit ourselves to emulating the meekness and lowliness of Christ.

The convenient betrayal by Judas reveals the impact of covetousness on one's own will. Paul said, "I had not known sin except the law said, 'Thou shalt not covet.'" Coveting finances makes fraud very possible, but certainly not necessary. Covetousness as an emotion strikes right at the morality of a person. If we are not careful, we can make covetousness out to be "just good business." Right on the back of coveting money, a position or a place of prominence, comes the emotion of treachery. That crafty emotion can quickly make one callous to what we know to be right, to the extent we override the work of our conscience and just wait for an opportunity to carry out some nefarious plan. Judas' convenient betrayal emphasizes how quickly a covetous thought can turn into a soul-damning action.

As the disciples watched the devotional actions of the woman pouring the precious ointment on the head of Jesus, there was a resentful anger that arose in them. It appeared they were acting in what they would consider a righteous indignation. In truth it was a self-righteous ignorance of which the Lord quickly made them aware. It is not right for us to make an uninformed appraisal of another person's actions for the Lord. Those same men experienced later a deep sadness when the Lord Jesus announced that "one of you shall betray Me." How could that happen? Who would do such a thing? By now they had learned a lot more about themselves and were wondering about what they had considered an impossibility.

Whenever we hear of some serious act of betrayal or disloyalty on the part of another brother or sister, we are saddened. The wise person will stop to reflect on themselves in that time of sadness and pray that God will strengthen us to be kept from temptation and delivered from evil. Fear and sorrow often are joined together when we hear of the treachery of others and fearfully consider that it could be me who would do

such a thing apart from the grace of God. A possible but wrong action is to disassociate ourselves from one taking a wrong course in life when they need our help whether they know it or not. I cannot remove myself from commitment to my Lord Jesus Christ, no matter what other people may say or do. I do experience anger, sadness and fear when I observe those I have been associated with, turn away deliberately and follow a path I know seems to them to be right because it appeals to them but will leave them spiritually dry.

In my mind's eye I watch Mary carrying with firm hands a box she had been saving for a special reason. Because of her close fellowship with the Lord in the past, she had heard and believed what He said, and with holy understanding, she broke the alabaster box. The precious ointment from within the box poured down over the head of the Lord onto His body, His clothes and the scent of it that permeated the room, was a testimony to the reverential love she had for the Lord. This may have been an impulsive act but not done on the spur-of-the-moment. I personally think she had been planning this beforehand. She wanted her devotion to Him to be known by Him, not just to others who would know that if she anointed His body after He was dead. Her devotion was a deep lively thing that was expressed in this emotional outpouring of fellowship, impulsive love and reverence.

We don't act always because of an emotional, momentary desire, but the depths of a person's interest in the things of God, in God Himself or in God's will, does express itself in emotional ways at times. The remembrance gathering of the Lord's people often produces fresh thoughts of worship and praise that are not repetitious but come from spontaneous thoughts implanted by the Holy Spirit when one has been enjoying God and His Word.

Expressions of emotion are not always bad, nor are they always good.
Quite often they begin in the soul as a result of taking in spiritual food
We have been enjoying, and by meditation, truth has come alive.
In our thoughts emotions they are born and by them our faith thrives.

Unchecked emotions that are without spiritual content seem to be unrestrained.
The out-of-control emotional event is not by the Spirit constrained.
They may manifest themselves from unholy boldness to fear.
It is important that by what is emotionally expressed, the characteristics of God do bear.

Emotions are like wild horses that have to be guided by rein and bridle.
If uncontrolled, they become a laughingstock expressed by one who is idle.
Holy emotions like reverence and harmony are something to be desired.
Close fellowship like Mary had, honors God and many others inspires.

True faith is never out of control, but it is not afraid of impossibilities.
When expressed in actions and words formed within opportunities of praise, we seize -
An impulsive act the Holy Spirit generates has God's glory as its real objective.
The emotional expressions one gives to the Lord are by Him truly accepted.

Understanding love when it is either given or received -
Is not a complicated emotion when one on Christ has believed.
It may express itself in an act of compassionate help which others have ignored.
The emotional response of love is not limited by calculated reason others may implore.

"Father, I know I don't "emote" very much by my nature, but Thou knowest how I feel about Thy people, Thy work and Thyself. Let that which is beneficial for purposes approved by Thee, come from the emotional part of me to bless others I pray. Keep me from foolish displays of emotion I pray. Be honored by any expression from me that will exalt the Lord Jesus and make Thy name to be extolled I pray. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

MARK 14:22-26

FROM THE PAST TO THE FUTURE

How greatly did the Lord appreciate the expression of love from Mary! How grieved He must have been by the treachery of Judas! He was not immune to the emotional aspects of being a human. In the expression of love, none can compare with Him! In resenting evil there is no one with such holy anger as His - and yet He always had His emotions under control. Even sitting by Judas as he dipped his unleavened bread into the same broth and spoke the solemn words of condemnation, "It was good for him if he had not been born," the Lord's response was always in captivity to His holy will.

The Passover feast was over. The ancient symbolism to a small group of people had fulfilled its purpose. The ways of God with the Jews they had annually been called to remember, are no longer relevant. There is

a new feast that is far-reaching to all people and places on earth. "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore, let us keep the feast." This is the feast of remembrance of a Person, not just an event. At the same time, we make a visible, public proclamation of His death and the value of the Gospel to us. Memory stirs the emotion. Memory produces thanksgiving. This sacramental feast which was introduced the night of the Lord's betrayal is a visible evidence of unseen grace. That is the meaning of sacrament. The two emblems the Lord used for us to remember Him by are bread and a cup of the fruit of the vine. These are truly sacramental symbols that remind us of the matchless grace of Jesus. Some have called these emblems "the Eucharist," which means "thanksgiving." It is true when we remember the Lord Jesus Christ, we are moved in our hearts to thanksgiving. So rather than the emblems being the "Eucharist," a reason for which we gather is for Eucharist.

What actually happened that night after all the Passovers were finished, and there is no more reason for Passover feasts, the Lord was making arrangements for those who love Him and believe in Him to continually remember Him in the weekly Lord's Supper. The fact and form of the Lord's Supper is such that at each reoccurring gathering of His people to remember Him, there is visible evidence of what He has accomplished for God and blessed us with. In every part of the world these emblems are available. This is like a portrait picture of a loved one. We don't look at it to be instructed intellectually, but rather to be moved by our emotions and affection so our heart toward that person is stirred by love.

