

Lent Devotional

Day 1

Mark 1: 1-20

The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God,

2 as it is written in Isaiah the prophet: “I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way”—

3 “a voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’”

4 And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

5 The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

6 John wore clothing made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.

7 And this was his message: “After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie.

8 I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

A deep and lasting work of the Lord in our lives is always preceded by the call to turn away from sin.

The good news of Jesus Christ becomes good news to me personally only after my waywardness is in full view and I see my offenses clearly.

A person may be able to say “I know I am a sinner”, in a vague, invulnerable way, and all the while remain personally unchanged and unexposed.

But when the the way of the Lord is truly prepared in a human heart it is deeply personal and precise. True confession is coming into agreement with what God says about us and our sin specifically, and carries an often painful honesty that places us directly before the judgement seat of Christ. It is not just “sin”, it is my sin.

God is very exacting in His exposure of our sin and need, and He is perfectly unmuddied in His view. “Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account” (Hebrews 4:13) It is at this point that the “good news” becomes ours personally, and the ONE more powerful steps in. It is in that very place of naked honesty and exposure in the Light, that the baptism of the Holy Spirit will come and make all things new.

Let the Lord search you out and show you your own condition. Receive the forgiveness of Jesus and then you will be positioned for a true outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

That is good news.

Lent Devotional

Day 2

Mark 1: 21-39

Jesus begins his ministry in Capernaum not far from Galilee.

Capernaum does not know it yet but many things are going to be shown to them over the next few years by the Lord. Many will be coming to faith at what will be done with changed lives, healings, the Sermon on the Mount, the feeding of the 5,000 and people forever believing in the Son of God, all around in the area of this city.

The passage starts with: Mar 1:21 *Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught.* (NKJV)

The Lord is always gracious and merciful to start to minister to us with teaching and speaking into our hearts. The true heart longs for the things of God, the fleshly heart longs for the things of the world.

Where is your heart today? Is it receptive to the word of God? Do you wish to seek his face in the Word?

Jesus is the Word that was made flesh. He entered this world to redeem us from the works of the flesh and the devil. We were not just formed out of the dust of the ground forever to return to the ground we are now through faith in Jesus, to have everlasting life with Him!

What is everlasting life? It is a life that is forever expanding, it is changing and extending, it is age long and beyond, that it is forever.

Why would we want to just wallow for what is here on earth with our eyes? We need to seek the face of the one that loves us and listen! The Demons in this passage attempt to interrupt. They attempt to thwart the things of God. They attempt to throw impediments to stop the flow of the Holy Spirit in our lives. To those demons the Lord Jesus in Mar 1:25 *But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!"* As everyone saw this they are amazed! I know I would be, would you?

When you see the things of God do you view them with earthly eyes or spiritual eyes? I know I have to shake myself awake to make sure I view the things of God with my spiritual eyes. I want to have the scales removed like Saul and become a Paul. I want to be like Blind Bartimaeus, and have my sight restored by the Lord Jesus. Let me see you Lord in the land of the living!

Peter's mother-in-law is healed in verses 29-31. Many are healed and demons cast out after Sunset verse 32-34. This Sabbath day the first day of ministry is a whirlwind of activity. The Lord is here on earth, His ministry is in full force and the first day is beyond productive.

He continues into the next day and leaves all the hubbub and retreats to pray. Mar 1:35 *Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.* (NKJV)

There are times we need to just pull away from the world and draw close to God.

Where do you go? When do you do it?

The Lord needs to speak in those quiet moments. No technology, no phones, no speaking, no doing anything, palms up, sitting quiet, listening, expectant to hear from our Lord. Praying is extending to the Father and the Father is extending to His own. He

speaks. You see our prayers rise up before the throne of God and the Lord hears them. The one second prayer of the fighter pilot as captured by C.S. Lewis before he crashes to the ground in his plane, his cry out prayer rises into eternity and goes before the Father. Forever it is in eternity in one second. That is where our prayers go.

Back on earth, the disciples, were looking for him, worried about him but when they found him he told them: Mar 1:38 *But He said to them, "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth."* That is what the Lord does. That is what he is tasking us to do as the body of Christ. As he has come forth, so do we. As he speaks and preaches so do we. What - you say you are not a preacher? That is OK, neither am I, but I have learned that we need to bring Christ in everywhere we go. We bring Him to the workplace, the school, the market, the gas station, the post office, and to the church with us on a Sunday.

Do you bring the Lord Jesus with you wherever you go? Do you wish to speak all that He has done in your life to all that will listen? To everyone you encounter? Tell them about how He is good, just, how He Loves us and cares for us and never forsakes us. Lord, I love you for that.

Thank you Lord for saving us, casting out the demons in our lives, speaking the words of life into our lives and showing us the way to eternal life found only in you.

Thank you Lord!

Lent Devotional

Day 3

Mark 1:40-2:12

In today's reading Jesus is confronted with two very distinct, yet similar, situations that He deals with.

The first one in Mark 1:40-45 seems more private, while the second one in Mark 2:1-12 is very public.

The first one describes a situation that Jesus wants to keep private, while the second one is completed and openly displayed in public.

In the first one, Jesus is approached by a leper. Leprosy was a dreaded disease that rendered the one who had it unclean and untouchable. Those who had leprosy were forbidden to come into the presence of others to avoid defiling others by their touch. This kept them isolated and separated from others in the community. They were truly the outcasts of society. It is probable that this man had not felt the loving comforting touch of another for a long, long time.

Jesus tosses aside all of these social taboos surrounding leprosy and casts aside His own concerns about defiling himself. He reaches out and touches the leper with His loving hand and immediately the leper was made clean and restored. This healing is a reminder that we must refuse to put up with the man-made boundaries or limits that we often times place around the mercy of Jesus. It is my belief that we did this at the beginning of the covid experience, and society is paying for it to this day. Afterwards, Jesus sternly charges the man to not say anything to anyone until he first went to the priests who would issue a certificate in writing to certify that he was indeed healed. This would allow him to rejoin society. He could not contain his excitement and he goes about sharing the good news freely and the word began to spread rapidly.

When have we ever heard that a man who was divinely healed be asked not to testify of that healing? This healing was a sign that Jesus had come into the world to restore all creation to wholeness. It points to a time when there would be no sin, no disease and no death that would keep us separated from the love of God and others through Jesus Christ. There are many who still suffer today and we know all too well the devastating effects of any number of diseases. We hold fast to our faith and hope that nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God, which is ours through Christ Jesus, our Lord. When God looks into our eyes He sees us through the eyes of the loving compassionate grace of Jesus, who is the only intercessor between God and man.

In the second situation, Jesus was now back home and what he had done previously in healing the leper, had followed Him home. The four men who helped the paralytic to be with Jesus were extraordinary men. They have merciful hearts, hearts that are not only concerned for their own wellbeing, but the wellbeing of others. They are reflections of what we should feel when we observe the compassion Christ had for others as was read in the previous section of scripture (Mark 1:40-45).

Just imagine the hardship that they had to go through so that they could bring this paralytic to Jesus. Surely, the four selfless men went home very happy with the thought in mind that they've done something that was worthwhile.

How many of us are like these four selfless men? How many of us will take time to visit the sick or just pick someone up in order to get to church or the hospital? Have there been times when we have avoided or been indifferent to the plight of the sick? Have there been times we have let a golden opportunity slip through our hands by not helping those who are in dire need of our help?

As long as we have breath, it's not too late to reverse this cycle of indifference to the sick, poor and the underprivileged. The greatest reward we get on earth is to help someone who cannot pay us back.

Then we observe these scribes who view the world through a negative lens. The scribes, who I believe could be viewed as today's modern media, ask, how can He forgive sins? Jesus not only says that this paralytic's sins are forgiven, but He rewards the faith of his friends by healing him. No one had seen or heard anything like this before, but they had better get used to it!!!

Heavenly Father, We pray that you will send your healing grace and mercy to all those who are sick and in need of Your presence in our lives. We pray that our attitudes would be inclined to treat those who are oppressed in the same manner You did, with mercy and compassion and healing.

The scribes did just the opposite. They could only see what you did as blasphemous.

May our relationship with You teach us to be drawn to what You are drawn to, in order to minister truth and healing into all situations.

In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen!!!

Lent Devotional

Day 4

Mark 2: 13-28

This portion of scripture is an interesting one as we look at the life of Jesus and who he chooses to surround himself with.

It may seem peculiar to us that he would choose a tax collector Levi, better known as Matthew to follow him. Tax collectors, the same as today, were not looked upon favorably in society. But in Matthew's day it was probably even worse, he was considered to be a betrayer of his people serving the conquering empire instead of sticking up for his Jewish brothers and sisters. We may ask why he would have chosen such a profession. Security in an insecure world is what comes to mind for me and then I ask myself how many times have I chosen the wrong thing because I thought it would bring me security; money, relationships, or position. I can't point a finger at Matthew without pointing one at myself.

Yet, Jesus saw Matthew for who he was, a man who would be willing to leave everything to follow Him.

We can imagine that there were those who thought Jesus was a bit crazy to choose someone like Matthew. He even took it a step further and decided to go to his house for a feast. Didn't he know as a Rabbi these were not the type of people that he was supposed to be associating with, Sinners? Yet, Jesus does something completely unexpected and different than what was normal or expected. Jesus goes on to say that it is the sick who need a doctor not the well. He was called to minister to the unlovely, the unlikely, the sinners those are the ones who needed Him and are still the ones that need Him today.

Aren't you glad that Jesus came to break the mold of all that had been and to do something different? I sure am and the rest of this portion of scripture points that out.

The reference to wineskins refers to the fact that you can put something new into something that is old, if new wine is put into old wineskins it will burst. Equally Jesus states that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. What is Jesus trying to say here? I believe that is that we all need to get used to the idea that Jesus came to do a new thing in the hearts and lives of people. I also believe that He is doing the same thing today.

I give all glory to God the Father that He sent Jesus to do a new thing in my heart and life. I have felt at times like I was the most unlikely of them all but God chose me and He has chosen you to fulfill His mission just like He choose Matthew to be one of his disciples.

Our challenge, is to leave everything that hinders us, whether that is things we find security in or our way of thinking and follow Him.

I pray today that each of you will be able to rely on Him who sees you for who you are and that you will be able to follow Him with your whole heart.

God bless you, my brothers and sisters.

Lent Devotional

Day 5

Mark 3: 1-19

Jesus went into the synagogue again and at this time He looked for a man who had a withered hand. On the Sabbath Jesus wanted to show the Jews and the priests a lesson about Sabbath. Then he identified the man by asking him to come forward. He looked around and asked them if it was lawful to do good on the Sabbath or to give life or to kill? No one answered and He was angry and grieved because of the hardness of their hearts. He told the man to stretch out his hand and his hand was restored.

This is showing us that God's interest is to heal and restore but the human condition looks to the law and would prevent from doing good even on the Sabbath. Are we looking to save or looking to the law and saying that we cannot heal on the Sabbath? God made Sabbath for human beings to rest but humans turned it into law saying you couldn't do good on that day. Restoration, Healing, and Shalom (peace) are the Sabbath. Completeness is Shalom. What do you see God saying to you in this? You can be legalistic and forget the good that God wants you to do even on the Sabbath or follow Jesus' example.

At this time Jesus went with his disciples to the sea and many people from far and wide came to see Him. Jesus has power over those who seek him and touch him, they would be healed. There were many types of ailments that Jesus healed. It only took a touch for them to be healed. Many followed him because of the miracles they had witnessed, You too are intended to touch the Son of God, they are different types of touch, if the multitude touched Him without intention nothing would have happened, but everyone who touched Him was healed. If we come to Jesus with the intention to be healed, we will be. He will heal you by your faith. There were people being possessed by unclean spirits and the spirits recognized Him, they fell down before Him because they knew who He was and cried out the He was the son of God. As Christians we know that God is in us and those same spirits recognize that today. Jesus is with us and is still the King of Kings and Lord of Lords and every spirit must submit to Him.

