

# Mark

## Section 2 – 13 weeks

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This was originally an expository series of sermons given in the church where I was serving as Pastor. A few years later, they were edited to be used as a Bible Study. There are a few things I feel I should share with you before using this material:

First: I had no intent of sharing or publishing this material until encouraged to do so by some friends. While I did consult several commentaries as I was preparing the original sermon series, I did not make notes of the references used in the messages. There was not in the beginning, nor is there now, any intent to plagiarize. Should you see anything you feel is the original thought of another, I ask for your grace and mercy.

Second: In my notes for teaching (or preaching), I tend to spell certain words phonetically for the purpose of emphasis. When transforming these notes from sermon notes to teaching notes, I felt inclined to leave a number of these phonetic spellings. They help me to make emphasis in the lesson at particular points.

Third: In my notes for teaching (or preaching), I make little effort to conform to rules of grammar. One example is that I often use a hyphen ( - ) to indicate a point where I may want to pause slightly and to keep certain thoughts connected as I speak. Another example is that I will use local colloquialisms to make points in the message.

Please accept that these notes are not an academic work. But I do hope they will help the preacher or teacher to be able to more quickly prepare their own sermon or teaching.

In the past few lessons, we have been looking into the passages where Jesus was training his disciples what it meant to be a Fisher of Men. In this lesson, we don't just begin a new chapter in the Gospel of Mark - but a new chapter in Jesus' ministry. Beginning with today's message, we are going to see Jesus teaching some deep and important truths. Truths that will not only impact our lives - but truths that have the power to change our lives.

Jesus had earlier left Capernaum, and visited other villages throughout Galilee. After the actions of the disobedient leper made it difficult for Jesus to enter any of the villages openly, we find him returning to Capernaum.

Read Mark 2:1 - 2 and make notes:

There have been some interesting discussions regarding "which house" Jesus went to. Was it his own family house in Capernaum? Had they moved there from Nazareth? Was it the house of Peter where he had earlier healed Peter's mother-in-law? These do make interesting discussions - however, if we are not careful this can lead us away from the message intended. Since the account does not identify the specific house - then it isn't important for us to consider at this time.

Jesus has already demonstrated healing in a number of places - so it is reasonable to consider that there is another message intended when the Holy Spirit inspires Mark to record this specific instance of healing for us to read.

Read Mark 2:3 - 4 and make notes:

This is a pretty bold act on the part of these four men! They couldn't make their way through this large crowd to get their friend to Jesus. So they made their way up to the roof of the house; tore away part of the roof; and lowered their friend down into the house and in front of Jesus.

Read Mark 2:5 and make notes:

There are several rich teaching nuggets in this passage - but one of the things God wants us to grasp hold of today is right here in this verse. When Jesus saw "THEIR" faith! There is not even a hint of any mention of faith on the part of the paralyzed man! Did he even have the least bit of faith that he could be healed? Did he have any hope at all that Jesus might heal him? In the majority of church circles today - the majority of Believers tend to place the responsibility for "FAITH" upon the shoulders of the person in need.

When the person needing a miracle doesn't receive the miracle - most of us will think it even if we don't say it - "well, they just don't seem to really believe that God can or will do that" - "now brother, you just need to believe" - "sister, you are doubting and not believing."

In this account - we are specifically told that it was the faith of the man's friends that Jesus was responding to. When Jesus saw the faith of this man's friends - Jesus responded by forgiving the paralyzed man of his sins.

The passage does not tell us if the sins were in any way related to being paralyzed. The sins forgiven may have all been sins of the mind and mouth; like our attitude and the words we speak. And all of these may have come after his being paralyzed. Maybe his sins were simply that of doubting and not believing.

**Jesus performed a miracle when he saw the faith of believers.** Let's just go ahead and admit it; all of us who claim to be saved in Jesus Christ, also claim to have faith! Can anyone see our faith today? Can Jesus see our faith today?

If I can claim to be a great sculptor - but I never sculpt - can anyone ever see that I am a sculptor? Maybe - just maybe - we are seeing fewer miracles today - because Jesus is "SEEING" fewer demonstrations of "faith" today! We need to spend less time trying to get those around us to "have faith" so that they can receive. We need to start demonstrating our faith on their behalf- so that they can receive.

Today - Jesus will still perform a miracle - when he is able to see the "faith" of those who believe. So, I ask again, as we consider our daily life - Can anyone "SEE" our faith?

Read Mark 2:6 - 7 and make notes:

This idea that only God can forgive sins had developed from the Old Testament. Some of the Rabbis in Jesus' day; had even come to the point of saying that the prophets who had spoken to people that God forgave them of their sins; were speaking in an arrogant manner and that those words were probably not inspired words. One example is when the prophet Nathan told David that his sins were forgiven.

Not all the Rabbis, but many of them, had accepted the idea that forgiving sins was something that only God could do. In their writings about the coming Messiah, none of them wrote that the Messiah would forgive sins. This idea was right in line with what the Rabbis believed and taught – so it is the expected response from the orthodox leaders. So there is no reason to think Jesus is responding to the teachers by being indignant.

Read Mark 2:8 - 9 and make notes

It is important for us to take notice that these teachers were not speaking out against Jesus. In verse 6 it says, "they were thinking to themselves;" and in verse 8 it says "Jesus knew what they were thinking."

This message today is less about our words and more about our "hearts" and our "attitudes." The question Jesus asked – was not only to the teachers - but all of those present: "Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven", or to say "Get up, take your mat and walk?"

To a certain degree, it would be easier to say "your sins are forgiven." Who can see whether they are or not? But if you say "get up and walk;" well, everyone can see whether the paralyzed man can walk or not.

Do you remember the reason Jesus wanted the man healed of leprosy to go to and show himself to the priest? Jesus wanted the leper's healing to be a testimony to them. Jesus is still interested in taking the gospel message to the priest. Jesus, just like his father, God - doesn't want anyone to perish. So Jesus, in response to what they are thinking, gets them to consider the more serious question. And then he demonstrates a kingdom principle to them.

Read Mark 2:10-12 and make notes:

"So that you may know" - he said to the paralytic - "get up, take your mat and go home" - and he did - and the people praised God!

So, how does this - "Jesus responding to the inner thoughts" - connect with "Jesus responding to people demonstrating their faith"? When these 4 men brought their paralyzed friend to Jesus for healing - Jesus could have healed this man and went on to the next person. If it was only about physical healing - that is probably what he would have done. Jesus ministered to this paralyzed man where he needed ministry the most!

This paralyzed man just may have been paralyzed more spiritually than he was physically. Jesus set his spirit free before he set his physical body free.

The Teachers who were thinking "He can't do that;" and the paralyzed man on the mat are both a picture of many of us today. Like the teachers - we are standing right there in the midst of the believers who have gathered to hear the message. And yet in our hearts we are thinking very negative things. We are like the paralyzed man on the inside. We may still be able to walk on our own physically But we are paralyzed spiritually - and many times emotionally paralyzed as well.

We are paralyzed from service in the kingdom of God; because of guilt from our past sins "I can't serve the Lord, because of what I have done - I'm not worthy." We are paralyzed from service in the kingdom of God; because of shame - "I know God has forgiven me, but what if others found out what I did." We are paralyzed from service in the kingdom of God; because of past failures - "I can't serve, I am such a big failure."

Let's face some facts today. Not one of us is worthy! All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God ! Go ahead, check out the whole bible. All of the people God used, failed him; some of them failed in a big way.

Praise God for 1 John 1:9! Praise God for His ever abundant Grace! Praise God for being the lifter of our head!

**Jesus heals inner paralysis.** It is time for us to be healed of our inner paralysis. It is time for us to be healed of past sins; past failures; past shame; and we serve a Savior and God who is ready and willing to provide that healing!

America, is still the greatest nation on the face of this earth today. But America is in real and present danger of being destroyed. Not from terrorist from other countries but from paralyzed Believers.

It was never God's plan for people to be Believers in Jesus Christ for salvation, **And then to be paralyzed from action.**

Do you know someone who has been partially paralyzed and prevented from serving God fully? Are we one of those who has been completely paralyzed and prevented from serving God at all? If so, we should Rise and be healed in the Name of Jesus !

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:



Jesus has been demonstrating to his new disciples what it means to become a Fisher of Men. In the last lesson, we saw where Jesus taught his disciples that they must not allow themselves to remain paralyzed by their past.

Most of us will agree - that it may take some divine strength to be set free from our spiritual or emotional paralysis. In this lesson, Jesus reveals another major truth to his disciples, and this one may be more difficult to put into practice.

Read Mark 2:13-14 and make notes:

There are those who believe this passage is fragmentary. That is, they believe something is missing between v13 and v14. And as a result they want to dismiss this passage as basically unusable for teaching, since we don't know what is missing.

I don't believe this is the case at all. Granted, at first pass if we read too quickly through this passage; it can appear that Jesus was in Capernaum (v12) - then he withdrew to the lake (v13) - and then he is in Capernaum again (v14) - because toll booths and tax collector booths would be in the city and not out by the lake.

The common question asked by those who see this passage as fragmentary is, "Why would Jesus momentarily leave the city and then quickly return?" This passage is more meaningful after we have read all of the Gospels.

What is recorded in this text, follows a basic pattern we see repeated time and again in Jesus' life and ministry. Jesus ministers to crowds of people - he then retreats to a place of prayer and meditation and perhaps spiritual and emotional refreshing - then he returns to ministering to the crowds.

After becoming aware of Jesus' normal routine - the fact that he would leave the city and then return is no big surprise; and really not something we would make an issue of. Verse 14 is like a great deal of the Gospel of Mark - we get the barest of details - basically a summary account.

In the calling of Levi - we are given his name - his occupation - the essence of the words addressed to him in the call - and Levi's response. Nothing more is given to help identify this Levi. Later in chapter 3 when the disciples are listed by name; there is no mention of "Levi, son of Alphaeus."

The Holy Spirit inspires Mark to record the radical nature of Jesus calling Levi to follow him and this is more the point than the name of the person. From the rest of the gospel accounts, we learn that this man is called Matthew. Whether Jesus changed his name or whether Levi had another name which he also used isn't really important to this particular message.