When the Lord "took bread" it was symbolic of an act of His own mind and will when "He took upon Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men." More than just taking it, He "blessed" and "brake" it. We bless what we are thankful for, and we are reminded that our Lord "gave Himself." He wanted to "be found in fashion as a man." He knew He would suffer physically, spiritually and emotionally - and He wants us to remember those all-important aspects of God's will that He fulfilled. The cup He took and gave thanks for is evidence that a new covenant has been made in which both parties who form the covenant, die to themselves and live for the other. The life He gave symbolized in the cup, is His own eternal life. He gave His life for us so we could share that life with Him. A few drops of our blood could never compare with the "blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." If all of our blood was shed, we would die because of our sin. His sinless ness makes His blood fully efficacious for us because He gave it for us. We who have believed in Him and have been "made the righteousness of God in Him," died when He died, were buried when He was buried, rose again to new life when He rose from among the dead ones. The value and results of His sacrificial death for us is what moves us emotionally and spiritually at the Lord's Supper.

We are not abandoned to our own devices as to how this feast is to be kept. The simple emblems are set apart for this purpose. The table of thanksgiving in the center of the gathered company signifies to us the fact that our Savior is in the midst of us. Those who partake of that feast are those who are there for Him, not for themselves or what they might get from being there. It is like a portrait of the Servant of Jehovah God looks upon and His "soul finds all His delight." He wants us to "Behold My Servant" and find our joy and delight in the same Person. The "Lamb of God" was first for God's satisfaction. We are blessed because God was satisfied, the Lord Jesus Christ was willing to die for us, and we are now "accepted in the Beloved." There is a sense in which we can see ourselves in the blessing of that feast because we are made members of His body. What blessing we have been given! What joy it is to be able to be at that feast! What holiness is expected of all who partake of those emblems!

To many it is just a service "the church of your choice" promotes.
They don't understand the value of a covenant God has sealed with His oath.
Eternal life is not an experience, it is a new life planted by God.
It is not an extension of the old life we had - that one belonged to the world.

The remembrance of Christ in God's appointed way is a holy convocation.
Two emblems sitting upon the table testify to the basis of our salvation.
These were not chosen by the Lord without careful consideration.
World-wide these fundamental foods provide for human preservation.

Bread is called the "staff of life," but before life the seed must die.
By means of death the life-force brings forth the bread on which we rely.
In taking bread the Lord gave visible evidence of what He did pass through.
From His death and burial, resurrection brings life made new.

Nutrients in the fruit of vines are needed for normal and healthy living.
We cannot generate by our own efforts the benefits the fruit is giving.
By being cut off and pressured hard there comes to us a blessing.
Those who partake of that cup of remembrance, testify to eternal life possessing.

As sacraments of which we partake, these visible emblems of grace -
Move our hearts and emotions to worship the Father and to praise
The name and Person of our Lord - and at that Supper is the place
Where with words and thoughts of our blessed Lord we come to Him in faith.

“Father in heaven, the Lord’s Supper on the first day of the week is a very special time and place to me. It seems like being there with other Christians there are many ways of expressing our gratitude and worship that I miss when I am alone. I long Father, to be with Thy own people and pray of Thee that this will be possible as we remember Him and proclaim His death until He comes. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

MARK 14: 26. *“And when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.”*

SING A HYMN.

The Passover feast has ended permanently. The Supper that began with evidence of a new covenant is over. The seats are about to be emptied as the night draws on. The weight of sorrow hangs heavy on the company of men as they realize their Lord and Master is sorrowful. He is sorrowful at the thought of one of His own betraying Him at this very moment; another soon to deny Him; and all to forsake Him. But then the sound of a hymn begins and one after another, joins in and their voices mingle and blend as each express in word, thought and sound, the thoughts of another who years before put into words what they are now thinking.

It is a unique feature of human experience to be able to join together with others and think the same thoughts, say the same words, voice the same appreciation or desire all at the same time, and it not be discordant. The human voice is an instrument without any comparison among other instruments. With the voice, tongue, lips and palette I am able to put into words the thoughts of my heart. With others in unison, we are able to do the same thing together. And yet if we all talk at the same time, even though the words are the same, it is seldom able to be understood. The Great Designer of the human body has also given us the ability to change the sounds of our voice to adapt to that of others around me. If we all make the same sound at the same time, in the same tone of voice, we will be able to be understood. However, even with that understanding, it is hard to listen to the same voice tone all the time and not be bored or disinterested.

God has given us the ability to all say the same words, at the same time, think the same thoughts and feel the same emotions as those around me by the simple action of changing tones in unison. That is singing. When the tune being sung is deliberately made harmonious, it becomes a beautiful sound to the hearers. When the message of the words, the sound of the voices and the tune is beautiful, it is very moving to the heart and soul of the hearers as well as the singers. Those male voices that night, singing their hymn of worship, praise or testimony, would have moved the hearts of all involved. In this way they were, to a degree, to participate with the Lord in His sorrow.

When they got to the Mount of Olives, they were asked to pray, but were unable to continue praying because they were tired and sad – and so they slept. They slept while He prayed. Let us not overlook the value of a good hymn well sung with others. It can warm the heart, sooth the troubled mind, proclaim a message of faith and truth, testify to the grace of God, give praise to the Lord, express words and thoughts of worship, and glorify God.

“Sometimes, Father, I think the singing of hymns is very secondary in order of importance of my fellowship with Thee. But at this moment I can understand that it was very appropriate for those disciples to sing that hymn along with the Lord. Help me to be ready with a psalm, hymn or spiritual song at all times, because I don’t really know just when it will be the right thing to do at any given time. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

MARK 14:46. *“And they laid their hands on Him, and took Him.”*

TAKEN BY LOVE.

A woman came, captured by love for her Savior;
Heart and hands full - to give without reservation;
Soul warm, mind filled with His truth, mouth closed.
No talk from her - deeper communication;
Actions so loud all are affected.
No mistaking what she gave; what she meant;
Worship without reservation.
All poured out,
Nothing for self or others.

His burying - she knew
What He said was coming!

Judas, with covetous eyes and mind bent.
The bag not full enough;
Never satisfied.
Fair game for darker powers;
Words smooth, deceiving, snakey.
Hands with fingers bend to grasp.
Furtive actions, quiet steps, captured by self.
Critical words, clammy greed capturing his soul.
Steps now bold because of others.
Puckered lips; darkness descending deeper than night.
Lips that burn still; silent forever - in hell!
He said, he was a devil!

The lamb's leg and herbs and flat bread and wine.
Reminders of the horrible and blessed past.
A furnished room, deep and full of memories.
Firstborn deaths; night travel; freedom!
Water ahead, fear inside, rushing sounds of battle behind:
All move through the mind.
The innocent victim, the bitterness of slavery:
Cleansing from sin - joy!
Quiet songs of redemption in the room.
The story is told.
Our Passover is in this very place!