Jesus called his disciples and gave them power to heal the sick and cast out demons. He knew each one and He knew their character. He knew their imperfections, for example James and John, the sons of thunder. He knows our character and He still calls us to follow Him, He called each of the disciples even Judas who He knew was going to be betray Him. He never gave up on his disciples and He never gives up on each of us in the body of Christ. We are called to follow Him and believe that the same authority He gave His disciples He also gives to us today.

Lent Devotional

Day 6

Mark 3: 20-35

Jesus entered a house to eat with His disciples, and a crowd gathered. Much can be gleaned from His response to the false accusations made by the Scribes (scholars/teachers of the Law); as well as His response to the concerns of His friends/family that occur in this passage.

It appears that the Scribes were trying to figure out what or who was behind Jesus' power to cast out (drive out, eject, expel, send away) demons. Was it that the Scribes saw Him as just a man that they concluded the reason He could cast them out was because He was in league with or possessed by Satan? [vs 22 & 23] It doesn't seem to be an issue as to whether or not Satan (the prince of demons) and demons existed. [see Mark 3:11] As we read through the Gospels, there are numerous occasions of people, who needed deliverance from demonic activity, coming to Jesus; of parents coming on behalf of or even bringing their children. At every encounter, He commanded the demons to leave; and they had to do as He said. What would the Scribes have thought if they knew that He had just ordained/designated/appointed His 12 apostles and was going to "send them out to preach and to have authority to heal and drive out demons" just as He was doing? [3:14] The Greek word for "devil" is "daimonion" defined as a demonic being, by extension a deity--devil, god. Webster further defines it as an evil spirit/being, a fallen angel expelled from heaven for rebellion against God; an idol; a false god.

Jesus exposes their erroneous and illogical conclusion by telling them a parable about the "strong man" [read vs. 23-27] From the Scriptures we now know that through His birth **Jesus** is the one, who entered the "strong man's" house. It was through His death that **He** "tied up" the "strong man". And it was through His resurrection and ascension that **He** plundered and carried off the "strong man's" possessions [1 John 3:8, Hebrews 2:14 & 15, and Col. 2:15]. He rescued each of us, ransomed us, redeemed us!

Next, Jesus addresses the issue of the precarious position in which they put themselves by making the false accusation of vs. 22 He defines the seriousness of what they actually did when they said in vs. 30 that Jesus "has an evil spirit". He calls it "blasphemy" against the Holy Spirit. The definition for the Greek word "blasphemy" is "vilification (especially against God), evil speaking ... defaming. Webster further defines it as "speaking of God or the Holy Spirit reproachfully--treating with scorn or contempt..the act of despising...disdain, hatred". This is the sin that will never be forgiven.

Finally, all in one day in Jesus' life, His mother and brothers come. His response to the reason they came??? vs. 34 & 35, looking at those sitting around Him, He said, "...Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."

He draws us in. Will I, too, sit in His presence? Will I be ready to say "yes" to whatever He directs me to do? Will I join Him in setting people free from the realm of darkness and its effects on their lives? Will I welcome Holy Spirit to live and move in me and through me as He did in Jesus? He compels me to say "**YES**"; I have to say "**YES**"! Will you?

The Parable of the Sower

The parable of the Sower is well known. It's a wonderful teaching that paints a picture in our minds of the difficulties faced by those that hear God's Word. The Sower sows the same seed but the soil that receives the seed determines the outcome of its effectiveness. And so, it is with the Word of God. It can be stolen, choked out, withered, and made unfruitful in our lives or it can take root and produce a crop many times greater than the seed that was originally sown. It's all dependent on the heart of the listener that receives the Word. Have you ever wondered why some people hear the Word and prosper yet others, the majority in fact, never seem to be changed. The Word is the same, the heart receiving that word is not.

Let's take a quick look at the heart of the listener.

The first is the heart that is hard, like the road, and when the seed is sown there, it is quickly stolen by the birds. Jesus tells us this is the work of satan who comes to steal the Truth of God's Word before it has a chance to start growing.

The second is the heart of someone with a shallow commitment to the Word, like rocky soil. It has both good soil to develop the seed and rocky soil that hinders growth. The seed that is sown there cannot develop the deep roots necessary to sustain its life. When trials and afflictions come, that person falls away because they were never established.

The third is the one who is choked out by the cares and concerns of the world. They have a divided heart. The worries of life and the desires for the things of this world eventually choke out the life that was meant to grow there. The soil of that heart was good, but they allowed other things to grow which eventually destroyed the life of God in their heart. The fourth is the heart with good soil which yields a crop many times larger than the seed that was sown into it.

Now, Jesus makes an important statement in verse 10 when His followers ask Him to explain the parable to them. He says to them "You have been given the mystery of the kingdom of God but those on the outside get everything in parables". I draw two conclusions from this statement.

First, we have been given the privilege to have the Holy Spirit quicken our minds to understand His Word. But do not be fooled, this parable is for the believer. You and I have got to make certain that our hearts are ready to receive His Word! Be careful that your heart does not become hardened to His Word. Make sure that you are not dealing loosely with the things of God, not allowing it to search you to the deepest places of your heart. And keep the things of this world at a distance so that you won't be led astray by the cares and concerns of this world or by the desires of your heart.

Second, we have been given a great responsibility both to share God's word and to work the soil of men's hearts. The Sower in this parable is the one that sows the Word, he is the farmer. Have you ever shared God's Word? Then you are the Sower. And like any good farmer would do, work the soil as you sow the seed of the Word of God. You have been given discernment and insight into people's lives. So, when you sow the Word, prepare the soil as you go. Perhaps you can pray as you sow. Or meet a physical need as you minister the Word. Let the Spirit be your guide as you prepare the soil of your heart and the heart of those that you seek to reach with God's Word.

Lent Devotional

Day 8

Mark 4: 21-34

Go, with your lamp lifted high, and plant seeds!

Jesus is the Word (John 1:1), and He is the light of the world (John 9:5). Jesus Christ is the lamp He Himself speaks about in the first parable of this jam-packed 14 verses. The lamp is Jesus, the Word of God, and His Holy Spirit living in us and changing our lives. Let us not hide it “under a basket or under a bed” but instead, “set it on a lampstand.” Some might say, “How do I hold my lamp up and let my light shine? I’m a shy person, and I don’t feel bold enough to go around talking about my faith all the time.” That’s not exactly what it means to keep your lamp from being hidden. It’s a personal thing. The light of Christ is within you, and it can shine with or without bold words. In verse 24, it talks about having ears to hear – this means listening to what the Lord is telling you through His Spirit, paying attention, and then acting upon what you hear. You may be called to speak bold words at times, or simply refrain from gossip, or respond to a troubled person with love and encouragement. The possibilities are endless. When we listen and take heed, even more will be measured out to us! (v. 24)

In the following verses (26-29), Jesus teaches the parable of the growing seed. When we keep our lamp from being hidden, we end up planting seeds, and we will likely not know how they will grow (v. 27). Many times, we question if those seeds were even planted or received. But it is not our job to grow them. The Lord our God is the gardener (or vinedresser in John 15:1). Our job is to abide in Him, and then we will plant seeds (without even knowing it sometimes). He will water them, nurture them, and grow them.

Next, the parable of the mustard seed (vv. 31-32) shows us that even the tiniest of seeds, when planted, can grow into one of the largest plants/trees, “greater than all herbs” and the “birds of the air may nest under its shade.” That’s right, the smallest seed can yield the most amazing plant that gives shade (refuge, protection) to many. We all know of people like this – mighty men and women of God, all with different qualities. Some speak a lot, some don’t, but they are providing encouragement and discipleship because the tiny seed someone planted has grown into something incredible. They go forth and plant more seeds because they are hearing and heeding what God shows them, and they receive more to share because of it. All of this they are doing with the beautiful and unique personalities given them by their Creator.

Finally, one of the things most impressed upon me is in verses 33 to 34. Jesus taught using parables (short allegorical stories designed to illustrate a truth, principle, or moral lesson). It appears that many in the crowds did not understand, even the disciples at times – but “when they were alone, He explained all things to His disciples.” Jesus is still doing this today through His Holy Spirit within us. Not only does He open up the meaning of the parables He taught as we read His Word, but He gives us new “parables” today – powerful stories or examples that we ourselves find or hear through others, such as our own pastors and leaders. I think of Pastor Flick’s parable of the spouse’s argument (in his sermon from 1/22/23): When a church is not in unity in the love and worship of Christ and love of one another, it is like walking into a house where the husband and wife just had an argument – we were invited, but it’s uncomfortable and we know that something is not quite right.

Hillary also shared a parable (at the beginning of each service on 1/29/23): A girl was held against her will in chains. Her captor (enemy) had filled her with such fear that when she found a key and unlocked her chains, she became so afraid that she locked herself back up rather than trying to flee. This demonstrates how we can allow fear (from the enemy) to overtake us at times and sabotage our freedom. These stories will remain in my memory forever because they cause us to personally connect with the truth. Jesus, of course, knows that is our nature and how we can learn and remember what He wants to show us. He is still using parables today.

Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. But He said to them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" Mark 4:39,40.

Storm Faith

Storm faith, is a type of faith, that we should desire to have.

Difficult, trying, even fearful life circumstances can rock ones soul. Storm faith enables one to navigate the turbulent waters of life. It is certain that most every person of faith will experience the wind and waves rise against them at some point. How does one gain "storm faith?"

One way is to have a gift of faith.

1 Corinthians 12:9 tells us that some people have a manifestation or gift of faith. These folks through a gracious gift of God seem to endure and stand more easily than most and obtain blessing by their faith for others and themselves, they can stand firm in storms that others sink under. But not all have that gift. What about us others folks without this "gift?"

Hearing the Word produces faith.

Romans 10:17 says that ..."faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Being taught, reading and studying the Word of God, which creates faith, can go a long way to increase our faith. This can enable us to stand the storms that we may travel through as we hold fast to what we have learned and find it is true. It stabilizes our soul. But there is yet another way.

Going through a Storm....with Jesus

Don't want to burst any bubbles here, BUT, this is the way most people develop "storm faith"..... the same way Jesus developed it in His disciples. {Please read the whole account in Mark 4: 35-41.

Like the apostles, most of us learn only by experience. Please note three things that these disciples experienced.

#1. They were following Jesus. Doing what He asked. Jesus said "lets cross over" and they do as He says.....they get in the boat. The only way to get "storm faith" is to make sure Jesus is in your boat. Is Jesus in YOUR boat? He is if you have been listening to what He asks.

#2. Jesus was asleep in the storm. The storm that had them so afraid.....Jesus was calmly sleeping through. Why was Jesus able to sleep in this storm? Good question! BECAUSE HIS FATHER WASN'T ...

Behold, He who keeps Israel Shall neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is your keeper; Psalm 121:4,5a

Jesus knew His Father would keep Him safe..... His Father is YOUR Father.

"I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.' [John 20:17]

Jesus was a living illustration of "storm faith" to His disciples. To know and have absolute confidences in this fact.....is what "storm faith" is.

Are you in a storm??. Right now, this minute.....know this, stand on this, even say this outloud an proclaim it....God is MY FATHER.....Just like Jesus.....I can have peace in this storm. Then trust Jesus to say..."peace be still" You'll find you have faith in the next storm.

Are you desperate for Jesus?

This passage begins with Jairus coming to Jesus on behalf of his dying daughter and rather quickly we are thrown into the story of the woman with the issue of blood.

As I was reading and rereading this passage one word kept coming to the forefront of my mind, Desperation!

Jairus was desperate for Jesus to save his daughter.

The woman was desperate to be healed of this thing that has completely ruined her life.

They were desperate for God to move.

Have you ever been desperate for God to move? Desperate for Him to answer the prayer that you have been praying for so long?