As a tax collector, it is perfectly natural that Levi would be seated in a city. Capernaum was a site of first importance in and around the northern end of the Sea. Levi was a Jewish citizen who had taken employment in the Roman government under Herod Philip. The Jews who took positions in the Roman government were despised by their fellow Jews. They were often classified along with the vilest of sinners and outcast among the Jews.

In those days, it was customary for the Roman government to auction off, or to sell, the tax collector position within a district. The Roman government received a set amount of money from which they could budget, and whatever profit the tax collector could get above that amount was theirs to keep. As you can imagine, it was a common thing for the tax collectors to engage in gross oppression of the people in their district.

According to Jewish customs at that time, tax collectors for the Roman government, being considered outcast, were disqualified from serving as a judge, or even as a witness, in any Jewish court session. They were not allowed to attend the synagogue. Basically the Jewish tax collectors were a disgrace among the community and even their own family. This makes Levi an interesting choice to be one of the original Fishers of Men.

We know from some writings of that era - that there was a toll, or tax, upon the fish that were caught in that region. Capernaum being the major city on the north of the Sea. It is likely that Levi collected the tax on the fish that some of Jesus' other disciples had previously caught and brought to the city to sell. If it is true that Levi had previously taxed some of the others who were Jesus' disciples, this makes an interesting mix among Jesus' disciples.

Also, knowing something of the way in which these tax collector positions were obtained, and the potential profit that could be gained from it - this makes Levi's decision to just up and leave to follow Jesus rather remarkable. Making note of the radical call to Levi - and the radical response on the part of Levi - we are ready to read the rest of this account.

Read Mark 2:15-16 and make notes:

It could have been that Levi was making a spontaneous expression of joy by giving a banquet for Jesus and his disciples. It could have been that Levi had found such inner peace and cleansing that he wanted his friends to get the chance to meet this Jesus he had met – either way, he gave a dinner party and invited them to come.

It is understandable that if Levi was an outcast among his fellow Jews, then his only social contacts would be other tax collectors and others who were designated as "sinners." To fully understand the message - it is important to note that those who were Pharisees looked down upon those who did not cherish the Jewish customs and traditions. They saw those who ignored the traditions as being inferior; at least spiritually; and often inferior in just about every way.

The Pharisees often dismissed as insignificant and inconsequential, those who did not take the time to adhere to the traditional religious practices of purity and separation. These were people who failed to eat their food according to the Pharisaic standards, or they failed to properly separate their tithes according to the traditional code.

The Pharisees were spiritual descendants, if not physical descendants of the "Hasidim" - a group who had distinguished themselves by their zeal for observance of the Law in spite of the repressive efforts of Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

It was nothing directed at Jesus specifically for the Pharisees to criticize Jesus for failing to observe the distinction between "the righteous" and "the sinners." They looked down on anyone and everyone who failed to make this distinction. From their perspective - if he is a teacher of the Law - he should know about these things and he certainly should know how inappropriate it is to associate with them - let alone eat with these kinds of people.

When the Pharisees held a banquet - they took great measures to insure that no one who was the least bit impure would be allowed to attend. They wanted to make sure they did not become defiled even by accident. And here Jesus is - in a banquet where just about everyone attending is one of these "impure people". Jesus was disregarding their time-honored custom. And this offended them deeply.

Read Mark 2:17 and make notes:

Jesus responded to their protest by using a "traditional proverb" of that time - "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick". A great many people have this idea that Jesus despised the Pharisees from the "get go." They usually reference the passage where Jesus calls the Pharisees a bunch of snakes - and from this they interpret every scripture where Jesus talks to them as though Jesus was speaking with an attitude of condemnation.

They use this one passage to see Jesus as looking down on the Pharisees. Basically the way the Pharisees looked down on the common people as being spiritually inferior. That is a possible interpretation - however I am convinced it is an incorrect interpretation.

What if we took the passage where Jesus looks right at Simon Peter and tells him to "get behind me Satan" - and we interpret that as Jesus seeing Simon Peter to be the devil in the flesh. And then we took that to every place where Jesus talked to Simon Peter as Jesus addressing Satan. This would lead to some very difficult passages to make sense out of - and I think that is what happens when we make the similar application to the interchange between the Jesus and the Pharisees.

In that one situation Peter was responding to Jesus in the manner that Satan would have - but not in all the situations. Neither were the Pharisees acting in the manner of Satan every time they had an interchange with Jesus. Sometimes - just like in the passage of Peter's response - they were simply responding in the manner in which they had been trained - and Jesus knew that.

In this passage - Jesus was not looking down on the Pharisees as spiritually inferior. He probably wasn't speaking with an indignant tone in his voice. Jesus sincerely wanted the Pharisees to hear the gospel message as much as everyone else.

This little phrase that Jesus spoke to them was one of their maxims that they basically used daily. Among the writings of that day there are statements recorded such as; "If they are not sick, why do they need a physician?;" and "the physicians are not to be found among the well but customarily spend their time among the sick."

The Pharisees used this maxim as a way of speaking down to the common people. They believed if you became sick, then you must have done something wrong. So, if the Pharisee is well and you are sick, then it is obvious to them that you are a sinner. Accidents that caused injury along with sickness and disease were viewed as coming upon people as a means of God's punishment for having done something wrong.

Jesus responded to their objections and criticism by using a maxim that the Pharisees would all agree to be a true statement. But Jesus was applying this "true statement" in a very different manner than they had ever used it.

Since these "Scribes and teachers of the law" were so confident in their righteousness - there was no need for "the doctor" to come to them. "The doctor" was going to where the people knew they needed some righteousness. Jesus recognized that these "teachers of the law" had seen a truth but were applying this truth incorrectly and as a result would find it difficult to perceive their need to come to repentance.

Jesus recognized the true zeal these "teachers of the law" had for righteousness - and Jesus respected their zeal to keep themselves spiritually pure. Jesus responded to their objections and criticism by beginning at a point that demonstrated that Jesus and these "teachers of the Law" clearly had a common basis. They both believed that the well person doesn't need a physician. It is the sick person who needs a physician.

Not always - but most of the time - the best way to silence your enemy is to "agree with them." Jesus agreed with them where he could. Jesus disagreed with them only in the application. And it is very likely to be true that this particular application never occurred to them. They were most likely applying this truth in the manner they had been taught to apply it. Jesus not only met the sinners where they were - in this case with fellowship and sharing a meal; but Jesus met the religious leaders where they were - stating the truths that they had right.

**Jesus didn't look down on the sinners as being spiritually inferior.** He respected them as a person and treated them with the same dignity he would have treated the righteous. Then while demonstrating his respect for these sinners - he shared with them the gospel.

**Jesus didn't look down on the religious people who had misinterpreted the truth they had - as being spiritually inferior** - even though that's the way they treated others. He treated them with respect and dignity. Then while demonstrating his respect for these religious people with zeal - albeit misguided - he shared with them a better interpretation and application.

Everyone of us either already has - or we will - meet those who are not even trying to live a righteous life. Many of them have given up on trying and they are just trying to survive in this world the best they can. They know the "religious community" looks down on them.

Will we "look down on them", or will we treat them the way Jesus did? If we want to share with them the gospel - then we will treat them with dignity and respect.

Everyone of us either already has - or we will - meet those who are sure they have the right interpretation of God's Word; but they are applying it in a manner that hurts and oppresses others. They even look down on us as being inferior because we don't believe God's Word the way they do.

Will we "look down on them" or will we treat them the way Jesus did?

If we want to share with them the better interpretation or application of God's Word - then we will treat them with dignity and respect - and find the truths where we have a common basis.

Many Believers today need an attitude change. We need to see others with a different heart attitude. We need to not only attempt to show respect, but we truly need to have respect in our heart for both the one who knows they are a sinner; and for the one who believes they are spiritually superior to us - even though we know they are applying God's Word all wrong.

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:



This lesson is continuing with the expectations of those who are to become Fishers of Men. We are going to look at a passage that is a troublesome one for a lot of people. But it is a rich and truly helpful passage for those who are patient enough to allow God to share it with them.

Read Mark 2:18 and make notes:

The opposition to Jesus was increasing. Not because Jesus was trying to get people upset, but because there were those who were simply unwilling to consider that the way they have always done things - might be wrong. Or, that the way they have always done things might not be the best way - there might be a better way. A better way to apply the Scriptures to everyday life!

The practice of fasting was important to the religious community of that day. If people were driven to question Jesus on the concept of what kind of people he was willing to be seen with - it shouldn't be any surprise that these people would certainly question him on the way he makes use of – or doesn't make use of the practice of fasting.

The Old Testament only specified one day when all of Israel was required to fast. This was the Day of Atonement - designated as a day for Israel to be cleansed from sin and affliction of the soul (Exod 20; Lev 16; Lev 23; Num 29). By the time of Mark and Jesus - the religious leaders had set aside a number of days throughout the year for fasting.

There was one group of Pharisees who were fasting on Monday and Thursday of each week. We really don't know what days or times the disciple of John were fasting. But from some of the writings of that era, it appears that John's disciples were periodically fasting as an act of repentance designed to hasten the coming of the time of redemption.

So the Pharisees and their followers had regular days of fasting - and while John and his followers were fasting for slightly different reasons, they too had regular days of fasting. Jesus on the other hand was not asking his disciples to fast at all.

Read Mark 2:19-20 and make notes:

Considering how many other people were fasting on a regular basis - those in the Pharisee camp and those in John's camp - it is a reasonable thing to ask Jesus why he and his followers weren't doing this religious thing that is so customary in all the other religious circles.

His not calling for days of fasting makes him look less spiritual somehow as compared to these other people who are obviously committed to their beliefs. In a manner that Jesus does so often throughout his earthly ministry - when one of these challenging questions is given - he responds by posing a different situation.

To the challenge "why don't you guys fast - aren't ya'll as spiritual as the Pharisees and the followers of John the Baptist?" Jesus responds, "How can my followers fast while they have the bridegroom with them?" Right off the bat this poses a problem for those asking the question - they all know that there is never a fast when a group is with the bridegroom - in fact there is a lot of celebrating going on while the bridegroom is present.

This kind of stops them in their tracks - they hadn't thought of Jesus as a bridegroom. All kinds of things must have rushed through their minds; "is Jesus getting married?" - "did we misunderstand?" - "is he getting ready for his wedding instead of starting a new religious group?"