Something new, and simple and profound:
The same room, but new thoughts.
No looking back; around now and ahead.
Faith moves forward in great leaps.
A new nation, new people, new kingdom!
A new Body and we are a part of it.
Can it be such unity and lasting forever?
Joy? Yes, but sorrow deep and mixed emotions.
Dark crimson in a cup reminder of death and life.
Both given, and blessed and mine to have - forever!
"Remember Me!"

Old witnesses from His creative hand;
Branches bent low, leaves quiet in night stillness;
Sounds of sleep, of weariness, of culture shock.
Footsteps coming nearer, stopping, quiet murmurs;
Slowing words, gathering sleep.
Solitary steps, going further in the darkness.
Stopping, knees bending, face lowering.
Sounds of sorrow deep; strong crying, tears.
Crimson sweat, repeated words, heavy heart.
The Savior bows, to the Father's will; to need;
To History, to prophecy, to love's demands:
The Son of Man is betrayed!

The feet flee, the fear is deep, the hearts are lost
In confusion. The night of the soul drops hard.
The "lostness" overwhelms the souls of men.
"We thought it was this time He would redeem..."
A sword, an ear; feeble attempts at manliness.
A miracle, all but overlooked.
Men lying all around on the darkened ground.
But still - no power, no courage, no strength, no Spirit!
All at a far-seeing distance.
There, but not there.
The distance is dark from light.
He's alone!

Arrogance and haughty eyes with down-turned mouths.
Lips that lie and shifty eyes with faces red and dark.
And beards long and perfect, overtopped with little boxes.

Eyes that will not focus on The Object.
Moving hands without the stillness of peace.
Shuffling feet in agitation looking for a place of rest.
Embarrassment covering the movements
Of souls dark and disturbed.
Self-righteous tones that cannot overcome the night.
And sounds of tearing, never heard before.
Mouths filled with water looking for release.
And the covered Face of
The Great 'I AM!'"

The first sound of morning speaks loudly.
Hands rubbing to get warm by a cold fire.
Others having fun at the expense of others.
No way to warm the deep darkness of hasty words.
A creeping coldness down the throat goes deeper;
To the place where heart, and nerves, and emotions
Cross their paths to form a knot.
It grows, and grows till words again spoken fast;
Makes the knot become stone in the soul.
And the morning sound comes again.
The bitter tears roll hot and heavy down the
World-cold face: the heart is broken!
The Lord looks!

"I am shaken in my soul by how quickly things can happen, Father. It seems unreal that all this happened within hours. Can love that was inherent in Him, ever capture me? He kept on track without deviation. In spite of all that happens and no matter how quickly; give me the faith to keep on love's track. In His glorious name, Amen."

MARK 14:27-52

GETHSEMANE

The journey from the upper room where important teaching was given, to the Mount of Olives and Gethsemane, must have given the disciples much to think about. When they arrived there the Lord quoted part of a scripture from the prophecy of Zechariah and applied it to Himself and them. Even in view of the cross just before Him and the suffering that would take place there, the Lord assured them of the fact of His resurrection. The smiting of the Shepherd was not a reference to the results of the envy and schemes of men who plotted against Him. The Holy, Righteous God was going to charge the Shepherd in the dark hour of the cross-death when He would lay on Him the iniquity of us all. But that hour of suffering was followed by a declared finished work and victory over sin, the devil and death itself.

In the prayer of the Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane, there was not a desire on His part to avoid the task that lay before Him. In affirming the will of His Father, He was already fully aware of the cost He must pay to provide eternal redemption for us. The "cup" had to do with the awareness that this was something He had to do alone. There was no one else who could assist Him in this task. He alone would bear the sin of the world. He alone would experience the excruciating pain of physical suffering as a human being and the even deeper pain of a perfect holy soul being made an offering for the sin of others. His communion with the Father in prayer was an honest expression of what was in His heart. That is when prayer really becomes a significant exercise of a supplicant. We are able to express in words our doubts, our fears, our questions in an open and honest way, and still be in perfect communion with our Father. It really is not appropriate to say to God in words what we do not mean in our heart. In the prayer of the Lord in Gethsemane there was full cooperation with the will of His Father. He surrendered His will to His Father's will. This is essential in any prayer we make. In our hearts when we are in genuine prayer, there is communion and cooperation with God that affects our will and our words. "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable unto Thee my God."

The bold claims of the sheep were basically human resolve to be faithful to the Lord. Sometimes we make claims of faith and loyalty without realizing what that might mean. Will I have to leave the comforts of everything I have? Am I willing, truly willing, to lose everything for the glory of God and the furtherance of His kingdom? Would I be willing to start completely over at my age and go forth in faith alone? We really don't know how vulnerable we are to temptations and challenges until we are actually in them. We have a tendency to sleepy indifference rather than the charge to "watch and pray." It is important for us as His people, as "the sheep of His pasture," to maintain vigilance at all times. We will be tempted by the world, the flesh and the devil. Our charge is to watch for anything that will endanger the carrying out of the mandate we have been given. The attitude of prayer indicates our acknowledging our need of God in every situation. To

find fellowship with other believers is a great safe-guard when tempted. Our thoughts and lives need to be focused on God in order to rise above anything that would beset us.

Evidence of sheep being scattered or seeming to be scattered is a sense of false security. "Everything is fine. Don't panic and don't worry." Also, there may be a physical dullness that seems like boredom along with spiritual weakness and indifference. Some have zeal without knowledge and bravely make claims of courage. That soon gives way to fear that causes one to flee from the challenges that come with faith. These are never far away from any of us. How kind was the Lord to speak of them about, and prepare them for, denial and failure. Promised victory comes after the trial of faith. The teaching of the Word of God in our gatherings as an assembly of God's people, the private counsel of spiritual people, can prepare us in advance of the opposition that is to be expected by anyone who is willing to "live godly in Christ Jesus."

In the darkness of the night, they move toward the mountain -
Not fully aware of the importance of that moment.
The lofty teaching, they had just been given, was more than they could contain -
And on its impact, they could not make a comment.
Further as they climbed that rise, He quoted another scripture
They knew was given as a warning unto them.
The Shepherd and His flock were the word picture -
He, the Shepherd - the sheep were these very men.

Bravado and boldness may have a place -
But they are not to be a reason for pride.
It is possible for a person to put on a strong face -
And all the while, have inward fears we hide.
To be afraid is not a sin, but to act in the flesh is.
Because the flesh can in no way please God -
Our only recourse when tempted is the strength which is His -
And by it overcome the flesh, the devil and the world.

To go to far into the Garden of Gethsemane
Is to walk on ground too holy for us.
The interaction of the Father and Son we can never see.
There are times to remember we are but dust.
Yet we know something of what prayer can do -
And the results earnest prayer can bring.
God has promised to take us through
To His promise we can always safely cling.