There is a difference between this woman and the rest of the people in the crowd. A difference that Jesus himself took notice of. Why did His power go out to her when she wasn't the only one touching Him? Even the disciples questioned Jesus on this one. "How can you possibly be asking who touched you, look at the crowd pressing in against you."

I think it was because she was desperate for a move of God in her life. God saw her, He saw her heart. While everyone else was satisfied with being in proximity to Him, this woman was desperate for Him. She reached out in faith and Jesus did just what Jesus says He will do, He responded.

There have been many times in my life that I have needed a move of God. But as I thought on this passage, I found myself thinking on a time when I felt more desperate than I had ever felt in my life, the moment I was told that my husband had passed. I was so desperate for God to move, for Him to do something, for Him to change what was happening. I pleaded with God to bring him back, to raise him up. God didn't bring my husband back but He did do what He has promised to do so many times in His Word, what He did for the woman in this account. He came close. He saw me in my desperation and He responded to it.

Our desperation is important to Him. And when we turn to Him in our desperation, when we reach for the hem of His garment, He is able to do a work far greater than we could ever expect.

I am reminded of Romans 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

I was desperate for God to bring my husband back. But as I continually reached out for the hem of His garment, many times with the help of those around me, God began to show me that what I was really desperate for was Him. For His presence. And that is something that can't ever be taken away from me.

May the things that you are desperate for be the very things that drive you to reach out for Jesus. May they drive you to be desperate for Him, for His presence.

And as you reach for Him, He will be faithful to respond and do for you what He did for this woman.

And what He is doing for me.

Mark 5:34 "Your faith has healed you, Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."

35 While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. “Your daughter is dead,” they said. “Why bother the teacher anymore?” 36 Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.” 37 He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. 38 When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. 39 He went in and said to them, “Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.” 40 But they laughed at him. After he put them all out, he took the child’s father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. 41 He took her by the hand and said to her, “Talitha koum!” (which means “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”). 42 Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. 43 He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

In moments of extreme distress and uncertainty we are more susceptible to the damaging impact of voices all around us. Some of the loudest voices are those that bombard us with reason and cause us to give way to fear. As Jairus was waiting upon Jesus to heal his daughter, the news is delivered that she is dead, as well as the suggestion to no longer “bother the teacher”. It’s in those moments, when our hearts are jarred by pain or grief, that Jesus is deeply moved to intervene. He responds quickly to Jairus with a clear directive; “Don’t be afraid; just believe”. Jesus covers Jairus in his vulnerability and weakness by clearing away the faith draining voices around them, and calls him to simply trust.

“and He did not let anyone follow him”..

When we come to Jesus with our deepest troubles, we are going with the flow of His perfect will for us. When we “bother” Him with our need we stand in our true identity as dependents. Two different times in this account we see Jesus clear out the chaos and clamor of competing voices. He dismisses the unspun emotions and upheaval, tenderly and fiercely covering the grieving parents, and raises the the little girl to life.

“They were completely astonished”.

In every trial we face we can be assured that Jesus will be faithful to us and we can lock eyes with Him as He clears away the doubt and fear assaulting our hearts. Every voice silenced, except that of Jesus.

Lent Devotional

Day 12

Mark 6:7-29

And the Lord Jesus called those who are his to himself. [Mar 6:7](#) *And He called the twelve to Himself, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them power over unclean spirits.*

The Lord calls you to that wish to listen and to follow him as a pupil, as a student, as a disciple. The Lord provided his own to have power. He will provide the power to overcome over any unclean spirits. The power to live out this life and follow Him!

We live here on earth right now, where as it is says in Gospel of John, “the ruler of this world”, a ruler is here who has been provided some level of authority, of influence, but that ruler thinks very highly of himself. He believes he is outside the purview of God, and of Jesus Christ. He then in turn has his minions that follow him and they are unclean spirits. The other unclean spirits involve our fleshly carnality. We wallow in in it. It is why the Lord Jesus came to this earth to deliver us from our sins and the works of the devil. The Lord will continue to explain to the disciples about what to do at each household, what to say, what not to do, when to go.

He speaks of Sodom and Gomorrah. You see the Lord Jesus was there that day, speaking with Abraham, looking down on the plain, he was with his two angels in spirit as they saw the level of fleshly carnality that was bubbling as an inferno in that city.

Apostle Paul describes this level of sinful passions as whole in Romans Chapter 1 right at the end of that chapter. [Rom 1:32](#) *who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.* He says “not only do the same” they not only copy and do they are complicit, they incite, they are aware. They do not repent themselves; they are accessories to the sin. Further he says: “but also approve of those who practice them” so if we allow in sin, if see sin and do nothing about it, it will bring into captivity or slavery.

Our spiritual house is just like in Joshua. “*But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.*” Josh 24:15b.

[Mar 6:14](#) *Now King Herod heard of Him* – he had heard of him by the mouths of men.

Envy is a hard thing. Commandment number 10 is about the things we covet. When you covet it is a conceptualized mental sin that starts to come out in the physical. Herod was coveting the fame and adoration. He was also an addict. Power, authority, wealth, fame, renown, position all from this world, these are many of the same sinful qualities that were inherent in Sodom.

Christ came to set the captives free! He came to deliver us from the works of the devil!

Today if you do not know the Lord Jesus, you can ask him, you can bring him into your life and home! He will deliver out the “unclean spirits” and bring you out of the captivity of sin and death. In him is Life and we can live it out abundantly, free, able to see the Lord in our lives, world, families, church, and with all that we love, we love others, we love the undeserving, we love those who do not know they are in need of love. We just do. We do because He is. He has come. He is Jesus. He is the Christ. He is our savior. He is our Shepard. He is the Son of God. He is our Lord and King.

Thank you Lord!

Read Mark 6:30-44

Today's reading is filled with valuable lessons, for the apostles, for the people who were followers and for us.

1) The apostles were around Jesus and telling Him all that THEY had accomplished and taught. There is a sense of pride in this reporting. There would also be the chance that because of these accomplishments and teachings, there would be people who would desire to be near them and with them.

Do you desire to be near those who do the works of the Christ? Do you desire sound teaching from His Word?

2) Sensing this, Jesus sets up the scene that will follow by suggesting that the group "come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest for a while." This certainly was a good idea to the apostles for they had been dealing with the public for awhile and probably needed a break. So they hop in a boat and go to a secluded place by themselves. Do those who teach and preach sometimes seek a place of escape in order to re-energize the promptings of the Holy Spirit in our lives? Many become burnt out because they can't seem to discern when the Spirit is moving them to take a break. There have been times when I have suffered from this.

3) Many folks saw them leaving for this place of escape and pursued them on foot in order to be near them. After all, the works they had performed would lead those who had interest to pursue them and to witness and learn from their teachings and accomplishments. Do we pursue the teaching of the Christ? Do we set aside time to learn from Him or from someone who rightly divides His Word?

4) So when Jesus gets there, He sees the crowd that had gathered. He feels "compassion" for this gathering. Strong's concordance tells us that "compassion" is translated from *σπλαγχνίζομαι*, which means to have the bowels yearn, that is, (figuratively) feel sympathy, to pity: - have (be moved with) compassion. Jesus is moved by what he observes. He describes the crowd as being "like sheep without a shepherd." He then begins to teach them. Teachers and ministers, are you moved inside to bring truth to the people? Do you have a compassion for those who struggle to get into His Word? Jesus did.

5) As it got later, the apostles ask Jesus to send the people away so that they can get something to eat. The apostles themselves were probably getting hungry and they knew that they had food enough for themselves, but not for the crowd. The apostles initial response was to send the crowd away because it would be too expensive to feed them all. They had not yet learned that in Christ, all things are possible. Jesus astonishes them with His response, "You give them something to eat." Do we get overwhelmed or intimidated by what seems to be an impossible situation? Do we, like the apostles only see things through our own eyes without ever considering to see the situation through the eyes of Christ?

6) Jesus commands the group to sit in orderly groups of 50-100. Jesus is positioning them to be fed. I wonder if this group, as they were being positioned to be fed, were expecting anything from the five loaves and two fish that the disciples had? They had already been fed spiritually, would they now be filled physically? When we walk into the church or into a study, do you position yourself with the expectation that you will hear from God? Do you position yourself with the expectation to be fed? When we pray (and this is something I really struggle with), do we have the faith to expect an answer to our prayers?

7) So Jesus blesses the food that they do have and begins to feed the crowd of 5000 men who had gathered (not counting women and children). They all ate and were satisfied. They gathered more leftovers than the amount of food that they had when they started. In all of this we see Jesus fighting against the apostles resistance. Their excuses of being too tired, the food being too expensive were but excuses. Jesus is asking us to lay aside our objections and let Him be the Shepherd of our lives. He not provides for us what we need, but He asks us to provide for others who are in need. He is asking us to have the compassion that moves us to action. He is asking us to take what may seem insignificant and turn it into something miraculous.

Heavenly Father, first of all, break down our resistance. Help us to see the needs in others through your eyes rather than our own. Give the faith we need to do Your will, and not our own. Help us to position ourselves so that these works will made manifest in our own lives. May Your blessing overflow so that there are leftovers of blessing to share with others. In Jesus' Name we pray.

In this passage we find Jesus and the disciples after the Feeding of the Five Thousand. Jesus dismisses the crowd and sends the disciples across the lake in the boat while he stays behind and prays. In the middle of the night the disciples are struggling to get the boat across the lake because of a strong wind. It says that Jesus sees them struggling and starts to walk across the lake, the passage mentions that Jesus is going to pass them by. Jesus sees their struggle and yet He is going to pass them by? Why would Jesus do that? It is not until the disciples call out to him that He states to them to not be afraid and He gets into the boat. The wind dies down immediately and they are amazed and marveled. The passage also mentions that they hadn't grasped the miracle of the Feeding of the Five Thousand either.

Here are a group of men in close contact with Jesus but they don't fully understand who He is or what He is doing.

The passage goes onto to say that when they get to the other side of the lake immediately people know who Jesus is and are bringing the sick to Him to heal. An interesting part of this passage mentions that they know if they but touch the hem of his garment they will be healed. In the chapter before is where we see the woman with the issue of blood has been healed. The news has gotten out that it only takes a touch of his garment for someone to be healed. Everyone who touched Him was made well.

These two accounts may not seem like they connect but if we look closely we can see that it is when we call out to Jesus that is when He reassures us He is there and He gets into our boats and calms our storms.

There does not need to be complete understanding of His purposes or plans only faith to cry out and know that He is the answer. The same is true when in faith we reach out to touch Him for healing in our lives or in the lives of those we love. It was simple faith that healed the woman with the issue of blood, it was simple faith the healed those who touched Him, and it is simple faith that causes us to cry out in the middle of our storms.

Today, all that Jesus is asking of us is to take steps of simple faith and He will be there to answers our cry and to bring us the healing we so desperately need whether that is physically, emotionally, or spiritually.

The Jesus we find in this passage is the same Jesus who desires to meet us at our point of need today.

Simply call out or reach out to Him and He will be there.

Lent Devotional

Day 15

Mark 7:1-23

A group of Pharisees came from Jerusalem and saw Jesus' disciples eating bread with unclean hands. This became a question about being unclean and they asked why the disciples didn't follow the traditions of the elders not the commandments of God? This was about tradition in their eyes.

Jesus answered with a prophecy from Isaiah that stated why were they just honoring God by what they said and not with their hearts and why were they turning traditions of men into commandments. Jesus addressed them regarding why they rejected the commandments of God but instead kept the traditions of men. He addressed via the commandment of obeying your parents that they were giving a loophole to get out of this commandment via tradition. Tradition in other words became more important than the commandments of God.

Jesus then addressed the multitude saying that it wasn't about what entered a person that made him unclean but it is what is in a person's heart. He then goes on to explain to His disciples that it isn't about what we eat that makes us unclean but again it is what is in the heart that comes out of a person that makes them unrighteous.