This is truly an interesting reply on the part of Jesus. In some of the writing from the Rabbis of that era - frequent use of the image of the joy at a wedding feast was used to describe the coming of the Messiah. But in none of their writings did they ever describe the coming Messiah as a bridegroom. They had somehow grasped the concept that the coming of the Messiah would bring the highest level of joy - like that at a wedding feast - but they had missed the concept that the Messiah would be a bridegroom.

The point of this is that neither Jesus' disciples - nor those asking the question - would likely have made a messianic connection from this statement - they were not looking for the Messiah to be a bridegroom. The closest connection they had up until this time was with the level or type of joy the Messiah would bring. But now, Jesus brings to light a different possible application of a concept they had held onto for some time.

In response to the challenge of fasting - Jesus tells them it would be inappropriate for his disciples to fast, because they have the bridegroom with them. While they probably did not make the messianic connection at this point - they did understand how inappropriate any act of mourning would be at a time of great joy. Jesus is both the reason and the center of the joy his disciples will experience. While they most likely did not fully comprehend his statements - Jesus did tell them that a time would come when his disciples would not have the bridegroom with them and that would be the appropriate time to mourn.

Read Mark 2:21-22 and make notes:

This short parable seems to be completely out of place when read by many theologians. They see no connection to the question posed by those challenging Jesus. Remember, if we believe that the Holy Spirit inspired the writer to write these words, then we must consider that this parable has some connection to the question that has been asked.

Just because we don't see the usefulness of a particular passage at first reading is not a reason to throw it out. It is a very good reason to pray for God to reveal the meaning of this to us. Without the Holy Spirit revealing the meaning of Scriptures, we would misinterpret most of the Bible.

If we don't see any connection at first reading - maybe at the second reading we will at least notice that the part of the answer about the bridegroom and this part about the garment repair and wine-skins both point out that there are inappropriate actions in some situations.

Just as much as it is inappropriate for people to mourn while the bridegroom is with them - it is inappropriate to repair a torn garment with a piece of “not yet shrunk” cloth and it is also inappropriate to put new wine into an old wine-skin.

In the first analogy, the people might only recognize inappropriate actions - but in the second analogy, the people now see that there are damages that result from inappropriate actions. The torn garment can wind up having a larger tear - and the old wine-skin can be damaged beyond further use. Inappropriate actions can cause further disappointment - more pain - and can be costly.

Here is the summary version of Jesus' response to the challenge to his disciples not fasting like the Pharisees or those of John the Baptist: If the disciples of Jesus were to follow the practices of the Pharisees or even those of John the Baptist - they would be doing things that are every bit as inappropriate as those who place a new piece of cloth on an old garment tear- and just as inappropriate as those who pour new wine into old wine-skins. If the disciples of Jesus were to continue to practice their faith following the manner of the Pharisees - or even John the Baptist - greater harm would be the result.

Consider the fasting of the Pharisees. It was mostly a religious ritual - it was more mechanical actions and dead spiritually. If Jesus' disciples continued this mechanical meaningless fasting when they were with the Messiah - the hurt and damages would be great. They would never be able to establish the personal relationship with Jesus that he was offering to them.

Consider John the Baptist's followers. They were fasting in repentance trying to prepare for the coming of the Messiah. If Jesus' disciples continued this fasting in repentance trying to prepare for the coming of the Messiah - when the Messiah is already with them - the hurt and damages would be significant. The least of which would be that they would "Miss The Messiah's Coming."

While it was going to be a little later before they began to recognize the fullness of who He is, Jesus was saying that his disciples had entered into the time of salvation. It is only appropriate for them to celebrate and feast in his presence - like those who were with the bridegroom.

The coming of the "bridegroom" in those days signaled the closing of era and the coming of a "new" era - for not only both the bridegroom and the bride - but for their families and their friends. Granted we don't have too many that work out like they are supposed to - but in a perfect world - the bride and bridegroom would have a very different relationship after the marriage than they did before. The bride and the bridegroom's priorities will be different after the wedding. They will be more concerned with providing the necessities of life for their family; and less concerned about playing games.

The families of the bride and the bridegroom would change the kind of relationship they had with their children after the wedding. No longer would it be a parent / child relationship - but it would become adult friend / to adult friend relationship.

The friends of the bride and the bridegroom would change in their relationship with the bride and bridegroom after the wedding. They would recognize the need for their friend to spend more time with their spouse and less time with them; and would make fewer demands on the bride or bridegrooms time.

By Jesus saying his disciples are like those who are with the bridegroom - he is in fact conveying the message that a "new relationship" is being set forth. If two people get married and keep the same relationship and priorities as they have before the marriage - damage will result and it is costly.

The analogy of the wedding celebration; the garment repair; and the new wine are all clearly connected to the question that has been asked. This message is just as relevant today as it was the day Jesus first spoke it.

When we "come to Jesus"; if we fail to recognize that we are entering into a "new" relationship - and we continue to do what we have "always done" - not only will our actions be inappropriate - but our actions will cause harm - and will be costly.

As Christians - we cannot continue to go to the places we used to go to. As Christians - we cannot continue to use the language we used before. As Christians - we cannot continue to respond to problems with other people the way we have always done so in the past. As Christians - we may not even be able to continue to do the "religious" practices that the majority of people feel so righteous about doing.

Later in the New Testament, we will be told that when we come to know Jesus Christ as Savior - that we become a "new creation." Right here Jesus has just revealed a major kingdom principle. As Christians - we are expected to do things differently from the world around us. And that just might include some of the most popular or common religious practices of our community - family - and friends.

Later in the New Testament - we will be told that true fasting means a whole lot more than just abstaining from eating. True fasting means tearing up the unjust contracts we have made. True fasting means pardoning the offense of others for their trespasses.

One of the ancient church fathers pointed out we are covered outwardly by a garment and we are refreshed inwardly by wine. While he wasn't clear on how this applied, this helps with the picture. If we take this analogy it becomes clear - we need to be careful that we don't try to sew new "Christian" practices onto our old pagan lifestyle. For surely we will find ourselves being torn apart.

If we take this analogy, it also becomes clear - we need to be careful that we don't try to put the new "Christian" inner refreshments into our old pagan refreshments of our hearts and minds. For we will surely burst.

While this is an old analogy - and many would rather ignore it for something more contemporary - when I consider how many people I have witnessed make a profession of faith in Christ Jesus - and then try to continue their old ways in some areas of their life - and then I see them not only no longer following Christ - but often times more sinful than they were before - maybe this is very appropriate - and still a contemporary analogy.

Jesus was offering his disciples then, something new in relationship to the Heavenly Father. And Jesus is offering us today, something new in relationship to the Heavenly Father. And it is still true - we need to be made into new creations before putting in the new parts of the relationship.

Christians cannot continue to be the same old person with new religious practices. If we try - something will have to give - something will be damaged - and it is going to cost us - and will probably cost those we love as well.

Isn't it time that we begin to live in a "new" relationship - a "new" heart AND attitude. Isn't it time that we begin to live "differently." Isn't it time that we give up the attitude; "but this is the way we have always done it" and listen to - and follow - the guidance of the Holy Spirit as he lead us and teaches us the way "more perfectly."

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

We have seen from the gospel of Mark, that in order for us to be Fishers of Men the way Jesus intends for us to be - then we are required to pray; we must have compassion and obedience; we must stop allowing ourselves to be paralyzed; we must give respect and dignity to others; and we must change our behavior from our pre-saved days.

In this lesson, we are going to look at another area - where we need to make some changes - if we want to be Fishers of Men, the way God intends for us to be.

Read Mark 2:23-25 and make notes:

The Old Testament law allowed a person to pick grain with their hands as they passed through a field and eat it. They were forbidden to bring a sickle, or any cutting device, that is used to harvest grain. There was no legal problem with what Jesus disciples were doing. There appeared to be a problem with "when" they were doing it.

Read Exodus 20:10 and Exodus 34:21 and make notes:

As we read the text on the 39 main categories of forbidden forms of work on the Sabbath that are identified specifically in the Old Testament - the third one mentioned is reaping. The Pharisees, according to the Law they lived by, would be correct to challenge someone who was reaping on the Sabbath. It was also believed in those days that a teacher was responsible for the actions and behavior of their disciples. So again, it would be perfectly reasonable for them to charge Jesus with the perceived infractions of the law by his disciples.



At this point, the only thing we could possibly take issue with is whether or not these disciples were "reaping" grain. If what they were doing, qualified as "reaping" grain - then this challenge is correct according to the law. If their pulling enough to eat personally did not actually qualify as "reaping" - then this challenge is wrong.

Read Mark 2:25-26 and make notes:

This is another passage that has been accused and abused by a number of theologians. Many people want to throw this passage out - making an issue out of an apparent discrepancy. It is over the statement "In the days of Abiathar the high priest." The incident of David and his men eating the loaves of holy bread occurred during the time when Ahimelech was high priest. Abiathar was a son of Ahimelech who escaped the massacre of the high priestly family. Abiathar later became the high priest during David's reign as king.

Claiming that the wrong person is mentioned as high priest - is the reason they suggest we ignore this passage. The argument is that since it has an apparent historical error - we shouldn't teach from this passage.

Another reason given for not using this passage for teaching is that the incident with David and his men may not have occurred on the Sabbath. The Old Testament account does not give the day as the Sabbath. Since that incident did not necessarily occur on the Sabbath - then it is not connected with this incident of Jesus and his disciples on the Sabbath.

My first response to these charges is that most Bible Scholars agree that the book of Mark is not a historical account. The things recorded in Mark did not necessarily take place in the same order as they are recorded in Mark. If a Bible Scholar agrees that the book of Mark is not a historical record then they should not make objections to the Book on the basis of historical accuracy.

The second response is that it was also customary at that time for the Jews to make a reference to something in the Old Testament by referring to the name of someone who was honorable, in or around that time, so as not to mention the name of someone who was less honorable.

Abiathar, Ahimelech's son, was much better known as priest during David's reign as king. Abiathar was better associated with David than was Ahimelech. If they wanted to make a reference to David, and to a high priest, it would be normal at that time to use the name of Abiathar.

If it was a matter of historical accuracy on detail - they would have used the name of Ahimelech. But since it was not a matter of historical accuracy and more a matter of relevance of issue, then it is in line with customary practices of that day for them to use the name of Abiathar.