To a certain extent we have been allowed to share
In what God is doing today.
Not that with His will our prayers and work compare -
But in His flesh, He traveled this same way.
Never once did He dishonor or deny
The Father or the work He was sent to complete.
May we who are disciples, in faith earnestly apply
Ourselves to our calling so we may place honors at His feet.

"I will never know the experience Father, that You and the Lord Jesus had in that garden. But I thank Thee in the times when all seemed dark, in Thy mercy and grace, Thou didst bring me through in victory. I will praise Thee for this example of His obedience to Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

MARK 14:53-72

TRUTH AND DECEPTION

The religious leaders had gathered in the night expecting the betrayal of Judas to end with Jesus being brought before them - in spite of the law against such a night-time gathering. These men had already prejudged the Lord Jesus and were using any means possible to see Him dead - in spite of the law against such a decision. In the role he had because of his heritage, the high priest was prepared to put on a display of incensed holiness and tore his garments - in spite of the illegality of such a display of false holiness. When truth is at the bar of justice, whether it be at the throne of God, the court of man's law, or the council of elders at a church meeting - it does not need to fear the lies that likely will be told. At the end of any such event, truth is not harmed by a lie. It may suffer, be reproached and be denied, but in the end, truth will win the approval of God. God has purposes in mind that may take one through the course of being

"despised and rejected of men," but the man or woman of faith will trust God to do whatever is necessary for His glory.

Twisting of words that have been spoken in a particular context, and implying they meant something different is not an uncommon practice when one person is seeking to condemn another. The appearance of holiness is only a pretense to cover the choice an accuser makes when he chooses to be deliberately blind to the truth.

Truth uses words in the context of which it was spoken. Truth uses intelligence diligently to illuminate areas of choice when an event is clouded or obscured. Silence in the face of lies is a testimony to the effectiveness of truth. When a dishonest question is asked and deception is obviously the goal, truth refuses to be led into that trap. But when an honest question is asked, no matter what the intent behind it is, truth gives an honest and precise answer. No one misunderstood the answer the Lord Jesus gave to the high priest as to whether He was the "Son of the Blessed." The priest knew what the Lord Jesus Christ had claimed as to His Person. The Lord had no choice but to give that question a precise and definite answer.

To follow the steps of Peter that night is to follow behind a devoted man. He had gone a bit farther into the garden than most of the others. When the Lord was betrayed by the kiss of Judas, Peter reached for his sword to defend the Lord against a whole company of armed men. When the others forsook the Lord as He was led away, Peter at least followed afar off. That was the action of a devoted man. When the Lord was taken into the high priest's palace, Peter followed close enough to see what was happening. His heart was in the right place. His faith in the Lord Jesus being "the Christ, the Son of the living God," never failed. It was his hope that failed. When he was laughed at and challenged by a maid, his courage failed. He truly loved the Lord That is what brought him to that place. Perhaps he thought the palace of the high priest would be a fitting place to claim His kingdom. The four times the Lord had told them of His betrayal, death, burial and resurrection, seems to have been totally misunderstood.

Peter lied about his own faith. He still had faith in Christ, but in his denial, he wounded his own soul. Peter never stopped loving the Lord even when his courage failed. There was light in Peter that brought him to that place but failed under the taunting words of a young woman. We should never claim we would never have done what Peter did. Strong men can become weak in the most unexpected ways at the most unexpected times. It was himself Peter really denied, when he said three times over, he did not know the Lord. The look of the Lord Jesus probably conveyed the thought, "Why are you denying yourself? Why are you wounding yourself?" The tears that flowed were evidence that love had not died, faith had not failed. The tears of Peter remind us of the fact when one has believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and confessed Him as Lord, even though hope and courage may fail, the work of God within that has made a person a new creation in Christ, will not fail. We have a new nature that is sensitive to the will and ways of God.

Fabricated accusations were made against the Lord.
Those who want to find fault often do it by twisting words.
They did it to the Lord Himself in spite of His perfection.
When we live by faith in Him, others will seek our condemnation.

The beauty of silence in the face of lies, is eventually it stops voices
That are raised against righteousness and truth because of sinful choices.
When silence rules and an honest question is asked, then is the time to speak.
The result will be deception will separate from those, who the truth seek.

An answer in as few words as possible often is the best way to reply.
Truth has an impact of its own that those who hear cannot deny.
It stands out like a light in darkness, like calm in the midst of a storm.
It shines like jewels against the blackness, when truth the speaker adorns.

We dare not say we will never fail, our humanity at best is frail.
It is not always that we can see ahead as to what telling the truth entails.
But even when we lose our hope and feel we have denied our faith -
The grief we have and the tears we shed are evidence of a work of grace.

When the time comes and we seem to have lost our courage, take a look at Him.
A look at the Savior melts the heart and drives us to confess our sin.
He is faithful even though we are not, on His love we can depend.
By His forgiveness and available strength, we can endure to the end.

To see the Savior face to face is a hope and joy awaiting me.
Exactly what He will say first to me, I don't know, but I will rejoice to see

The One who knows me inside out, from whose searching I cannot hide.
In perfect fellowship with Him I will be able then to abide.

"Gracious Father, my prayer this morning is that I will always be committed to the truth, to doing the truth and saying the truth in full fellowship with Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

MARK 14:72. *"And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, 'Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.' And when he thought thereon, he wept."*

CALLED TO MIND.

To me it seemed strange that Peter forgot,
Until I recalled to my mind -
There is many a time God speaks to me,
And it seems that I too am blind.

It is true he was afraid of those around him,
But there are times when some men I know,
Intimidate me so that my mouth remains shut,
When I could really let grace from me show.

Peter denied, the Lord who he loved,
When the cock crowed the second time around;
Peter was pricked to the heart it is said,
And the Lord reached his heart with no sound.

When I think I am strong, I'm in a dangerous place,
Because that means I'm depending on me.
When I recall to mind, all my Lord has said -
I hope I won't be ashamed Him to see.

"Father God, help me never to be critical of my brother or sister, until I have been in the same kind of pressure as they are in. Amen."

MARK 15

They heard Him speak, they watched His life and saw the things He did.
All but two rejected Him and all the words He said.
They did not want "This Man;" for His death the council cried.
Nothing could them satisfy until they saw that Jesus had died.

Pilate heard false witnesses and heard as well; all the council had to say.
He knew the reason they wanted Him dead was really just for envy.
He knew Jesus innocent of charges laid - yet still his own heart was evil
And he delivered Jesus to be crucified just to content the people.

Barabbas must have had fear within when he heard them call his name.
He probably thought he was about to die when the soldiers for him came.
But when the shackles were taken off and he was told that he was free,
He probably thought, "I wonder who is the Man who would die for me?"