When sin is in the heart it will come out in the actions of the person. The sense nowadays is not about uncleanness but it was what Jesus is addressing which is a matter of the heart. Don't misunderstand, hygiene is important, we must keep cleaning our hands in the era of Covid. But Jesus is addressing the traditions of man, as they were asking why the disciples were not washing their hands as the thought was that unclean hands would make the heart unclean.

How often has the tradition of the church hurt people?

Tradition has its place but when it costs a person his salvation is that right?

As followers of Christ, we must follow the word of God and not the traditions of man. We must follow the word of God and not dilute it by following the traditions. Some traditions are good and have their place but they should never be above the word of God.

Let us examine what we choose to follow, may the word of God be what is in our hearts.

Lent Devotional

Day 16

Mark 7:24-37

Mark 7:24-37 ... In this passage, two separate individuals personally experience Jesus' power. The first is a woman, whose young/little daughter was possessed by an "unclean spirit" (Greek word "demonic"); the second is a man, who was deaf and had an "impediment in his speech" (Greek word "hardly talking"). The woman comes on her own and by herself; the man is brought by two or more people (vs 32).

The woman "begged" Jesus to drive the demon out of her little girl. Did a friend tell her that Jesus was able to free people from demons? Had she heard news reports of Him doing so? Did she encounter obstacles as she made her way to Jesus and fell at His feet? (vs 25) Would Jesus' response to her plea be a new obstacle? (vs 27)

Could there have been a family in the house, children eating at a table, pet dog(s) (perhaps a puppy?) under the table waiting for food to drop on the floor? Could this be part of the reason Jesus chose to respond to her in this way? Did the woman see the kindness in Jesus' eyes while He was saying these words? He didn't tell her to leave; He didn't send her away or ignore her request. When He finished speaking, she said, "**Yes**, Lord, yet/**but**..." That word "Yes" in the Greek was a strong affirmation--"even so!" Nothing could stop her from placing her complete trust in Jesus to do as she asked. Jesus responds, "for such a reply" "for saying this" (vs 29). The word "saying" goes beyond just the words spoken and brings in the thoughts and reasoning. He had seen her mind working to find a way around what He had just told her; He saw her heart and her resolve that only He could do this. Her little daughter was freed from the demon that had no choice but to do as Jesus (silently?) commanded. Light had come into the darkness and the darkness had to flee!

Next, did the man know why those who brought him to Jesus were doing so? Did he know that it was possible for Jesus to open his ears and loosen his tongue? Was he watching Jesus' expressions when they were making their request? He couldn't hear anything being said, but he could see. Did he see Jesus' compassion as He looked at him? Did he see Jesus' authority and power? Was his heart pounding as Jesus took him away from the crowd? Did he stare into Jesus' face as Jesus put His fingers into his ears and spit and touched his tongue? Suddenly he could hear! Suddenly he could speak! Those who watched were overwhelmed with amazement that Jesus could and would heal. (vs 37)

Whether we come to Jesus on behalf of another, or we actually bring someone in need to Him, Jesus will always respond with kindness, gentleness, authority and power...perhaps surprising us with what He says or does. When we come into His presence with our plea/request, will we lock eyes with Him, not even mentioning our plan for how He could/should/might answer. Will we **trust** and **watch Him with confidence** as He commands demons to go [and they must!]; as He heals, recreates and restores.

Who do you know who needs to be brought to Jesus for healing or restoration? What request will you bring for one who needs to be set free from the realm and spirits of darkness?

Just as Jesus did 2000 years ago when He was physically in this world, He will do today from His throne in Heaven and through His Church on earth!

Ask, bring, be overwhelmed with amazement!

Four Thousand Fed

The disciples are again, for the second time in Mark's gospel, faced with the task of feeding an overwhelmingly large group of people with almost no provisions on hand. And while it might be our tendency to judge the disciples for their lack of faith or for their short memory we might do well to search our own hearts first.

Have we ever faced the same or similar trial in our lives and when round two comes we immediately fall back into a position of unbelief? History has a way of repeating itself. Perhaps it's "the sin that so easily besets you" that catches you off guard even though you should have seen it coming or a place where God met your need powerfully but now you find your bank account empty, and the need is again staring you in the face. Whatever the giant in your life, you can be assured that the devil will do his best to revisit you with the same affliction, if for no other reason than to challenge your belief that God is faithful. As if to raise the question in your mind "Did God really (fill in the blank)". Be prepared for the devil to challenge the ground that you have gained in your walk with the Lord. Guard your heart and mind with the promises of His Word and remind yourself of the things He has done for you.

The story moves on as Jesus and the disciples head out after feeding the four thousand. To my great surprise the disciples only took one loaf of bread with them! The disciples had collected seven baskets full of leftovers after Jesus performed this miracle and sent the crowd away. I can't help but wonder what they did with it? The passage doesn't specifically say, but I'm picturing the disciples sailing away in the boat with Jesus and the seven baskets left to spoil on the shore behind them as they listen to Jesus warn them about the leaven of the Pharisee's. And they get stuck talking about their lack of bread!

Two thoughts.

First, don't forget to take what God provides with you as you journey through life. I'm not suggesting that we depend on yesterday's provisions for tomorrow's trials. But I am suggesting that when God works a miracle there is always an abundance leftover for us. It's there to provide for our needs as well.

Second, beware that the leaven of the Pharisee's doesn't spoil the provision of God in your life. What is the leaven of the Pharisee's? Unbelief. They came out to argue with Jesus and test Him, asking for a sign. The Pharisees wanted Jesus to give them a sign from heaven. They needed proof because they didn't believe He was the messiah. Unbelief is dangerous. It will destroy the life of God in us and it only takes a little to work its way through our whole life.

As I write these thoughts, RCN is in a time of intense prayer seeking God. Many prayers are being lifted to the Lord asking for healing. Unbelief will undercut our prayers. To give an analogy; our prayers are like balloons floating up toward God and unbelief would be the pins we use to pop the balloons as we let them go. It's time for us to have the faith of a Child and believe that God is who He says he is!

Exodus 15: "If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the Lord your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians, for I, the Lord am your Healer".

See Clearly and Align with God

God wants us to see clearly, and He will not give up on us if we are seeking Him to lead us and heal our sight! In Mark 8:22-26, we read the story of a blind man healed by Jesus. We note that it was a very personal experience between Jesus and the man:

- He took the man by the hand and led him out of the town. We can imagine that the man may have been at least a little apprehensive to be taken out of the town by the hand of someone he could not see (in the physical) – he trusted and desired to be healed. Jesus will lead us to new and different places and situations, different ways of thinking - in fact, a whole new life (2 Cor. 5:17) - if we trust Him and allow Him to lead us (Prov 3:5-6).

- Jesus spat on the man's eyes. The way Jesus chose to heal the man's blindness was unique, different from other healings. He heals us in very personal ways. Typically, "healing" is defined as "make whole or sound, restore." He wants to heal us physically, emotionally, spiritually, and even intellectually. God will show us things, answer prayers, convict us, and lead us in ways that are personal, unique, and often unexpected.

- He asked the man if he saw anything. Do you ever hear Jesus asking you, "Do you see what is right in front of you (this opportunity)?" or "Do you see what I have done here?" or "Do you see the need I want you to address?" or simply, "What do you see?" He will ask us these things because, while His patience and grace abound during the process, He desires that we see clearly.

During his healing, the man did not see clearly at first, reporting, "I see men like trees, walking." (v. 24) So, Jesus put His hands on his eyes again and he was completely healed. It was not in Jesus' character to leave the man with a partial healing, but to fully restore his sight. That is His desire for all of us! The more I get to know Jesus, the less I am satisfied with partial healing – I want to fully see what God wants to show me!

In verse 26, Jesus sends the man away telling him, "Neither go into the town or tell anyone in the town." Why does He tell this man (and some others after healing them) not to tell anyone, while at different times instructs people to do the opposite? In Mark 5:19, Jesus told the man He delivered from demons to go home and tell his friends everything the Lord had done for him. Since we know that He was in complete alignment with the Father, we can surmise that He was keeping the will of God in mind. God's timing is perfect in how Jesus fulfilled prophesy and accomplished the Father's plan. We also know that His ways and thoughts are not our ways and thoughts – His are much higher! (Isaiah 55:8-9). We may not always understand, but we can ask Him for discernment - to see clearly what He wants to show us.

It is possible for us to clearly see one moment, and the next moment forget what we just saw or learned from Jesus. This is depicted in verses 27 to 33. Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do men say that I am?" and then "Who do YOU say that I am?" Men/others around them had different ideas about who Jesus is, but Peter answered, "You are the Christ (Messiah, Anointed One)." Peter got it right! After all, he spent every day with Jesus, watching Him and learning from Him. He answered the most important question of his life (and of ours), seeming to know exactly who Jesus is. But then (vv. 31-32) Jesus begins to teach them about how He will be rejected, suffer and be killed – and Peter rebukes Jesus! Imagine arguing with Jesus to His face... telling Him that He must be wrong! It seems irreverent, but I feel Peter's heart at that moment – he did not want to hear that such things would happen to his Lord.

Jesus tells Peter, "Get behind me, Satan!..." What a blow to Peter – but Jesus needed to wake him up. How could he proclaim that Jesus is the Messiah and then immediately disbelieve Him? We do this, too! There are things that the Lord tells us and shows us that we don't always want to believe. Jesus states how Satan was trying to get ahold of Peter's thinking when He adds, "...For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men." The disciples were immersed in Jewish teachings and traditions before encountering Jesus, so they still had ideas that the Messiah would be a king with political and governmental authority – in a physical way – overthrowing Roman rule. That was not God's plan. Are we stuck in our own thinking and understanding at times so that we cannot see clearly that God wants to do something new and different? (Isaiah 43:18-19)

Prayer for today:

Help me, Lord to see you clearly – what you want to do in me, what you want to show me, and where you want to lead me. Then help me to trust you with my whole heart and lean not on my own understanding and allow you to direct my path. I don't want to let my own thoughts or the enemy of my soul come in and obscure what you are showing me. I want to be a doer of the Word (James 1:23-25) and be aligned as much as possible with your will and perfect timing. Thank you for your promise to transform me by the renewing of my mind.

Trying To Find A Parking Place on The Mountain?

Peter, James and John had a miraculous vision and experience with Jesus. They saw Moses, Elijah and also Jesus, in His glory.

They saw Moses, the one used to deliver and found the nation, the one given the sacred Law and Elijah the representative of the ministry of the prophets, there could not be a more exiting, blessed spiritual experience, for a Jew than this.

Moses was the very heart of the Jewish national and religious life. Elijah was one, if not the most revered prophet by, the Jewish people. Every devout Jew knew of the prophet Elijah and there was an expectation for him to come before the “great day of the Lord” [Mat. 17:10, Mal. 4:5,6] This eyewitness vision, of these two men, would have caused these three disciples to expect astounding prophecies and deliverance for the nation to be at hand. Who wouldn't want to have them stay and to be with them?

We may have exciting, enlightening, faith increasing experiences. We can have visions, dreams, revelations, healings,.... times we know we are in the presence of God. We, like Peter would love to park on the mountain top. Would like to always be in a place like that. But these disciples found out the Lord does not want us to park in the astounding experience, He brought them there to teach them something.

Peter refers to this event as cementing in their hearts and essential fact for us all....listen:

“For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; 2 Peter 1:17-19

God gave them a revelation an “mountain top” experience.....and why?.....To teach them the HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO LISTEN CAREFULLY AND SERIOUSLY TO TH WORDS OF CHRIST.

Whatever experiences God leads us into.....when they are over.... and we are down from the mountainremember.... we were brought there to be encouraged to keep Jesus and His words central in our lives.....Remember the lessons of the mountain top!