The issue with David and his men - like the issue of Jesus and his disciples - is all about doing something that is forbidden. The fact that God did not condemn David for his actions gives us an indication that the Pharisees may be interpreting the Scriptures with a much narrower margin than God does.

Jesus is pointing out that the Pharisees are interpreting the law in a manner that is unduly stringent and exceeds the intention of the Law. The religious leaders in David's time may not have interpreted the law so narrowly - we don't read of any uprising against David for eating the Holy Bread. But eating the Holy Bread - if you are not a priest - was forbidden! And yet, when David and his followers ate the Holy Bread - they were not punished by man - or God.

Jesus is claiming that in the same way that it was justifiable for David and his followers to eat the Holy Bread - it is justifiable for Jesus and his followers to pick and eat grain on the Sabbath!

Read Mark 2:27-28 and make notes:

As we arrive at verses 27 & 28 - those who want to toss out this whole passage point to the statements in these 2 verses and argue that there must have been much more said. The conversation doesn't seem to flow. It seems as though some of the conversation is omitted.

From the beginning, we have acknowledged that book of Mark is more of a summary account. So it is here as well - let us spend our time focusing on the point of the summary and not get bogged down in what part of the conversation might be missing.

Given the essence of the challenge and the essence of the response by Jesus to this challenge - what is it that the Holy Spirit intends for us to understand about the kingdom of God - and about being Fishers of Men?

The point is not - as some would like to argue - that David ate the forbidden bread on the Sabbath! The point is - that in the same way that God did not condemn - or even punish David for eating the Holy bread - God is not going to condemn - or even punish - Jesus and his disciples for picking and eating the grain on this Sabbath day.

The point is that the religious leaders in Jesus' time were interpreting the law much more narrowly than God intended. The point is that man has managed to complicate things to the point that we needed to be reminded of "why" God established a "Sabbath Day". The reason for the Sabbath Day was for "MAN'S SAKE." The Sabbath Day was intended for Man's Good - or for Man's Benefit!

Keeping this in mind - we can begin to see that the original intention of the Sabbath has somehow been lost by all the extensions of the Law that have been made by the religious leaders.

The arguments that have been made that verse 27 makes a radical and unparalleled interpretation of the Sabbath in all of Judaism - is not really valid. It is better to argue that verse 27 is a return to original interpretation and intent rather than a departure. The original intent and purpose of the Sabbath would never have forbidden Jesus and his disciples to pluck and eat grain on the Sabbath to meet their need for nourishment.

The Sabbath was established for man's good. It cannot be good for man to go without nourishment when nourishment is at hand and available. Jesus pointed out the weakness of a human system trying to fence in the Law of God with restrictions. Later in the New Testament, we will be told that the Law is completely fulfilled when we act in Love toward others.

Having this knowledge of what is said later - "love fulfills the law" - We can understand that here Jesus is pointing out that we may actually be violating the Law by some of the human restrictions that have been placed upon the Law.

Can it be an act of love on our part - if we deny a person the opportunity to eat nourishment - just because it is a certain day of the week? We are not talking about harvesting the field! We are talking about meeting the human body's need for nourishment! Since the Sabbath was made for man - then the one who is Lord over Man is also Lord over the Sabbath. We should be looking more to Jesus and to the leading of the Holy Spirit for what is allowable on the Lord's Day - than we look to traditions of man.

Having the knowledge of "love fulfills the law" - then we can simply apply the "yardstick of love" to whatever it is that we are questioning. We want to know if this action – or this activity – is acceptable to do on the Lord's Day. Then take a good and honest look at the activity. Does it extend love toward another person? Or does it extend love toward God? If it does, then it is acceptable. If it is only a matter of convenience for us - Then it is not!

God knew something thousands of years before man would ever figure it out. In the past couple of generations - there are a myriad of studies that have been conducted in the secular world - that have all concluded pretty much the same thing. People can not work non-stop without periodic rest times.

Some of the studies have concluded that a business will actually get greater efficiency and greater proficiency - if their workers get a couple of rest periods throughout the work day. So the business actually profits from paying their workers to rest.

Some of the studies have concluded that a business will actually get greater efficiency and great productivity if their workers get one day away from work each week. Some of the studies have concluded that a business will actually get greater productivity if they will give their workers 1 week away from work every few months.

The secular world - only in the recent century - has finally figured out what God knew from the beginning. Human beings need rest. We will not only be stronger - but we will perform better if we get rest. We will be healthier - we will be more productive. So God said - “six days work - then rest one” (Exod35:2)

And yet a great number of Christians today - are acting like they can simply work each and every day without any significant time for rest. Yes - I am saying that it is a Biblical principle - that we should rest from our regular work - one day each week. **Now, what exactly can we do on that one day each week? Let love be the yardstick!**

A pastor I know - and I love him - has consistently taught for years that it is wrong to do any kind of work on Sunday. He has taught for years that it is wrong for Christians to go out to eat on Sundays. His logic is that it requires the restaurant people to work - so when Christians go out to eat on Sunday they sin. And yet, he requires his wife to cook a full meal on Sunday - because he doesn't like leftovers. And this requires her to not only cook - but to clean up the kitchen and dishes afterward.

Holding on to his standard for “no work on Sunday” - is it right to require his wife to cook and clean on Sunday? Before we jump to judgment - don't forget to take the yardstick of Love. What if his wife really loves to cook? What if this is part of her love language? Or would it be wrong to cook a meal and take it to someone who was sick - or hurt? Would it still be wrong to take someone out for a meal on Sunday – in order to bless them with a meal and some fellowship time?

What part does Love play - in this activity - that we are considering? In our society, it is illegal to sell certain items on Sunday. Did our legislature fulfill God's intent for the Sabbath day?

Would it have been “love” for the priest to make David and his followers go hungry - because the only bread at hand was the Holy Bread? Would it have been "love" for the priest to make Jesus and his followers go hungry until the next day - because today is the Sabbath?

I am willing to go on record and say that today's Church People do need to re-evaluate - what activities we should be doing on the Lord's Day. Today's Church People do need re-evaluate our work schedules and our work habits. But before we go forward simply making more rules like "you can't go out to eat on Sunday;" let's measure what we are doing against the yardstick of love.

I am also willing to go on record and say that one of the primary reasons we have not been doing a very effective job of being Fishers of Men - is that we have made a lot of rules about what can and cannot be done on Sunday; while giving little - if any at all - consideration as to how love fits into the whole thing.

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

We began this series with the Word of God telling us that all followers of Jesus - regardless of what specific calling or gift we might receive personally - are ALL called to be Fishers of Men. We have been looking at Jesus' teaching and demonstration of what we should be like if we are going to be Fishers of Men.

In the last lesson, we saw in the Scriptures that rather than following the traditional list of things that we cannot do on the Sabbath - or the Lord's Day that we Christians recognize - that the better decision maker for what is allowable is the yardstick of Love. If this action or this activity is an act of Love, then it is an appropriate activity for the Lord's Day.

In this lesson we are going to look at "another time" when Jesus did something on the Sabbath. And it is easy for us to take a quick look at this passage and say; "oh, well that is just saying the same thing as the passage last week;" and then we skip on to new ground. But as we slow down and dwell in this passage for a little while, we discover that there are two important things we need to take with us from this passage.

Read Mark 3:1-2 and make notes:

In the synagogue was a man with a shriveled hand. Also in the synagogue was a group of people who had shriveled minds. We are not told here exactly who these people are that make up this group; but later in verse 6 they are identified.

At this point, it isn't important to the message as to who they are. This group with the shriveled minds could not see the need of the man with the shriveled hand, because they were too caught up in their desire to catch Jesus in an act of breaking their traditional law.

They had not come to the synagogue to worship God that Sabbath day. They had come on a search and destroy mission. This group with the shriveled minds didn't seem to doubt Jesus' ability to heal. They were watching to see "if he would heal on the Sabbath."

Read Mark 3:3-4 and make notes:

Jesus knew the evil bent of their minds. He also knew the depth of their bitterness toward him. He understood that this group of people was so offended that he had broken their traditional interpretation of the law that they failed to realize Jesus had brought to man a freedom from the imprisonment their interpretation had placed upon man. Their shriveled minds had failed to recognize the revelation of the original intent of the Sabbath.

Jesus - with a sincere desire to reach even these people with the shriveled minds - asked the man with the shriveled hand to stand before the congregation. Jesus then asked the a question that was designed to cause these shriveled minds to exercise themselves in a thought pattern not only of reason - but of grace, and mercy as well. "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath?" - "Is it lawful to save a life on the Sabbath?"

The traditional law did make a provision that if a person's life was in danger; then whatever actions were needed to save their life could be engaged; but if the life was not in danger; then all medical treatment would have to wait until after the Sabbath.

With the traditional interpretation that had been placed upon the Sabbath by the religious leaders; can you imagine the amount of physical suffering that was endured by all those who became sick or were injured in some kind of accident on the Sabbath. They all had to wait until the next day to receive medical treatment - to receive relief from the pain.



By way of their own traditional interpretation, the answer to Jesus' question about saving a life was; "Yes, you can save a life on the Sabbath." But to the question of doing good; their traditional interpretation actually said; "No, you can't do a whole lot of things on the Sabbath, even if they are good things."

And we would all agree that a shriveled hand is not a life threatening situation. Jesus had the man with the shriveled hand to stand in front of the congregation. This man and his affliction was now in plain sight of everyone.

If there was any compassion in the hearts of this people toward the difficulty of life this man experienced surely it would surface now. But none of the group answered Jesus. They remained silent.

Was their silence a sign of their agreement with Jesus. No, it wasn't. This group with the shriveled minds, wanted to harm Jesus more than they wanted good to be done for a man with a shriveled hand.

Let's think for a moment on a couple of the possible interpretations to this situation: Was Jesus suggesting that there was little difference between killing a person and allowing a person to suffer? If we agree with the traditional interpretation the Pharisees held to; how much difference is there between the person who withholds treatment from a person in pain from the person who actually inflicts the pain upon a person?

Disease and disfigurement are seen by many as works of the Devil. Jesus will later reveal that he came to destroy the works of the Evil One. Right here in this situation, we see Jesus demonstrating the destroying of some of the Devil's work.