Simon coming into the city would wonder just what was going on.
When the cross was laid on him, he would think, "I wonder what Jesus did wrong?"
After that day he fades from view, as a man of history he is lost -
But millions still remember he was the man, who that day bore Jesus' cross.

Women were there, they viewed the scene, they'd followed Him for years.
Jesus was the One who healed their sick and dried their many tears.
In loyalty they stood right there when He was lifted on the tree -
And never left until it was all done, and His tomb they were able to see.

Joseph, of Arimathea - did not agree with all those counselors.
He had believed on Jesus but up until then he was a secret follower.
Now coming out in the open, to the body of Jesus claim -
He is remembered as one at the cross, who honored Jesus' name.

Some obscure and others well-known, divisions were at the cross.
Some believing on Him were saved, and others eternally lost.
Christ's death divides between the ones who reject, and those who truly believe.

To reject Him means God rejects you, God gives sonship to those who receive.

I've been to the cross by faith in Christ, and God's grace has brought me new life.
It is certainly true when I received Him there, God gave me His own light.
When I read of the cross and those special people who were identified there that day,
I am made to praise God for receiving me, and for placing me in His Way.

"I am reminded today, Father, of the words of Thy servant, Paul when he said, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." He certainly had it right. There is absolutely nothing that would ever recommend me to Thee apart from the fact that I have been to the cross and seen His life given and His blood shed for me. I bow in gratitude and thanksgiving for such a Person as my Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

MARK 15:1. "...and bound Jesus, and carried Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate."

BOUND.

He who binds the planets in their orbits, was bound.

He who says to the waters of the oceans, "This far shalt thou go and no further," was bound.

He who controls the winds and water with a word from His mouth, was bound.

He who blinded men, that they could not see and gave sight to the blind that they could see, was bound.

He who loosed, the tongue of the dumb that they could speak, was bound.

He who spoke forgiveness and healing to the paralyzed, was bound.

He who forgave the sins of the adulterous that they could live in freedom, was bound.

He who released from the restrictions of creation enough fish and bread to feed thousands of people, was bound.

Has there ever been such a word, such a sight, as to see the One who gives deliverance to the captive, sets the captive "free indeed", enables the liberated to walk in newness of life, adds such a dimension to the restrictions of our humanity that we have "abundant life," --- to see Him bound?!! It defies all logic. It is not to be understood. It cannot be that such a thing could happen. It demands an explanation!

"He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so opened He not His mouth."

The Word of God; the sign of the Servant; the Surety for sinners; the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world – the explanation is: God planned it this way. The humiliation; the submission was all part of the evidence that this One is indeed the Chosen One of God.

"Eternal Father, who has planned such a great salvation from before the foundations of the world: I am so thankful that He who liberates captive sinners was willing to submit to the puny cords of frail, mortal men. He didn't laugh at their arrogance and weakness but allowed them to lead Him as if they were in control. He allowed them to deliver Him to such a moral coward as Pilate. He acted and spoke with such dignity and quiet confidence that even the weak governor was convinced of His innocence. And yet He "was bound," "was delivered," "was crucified." O, the depths of mercy and grace that was seen in the Lord Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God; thanks be to the Lord Himself for His willingness to "humble Himself and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

MARK 15:15. "And so Pilate, willing to content the people...."

"THE PEOPLE!"

"They clothed Him with purple", this One from one high,
In mockery scorned Him, they wanted to die
The One who could save them if only they cried;
But No, they refused Him, this One from on high.

“They platted a crown of thorns”, on His head it was pressed,
In mockery they bowed before the One who had blessed
Their children, their sick ones, their lame and oppressed;
But O, they denied Him nor His name would confess.

“They smote Him on the head” with a reed in their hand,
In mockery spit on Him, that vile Roman band.
And bowing their knees with the scorn of the damned;
And then led Him out, that Holiest of men.

“They compel one Simon”, His cross to lay hold,
In mockery led Him like a sheep from the fold,
To the place called Golgotha, “the skull” we are told;
And then crucified Him, Christ Jesus the Lord.

“O God of all righteousness, holiness and truth. I am so overwhelmed with the thought that a cowardly man who wanted to content the people, could pass a judgment so unrighteous and false and yet Thou hast brought such blessing to me from that place. The place where they nailed Him, mocked Him, humiliated Him and rejected Him, became a place of blessing for me. The place where righteous justice was carried out in full and resulted in His death, is the place where life for me really began. I don't know what to say Father, except a thousand “thanks”, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

MARK 15:1-32

"THAT WE MAY SEE AND BELIEVE"

The Gospel as recorded by Mark is a crisp, precise recording of events without a whole lot of explanations. The things he wrote about are to give by the Spirit's direction, an account of incidents without referring to fulfilled prophecies or human interests. For a person who is searching for truth, the comment by those mocking priests and scribes, "that we may see and believe," resonates with the purpose of the Gospel.

When the Lord Jesus stood before Pilate, again He was questioned, and again answered the honest one that needed to be answered. He did not hesitate to identify Himself as to who He truly is. When it comes to fabricated accusations and misleading questions, He remained silent. The wise person who intends to "live godly in Christ Jesus," will follow that same practice. The whole purpose of propagating the Gospel message is that others "may see and believe." Faith does not grow and produce fruit of salvation if one wins an argument and is not willing to pay the cost of reaching out to others with compassion.

Jewish people in those days had learned that if they created a fuss and stirred the whole locality, Pilate usually backed down from such a confrontation. Pilate had developed a weak man's response to difficult situations. He was "willing to content the people." The chief priests who were the religious leaders, the scribes who were the moral leaders, knew this and stirred up the people against the Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps some of those same people a few days earlier were shouting Hosanna's when He came into the city on a donkey. They may have thought He was going to lead them to victory over Roman rule, but were now against Him. Others who had followed Him when He was popular, now were hidden and silent in the face of opposition. This is not uncommon among people all over the world and in every generation. Pity the man who depends on a crowd for his popularity and effectiveness. God has His own way of accomplishing His purposes and it does not depend on a crowd. It depends on obedience to the Word and will of God.

In the accounts given in the four Gospels, there are very few words used to describe the act of the crucifixion of Christ. Movie makers and artists have used their imaginations to fill in what the Spirit of God has deliberately left out. How can a description be made of excruciating pain by mere words or the stroke of a brush? How can the abhorrence of an absolutely sinless Person who bore "the iniquity of us all" ever be described? Holy ground should always be allowed the privacy of being kept holy. Vain attempts to reach one's heart and soul should be abandoned so the Holy Spirit and the Word can bring life.