Jesus encounters a father with a boy who has a mute spirit since childhood that the disciples could not cast out and says, "Bring him to me." In the immediate presence of Jesus the spirit is agitated and begins to manifest inside the boy. The man has been dealing with this so long that his faith seems more than tested, even shaken as he says to Jesus "If You can do anything....." In that moment it's as if Jesus was thinking: (if I can do anything???). Jesus responds to the mans "If You" with His own "If you"; "If you can believe!"

Then comes the promise: "All things are possible to him who believes." In hearing the promise of God from Jesus the man cries out to God in desperation and faith "I believe, help my unbelief." As the account goes, the boy is healed of the mute spirit and raised up. All things are possible.....

There are many lessons to be learned from this account:

1. Bring people to Jesus - we cannot help them on our own. We already read in Mark 2 about the 4 friends who brought the paralytic to Jesus. A theme is developing here, no number or power of man can do what Jesus can do. Bring people to Jesus.
2. All things are possible to him who believes. It was clear from the way the man asked Jesus "If" Jesus could do anything, that his faith was weak at best. Matthew 19:26 tells us that "ALL things are possible with God." In John 14:1 Jesus says "You believe in God believe also in Me." All things are possible to him who believes.
3. Prayer and fasting develops belief. The disciples could not cast the spirit out, but Jesus could. Jesus explained that this was simply a matter of prayer, sacrificial prayer (fasting). Prayer is the key. It opens our eyes to those who need Jesus, strengthens us to bring them to Him, increases our faith, and brings on miracles in our lives.

You or someone you know may be going through a struggle, and it may have lasted for decades. Come to Jesus. Tell Him, ask Him, listen to Him. ALL things are possible to him who believes in Jesus.

Matthew 11:5 The blind see, the lame walk; lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the Gospel preached to them.

Jesus today help us to see what you see, help us to walk straight, narrow, and steadfast with perseverance, cleanse us and purify us, open our ears today to hear You, raise up the deadness in our lives so we can have our life in You today, Jesus, we are poor and need the Spiritual riches of the Kingdom of God to come. I'm coming to You, Jesus. I believe in You, Jesus. I'm here, and I'm willing to sacrifice for Your glory.

Mark 9:30-32

30 They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, 31 because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.” 32 But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.

There are some revelations that can feel initially like an unbearable weight. Often times we struggle to grasp the fullest picture of what the Lord is saying, and our deceitful hearts will latch onto a fragment of it and want to retreat from further knowing. The issue is not with the truth that is revealed, or the One who is revealing it, but with the condition of our battered hearts. We are fearful because we don't understand the heart of God. We draw back because we are not wholehearted as we should be. We avoid further pursuit of truth because we desperately want to preserve our comfort. But just like in this account, Jesus desires intimate discourse with us. He wants to clear away the noise and bring us a life giving word. In this same account, according to Luke 9:44, Jesus says “Let is saying sink down into your ears..(ESV)”. He calls us to fearlessly pursue truth and understanding. He invites us to personally receive revelation and instruction, for our personal lives and pertaining to the Kingdom of God in general.

“The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant” (Psalm 25:14)

“It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter” (psalm 25:2)

When the word of the Lord seems to dash our most treasured expectations into a sudden or painful disappointment to our flesh, we should not retreat, but press in further. We need to “taste and see that the Lord is good” and reject any thought or feeling that suggests differently. The disciples hearts were grieved at this word (Matthew 17:23), but at this point they decline the opportunity to inquire more fully of the Lord. Fear and grief effectively stopped them. Eventually they would understand the miraculous and life giving message the Lord was speaking. The very death He spoke of would be salvation, healing, and deliverance for their souls and millions more.

Is there a word the Lord has spoken that your heart doesn't want to receive? Is there a hard truth that you just can't understand? Pursue the One who knows most fully. Remember the Lord in His goodness, and that the word of the Lord is always sent to bring life and wholeness.

“The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you..” (Luke 8:10)

Lent Devotional

Day 22

Mark 9:38-50

Did you ever want to have desert before you had the dinner? Eat the pie before you have the spaghetti? That is what we will be doing this morning with this passage. Reverse dinner!

Verse 50: "Salt is good" – salt preserves, salt heals, salt can save you when you are depleted and not able to have enough fluids, salt adds a flavor and brings out the flavor of what it is put on. Without salt things would not be able to exist. When we are depleted in the hospital quite often you are provided an intravenous saline drip to provide you fluids but also "salt". The Lord is our salt. He saves us. He rescues us. He heals us. He preserves us. It is outside of ourselves and we cannot do it without him like "salt."

Things that take away salt are being described in verse 43, 45, and 47, Outward sin of the hand, outward sin of the foot taking you places you should not go, outward sin of the eye as the entry way to the soul. The Lord Jesus teaches us in Luke: [Luke 11:34](#) **The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light. But when your eye is bad, your body also is full of darkness.** The entry point for the inner sin is the eye. If the eye is bad then our body is full of darkness as described above. The lamp of the body, the lamp that burns bright and clear, unhindered by black soot, bad oil, wind blowing it out or down, it burns bright clear and is well fed. It burns not with oil but by the salt!

The salt that is the Holy Spirit of God, the passage from Mark tells us about what it is like to go to hell. As a believer of Jesus I know, when he speaks he speaks absolute truth with full authority. He is speaking what it is like, what you shall be in it and never ending torment. It is truly hell. No one would want to go. This spurs us to tell others what it means not to believe in Jesus, the truth, the light and the way. The only way to the Father and we should never cause a little one to stumble. Our testimony should be we never caused someone else to stumble to fall away from faith, to possibly enter a road to hell.

How does this happen? What we see with our eyes. What we do with our hands. Where we go on our feet; when we are full of salt we want to provide mercy, love, long-suffering, joy, grace, all aspects of the Holy Spirit, and also we provide cold water in the name of Jesus to those that need a drink. A drink of the living water of the Lord and with the Gospel of Christ; [Mark 9:40](#) **"For he who is not against us is on our side."**

Once we start to know the Lord Jesus and His Holy Spirit can work something through us perhaps as a miracle, perhaps as a word of knowledge, perhaps as a prophecy, perhaps as a prayer, perhaps as a listener, perhaps as a friend in Christ, perhaps as a husband, perhaps as a wife, perhaps as a father or perhaps as a mother. We are all workers for Him. While we work for Him we cannot "lose his reward" as it says in verse 41. So when you see someone that is doing the works of Christ and you do not know him, you really do. He or She is a brother or sister in Christ working with the same Holy Spirit that saved you and pulled you out of hell. Sometimes these works are different but, if they are of Christ, that is OK as he is the salt that flavors us, heals us, preserves us, and rescues us.

"Sozo" (Save)! You save us, you heal us, you rescue us, you save us! Thank you Lord!

The breakdown of the God ordained family is one of the greatest sins of the modern world and of the modern church in the west. We have fallen prey to the teachings of this world when it comes to these matters. "Irreconcilable differences" have become the norm for divorce. Gender manipulation and alternative lifestyles have run rampant in western society to the point that this is celebrated. Worst yet, we have legislated within our government the breakdown of the God ordained family. Is it any wonder why divorce is more common than a sustaining marriage? Is it any wonder why children have no real mother or father to call their own?

I do not believe that there is an area where man's sinful nature is more at work than within family life. That nature sees man focusing on his own needs, his own desires, while ignoring the needs and desires of the ones he is called to love the most on this earth. This problem has existed from the beginning where we clearly see the work of the evil one in the midst of the family. It is God's desire that no one would get a divorce. I believe it is safe to say that in a marriage where both the man and wife are fully devoted to Christ, or in one accord with Him, that divorce is never an option. I would venture to say that in modern times, these verses have been used to encourage divorce rather than to discourage it.

I believe that it is important to understand what God expects in a marriage. For many people, including myself so many years ago, marriage is based on all the wrong reasons and is often a matter of convenience. Marriage, which is a covenant relationship, depends upon two people remaining faithful to each other through the good times and the bad. It is a testimony of the relationship that Christ has with His church. Marriage serves as a testimony to the whole world that God's love and His never ending faithfulness can overcome all the temptations the world offers in order to do just the opposite. Marriage teaches us about the proper relationship we are to have with one another as one in Him and with Him. It is truly a covenant relationship. It is much more than a matter of convenience, it is a testimony of God's work in human life. As we continue to feed that relationship we have with Him, so we feed the relationship we have with our spouse.

Just as Jesus restores souls, His ministry is often to take that which is broken and make it whole. His ministry is to break the chains of sin that lead to marital breakdown and restore the oneness with Him and one another which is required to bring marital bliss. What divorce does is break down the very work of God in this world. It causes pain and suffering and brokenness that does not serve as a testimony of God's saving and freeing work on this earth.

The other result of broken families are the broken lives of children. Jesus called the children to Himself and blessed them. A good marriage is a blessing to our children and will teach them the importance of a oneness with Christ and with one another. We all like children, must be dependent upon our Savior, because the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to ones who are as little children.

Heavenly Father, does my marriage reflect the covenant relationship that Christ has with His church? Am I seeking you first? Do I understand the importance of a Godly marriage and have I shown that to my children? Is my family a reflection of how much You mean to us?

Thank you Lord for being the source and the center of my family's existence.

In Jesus' Name I pray.

The account of the rich young ruler may be one that many of us are familiar with and have read many times. Here is a man who has kept the Ten Commandments since youth and has a deep desire to follow Jesus but Jesus can see into this young man's heart. Jesus knew that there was one thing that this young man held onto more than his desire to follow Him and that was his possessions. You see this young man had been blessed materially and that blessing was something that he could not let go of. We know from the Gospel of Matthew that Jesus states that we must "love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." (Matthew 22:37) Jesus looked on this young man with love because He knew the depths of his heart that loving Him with all he had and letting go of the things of this world would be next to impossible for this young man.

Jesus tells his disciples that it is difficult for anyone who has riches and places their trust in those riches to enter the Kingdom of God. He goes on to state that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than it is for a rich man to enter the Kingdom. In our minds we think of the eye of a sewing needle and that would be impossible but tradition states that there was a gate in the wall of Jerusalem called the eye of the needle. It is believed that at night after the main gates of the city were closed that if a caravan came trying to enter the city there was only this one gate available to go through. The problem was that it was big enough for a man to walk through not a camel laden with goods. For the camel to get through this gate all of its burden would need to be left outside and the camel would have to crawl through the gate unencumbered to get into the city. This is a powerful illustration that Jesus is using, for what must we lay aside to enter the Kingdom of God?

The disciples go onto to say that then it must be impossible for anyone to enter the Kingdom of God and then Jesus makes a very profound statement, "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible." (v.27) Whatever it is that God is asking you to lay aside to fully embrace His Kingdom, you may be thinking it is not possible for you to do and guess what you'd be right. Read that statement from Jesus again. For man that answer is "No way" but with God the answer is always "Yes". You know what the great part of this letting go and embracing the Kingdom of God is that whatever God is asking us to lay aside He is going to give back to us a hundredfold (v.30). Amazing, right? We don't lose anything when we lay aside what God asks for us to follow Him with our whole hearts. We will need to give up all the baggage to crawl through the eye of the needle but God is going to repay that back more than we can ask or imagine. We may not see it in the here and now but Jesus is preparing a place for you and me, all it requires is our obedience. You see my friends, nothing is impossible for God, may He help us to lay aside our unbelief and follow Him.

Lent Devotional

Day 25

Mark 10:32-45

Going up to Jerusalem following Jesus they were amazed and afraid because they did not know what was going to happen. He predicts his death and resurrection in vivid detail to his disciples. Jesus, as God, knew what the future was going to be.

Sometimes we as Christians, we enjoy the fellowship with one another, but we also don't know what the future will be and have that fear but we can rest assured that God brings everything into our lives for a reason. It all has a purpose and He uses everything to mold us and make us more like Him.