Was Jesus demonstrating that it was a good and appropriate thing to do on the Sabbath to undo the evil works of Satan? Would this include such things as "clothing the naked" - "instructing the ignorant" - "feeding the hungry" – etc.; as things appropriate to do on the Lord's Day?

## #1

The first thing we should take home with us from this passage is this: more than simply using Love as a yardstick of determining whether a particular activity is okay or not on the Lord's day; our failure to do good for those in need may make us just as guilty as those who inflicted injury. This concept not only includes the Lord's Day, but it applies to Everyday!

The Lord's Day does not excuse us from mercy, grace, or from helping others! Going without food is not fasting. Going without work is not Sabbath.

Read Mark 3:5-6 and make notes:

The tenses of the verbs in the original Greek are important here in this verse. The "looking around at them in anger" is in the aorist tense; which means it was momentary. But the "deeply distressed " is in the present tense; which means it was continuous.

Jesus didn't just stand there looking back and forth at this group who was making him angry. He didn't continue to keep his focus on those who angered him.

This would be a good text to use in helping someone with their anger management. Jesus didn't keep focusing his attention on that which angered him. He moved on, even though his hurt remained with him.

The stubborn hearts of those who had come to find fault actually angered Jesus. But in his anger, Jesus did not sin. Please note, it tells us in verse 5 that Jesus was not just a little disappointed with these people. Jesus was "deeply distressed" and it caused him to be angry. Jesus had more love and compassion than he had anger. Even though these "jerks" had made him angry; Jesus was still able to move and act in the tender mercy and grace of God. This is something all Fishers of Men should strive to do!

In this text we are given the identity of who is beginning to plot to kill Jesus. It is the Pharisees AND the Herodians. While it wasn't important to the message earlier; at this point it is important to the message to identify those who are plotting to kill Jesus.

This is an interesting joining of forces. Strange bedfellows we might say today. The Pharisees were a group of religious leaders. The Herodians were a group of political leaders. The Herodians were those who had aligned themselves with the Roman governments leading family in that district - the Herodian family. In just about every cause, the Pharisees and the Herodians were opposite sides of issues.

The Pharisees wanted what would help the people to be more religiously clean and pure. The Herodians wanted what would make the people more financially prosperous. But here, regarding this man Jesus who was giving such an unorthodox interpretation of the law; both the Pharisees and the Herodians agreed to work together to find a way to kill him.

Perhaps the first reason this is important, is to help us realize that this plot to kill Jesus was not a spur of the moment decision somewhere near the end of Jesus' ministry. This began very near the beginning of Jesus' ministry.

The second reason this is important is so we will realize that if we are going to be Fishers of Men - we can expect religious leaders and political leaders to come against us. If they hated Jesus and what he stood for - why would we ever think that they will love us for teaching what Jesus taught?

Let us not act surprised when religious leaders come against us! Let us not act surprised when political leaders come against us with laws that make it difficult for us to find a place to meet or difficult to share the gospel publicly! Neither of these is a reason for us to accept the opposition and just give up. Just that we should not be surprised by it - and maybe already be praying about and seeking God's plans as to how we will overcome it.

## #2

The second thing we should take home with us from this passage: we should be aware that the religious leaders and the political leaders will eventually come against the gospel of Jesus Christ.

By all means, give thanks to God for the liberty and the protection we currently have in this country - and work toward maintaining this religious liberty. But be aware that it will one day be taken away. This is explained more fully in the Scriptures concerning the End Times.

We Christians, do need to be more careful to give ourselves a day of rest and restoration. But we need to become more aware of those in need around us. We need to help where we can. We need to be good stewards of this freedom that we have. We need to be doing all the good that we can - while it is even permissible to tell people about Jesus. While I believe it is a very small number - there are people today - trying very hard to get themselves into influential positions within our nations government - who are plotting even now - how they can kill all this "Jesus ministry" that is going on in this country.

This isn't being said to scare anyone. This is being said to alert you and me. We need to be sharing our faith as often as we are given an opportunity to do so. We need to be spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ as much as we possibly can.

Just like from the beginning of Jesus' ministry - there were those who were looking for a way to kill Jesus. In the very same way - from the beginning of a local church. In every other local church there are - or there will be - people looking for a way to kill the church. While some will try to say and do things from the outside that would kill the church in the community; others will become members and try to kill it from the inside.

This local church has had some bumps and lumps. It has experienced some pain. It has had to go through times of recovery; but it is still here. And I am convinced that this church is very healthy spiritually today. But we must not be ignorant that Satan will send others to try to destroy the work of God. And we should be making the very best of every moment we have to be witnesses for Jesus Christ.

How many of us are honest enough to confess to Jesus that we have not been very good stewards of the time we have?

We should ask him to forgive us - and ask him to strengthen us - and ask him to help us be more aware of the opportunities to share the gospel. We should ask him to give us the strength - and maybe even the boldness to share the gospel - as we help others.

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

In the previous lesson, we saw where Jesus experienced a challenge from religious leaders regarding his healing a man with a shriveled hand on the Sabbath. Jesus had no real difficulty overcoming the challenge and we might even say he won that round. But it wasn't about winning. His purpose was teaching us something about being Fishers of Men.

Read Mark 3:7 and make notes:

As we noted earlier, this is a pattern that is evident throughout the ministry of Jesus. Following a time we might call a ministry success, Jesus retreats to a more solitary place for restoration and refreshing before returning to ministry. As often did happen, when Jesus withdrew for some quiet time - the crowds found out where he was and followed after him. We are not going to try to cover the significance of this again here; but it sets the stage for another important message to Fishers of Men.

In this simple passage we find some really interesting information that most of us run right over and never notice.

Read Mark 3:8 and make notes:

Verse 8 has more importance than might be evident by a quick reading. So we are going to come back to it in a few minutes - But lets look at the next few verses first.

Read Mark 3:9-10 and make notes

This is an interesting place to slow down. All these people desiring to "touch" Jesus. Was the miracle healing to be found in simply touching Jesus? No, it wasn't the touch in those days - it was the manner in which Jesus was touched. As we read later in Jesus' earthly ministry - there were those who touched him and they were not healed.

I'm referring to those who arrested Jesus, bound Jesus, and those who beat and abused Jesus. Not one of them was healed - or received any miracle, and they all touched Jesus. The difference was that those people who were healed and those who received miracles, touched Jesus in loving faith.

Many people are attempting to touch Jesus today, but they are attempting to touch Jesus with no more faith than did those who were simply following orders to arrest him, following orders to bind him, following orders to beat him, and those following orders to crucify him.

We cannot simply touch Jesus with the physical intellect or the physical rationale. We must touch Jesus with faith!

And we don't have to lay down our intellect to touch Jesus in faith. The truth appears to be that the more we know and understand, the more we have to acknowledge that there must be a God for there are too many dead ends in man's science and man's physics.

The partially intelligent will arrive at one of those dead ends and prefer to make up something to try to justify the dead end. The truly intelligent allows God's Word to fill in the blanks from man's science and physics. And it does all fit together.

Today, we can't be touching Jesus in an attitude of greed or selfishness; "I'll touch Jesus and then I will become a famous person - performing miracles, healing, and maybe even giving prophecies." We must be touching Jesus in an attitude of loving faith. I want to touch Jesus - I want to share the rest of my life on this earth with him and serve him in any way he so chooses for me. And I want to spend all of eternity with him. "Please dear God, I surrender all, let me touch Jesus today!"

Read Mark 3:11-12 and make notes:

We touched on this issue in an earlier message as well. The demons had faith as to who Jesus was. But when they expressed their faith in his identity they received a different response than when Peter expressed his faith in Jesus' identity.

The difference was Peter expressed his faith in love, while the demons expressed their faith without love. We can think of several practical reasons Jesus might not have wanted the demons to run around telling people who he was.

But it is not all that likely that demons would have run around the countryside telling everyone they found, "hey, the Son of God was right over there; you had better get to him fast if you want to be healed."

I will agree that there may have been more than one reason, but the biggest factor in him telling them to be silent probably had more to do with the way in which they expressed it and the heart with which they expressed their faith. And while we have touched on this in a previous message - since it is brought up again here, we will say it again.



Today, we need to be careful that we are not publicly acknowledging who Jesus is with a heart that is not right. We need to be careful to profess Jesus is the Son of God, but we need to be doing so with a heart of loving faith. Not out of "it's the thing to do" - or "it's what's expected" - but simply "I've been touched by Jesus, and I want to tell you what he has done for me."

Let's look back at verse 8: The places mentioned from which the people came is of some importance. In verse 7, we are told a crowd from Galilee followed Jesus. Now in this verse we are told there were people from Judea and Jerusalem that followed as well. The naming of these three areas represent the whole of Israel proper. So there were people - many people in fact since it says "crowd" - that followed after Jesus from all over Israel.

And the other places mentioned; Idumea, Transjordan, the regional coastal cities of Tyre and Sidon; pretty much cover the surrounding neighbors of Israel. We are twice told that a "crowd" in verse 7 and "many people" in verse 8 followed Jesus.

Having taken the time to tell us it was a "crowd" from Galilee and "many people" from the other places may be intended to distinguish the people of Galilee from other places. The reason this is worth slowing down and talking about is simple. It reveals that Jesus took the time to minister to people outside "Israel" proper and outside the Jewish community.

Long before Jesus tells his disciples to "go into all the world" - he has already set the example that his Good News was intended for all the world and not for the Jews only. Jesus himself ministered to other nations with the same miracle working power, divine grace, and supreme love as he did to the Jews.

One of the reasons this passage is important to us today is that it refutes the suggestion by some that Christianity is to the Jewish faith pretty much what "left-over food" is to a elegant banquet - or that Christianity is God's "plan B" because "plan A" failed.

It was always part of God's plan for the Gentiles to share in salvation. We don't stand here today as some kind of "plan B." It was always part of God's plan for people from every nation to be saved and to live and move with the real power of God.

Part of the Good News is that we as Gentiles are not accepting and receiving a second place servant hood with God. Even we Gentiles were part of God's original plan of salvation. Even we Gentiles were part of God's original plan to have his Spirit dwell within and work through is another reason this passage is important to us.

We do not have to take up Jewish customs in order to have a valid relationship with Jesus Christ. We do not have to take up Jewish symbols and Jewish methods in order to have a valid worship and praise experience with God.