The facts surrounding "the Act" are that the Lord Jesus was falsely accused and though He was innocent and declared innocent by Pilate, He was condemned to die because of the envy of religious leaders. Even today similar people will seek to stop a work of God if they think it is going to be a threat to their position and comfort. The feet that walked for miles to bring the message of hope and salvation, that went out of the way in order to bless those who were despised, were pierced by the nails that sought to hold Him to the cross. Hands that were held out to receive children, to dispense bread and fish, that touched the leper, that blessed thousands, were pierced - fulfilling scriptures that had been written long before. Eyes that had seen people as sheep without a shepherd and had compassion as they were fixed on people, now saw evidence of

rejection of His own people He had come to bless. Ears that had heard the call of the blind, the words of the penitent, and the persistent calls of the needy, heard the voices of mockery and derision.

When one is acting in conformity to truth and in cooperation with divine justice, this goes beyond the actions of a natural man to the spiritual man. The Lord Jesus did not cry out for help. He made no appeal to God because He was on the cross for the sake of "saving others" so consequently "Himself He cannot save." He was acting under the will of God. "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him." There will be a cost to pay for following the Lord Jesus. Many thousands of believers have paid the ultimate price that others "may see and believe." The Lord was "separate from sinners" it is true. He did not then, nor does He now, lead by compromise or expediency.

Divine authority is based on simple truth, not on half-truths. Any deceit is apt to find one out, and all that has been done by commitment to the truth can be wiped out quickly by a half-lie. A fundamental principle for the furtherance of the Gospel is that others will be saved at our expense. The priests that saw Jesus die would not forget what happened that day. A great number of them believed later when they heard the preaching of the Gospel by the apostles. True, the mockers said, "He saved others, Himself He cannot save." And they challenged Him to come down from the cross that "we may see and believe." Instead, the outcome of the "determinate counsel of God" has brought blessing to mankind.

"Father, I feel like the ground I am walking on here is too holy for me to go any farther. The whole universe seemed to stop when the sun went dark and the ground shook on that day. I have been to the cross by faith, but to speculate on what happened there when Christ died seems to me to be out of bounds. So, I simply worship, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

MARK 15:30. *"Save Thyself, and come down from the cross."*

SAVE THYSELF.

Suppose that man, so morally weak;
Had been strong in courage, and when he knew
That envy was the reason they brought Him there;
He had searched out truth when he heard Jesus speak.
Then as a man of character, he would let that show;
And delivered a judgment that was true and fair?
Suppose He saved Himself from Pilate!

Suppose when standing before the crowd,
He decided to do as He had done before.
He would walk right through them and they couldn't touch
Nor restrain His path, though all would shout aloud;
And He walked down the road to Galilee's shore.
Then went home to heaven, 'cause the price was too much.
Suppose He saved Himself from the crowd!

Suppose when those soldiers so bold and so strong,
Had fallen down flat as they did that night.
Suppose they had worshipped and never had mocked.
Suppose they had realized what they did was wrong;
And stopped, and swallowed, and did what was right.
Suppose they defended Him, and the trial had stopped.
Suppose He saved Himself from the soldiers!

Suppose when He got to Golgotha that day,
He decided He had enough, and stopped the whole scene.
Suppose He never went there as a lamb;
And told them all there, "Go your own way."
Suppose He used power, and wiped the place clean
From such people as us. We all would be damned.
Suppose He saved Himself from the cross!

There wouldn't have been life, for those who were dead.
There wouldn't be peace for those who have fear.
There wouldn't be hope for the hopeless in sin.
There wouldn't be help for the people in need.
There wouldn't be welcome from God to draw near.
There wouldn't be truth for the fallen of men.
Suppose He saved Himself and came down!

There would be no Gospel, no real good news.
There would be no faith in the Savior to place.
There would be no joy, no forgiveness of sin.
There would be no place for the sinner to choose
Life: There would be no day only darkness to face.
There would be no future for all of mankind.
Suppose He had saved Himself and come down!

But the truth of the matter is, He did not come down!
He suffered it all, and in His holiness, brought
To the world at large, hope for peace made by blood -
The blood of His cross! So now all who own,
"It's for me that He stayed on the cross; I am bought
With a price!" They are brought home to God.
Because He did not save Himself and come down!

"Father, I have read this account of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ many times. And still it speaks so loud that all other sounds fade. It really happened; and the results are really true. My mind sometimes wonders what everything would be like if He had changed His mind. Maybe today I have learned something about focusing on the goal. Thanks! In His name, Amen."

MARK 15:33-47

THIS MAN - THE SON OF GOD

Many people appear in the narrative of the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus who are not spoken of in other passages of scripture. The unnamed centurion, who was an eyewitness of all that took place that day, as well as being a participant, gave the final and most important testimony as to who Jesus is. The last view unbelieving humanity saw of the Lord Jesus Christ was when He was on the cross. Three hours had passed when the Lord Jesus was tormented and reproached by religious leaders, passers-by, the thieves who were crucified with Him - the centurion saw and heard all this. Then there was three hours of darkness that was obviously supernatural and made men and women fearful. It was a melancholy scene - and the centurion was right in the middle of it. The silence, the sense of fear and desolation impressed that centurion with a foreboding feeling of the seriousness of what humans had done to God.

There were evidences given at Calvary that reveal what God is like. Nothing impacts a fearful soul quite as much as silence in the face of opposition. No words of retaliation, no threats were made - it was like everything was under a higher control than that of men. This we must remember for our own sake, is God-like. Compassion was shown towards grieving women on the roadside, to a sorrowing mother and a repentant thief. This we must remember is God-like. Under the pressure of suffering, the words spoken were few and purposeful leaving no doubt as to their meaning. This we must remember is God-like. The centurion saw and heard all of this.

At the end of six hours on the cross, "Jesus knew all things were now accomplished." The Lord Jesus was a human being who perfectly joined spiritual and holy things with secular things associated with everyday living. He knew when God was satisfied with the sacrifice He had made, and He now could "give up the ghost." He knew the cost of redemption for lost sinners had been dealt with fully so they could be saved - now He could "dismiss His spirit." His life and death of perfect humanity, and the blessings that have come from His compassionate deity had accomplished the purpose for which the Father had sent Him. Jehovah's Perfect Servant had done exactly what God wanted. Now He "gave up the ghost."

The centurion felt the ground shake beneath His feet. He saw rocks breaking around him and he knew this was no ordinary death of an ordinary man. He saw beyond what to him would have been a common sight, a crucifixion, to the One who was crucified. He saw beyond the envy, the mockery, the humiliation and the pain, to the Person who obviously had power to lay down His own life. The centurion knew the death of the Lord Jesus was way out of the ordinary. He believed that "Truly this Man was the Son of God." This is what we do today when we further the Gospel. We are to present Christ in such a way as to convince people who hear, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Philip, a first century evangelist, did this when he preached "Jesus" to the eunuch from Ethiopia. We are to do that now and God can use us to bring eternal life to those who seek the Lord.