Then a conversation begins between James and John, speaking to Jesus. They boldly asked Jesus to give them whatever they asked and Jesus asked them what they wanted, they wanted position in the Kingdom by being in the places of power at Jesus' left and right hand. Jesus then asks them if they are able to drink from the same cup and have the same baptism He has, meaning can they partake in his suffering as well as the ministry He has done. Jesus tells them that indeed they will. Now the other disciples find out what James and John have asked and get upset, what about them? Jesus states that whoever wants to be first in the Kingdom will need to become a servant to all. Jesus then states He came to be a servant to all and to be a ransom to many.

From my personal life when Jesus came into my heart and then sat on the throne of my heart, I felt peace and I had a deep desire to serve other people. I have joy every time that I serve; I serve from a place of joy because of what He did for me.

In the body of Christ if each one of us has a servant heart like Jesus we will be blessed because we are willing to serve one another. Jesus wants us to be humble and gentle and to be sensitive to others.

Jesus entered Jerusalem, the last segment of a 3-year journey with His disciples. This passage begins with Him sending two of His disciples on an errand--everything is exactly as He said it would be--and ends with a profound statement regarding faith, answered prayer and forgiveness of sin.

As Jesus rode into the city on the borrowed colt, He was received with praise, adoration, honor and blessing (vs. 8-10). The next day, returning to the city, Jesus spoke over a fruitless fig tree, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again" (vs 12-14). Then He proceeded to the Temple; and after clearing/cleansing it of all that didn't belong inside, He declared, "My house will be called a **house of prayer** for all nations" (vs 12-17). The following day, as Jesus and His disciples saw the fig tree, Peter described it as being "withered from the roots" (vs 20-21). Some conclude that the fig tree represented Israel; and that since Israel failed to bear the fruit God intended them to bear, the religious system they created was done.

But Jesus focused upon **prayer** (vs 22-25). The kind of prayer that has its roots in faith; that can move mountains; that refuses to doubt; that believes/trusts that what has been requested is received; that forgives "so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins".

As I examine my own heart, do I truly engage in this kind of prayer?

Do I welcome Jesus with "praise, adoration, honor and blessing"?

Are my roots in Him and all that He **did/is/does**?

Am I studying the Scriptures to find out what He accomplished in His death, in His resurrection, in His ascension?

What is He doing right now?

How does this effect the way I pray, and what I request?

Do I reject doubt; command it to leave my heart?

Do I trust to the extent that I receive what I ask?

Am I asking according to His will?

Do I spend time with Him to discern His will?

As His temple (I Cor 3:16), are religious works or worldly ways in me?

Will I ask Him to cleanse me as He did the Temple?

Will I ask Holy Spirit to impart courage so that I can?

Will I forgive "so that my Father in heaven may forgive me my sins"?

I must; please do the same...

Lent Devotional

Day 27

Mark 11:27-12:12

Jesus Authority Questioned

Mark 11:27-33

Jesus had just overturned the tables and drove out those that were buying and selling in the Temple. The chief priests and the scribes were furious and sought Him out to question His authority to do such things. Jesus required them to answer one question before He answered theirs. Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men? A simple question but they could not answer. If they said it was from heaven then they would be guilty of not believing in it. But they feared the people and so couldn't say it was not from heaven, and so they chose not to answer. Two things are at work in the hearts of the priests and scribes, and both keep them from the Truth.

First, they feared the people. Why is it so important for them, and us, to have the approval of man? How many shy away from the things of God because they are afraid of what people might think of them. How many people keep silent when the name and Glory of Jesus is laughed at and cursed by the world? Jesus said that we could expect to be hated by the world if we loved Him. Expect to be rejected even as Jesus was rejected. It is a choice that we must make. Are we willing to stand for Christ in a world that rejects Him?

The second, they did not believe John was sent by God. I think they really wanted to answer Jesus' question. They really wanted to tell Him that John was not sent by God and neither was He! Unbelief had dealt a death blow to their heart. And unbelief can do the same in our hearts. It can stop the work of God in our lives because it renders the heart dead to God. The priests and scribes were staring the Son of God in the face and yet they couldn't see the Truth that was right in front of them. Unbelief had hardened their hearts.

The Parable of the Vine-growers

Mark 12:1-12

Jesus begins to speak to the people in parables giving them the account of the Vine Grower. In this account we have a man that plants a vineyard and rents it out to a vine grower to tend while he goes away on a journey. At harvest time the man sends his servant to receive some of the produce from the vineyard but the servant was beaten and sent away. The man continues to send servants to collect what was rightfully his but the vine grower beats some and kills others. Finally, the man sends his son thinking that they would respect him but they kill him as well. Jesus asks "What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will destroy the vine grower and give the vineyard to another." Jesus leaves them with this scripture: "The stone which the builders rejected, This became the chief corner stone."

Our God is a good God! The scriptures say He lets the rain fall on the just and the unjust. His goodness falls upon all mankind, but most people never recognize His good gifts. Our lives are like the vineyard in this parable. One day God will come to see what has grown that He may take what is rightfully His. He is looking for our lives to produce good fruit. Unfortunately, the world is full of people that take the good gifts He gives and selfishly keep them. But God is good, and He sends His servants (you and I) to them in the hopes that they will listen. He has also sent His Son into the world, but most reject Him. Pray that God's grace will open the eyes of those that are lost, that they may recognize His goodness. Pray also that we keep our hearts set on bearing good fruit to the glory of God.

Do Not Test the Lord, but Love Him and Others

In this section of Mark 12, Jesus is being tested, by representatives of the three types of Jewish religious leaders or teachers of the day – the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the scribes. Each of them had their own agenda when they brought a question to Jesus. Their intention was to trip Him up and cause Him to say something contradictory to scripture or against a law – to justify arresting and killing him. In the verse just prior to this (12:12) it states that “they sought to lay hands on Him but they feared the multitude...” What they really may have been fearing is a loss of their social and religious status and their political power. Brief research indicates that the Pharisees and Sadducees were considered religious authorities – with some opposing doctrines, often battling and contradicting each other. Scribes were more of a profession, often (but not always) part of the Pharisee sect, and their role was usually to write legal documents and properly interpret scripture. Although they had differing beliefs, one thing was the same – they all had become absorbed with their own importance and stature over any concern about the Jewish people.

Jesus (and John the Baptist before Him) had clearly been speaking against them and rebuking them – revealing their pride and hypocrisy. All of Matthew 23 is dedicated to Jesus’ warnings or “woes” to the Pharisees and Scribes – calling them “whitewashed tombs” in verse 27 – “outwardly beautiful” but dead on the inside. Their hypocrisy was being revealed by the Christ, and they were certainly feeling threatened. We can also feel threatened when Jesus begins to reveal truth to us. It means changing our ways of thinking and living (selfishly), and our flesh wants to rebel. I sadly think of someone that I care deeply about who once told me, “I am not sure where my faith stands right now – but one thing I do know is that no one can tell me what I’m doing is wrong.” This person was living outside of what they knew that God would want for their lives, and the conviction ignited a spirit of rebellion rather than the repentance that can lead to salvation (2 Cor. 7:10).

The testing of Jesus by the Pharisees (Mk 12:13-17) was concerning whether it was lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not. It is interesting that they started by acknowledging that Jesus was a man of integrity and taught the way of God in truth (v. 14). Jesus amazed them with His answer, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s.” This answer shows that we are to obey authority (Titus 3:1, Ro 13:1), while at the same time honoring God with our lives and giving Him what is His. So, yes you must pay your taxes and adhere to other laws of the government (even when you don’t fully agree), as long as these laws are not forcing you to go against God.

The questioning of Jesus by the Sadducees (v. 18-17) is interesting because it regards an issue of major doctrinal conflict between them and the Pharisees – resurrection, which Sadducees did not believe in. If they could get Jesus to slip up here and somehow contradict this teaching, then they might be proven right. Jesus explains that they are greatly mistaken (deceived) in their understanding and that God is the God of the living. In our flesh, we want to be right – but God’s Word is truth and should not be tested or manipulated to substantiate our own agendas. After all, Jesus told Satan himself that “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” (Mt 4:7) In fact, we need to do the opposite and seek justification in God’s Word and His Spirit within us, prayerfully making decisions in our lives that are led by Him. We must align with Him, not Him with us!

The third testing of Jesus (v. 18-34) is made by one of the scribes who, seeing that Jesus had answered well, asked, “Which is the first (most important) commandment of all?” This probably seemed to the scribe that it would be impossible to answer, but Jesus’ response is perfect, of course, and sums up the entirety of the law, which He came not to abolish, but to fulfill (Mt 5:17). Jesus stated, “love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.” And then Jesus added that the second is to “love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.” This is what we are to give to God and not to Caesar! At that point the scribe recognized the incredibly powerful truth that Jesus had told – certainly these two commandments encompass all possible rules and laws of holiness and righteousness – to completely and with all that you have, love God and each other. The scribe acknowledged that Jesus was right, he even stated that these two commandments were more important than all of the burnt offerings and sacrifices (v. 33). The Messiah then told him that he was “not far from the Kingdom of God.” And after that no one dared question Him (v. 34).

Unfortunately, we know that the pride and fear of the religious leaders persisted, and they began to come up with other strategies to eventually arrest and kill our Lord, Jesus. We also know that this was a fulfillment of many prophecies and of God's plan – but now it is finished! Let's not test Him and crucify Him again, but instead love Him with all of our being and love each other as ourselves – in order to live the abundant life that Christ came for us to have (John 10:10), now and into eternity.

Prayer: Thank you, Lord Jesus, that you came to fulfill God's law and plan, and that You – your Word and Spirit – are Truth! Help me never to test You in order to justify my own agenda, the thoughts and ways of my flesh. But instead help me to come to you and have Your Word and Spirit test me so that I walk in Your ways, which are perfect. Create in me a new heart, Lord, and renew a steadfast spirit within me! (Ps. 51:10)

Lent Devotional

Day 29

Mark 12:35-44

Give what little you've got

Mar 12:41 Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much.

Mar 12:42 Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans.

Mar 12:43 So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury;

Mar 12:44 for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood."

This incident is about more than money, it's about the heart, about faith, about trust, about love to God.

There are people that hold back in offering themselves to the Lord, they feel they have very little of worth to give to the Lord. They see people, multi gifted, and God using them and they hold back thinking.....what do I have to give, what is my little when others have so much to give.

Please note that Jesus saw HOW they put in what they had. That means He understood not the amount but the extent of the sacrifice, and faith the person had that was offering.

Just like the Lord sees, the faith, the attitude, the HOW when people put money in the offering, He watches and sees HOW we offer ourselves to Him.

I've heard some great worship music.

Watched a woman in a church in Maryland who could have given Whitney Houston singing lessons. She was obviously talented by the Lord and much of her singing was from a natural gift given to her.

On the other hand I heard a woman sing at a different time. I knew her well, she had a strong faith, a sweet spirit and was deeply committed to Christ in all she did. Her singing voice was not the best. She was nervous realizing her lack of natural ability, yet when she sang you could feel the presence of the Lord because of the sacrifice and cost of her faith in the whole of her life, not just the offering of one song. In other words you saw HOW she was giving her offering, it was not just a song it was part of her whole life.

What you have is of great value to the Lord. Every act of faith or sacrifice of obedience He watches, He knows all that is behind it. When you give Him an offering of money, time, teaching, serving.....He sees everything behind that and knows all of the time effort, love and faith behind it.....it is that which gives it its greater value!

Today as Paul said....."I urge you by the mercies of God present yourselves a living sacrifice" Your little may be greater than someone else's much in the sight of the Lord.

“Take heed that no one deceives you”, Jesus says in response to the disciples in verse 5. The New Testament is filled with warnings against deception & false teachings.