When we study the Jewish customs and Jewish practices of the Old Testament, we can find some beautiful symbolism. Within the Jewish practices and ceremonies of the Old Testament we find beautiful signs and symbols of what God had in store for his people. Most of those symbols and practices were to prepare the people's attitudes and hearts for the coming of the Messiah.

Praise God, the Messiah has come! We need to be careful that we don't get so caught up in "returning to the Jewish practices" that we miss the full power and impact of a personal relationship with Jesus.

Another reason this passage is important today - Some have heard lies from Satan and accepted the lies as fact. Lies like, they cannot be saved because of where they are from or the family they came from.

Some of these surrounding areas had people who participated in some pretty despicable things. They were very pagan; and yet Jesus reached out to them with the same love and grace as He did with the Jews. Salvation in Jesus Christ IS available to us today; regardless of our background; regardless of our past practices and lifestyle.

And yet there is still at least one more reason this passage is important today. There are those who can bring themselves to accept that Jesus MIGHT save them; but because of their background or past; they believe He would never heal them - set them free from their bondage - and certainly not use them to minister!

The same miracles and blessings Jesus gave to the Jews - He also gave to those people from the surrounding areas when they came to Him! Regardless of our background - heritage - past lifestyle - or our socio-economic status. If we will come to Jesus - and ask him; He will save us and He will heal us. He will set us free and He will minister through us If we will only allow him.

As Believers in God, who have been saved by Jesus Christ; we are to rise above the limitations of our ethnicity and accept our place as a first class member of the family of God. Through whom God can and will work with marvelous power. Not as some second choice - but as part of God's first choice.

As “the feet” of the Body of Christ, we need to get going. As “the hands” of the Body of Christ, we need to reach out. As “the mouth” of the Body of Christ, we need to speak out.

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

We are still looking at becoming Fishers of Men. In the text for this lesson, Jesus demonstrates something important:

Read Mark 3:13 and make notes:

Jesus leaves the crowd that has pursued him with such passion and he goes up to "a mountain." The Holy Spirit does not prompt Mark to record the name of the mountain, so the specific location is not important to the message.

Read Mark 3:14-15 and make notes:

Much has been made of Jesus having called "twelve." Some see in this number a message of completeness. Some see in this number a new form of the original 12 tribes of Israel. I can see the beauty in both of these concepts; but truthfully I am convinced there is a bigger message in this text. Jesus is described as having been "appointed" by God in Hebrews 3:2: "He was faithful to the one who appointed him"

Here in Mark, we are told that Jesus appointed twelve people to be "with him" and to be "sent out." In some versions of the New Testament Mark 3:14 is translated "ordained" - while Hebrews 3:2 is translated "appointed." In the original Greek, both texts have the same word. The Greek word is "*poieo*" (poy-eh-o); which means "appointed" and not "ordained" in the sense that we use "ordained" most commonly today.

Later in his ministry, Jesus "appoints" 70 others to go out and preach. The apostle Paul speaks of himself as having been "appointed" by Christ; and that took place after Jesus had been crucified, died, buried, and risen from the dead in his glorified body

The point to be grasped here is that it was a normal part of Jesus' ministry; to "appoint" people to go out and minister. He continued to "appoint" people to ministry even after having been crucified. The apostle Paul is a clear example. There is no reason to think, to teach, or to believe that Jesus is not still "appointing" people today.

A common teaching today is that the original 12 were the only apostles. Some of their arguments for this is that to be an apostle, the person had to be personally appointed by Jesus Christ and that only these original 12 had special spiritual gifts and abilities - such as casting out demons, healing, etc.

I will admit that there are some today - just as there have been in every generation of the church's history - who have claimed for themselves the title of "apostle" and they were not and are not! Just because we call ourselves an "apostle" does not make us one. But at the same time it must be pointed out that nothing in the Scriptures will support the teaching of "only the original 12."

In fact the Scriptures indicate to the contrary. The apostle Paul is the most glaring exception and most of those who teach only the original 12 will admit that Paul is to be included - but are not quite clear on why only him!

If Jesus appointed Paul after his rising from the dead; then why could he not appointed others? The New Testament names a number of other people who are called "apostles" besides the original twelve and Paul. This gives us reason to believe that Jesus not only could appoint others besides Paul; but most likely has appointed some in every generation of the church.

Can we agree that if even one person was appointed by Jesus after his resurrection - then it is possible for Jesus to appoint others? Can we agree that if other people in the New Testament are called "apostles" - then it is possible for others to be called "apostles"?

But this text is really not about apostles! This text is about people being "appointed" by Jesus!

The text we are looking at in this study, is one of the few places where the NIV and some other translations are not as accurate as they should be. If we simply do a word-for-word translation from the Greek to English; this passage would read something like this:

*"And he goes up into the mountain, and calls to whom would be; and they went to him. And he appointed twelve that they might be with him, and that he might send them to preach, and to have authority to heal diseases and to cast out demons."*

The original Greek of this text does not have any words that mean "ordain" and none that mean "apostle." The original Greek text simply states that 12 were appointed to "be with Jesus" - to "be sent out by Jesus." The original Greek text, if we don't mess with it and begin to add to it or to take away from it, is very much in line with the text in Mark, up to this point.

Jesus is teaching his followers how to be Fishers of Men and preparing them to be Fishers of Men. We have already agreed that it is possible for people to be appointed by Jesus today! Now look carefully at what these who are "appointed" were "appointed to do: - to "heal diseases" - and to "cast out demons"

Unfortunately some translations have left out the Greek part that says "healing diseases" - but other translations kept that part.

Part of being a Fisher of Men - means that we should be praying for the sick to be healed and that we should be praying for people to be delivered from the oppression, interference, and the control by demonic forces. And we should expect it to actually happen! That was part of being a Fisher of Men in the beginning - and nothing in the Word of God gives any indication that it ever stopped being a part of being a Fisher of Men.

I am aware that a common argument for the gifts and ministry of the original 12 having ceased - is the text from the New Testament where it says "prophecies" and "tongues" will cease.

The text is 1 Corinthians 13:8, please read and make notes:

While we are not really teaching about prophecies or tongues in this lesson - if you want to use this argument to support the concept that the ministry of the original twelve ceased when they died; then you have to agree that "knowledge" passed away when they did also! When we listen to what some people are teaching today - it does sound like "knowledge" just might have passed away - at least for them!

If we decide we want to be one of those who believe that these things have all passed away; then why would we believe God appoints some to be "preachers" today? - Why would we believe God appoints some to be "missionaries" - "evangelists" - or any other ministry area?

Either God is still "appointing" people today or nobody is called or appointed today! For those of us who believe Jesus is still calling and appointing people today there is a message in this text for us.

The high point of the message IS NOT that those appointed will heal diseases and cast out demons! The high point of the message is that those appointed are appointed for the purpose of "spending time with Jesus" - "to be with him" - before going out to do any ministry.

Regardless of the specific ministry gift or calling we believe we have received - the authority and the effectiveness of our ministry efforts are directly related to the level of relationship we maintain with the ministry giver - Jesus Christ! Our relationship with Jesus sets and defines the boundaries of our ministry power and authority. The time we spend with Jesus imposes upon us the limits in ministry.

The point of the message in this simple text is the attention to the presence of the followers with Jesus and their preparation for the mission. Being with Jesus - spending time with Jesus - uniquely qualifies any individual to bear witness of Jesus either in word or deed - and sometimes both word and deed. Being with Jesus - spending time with Jesus - enables the individual to share in the power of the Kingdom of God.

The majority of people get as excited about reading these next few verses as they do about reading the "who begat whom" verses in Matthew and Luke. But I am convinced that every part of the Bible was inspired by the Holy Spirit to be written down - so every part has something to say to us.

Let's spend a few minutes and look at this text.

Read Mark 3:16-17 and make notes:

This list of who was appointed begins with Simon - and the text tells us Jesus called him "Peter." Simon was called early in Jesus' ministry in Galilee; but it is here that we are told that Jesus did not call him by his given name. Instead Jesus called him by what we today refer to as a "nick-name." "Peter" is Greek equivalent of the Aramaic "Cephas" - which refers to a "stone" or a "rock." Next we are told of the brothers James and John - and that Jesus referred to them by a nick-name as well. Jesus called them the "sons of thunder."



Nothing has been revealed prior to this text that would explain why Jesus would give either of these 3 men these particular nick-names. Later we will read of Peter's firmness and ability to stand even under the threat of the Sanhedrin. We will also read of the fiery outbursts of James and John.

After reading the rest of the Gospels and then returning to this text - we can see that Jesus is "calling those things that are not – yet - as though they were." Long before Peter was able to stand against the threats, Jesus was calling him "the rock;" and long before James and John could be bold in public, Jesus was calling them "sons of thunder."

Before we go on - let me asks you Fishers of Men - do you want to go on calling those around you such names as; "lazy, shallow, hypocrite, unreliable, etc." - or do you think we should be calling them what they "will be" in Christ Jesus?

If we call people demeaning names - even if that is the way they act right now; will they become something better? Do we inspire people to become what we call them? Just some things to consider as we go about being a Fisher of Men. By the way, you might find a useful application for this concept in your work place!

Read Mark 3:18-19 and make notes:

It is interesting that Simon and his brother Andrew were called together earlier in Jesus ministry. But in this listing, we see Andrew listed separately from Simon, and after James and John. The first thing that is of some note is that all of the remaining names, after Simon, James, and John - don't get a lot of press in the remainder of the New Testament.

Then there is the name “Bartholomew.” Many Bible scholars are convinced that this was not a "proper name" but a nick-name which means "son of Talmai." If this is true then we don't know the proper name of this follower of Jesus. But here again, we see Jesus calling one of his followers by a nick-name rather than their proper name.

Then there is "Matthew." His proper name is "Levi." He was a tax collector. We read of his being called to follow Jesus in chapter 2, but Jesus prefers to call him "Matthew." We are given no reason for this name change. One possible reason is that Levi had been a tax collector; and tax collectors were despised in a major way. By changing his name, Jesus may be helping not only Levi but the other followers to see Levi in a different light. He is a follower of Jesus and no longer a tax collector.