When the veil was torn from the top to the bottom and there was a way opened to the Holiest, the end of a religion took place. This was also the opening of a new and living way into the presence of God. Those who come to God are "accepted in the Beloved." Hopelessness and fear have been removed, and we are able to

"come to God by Him." Now faith in God brings blessing to mankind without the sin-polluted works of men. Now love for God is expressed from the heart without fleshly efforts to earn God's love for us. We are able to have access into the presence of God, and learn from Him what His will for us is that we will act with loving obedience toward Him. The Lord Jesus had no grace nor truth shown toward Him from men. There was no mercy nor justice extended to Him from those in whose hand He held their breath. Peace and righteousness were absent from all the dealings of the religious and political leaders. But none of this stopped the purposes of God. God was totally satisfied with what His Perfect Servant had accomplished. We can confidently tell people of a finished work and a satisfied God.

Joseph of Arimathea asked with urgency for the body of the Lord Jesus, and referred to that body as a whole person. Pilate considered Jesus' body to be only a corpse when he gave Joseph permission to take the body (corpse) of Jesus and bury it. As that stone was rolled to the door of the sepulcher, there was a close to a chapter of religious forms. Now faith is the personal testimony of an individual as to their faith in a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ. God was revealed in a new way through His Gospel of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.

A leader of men said in very few words
A truth that must to the world be told.
He saw for himself all that went on that day -
And declared that Jesus is God.
There was no doubt in his mind and never should be
In mine nor those to whom the Gospel I tell.
Jesus is truly who He said He was -
He alone is the Savior from hell.

When the Lord Jesus dismissed His spirit that day-
He used the keys He had of death and of life.
By deliberately turning the keys of death He had,
He brought to an unknowing humanity - light.
Because He died for us, we live.
He died that we might live through Him.
He gave everything He had to give
That we might be free from the bondage of sin.

If I had been in the temple that day,
I am sure I would have seen great fear.
From top to bottom that veil was rent,
So that "whosoever" can now draw near
To God and know they are welcomed there
Because of the death of His Well-Beloved Son.
We are able to come right to the presence of God,
Because the work of redemption is done.

The stone was rolled to the door by men,
But men could not keep the God-Man in.
He whose body was laid in that tomb,
Was the One who had won victory over sin.
To Him a grave is no barrier to life -
It is a temporary stop on the road to heaven.
We do not need to fear that stopping either,
Graves don't hinder the blessing of the forgiven.

"Father, when it comes to describing all the events and impacts of that place and that day, I am at a loss. I think it should be that way. But the blessings that have come from it - may I never cease to speak of to others and praise Thee for it. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

MARK 16

YE SHALL SEE HIM

How is it possible to describe the penetrating of barriers that had always been thought to be impenetrable? The framework of human experience has created limitations that most people cannot get past. Yet there have been those who have perceived there are things we cannot see that are real. Medicines have been developed that can stop the effect of disease caused by virus and bacteria. Gravity cannot be seen but its effect is well known by everyone. Far-seeing scientists have put huge machines into space, not because they could see gravity, but they could see its effects. Christians who believe Jesus Christ rose from the dead

have left unmistakable impressions on the world because they have faith in One, they have not seen but believe He is risen from the dead. To many the resurrection of Christ is an impossibility because they limit their thinking to what they have experienced. Huge airplanes carrying hundreds of tons of weight, rise on the unseen air and travel around the world carried on something that is real but unseen. When Christ rose from the dead, no one was there to observe the action. But the reality is seen in the evidence of millions of lives of human beings who have committed themselves to living their lives as Christ taught, and dying in the sure hope of being with Him. It was not the testimony of undisturbed grave-clothes that led the women to tell the news that Christ was risen - it was the absence of the body of Christ. Angel-messengers were seen and heard, but it was their message that thrilled the souls of those who came to honor Him.

They heard a message to them that was personal. "He is not here." "He goeth before you." Ye shall see Him." "He said to you." In a few words the fact of Christ's resurrection clarified that after resurrection there is personal knowledge of people and events. There are plans and activities in which to engage. There is interaction between people and God that is significant in carrying out God's will and work. Resurrection is the start of a whole new dimension of living. When those women saw the stone was rolled away, there was fear, sorrow and trembling - and at first silence. But hope was not dead and the whole experience led them to actually see the One in whom they had placed their faith - in His resurrected body. Christ had moved into a new kind of life. So we look forward to that ourselves. Our resurrected life will be real life, but different from anything we have experienced before. "We shall be with Him and like Him. for we shall see Him as He is."

The resurrection of Christ produced great changes in the disciples. Now, after His resurrection, they remembered what He told them before He was crucified. The truth of a kingdom much larger than Israel began to be real to them. There was a change - a transfiguration of sorts, from being "conformed to this world" to being "transformed by the renewing of your mind." What happened to them because of seeing and hearing the resurrected Christ is to be the same thing to us. We are not to be "conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." The whole event of the cross-death of the Savior, and the glory of the resurrection, made life entirely different for them - and for us. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" was Paul's motivation for being successful in life, and it should be the same with me.

The resurrection of Christ gave to the disciples, proof of the teaching He had given them over the years. Spiritual things are more important than physical things. Eternal things are more important than temporal things. The things of God take precedence over the things that men consider important. Holy things are more important than secular things. Love conquers even death itself. There was no question as to who Christ was before He died as far as the disciples were concerned. But after His resurrection they could see beyond their limited vision to the big picture of the kingdom of God. Thomas made it personal when he said, "My Lord and my God." The Lord Jesus Christ made it universal when He charged them with the commission to "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel." His authority is universal. He was faithful as a Servant. He was effective as a Teacher. He was compassionate as a Man. He was victorious as the Savior. We are now privileged to be called to serve Him "with reverence and godly fear."

At "the right hand of God" He sits with all authority as God. His redemptive work has been completed and is permanent. Nothing more can be done - nothing more should even be attempted. That would be an insult to the Lord Jesus Christ who on the cross said, "It is finished!" He is sitting there as the universal Sovereign whose reign will extend to the ends of the world - and we shall see Him in His glory!

"O Holy God, my Father, there is no way I can express what is in my heart right now when I think of the glory of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Everything that is happening in the world today is so insignificant compared to what happened that first day of the week. May this servant never lose sight of the fact that I represent a Living Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

His body had been there, they had seen Him entombed,
For the three days and three nights as He said.
But early on the Lord's Day, His body they sought,
They still thought that Jesus was dead.
True to His word, by the power of God,
He was raised up from the sealed grave,
The scriptures of truth plainly state,
Believing on the risen Lord Jesus we are saved.