In **Colossians 2:8**, the apostle Paul writes **“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.”**

1 John 4:1 states **“do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world”**

This passage in Mark describes the sign of the times and seasons of great deception. As we read through these verses, it would seem as if they were written today, for today, yet they were written two thousand years ago. Understanding these warnings, written for us, gives a great perspective on the love and grace of God. **God so loved** (John 3:16) us that He was willing to warn us, and show us clearly the signs so that we can avoid deception. Why? It is not His will that any would perish (also John 3:16). There is so much hope in Jesus! Verse 13 give a great promise of hope, “he who endures to the bend will be saved.” This includes you and I, and all who call on the name of the Lord and trust fully in Jesus for salvation.

In **2 Corinthians 6:2** He says: **“In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you. Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”**

What is the Holy Spirit speaking to you through this passage? Pray on it, ask Him. Sit and listen. Receive His Word for you today. Receive Him.

Hebrews 3:15 Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.

Do not be deceived.

Isaiah 30:21 says **“This is the way, walk in it”**

In **John 14:6** Jesus said to him, **“I am the way, the truth, and the life.”**

Jesus is the way. As we continue on, lets understand the days in which we are living, and that Christ has shown us in advance. Lets live and walk as children of the day, hearing and following the voice of God and His Word. Lets **“Take heed that no one deceives you.”**

Lent Devotional

Day 31

Mark 13:21-37

“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33 Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. 34 It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. 35 Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning— 36 lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. 37 And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!”

The days before the return of Christ will be days of unparalleled darkness and deception. And it will be those who are watchful and holding fast to the truth that will see things for what they really are. It will be a felt darkness that clings to the heart and threatens to suffocate it. Those days of darkness will require every believer in Christ to take serious inventory of their own souls if they are to survive, to allow the Holy Spirit unhindered access to every corner of our soul. Jesus exhorts us four times to “watch”. When the atmosphere and circumstances are heavy with spiritual darkness it is the watchful, prayerful heart that will come through unharmed. Those who live a life free of compromise, and intolerant of sin within themselves will be those who can see clearly. The command to “keep watch” is the call to be awake and alert, hidden in Christ, and responsibly filling the call of God in this life. It is Jesus who leads us into victory over deception and darkness. It is through our knowledge and connection with Him that we will endure. Darkness can not extinguish the Light of Christ within us, so let us be watchful, both inwardly and outwardly. Let us not be found sleeping, but patiently and passionately looking for the coming of our Savior.

“if your eye is good, your whole body will be filled with light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be filled with darkness. If therefore, the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness” Matthew 6:22-23

“In this world you will have tribulation. But take heart! I have overcome the world” John 16:33

The world hates and hated Jesus. The Bible uses the Greek word (kosmos) for “world”. The notes about that word say this: (kosmos) – order, world, worldly affairs, inhabitants of the world, - English word for cosmetic came from this Greek word.

The chapter starts (in my Bible) with a subheading – “The Plot to Kill Jesus” – why would the Jews want to kill? This is going against all that is right “they might take Him by trickery and put him to death” (NKJV) Verse 1. That is what the world will try to do with the Gospel message of a Life in Jesus. The Lord provides us life and He provides it abundantly. What does it mean to have abundant life? [John 10:10](#) **The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.** (NKJV)

In the passage, the woman with the alabaster flask is anointing the Lord Jesus. The woman’s “memorial” was to anoint Jesus with fragrant oil; the world opinion that was in that very room rebelled against this act of love for the Messiah. Verse 10 and 11 – this was the tipping point as Judas made the decision to betray the Lord Jesus as he has his feet firmly planted in the world not in the kingdom of God. Do we have both our feet in the kingdom of God? Do we bring all things not some things to the Lord Jesus? I know I struggle with that and it is something I am working hard to make sure the Lord is first in all things not some things. He is faithful. Praise God.

The passage continues to the Lord’s Last Supper. You see we will have a sacrament or a ceremony or a way to remember Him and what He has done for us on the Cross. What we will receive only through faith in the Lord Jesus. Do you think of him when we have Communion? The Blood is the Grape Juice, the wafer is the flesh. We have to eat it to bring it in and remember who he is, what he has done, where he had go for us, when he did for us and how he went through it the Lord did His saving work for each of us. Not some of us, all of us.

[Romans 5:8](#) But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (NKJV)

As you read this section of our main passage you will see the two kingdoms colliding together in this chapter. (Please note these two forces are not of equal strength, the kingdom of heaven is always above and stronger than anything of this earth or of the devil, they are just sneaky, deceptive and lying their way into places of power, showing power, and trying to secure power.) They are two opposing forces that cannot reconcile to one another; ever take two magnets and try to turn them around so the same polarity is facing to each other? They repel each other or push against each other and, they can never come together as they are opposites. The Christ is the only way the polarity of this world can be turned around to work properly in His Kingdom. The Kingdom of God has no sin in it. To enter that Kingdom and reside there you have to enter through the Christ. Think about that. Do you believe? Do not believe because I am writing this? Believe it because the Bible says so. That is the Word of God written for us. So when all of this has happens here in this passage, the plots, the anointing, the conspiracy and actual betrayal, the last supper with communion, the Lord has them leave as He is continuing on with His Work. The Work will be on the Cross and then in the Garden Tomb followed by the Ascension recorded in Acts Chapter1, then followed by Pentecost recorded in Acts Chapter 2. [Mark 14:26](#) And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. (NKJV) Thank you Lord!

This is one of the most revealing scriptures there is when it comes to the humanistic character of man. Jesus and His disciples are about to make the journey to Gethsemane. However, prior to their journey Jesus tells them that they ALL would fall away from Him. Peter, who is the one that historically is transcribing this Gospel to Mark, tells Him "Even though they may fall away, yet I will not." It wasn't just Peter who was saying this, they were all saying it (v. 31). Each of them believed that they would die with Him, rather than deny Him.

How often have we spoken out of turn or made a vow to Christ that we subsequently cannot keep? Should we not prayerfully consider the things that we say and do for Him before we say or do them?

I am deeply troubled by my own inability to consider what Christ is saying to me through His Word before I go spouting off about this and that without considering what Christ would say or do.

When they get to Gethsemane Jesus takes His three closest disciples to come with Him to keep watch while He prays. Jesus is at a point when the realization of what He is about to do is present. He says that "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death." In His humanness,

He prays "that if it were possible, that this hour might pass Him by." In His divinity, He prays, "yet not what I will, but what you will." Moments later, He discovers that the three disciples had fallen asleep while keeping watch. Jesus tells them "that the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." He warns them that they should "keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation." This same scene is repeated for a second time. Prior to this, Jesus had told them that they would all fall away. Yet here, in the hour of greatest turmoil for our Savior, they could not stay awake to keep watch. How often have we said that we could not pray because we are too tired? How often have we not kept watch over our own faith because we are too busy, or caught up in some worldly endeavor, or too tired to keep watch? It's in those hours that we are in the most danger of falling away.

The words written by Keith Green in his song "Asleep in the Light" most accurately describe the character flaws spoken of in these verses. "Oh, bless me, Lord, bless me, Lord" You know, it's all I ever hear, No one aches, no one hurts No one even sheds one tear. But, He cries, He weeps, He bleeds And He cares for your needs. And you just lay back and keep soaking it in. Oh, can't you see it's such sin?"

These words speak to the very real truth we have as a reality within the western church. We are always seeking how much Jesus can do for us rather than what He can do in the lives of others. Because all of His disciples fell into this very trap, they fell away, just as Jesus described. They grew tired and became apathetic even at the hour of Jesus' greatest burden, which was to die for their sin and for mine.

Heavenly Father, may we never take for granted the work you did for us through Jesus Christ. May we never grow into a state of apathy when it comes to the blood shed for all mankind and for our salvation. May we never grow tired or apathetic to the ministries you call us to, including prayer, which is simply being available to communicate with You. You are worthy.

At this point in the narrative of the Gospel of Mark we come to the point of Jesus' betrayal, arrest, and trial before the Sanhedrin.

Most of us are familiar with this account but have we really sat back and thought about all that Jesus had already been through that night and now was about to face?

When Judas comes to betray Jesus, Jesus has already been dealing with the fact that his other disciples could not even back him up in prayer. They had been sleeping and were not ready for the events that were now going to unfold. We know that Judas commits the ultimate betrayal but what about the others? They run away, Peter tries to defend Jesus and cuts off a guy's ear in which Jesus then has to heal, and one guy getting caught up in the action runs away naked.

Yes, there is nothing as bad as betrayal by a friend as we see in the case of Jesus but how many of us have run away from friends when the going gets tough?

Judas did commit the ultimate betrayal and paid the price with his very soul but the others had to struggle with their betrayal as well. They turned their back on Jesus and ran, Mark tells us about the one young man who runs away naked, a symbol of shame not unlike Adam and Eve in the garden. When we sin, when we turn our backs on Jesus, we are not unlike this young man or Adam and Eve. We are left naked in our shame and betrayal but thankfully that is not the end of the story.

Next, we find Jesus standing before his accusers remaining quiet until they ask him the question, "Are you the Messiah or the Christ?" Then Jesus answers with a response that makes all the difference. "I am!" That I am is so powerful and upset the Sanhedrin because it refers back to the fact that Jesus is God in the flesh.

In the Old Testament when Moses asks who he should tell the Israelites has sent him, God replies "I am" Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. His willingness to go to the cross and bear our sin and betrayal is the ultimate act of love. The "Great, I am" loves us that much.

No longer do I have to live in my nakedness of sin and shame, I can know the God of the universe and that changes everything. It's amazing, isn't it? God loves you and me that much; to accept the punishment we should have received for our betrayal.

Let us praise God for His great sacrifice and love for us. May our hearts overflow with gratitude that we can stand before the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and know Him as our personal Savior.

Lent Devotional

Day 35

Mark 14:66-15:15

When Peter confirmed that he was going to stand with Jesus no matter what, Jesus predicted that before the rooster would crow two times that Peter would deny him three times. Peter was confronted by a servant girl two times and he denied knowing Jesus and a third time by a group of people who recognized him as a Galilean because of his accent and he began to curse and swear that he denied knowing Christ. The rooster then crows a second time and Peter recalled what Jesus had said and he wept.

In uncertain circumstances, the Messiah that Peter thought was going to be the King of the Jews was taken, now Peter had no one to rely on, fear takes him over; what he had promised to Jesus now became meaningless.

Looking at our own lives how many times have we denied Christ because of the fear of men, we have made the decision to deny Christ and have decided to blend into society. It is easy to be strong spiritually when there are no adverse circumstances. I'm sure we've all done this. Yet, Jesus the Messiah knows our weaknesses and He knew Peter. Christ knows us as well; he sees our potential and just like Peter He has faith in us and loves us.

The next scene here is that of when the priest, scribes, and elders took Jesus bound in front of Pilate, accusing him of all types of crimes. Jesus confirmed that he was the King of the Jews when asked by Pilate. Jesus then remained silent in the midst of his accusers, like a lamb before the slaughter (Isaiah 53). Pilate then had a choice to make because he was accustomed to releasing one prisoner upon the Jews request during the Passover feast. There was one prisoner named Barabbas who had committed murder and when Pilate offered them the choice between Barabbas and Jesus (referred to as the King of the Jews) they demanded the release of Barabbas and the crucifixion of Jesus.

Our Lord loved us so much that He did not answer before his accusers; he remained faithful to the plan of God the Father and for him to die as the Lamb of God. This was to fulfill prophecy and to bring salvation to all. This is the greatest love shown to mankind. As Jesus spoke in John 15:13, "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends."

Can Jesus call you friend? Have you accepted him as Lord and Savior? Have you accepted this gift of love for you?

Lent Devotional

Day 36

Mark 15:16-39

A difficult passage to read. The beating of Jesus. The mocking and insulting of Jesus. The torture of Jesus. The killing of Jesus. The death of Jesus.