By the time the Holy Spirit inspired Mark to write the gospel account - the name "Judas" was a very disparaging name among the believers in Jesus as the Messiah. There was another follower of Jesus who's proper name was Judas besides the Judas we know as "Iscairiot."

"Thaddaeus," listed here, is believed to be the “other Judas.” And to keep from having anyone possibly see him in any negative light - he is called Thaddaeus. There was also another follower of Jesus named "Simon" besides the one Jesus called "Peter." This other Simon is referred to as being "the zealot." We can only wonder whether Jesus referred to him this way or if the Holy Spirit inspired Mark to designate him as such. It does however tell us that this Simon had a notable zeal for the gospel cause.

And the one making the bottom of the list is the one perhaps the whole world knows about; "Judas Iscairiot." He is the one who betrayed Jesus.

This has some helpful insight for us today. The one who God knew would be the one to betray Jesus - was allowed to spend time with Jesus. He was afforded as much access to the Savior as any other person. He was even allowed to serve in Jesus' ministry.

Judas Iscariot was the treasurer. There is certainly nothing wrong with being the treasurer. It is not more evil than any other ministry position; so please don't associate being a ministry treasurer with being a betrayer of Jesus. The point is first that Judas - when he rebelled against Jesus and betrayed him - was without excuse. He could not say "it was because he was never allowed inside" or anything like that.

Don't think today that those who are attacking the cause of Christ are doing so because they are jealous of all those who have found Jesus. Those most active in attacking the cause of Christ - are usually people who have had an encounter with Christ - but were unwilling to surrender to his Lordship.

The Judas Iscariot in the New Testament, expressed his desire for Jesus to conduct his earthly ministry differently from what Jesus was doing. Judas had wanted Jesus to collect the money from the gifts he received and spend it in benevolent ministry outreaches. Most of those who are attacking the cause of Christ are people who could not get Christ to change the ministry to whatever their idea of "what ministry should be." Please don't be misled by thinking "if only these attackers of Christianity could meet Jesus."

People who simply don't believe in God or Jesus - are not the ones attacking Christianity. Those who simply don't believe in God - will usually do nothing more than smile at you for believing and wonder how you could be so naive.

Those who are actively trying to destroy Christianity are most likely to be those who know Jesus does exist. But they can't make Christianity become what they think it should be - so they are trying to destroy it. For you see; if it would just go away; then they would not feel the conviction.

Hopefully, this helps to bring understanding as to how we should pray for those who are actively trying to destroy Christianity.

An important point we need to take home with us from this passage is this: When we spend time with Jesus - we will become more like the good positive person he has created us to be - OR we will become an enemy of Jesus and his cause. Will we become the strong one in Jesus, or will we become the attacker?

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

The text we are going to look at in this lesson is a very important text for those who accept the call to become Fishers of Men. While there are several things we should take home with us from this passage, there is a major thing we need to reconsider in our lifestyle and relationships.

Read Mark 3:20-21 and make notes:

Once again, we are told of Jesus' absence of a time of leisure, and even an absence of time to set quietly and eat a meal. We are also told that Jesus' family has come to the conclusion that Jesus must have gone crazy.

Before you get too mad at Jesus' family, consider for a moment: Can you imagine the kinds of reports Jesus' family have probably been receiving about him? Some are telling how Jesus went to a certain village, or to someone's home and performed miracles. Some are telling how they heard people going up and down through a village saying that Jesus is here and he heals diseases. And perhaps some are telling them that they recently saw Jesus, and he wasn't taking good care of himself; he isn't getting enough rest, and he is so caught up in his ministry that he isn't even taking time to eat properly.

Reports like the first two, could be embarrassing for the family and they could even feel embarrassment for the sake of Jesus. But reports of the nature of this third report, would most likely make a family mad. They understand that without proper rest and food, a person will get sick and die.

We might allow our family member to go on with their personal quest, even though we think they are wasting their time and resources. But if we hear that they are so caught up in their quest that they aren't eating and sleeping - we would most likely try to intervene and "make them" eat and get some rest.

However, don't make too light of this account. The Greek words that are translated "he is out of his mind" - speaks of someone who is ecstatic in the sense of psychic derangement.

To use such language, reveals that his family actually was thinking that Jesus had gone crazy - he had become deranged. This reveals both a misunderstanding of Jesus by his family and it reveals their unbelief.

A few verses later we learn that Jesus' mother was with those who come to take Jesus. What we don't know at this point is whether Mary doubted Jesus' ministry and also thought he was crazy or that Mary believed in his ministry and was with the family members who came to take him - just so that she could try to keep them from hurting him.

His birth account tells us that Mary heard the things the angels said about the baby she would have and that she pondered them in her heart. When he stayed at the temple when he was twelve - she worried about him, looked frantically for him - and when they found him in the temple - demanded to know why he would do such a thing.

It is reasonable to think Mary wasn't a Believer in this healing stuff and the casting out demons on the part of Jesus. But truthfully, the scripture simply doesn't tell us enough to be emphatic about it one or the other. Mary was indeed a blessed person to be chosen to conceive and bear the Christ in her flesh. But how much more blessed Mary would be to receive the faith in Christ!

Read Mark 3:22 and make notes:

The simple fact that those we might consider "legal specialist" have come down from Jerusalem - indicates the ministry of Jesus has attracted the attention of the Sanhedrin. The scribes know that at the least Jesus has a considerable following of people. And they seem to believe that he is actually healing diseases and casting out demons. The scribes declaring that Jesus was doing his work by being in alliance with the devil, was a way of saying that what Jesus was doing was "un-lawful" and it needed to be stopped.

Read Mark 3:23-27 and make notes:

Jesus answers the accusations of the scribes with some well known proverbial sayings of that day. If they would just stop and think about what they are saying, they would know that it can't be true.

Satan cannot cast out Satan! If what you are saying is true, then you are saying that an impossible circumstance is taking place. Satan is destroying his own realm! If what you are saying is true, then Satan has become divided against himself and that means that Satan has become powerless. And if Satan is powerless, then he can't cast out anything!

Jesus says Satan is more like a "strong man" than one who is divided against himself. Jesus responds to these charges by suggesting that someone who is more powerful than the strong man has arrived on the scene. The strong man has been bound and what the strong man has is being pillaged by the one who is more powerful.

The casting out of demons is nothing less than a forceful attack on the kingdom of Satan – and it is a denouncing of Satan's claimed lordship. What isn't said directly - but is indicated indirectly - is the source of Jesus' power. If Satan isn't the source of Jesus' power, then who or what is the source of Jesus' power?

When Jesus begins the pronouncement on blasphemy for those who are paying attention - Jesus is proclaiming that he is working in the power of the Holy Spirit. Rather than being possessed by an unclean spirit - Jesus possesses the Spirit of God!

Read Mark 3:28-30 and make notes:

Jesus declares that "all sins of men" are open to being forgiven with one exception. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is beyond being forgiven. This solemn, and for some frightening, warning must be interpreted in the light of this specific situation to avoid going into error with it. Blasphemy is an expression of defiant and open hostility to God.

Jesus was saying that the scribes were putting themselves in danger if they continued in the openly defiant hostility toward the work of God that Jesus was doing. The casting out of demons was clearly a sign that the kingdom of God had invaded the kingdom of Satan. And yet the scribes were saying that it was a sign of the kingdom of Satan invading the kingdom of God. This is calling light darkness. But the scribes were not simply saying that the work of God was the work of Satan. The scribes were saying this, while at the same time willing to use force to stop this work from going forth.

There have been a great many people who have studied this text and have come to the conclusion that when a person says the work of God is the work of Satan - then this person has just blasphemed the Holy Spirit and that they can never be forgiven. Others have studied this passage and have come to the conclusion that blasphemy is when you say God's work is of the devil AND take forceful actions to stop God's work.



First, I ask you to consider that Jesus did not say that blasphemy against the Heavenly Father was unforgivable. And Jesus did not say that blasphemy against Jesus was unforgivable. Jesus said that "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is unforgivable. The first thing - is that the blasphemy to be concerned about is that which is against the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, I ask you to consider, Saul, in the New Testament said these kinds of things. Saul put some believers into prison, and had others killed. And he most certainly was forgiven, was saved, and was made an apostle of the Gospel. And God worked mightily through him.

Blasphemy must be something more than simply saying this and it must be something more than even taking forceful actions against the work of God. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which is unforgivable, is talking about that which is conscious and deliberate. This warning was not directed to the common people of that day, neither is it directed toward the common people of our day.

This warning was directed to those in that day who were knowledgeable regarding God's Word, and knowledgeable of God. And so it is today. Those who know the Word of God and who know God, have a serious responsibility - and must be very careful about what they attribute to Satan. I will go on record and say, If a person doesn't have some personal experience with God, they are not capable of being guilty of "blaspheming against the Holy Spirit."

Read Mark 3:31-35 and make notes:

The passage we are looking at is very interesting. It begins with Jesus' family suggesting that Jesus is obviously crazy. And it has an account of Jesus' family coming to take him home.

Right in the middle of these two accounts is the incident involving the scribes from Jerusalem, saying that Jesus must be doing what he is doing by the power of Beelzebub. This sandwich is deliberate. The Holy Spirit inspired Mark to record it just this way. The suggestion is that the members of Jesus' family who suggest that he is crazy is not so different from the scribes who attribute Jesus' powers to an alliance with the devil.

Jesus' family says "he is crazy" - "he is mad" - "he is beside himself." The scribes say, "he has an unclean spirit" - "he is in alliance with the devil." Today, we might prefer to say that there is a difference in saying someone is crazy and saying they are working with the power of Satan. But this account in Mark is indicating even though the statements about Jesus being crazy are coming from his own family, they are not so different from those saying he is working in the power of the devil.

Let me explain why they are so similar: When his family says, "he is crazy", they are trying to prevent people from listening to him. Why listen to him if he is crazy? When the scribes say, "he is in an alliance with the devil", they are trying to prevent people from listening to him. Why listen to him - and certainly why accept any miracle work he does, if he is in cahoots with the devil?

His family - and let's accept the fact that they love Jesus - is trying to do the same thing that the scribes who hate Jesus - are trying to do. For different reasons most likely - but trying to accomplish the same thing. Both of them, probably without realizing it, are trying to interfere with the plan of God, the will of God, and the work of God.