The great stone was rolled away,
So those who came could see He was not there.
It wasn't that He vanished mysteriously,

Nor as a spirit, gone into the air.
It was the same Person who came and was seen,
By those women who traveled with Him before.
When the "young man" told them Jesus had risen,
They could see plainly that He was not there.

To Mary Magdalene first and then to the others,
The Lord Jesus came to make Himself known.
It was hard at first to believe it was He,
But all believed when the wounds were shown.
He is alive! The proofs are there,
Hundreds saw Him alive after death.
I believe! There is no question it's true -
I have come to know Him believing by faith.

"O heavenly Father, I do thank Thee Thou hast raised Him from the dead. I rejoice in a living Savior and the promise of His return. All praise to Thee! Amen."

MARK 16:1. *"And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had brought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him."*

AND WHEN.

v.1. "And when."

There is a proper time to bring to God,
The things we have prepared.
These women came according to His word,
To give what they could right there.

v.9. "Now when."

It happened that morning, just as He said;
The stone was rolled away.
Jesus had risen from the dead -
Mary never forgot that day.

v.12. "After that."

He wasn't known at first to two,
Who walked in sadness to their home.
But when they heard and saw Him there,
They knew from the dead He had come.

v.14. "Afterward."

The eleven in sadness, sat to eat,
Their hearts were sore and sad.
But when Jesus appeared right in their midst,
All changed, and they were glad.

v.19. "So then after."

He spoke to them, He made it plain,
A new work they had to do.
So they went forth and preached His word;
That's the same as we do too.

Gracious God, I am thankful I have a living, risen Savior to tell the people about when I preach the Gospel. Don't ever let me overlook or downplay the power of His resurrection. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

MARK 16: 12. *"After that He appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country."*

HE APPEARED.

It strikes me as a great truth that the Lord was willing on many occasions to show Himself to people. They didn't always know that it was Him. When Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden, He would walk with them in the cool of the day. At that time, they knew Him and would have greatly appreciated those times of intimate fellowship.

Abraham was sitting in his tent door one day when the Lord and two others with Him approached this man who was His friend. Abraham recognized Him and immediately set about to do what one does when a friend comes to visit. The Lord did not want to hide from Abraham what was about to take place at Sodom. He told Abraham of the danger there and what was going to happen because of their intimate friendship.

Whether it was as the Guide of His people Israel out of Egypt and across the Red Sea; the Law-Giver on the top of Mt. Sinai; the Captain of the Lord's Host on the other side of Jordan; the Companion of the Faithful in the fiery furnace or the Man of Galilee – it is always a time of great moment when He appears.

The walk and words of the Great Creator dispensing wisdom to the first people left them with an understanding of their role and responsibility in life. The friendship and warnings of the Great Warner, gave Abraham an awareness of his need to be an intercessor for his brethren. The leading and guiding through impossible situations as the Great Leader of His people, gave them the assurance that He was in control and they needed to obey His will or die.

The two walking to Emmaus didn't recognize Him because He was in "another form." He didn't look like the One they were used to. He didn't look like the One who was led as a lamb to the slaughter. He didn't look like the One who taught them from the boat. He appeared as a stranger to them: knowledgeable in the Word of God, but a stranger just the same. He knew much more than they did about the coming Messiah, but He was still a stranger to them. Their hearts were warmed and then burned as He talked with them on the road-trip to Emmaus about all the scriptures had to say about the Christ of God. From the beginning of the Scriptures to the end, this One taught them from each book the key point of the whole Word of God, but they still didn't know Him.

At the table after giving thanks, He took the guest's role and reached for the bread first. The wounds in His hands became visible to them, and to their amazement for the first time they realized – this is the Risen Christ. This is the Lord Jesus Christ who was risen "as He said."

For us today, He is the One who in every situation, every trial; every time of blessing - appears. But far too often we don't realize the fact that He is here: loving, caring, involved, listening, participating in the work we are engaged in. He has not left us alone. He is with us; the Father is with us; the Holy Spirit is in us and we need to be aware of His presence even though He may not be to us as He was the last time.

"How I thank Thee Father; that the Lord Jesus is willing to be so adaptable to all the situations in my life; that I can call on Him with full assurance of His interest in every case. He has revealed Himself to me in many ways and situations that I sometimes didn't even recognize His footsteps until the crisis was past. Help me to live in the assurance of His abiding presence. In His own comforting name, Amen."

MARK 16:19. *"So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God."*

SIGHT AND SOUND.

The sound of a moving stone: large, embedded deeply in place, marks of authority broken, hands of celestial pressure easily moving it, to show the emptiness inside the ground it guarded. Even this stone cries out - "He's Risen!"

The sound of voices: women wondering, How...who? Of indrawn breaths, of gasps of surprise, of joy restrained, of hope rising, of wonder, of fear, of lips open but wordless, of faith not fully expressed. Their hearts are filled - "He's Risen!"

The sound of a man's voice: understood clearly but not the words, comforting but alarming, enlightening but causing fear, giving assurance but not expected, making plain but causing confusion. No question about it - "He's Risen!"

The sound of running feet: their garments flowing behind, their knees shaking until strength of hope comes, their eyes wide in amazement, hands empty now of spices dropped, mouths open but silent; except Mary's - "He's Risen!"

The sight of a new day: sunrise and an empty tomb, sunrise and hope-filled saints, sunrise and a voice from heaven, sunrise and a new eternal day begins, sunrise and the dead One lives, sunrise and the news begins to spread; "He's Risen!"

The sight of a celestial messenger: "Go, tell them what's happened," and he comes from God; "Go, tell the disciples and Peter," says the messenger, and the women run; "The tomb is empty," says the women, and two men run and see for themselves; "He's Risen!"

The sight of the risen Lord: Mary's tear-filled eyes are lifted and see Him; Peter's grief-filled eyes are lifted and He sees Him in private; two on the road lift doubtful eyes and see Him; eleven in a room lift fear-filled eyes and see Him: It is true, "He's Risen!"

The sight of weeping saints: mourning in the dark room, recalling, fearful, night-time in the souls of all, uncertain, hope is gone, the sight of violent death remains in the eye of the mind, a sealed stone, guards: and then, right in their midst - "He's Risen!"

The sight of an angel - the sound of his voice: "Be not afraid!"

The sight of a Stranger - the sound of His voice: "Mary!"

The sight of eleven in fear - the sound of His voice: "Peace be unto you!"

The sight of a dark, lost world - the sound of His voice: "Go ye!"

The sight of the ascending Lord - the sound of His voice: "I will come again!"

"O gracious Father: keep me from ever getting used to the fact that He is risen. I want it to be always as fresh in my mind as it was in theirs the day it happened. That fact even now as I pray, gives my day a jump-start. He is not dead and He keeps His promises. Can this be the day I see Him with these eyes? Amen."