The crucifixion was the only way to save us. It was the only way to provide forgiveness (Heb 9:22). It was the only way to free us from the state of sin (Jn 1:29). It was the only way to destroy satan and his power of death (Heb 2:14). It was the only way to free us from the fear of death (Heb 2:15). It was the only way to cleanse/purify us from the acts of sin (I Jn 1:17). It was the only way to cancel the debt we owed because of our sin (Col 2:13,14). It was the only way to redeem/ransom/purchase us to God (Rev 5:9). It was the only way to finish/complete His Father's work (Jn 5:36). It was the only way to reconcile us to God (Col 1:20).

It is impossible for me to imagine what actually happened on that cross. I know the facts--it was not only my sin (every action I did and will do on this earth that was not God's will--loving Him and others; every unloving or careless word I spoke), but it was trillions of people's sin that He took upon Himself!

Two times Jesus cries out words (vs 34 and 37). The first time in anguish; the second time before He breathed His last breath. Is the record in Luke 23:46 what He said the second time? If so, just before Jesus entered death, He committed His spirit into His Father's hands. In the garden, Jesus lived out complete surrender, "not My will but Yours be done"; now on the cross, it was complete trust, "into Your hands I commit my spirit".

In light of all this, how can we possibly not receive Him, love Him, worship Him, live for Him? Will we follow Him in that type of complete surrender and trust? "Let us **fix our eyes on Jesus**, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb 12: 2)

"Thank You, Lord Jesus! The words 'Thank You' do not seem big enough. In remembering what You did for us on the cross and through Your death, my heart is overwhelmed to the point that the only thing I can do is "tuck under Your wing" (Mt 23:37) and place my head upon Your heart!"

Jesus is buried

The crucifixion is complete, Jesus is dead, and His disciples have been left alone. Those that had stood by as Jesus breathed his last had seen literal darkness fall over the land as He died. It was not a pretty scene. It's far easier for us to keep reading to get to the good part of the story but this is something that every believer needs to behold. The body of our Lord and Savior is hanging lifeless on the cross and those that were closest to Him in life were now scattered. It is hard to wrap our minds around the reality of Christ on the cross. Our God, that came in the flesh, now hangs in our place bearing our sin and shame. Praise be to the name above all names, for it is in the name of Jesus Christ that we have been released from the power of sin and death and made alive to God. Let us always remember that there is a penalty for sin, and it is death. Blood had to be shed to atone for sin and God Himself bore our sins on the cross. Remember that the next time the enemy of your soul tempts you with some fleshly sin or pleasure. Determine, by the grace of God, to abandon sin.

This scene also reminds me of the apostle Paul's words in Galatians 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ." It is my hope that each person reading this devotional will be challenged by Paul's words and the reality of what that means. Our commitment to Christ begins with the death of ourselves and it should be no less final than Jesus' death was on the cross. Too often we skip this part. We want Christ to live in us but there's no room because we have not put the self to death. The Christian life does not begin when we confess our sins, rather it begins when the power of God breathes life into our spirit. We are made alive to God by His saving power alone. It is not by our words of confession. It is by the power of the living God being released within us, and this made possible by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

I would like to point out two things that Mark highlights in this passage. First, he points out that there were a few women that played an important role in Jesus' life and that they now stood at a distance watching His crucifixion. These women would follow Jesus and minister to Him. If we look back throughout the scriptures, we can see that women played a vital role in the lineage of Christ. And the scriptures make that clear. Mark brings honor to these women who had been important to Jesus, and not because they did something outside the role of what we would expect at that time. They were simply willing to serve Jesus. And now, while others abandoned Him, they remained close. There is a beauty in the service of these women as it was an act of love. Never forget that Jesus knows the heart, and motive matters. A simple deed done unto the Lord a sweet fragrance to Him.

Mark also credits Joseph of Arimathea who buried Jesus. He was a prominent member of the council that "gathered up courage and went in before Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus." I'm always encouraged by people that make a stand for what they truly believe in. I don't know where the disciples were, but Joseph of Arimathea was with Jesus. Mark tells us that Joseph was waiting for the kingdom of God, and I believe that he was convinced that he had found what he was looking for. May we also be fully convinced of the things we believe and then abandon the things of this world to lay hold of Him.

Do Not be Afraid to Tell Others, “He is Risen!”

As Mark chapter 16 unfolds, the setting is tragic... Jesus had been crucified, died, and was laid in a tomb. The next day was the Sabbath – the first one that His followers will partake of after His death – with the reality that He is gone sinking in. Imagine the heartache... imagine the confusion... imagine not knowing what is next. In verses 1 and 2, we read that three of the women – Mary Magdalene, Mary (Jesus’ mother), and Salome (mother of John and James) went to the tomb with spices to anoint the body of Jesus. These women loved Him, followed Him, watched Him die on the cross, and are now going to care for his earthly body, according to their customs – and since this could not be done on the Sabbath, they are going as early as possible at sunrise the following day.

They wondered who will roll the large stone away from the door of the tomb for them (v. 3), but when they arrive find that the stone was already rolled away (v. 4). At this moment (upon reading these verses), it is easy for us to get excited because we know He is risen! However, let’s put ourselves in their places if we can... this sight must have caused fear and dread... thoughts like, “Who has entered our Lord’s tomb? Have they taken His body away? What does this mean?” When I contemplate this, I realize that it is a blessing to be alive now, 2000+ years later, with several Bibles in different versions right here at my fingertips – in paper form and online. We know the end of the story – but at that time these women (and all who loved Jesus) did not.

Then, the women enter the tomb (v. 5), which was very brave since they were already frightened and confused. Upon entering, they see an angel clothed in a long white robe and “they were alarmed.” In Biblical accounts when someone encounters an angel, scripture indicates that people are stunned and fearful; the angel tells them, “Do not be afraid” and proceeds to give them a message (Luke 1:30, 2:10). Here in verse 6, the angel says, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him.” If I try to place myself there at that moment, I don’t know if I could think and comprehend over the sound of my heart pounding so rapidly and loudly that it might explode out of my chest!

Then the angel tells the women (v. 7), “But go, tell His disciples – and Peter – that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you” (Mt 26:32, on the night He was betrayed). The angel is reminding them of something Jesus told them before He was killed – that He would rise and meet them in Galilee – but this was too much for the women to process in this scary moment. “So, they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.” The fear experienced by the women here is understandable. We naturally fear the unknown. In reality, the one thing they knew for sure was that the body of their Lord was missing. How could they immediately tell others that He is risen and will meet them - something so amazing and virtually unreal - before they could process it themselves?

This account reminds me of many people, including myself, before they come to know the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and fully realize that He has been resurrected and conquered death – for us, so that we can have eternal life with Him. Accepting this can be scary and confusing, causing us to wonder... What exactly does this mean? How does it impact my life? What do I do now? Who do I tell? Once we know the truth and follow Him, are we still sometimes afraid? Do we still hesitate to tell others?

We now have the blessing and the privilege of His written Word – the Bible, which from Genesis to Revelation is full of God’s truth and includes the end of the story – that Jesus is the victor over death and over the enemy of our soul. We also have His Holy Spirit that desires to live within us and direct us – our teacher and counselor, reminding us of what Jesus said and taught - the Spirit of truth that will guide us into all truth. (John 16:5-15)

So, let’s not be afraid! We don’t need to be! We not only know the end of the story, but we have the Word and the Holy Spirit of God to help us – and His resurrection power available to us! (Phil 3:10) So, go and tell others, “He is risen!”

Why Mary Magdalene?

Mar 16:9 Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons.

Mar 16:10 She went and told those who had been with Him, as they mourned and wept.

Mar 16:11 And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe.

Jesus ways are not our ways. He knows His own and reveals Himself to those He chooses, "You have not chosen me I have chosen you He said to His disciples.

The most significant and important event in all human history is Jesus resurrection from the dead.

You would think He would reveal Himself first to some of His 11 chosen disciples, you know the ones He prayed for aboutand ministered with for 3 years.

Instead we see the first human to see Him resurrected was a woman, and a formerly demon possessed woman at that. For a Jew at this time women had a low standing in their religious culture. A woman like Mary, who had been possessed of devils would obviously be a woman with even a lower public estimation. A woman with a bad reputation. Yet Jesus revealed Himself first to her..... WHY?

I believe He did this with deliberate intentto send all who would believe. In fact what He did by showing Himself to Mary is still true todayits a lesson for us all.

SO...Why??...Because she was there, the first there, and why was she the first there?? Because Jesus had delivered her from 7 demons, and she loved Him. Even though she believed Him dead, she did not let that keep her from being devoted to Him and do all she could, to provide and prepare Him for a reverent burial. Instead of her love for Him finding Him dead.....she saw Him alive. And excitedly was sent back to tell the disciples, [who didn't believe her] that Jesus was alive.

In Luke 7:36-48 Jesus previously had an encounter with a woman while visiting a pharisees home, to eat. Another sinful woman, similar probably to Mary, anointed His feet with a fragrant oil, and weeping dried His feet with her hair. The Pharisee immediately thought to himself that Jesus could be no prophet as a prophet would not allow such a woman to touch Him. There He taught Peter a lesson about love. He said:

"Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head.

Luk 7:45 You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in.

Luk 7:46 You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil.

Luk 7:47 Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little."

Luk 7:48 Then He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

There it is a living illustration of those who get to “see” the Christthose who are devoted.... and love..... and seek Himwho want to minister to Him.....He shows Himself to them. He would have shown Himself to anyone who came for showing the same love Mary did.

David ministering to his son, Solomon as he prepares to begin the building of the temple says this:

"As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you

Mary did, she had what David said, served, loyal heart, willing mind.....she sought Him and found Himrisen and victorious over DEATH and the GRAVE.

When we seek Him with all our hearts He will be found by us [Jer 29:13].Lets do like Mary.

The resurrected Christ, after rebuking the apostles for their unbelief, gives them a command; “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel”. Its amazing to think what was set in motion in that moment, and that here today we have almost seen the complete fulfillment of this. In the past 100 years the Gospel message has spread throughout the world like never before through the modern missions movement, and it all started with 11 faithful who obeyed Jesus.

A promise was given that day to the 11 which has been faithfully shared and passed down throughout the years by the church; “He who believes and is baptized will be saved”. Many have come to a saving faith in Christ through the message of the Gospel as it continues to spread to the uttermost regions of the world and the deepest places in our hearts.

The life of a believer is marked by “signs” which are brought on by the presence of the Holy Spirit within; demons will obey, new languages spoken, protection from all that kills, and healing for the sick through the laying on of hands. There is power in Jesus. All believers have experienced the power of God and the signs that going along with putting our trust and faith in Him alone for salvation through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, yet there is more. The Word of God teaches us to “desire the greater gifts” of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:31), and that God “gives the Spirit without measure” (John 3:34). There is more for us. More power, more signs, more miracles, more protection, more favor.

After this, Jesus went up into heaven to sit at the right hand of God. What is He doing now? He “lives” to intercede (Hebrews 7:25). He is praying, praying for us, praying for you. Because He is praying, He is always able to save “to the uttermost those who come to God through Him”. The disciples knew this, and believed, and obeyed.

What was their response to the Word of God and prayers of Jesus? They went out, they preached, God worked with them, the Spirit confirmed His Words to them, and the signs accompanied them.

What about us? Where does that leave us as a church? Do we believe? Have we been baptized, not just with water but with the Spirit? Do we see the signs? Are we functioning in the gifts? A few weeks back we learned of the man with the mute spirit, he said “Lord I believe, help my unbelief.” God sees your faith, and wants to help you gain more, and experience more of Him through faith. Ask Him to help. Don’t give up.

For such a time as this we have been placed on the earth, where we are, for the purposes of God. Seek first His Kingdom and the resurrection power of Jesus that is available to us through the Holy Spirit. As we consider all that Jesus died for, also consider all that He lives for even now today, in this world and in you. Christ in you is the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27). May the fullness of the blessing of the Holy Spirit rest on us and abide in us, and our faith in Jesus Christ allow us to believe that all of His promises are true, leading us to walk in that truth and lives lives of freedom in Jesus for the glory of God.