Jesus' family doesn't appear to believe Jesus is performing miracles. When they hear the reports that are coming back from all these villages Jesus has visited, they come to the conclusion that "he must be out of his mind"

The scribes believe Jesus is actually performing miracles. But they are saying that he is obviously working in agreement with Satan. And let's be fair when we consider the scribes. These guys have been serving God for some time, many of them all of their adult life and they are twice Jesus' age.

In all their years of serving God, they have never healed anyone, and they have never cast out a demon. So, since Jesus is casting out demons and healing diseases, he must be doing it with the power of Satan, since their experience says it doesn't happen with the power of God.

Maybe we need to read Jesus' warning to the Scribes in a tone of voice that is one of genuine concern - rather than a tone of voice that is one of contempt! Something of the real family is revealed here.

The biological family of Jesus stands "outside" of the working and ministry of God. The messianic family is "inside" where the working of God and the ministry of God is taking place. The biological family is on the "outside" - while the true family is on the "inside"! One is family "by skin and blood" - but the other is family "by heart and faith"!

When Jesus' mother and brothers arrived, Jesus was inside the house and many people had gathered close by him - to hear what he had to teach, and some to receive healing or deliverance.

This text doesn't say that his family was unable to get into the house - it simply says they didn't go inside. But "they sent someone in to call him." Please note that it wasn't just one person who told Jesus his mother and brothers were outside looking for him. Look at v32, it was the "crowd who was sitting around him."

The message must have passed from person to person that his family was outside and how the crowd must have wondered why Jesus didn't suspend the ministry and just to run outside and greet them. People back then were not different from people are today. And isn't that pretty much what we do? When our family comes - we suspend church and go to greet them don't we? Before you object to this statement; how many people do you know who have stayed home from church because some family members came to visit?

Jesus responded to this by saying "Here is my mother and brothers." It isn't really important to argue whether Jesus was pointing toward everyone who had gathered around him or just the twelve. The larger message is certainly that there is a special relationship for those who are obedient to the summons of Christ. A family type of relationship that is stronger and deeper than the biological relationship of blood family. A family type of relationship that takes priority over the biological family.

It is the performing of the will of God in our life that determines our kinship to Jesus. It is the radical obedience to the Heavenly Father that determines our inclusion in the family of God.

It isn't the person who claims Christ - that is a member of the family of God. It is the person who obeys God and makes a continuous effort to follow Christ who is a member of the family of God.

The fact that there will be no marrying and giving in marriage in Heaven – just may indicate there will be no biological family units in Heaven. The biological family ceases to have any significance when the physical life is ended. The Spiritual family relationship transcends this earth and will continue with us throughout eternity. That is why it takes priority over the biological family.

It is indeed a wonderful thing when the members of a biological family unit become members of the family God. For only in this Spiritual Family will there be any relationship beyond this physical life.

Do we need to reconsider how we respond to the demands of our biological families? Do we need to place any more emphasis and put forth any more effort toward helping our biological families come into the family of God? If we always set aside God's family for our fleshly family will they ever become members of God's family?

Jesus did not set aside God's family for his fleshly family - and the Scriptures indicate that some of them became believers. When we answer the call to become a Fisher of Men, we need to be aware that some - or maybe all - of our earthly family may consider us crazy. Jesus' family did - and so might ours.

If Jesus had not remained faithful to what many saw as his being crazy - you and I would have no hope of being saved today. You and I would have no hope of being healed today. You and I would have no hope of being delivered from torment and oppression today. But Jesus did remain faithful and we do have Real Hope of becoming a part of the Real Family!

Will our faithfulness to what others see as crazy be the encouragement for someone to try Jesus? Or will our lack of faithfulness keep someone from ever considering Jesus?

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

In our look into what it means to become a Fisher of Men as revealed in the book of Mark - we now arrive at a series of teachings by Jesus which were given by means of parables.

The first few parables we will examine reveal some significant information concerning the kingdom of God. The parable we are going to look at in this lesson reveals something about God. And as such - reveals something about what we should be like if we are going to be Fishers of Men.

Read Mark 4:1-2 and make notes:

The introduction into this time of teaching is simply that "once again Jesus began to teach by the lake" - and "a crowd gathered around him." On this occasion Jesus got into a boat and sat in the boat. From his position in the boat, Jesus taught the people who stood along the water's edge. It is of some importance for us to recognize what is said in verse 2. Jesus taught the people "many things." Not everything that Jesus taught is recorded here. But of all the things Jesus did teach the people - some few things the Holy Spirit inspired Mark to write down for us to read today.

The Holy Spirit prompted Mark to write a couple of things: ONE - that Jesus taught the people "many things"; and TWO - only these things that Jesus taught are to be recorded for future reading and studying.

Read Mark 4:3-9 and make notes:

This particular parable regarding "the sower" - is framed by a call to "pay attention." At the beginning in verse 3 it says "Listen!" - and at the end in verse 9 Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." It is obvious Jesus wanted to involve his hearers in the situation he was describing. They were intended to be led to a place of making a form of judgment.

Jesus is indicating that there may be more to this parable than first appears! There were most likely those who only listened superficially in that day and missed the real message. The conclusion of the parable clearly indicates this parable is set apart as having some significance. And the truth is - the understanding of this parable provides the key to understanding the other parables which follow.

A little later, the meaning of the individual parts of this parable will be explained. And if the meaning of the parts was all that is important for us to read and hear today - then that is what the Holy Spirit would have inspired Mark to write. BUT, the Holy Spirit inspired Mark to write down the parable itself; as well as the interpretation of the parts. So, it is reasonable to expect that there is something in the parable itself that the Holy Spirit wants us to see - in addition to the meaning of the parts.

This parable is one that many of us are probably familiar with. And have probably heard it taught several times in your life. Even so, please take the time and let's try to take a fresh look at this parable.

In our day, there are many people who have never planted seeds of any kind. They don't have any personal experience with planting, growing, and harvesting. They have no personal experience with plants sprouting and then dying. However, in the day when this parable was taught by Jesus, this process was very familiar to all those who lived in that area. Even those who did not make their living by farming, understood the process. Agriculture was a major part of the community life and it was all around everyone. Even those who made their living by other means lived and moved about the fields of those who did farm for a living.

One of the keys to fully understanding this parable is to understand the act of sowing that is described here. The Kingdom of God has broken into this world much like the seeds that thrown about by the sower. In the description of the various soil types it gives reason to reflect upon the different responses of people to the very same gospel message. However, the various responses may not be the main point to carefully consider.

Consider for a moment, this parable is telling us something regarding the Kingdom of God coming to man's earth. First, God is at the center of this action. Secondly, this is the manner in which the Kingdom of God has come to mankind.

The climax of this parable is the glorious character of the harvest; thirty fold, sixty fold, and the remarkable yield of an unusually large harvest of a hundred fold. When this harvest is compared to the backdrop of the many obstacles experienced by the sown seed - the emphasis is not to be placed on what first appears to be the enormity of the waste - but the emphasis is to be placed on the splendor of the harvest.

Let us not allow ourselves to be misled down the wrong path and get caught up in the idea that the sower didn't know how to properly sow seeds. After all, why would a knowledgeable sower throw seeds on a path - rocky soil, or among weeds? And let's not allow ourselves to be misled on the path of how wasteful the sower was with the seed they had.

The harvest; in several places in the New Testament; is a common figure for the consummation of the Kingdom of God. In this parable, we can see a significant reflection on the future aspect of the Kingdom of God described in the sowing of seed - and its growth - and its ultimate yield.

There is an aspect of the Kingdom of God that applies both to the present and to the future. If we stop only at the blessing that the Kingdom of God has come to man, then we greatly miss the message.



John the Baptist understood - Jesus certainly understood - and it is apparent that Jesus' disciples of that first century understood - That the Kingdom of God also meant that a harvest was expected.

For all of those who were sincerely looking for the coming of the Messiah and had listened to the common teachings of that day - this parable carried a significant message! As a result of the common teachings of that era - most of those who were looking for the coming of the Messiah- probably expected the Messiah to arrive on the scene with something of a blaze of glory - toppling earthly kings and kingdoms - and establishing a divine kingdom on earth. Justice and righteousness would become the order of the day. God's people would no longer be taken advantage of by the governments of man - etc.

Jesus was teaching - in somewhat of a veiled way - that the Kingdom of God - which had indeed come to man through him - was more like the relationship of the seed being sown - the results of the seed being sown - and the harvest of the seeds sown. The seed was not sown only in the places that had been properly prepared for receiving the seed. The seed was sown in all places - even those places that had not been properly prepared to receive the seed. The seed was sown in all places - not just those places that were worthy of seed being sown.

I mentioned earlier that this parable would be explained - and there is something to be gained from understanding the meaning of the parts of the parable. But there is something of great importance for us to grasp right here - before we look into the meaning of the parts of the parable.

God is the sower of the seed of the gospel. God has sown - and God continues to sow the seeds of the gospel to all people. Regardless of their preparation, - worthiness, reception ability, and so forth. God does not withhold the sowing of the seed of the gospel from certain people. God sows to all!

If we are going to be Fishers of Men:

Can we withhold the gospel message from any particular people - or group of people?

Can we withhold the gospel message from a particular person?

Can we be the kind of Fishers of Men that God would have us to be and go about our sharing of the gospel message by deciding that certain people are a waste of time?

There are those that we know are "hard-hearted" and even "hard-headed." But if we are going to be the kind of Fishers of Men that God would have us to be - then we must sow the seeds of the gospel message to them as well.

There are those that we know are so shallow that even if you did manage to get them to take hold of some small part of the gospel message - they would turn loose of it before long. They would never allow it to take root in their lives - it would never get very deep into their lifestyle or attitude. But if we are going to be the kind of Fishers of Men that God would have us to be - then we must sow the seeds of the gospel message to them as well.

Later in the New Testament, we are told that God reveals himself to all mankind - even nature expresses God to those who will pay attention. But here, in the sharing of this parable, long before we are told that even nature reveals God to man - it is revealed that God shares the potential of becoming a part of the kingdom of God with all.

When someone comes to the end of their life and they die without Jesus - that doesn't mean we should not mourn for them and their state. But it does mean that we should not be angry with God for not saving them before they died.

This parable helps us understand that God does indeed sow the seeds of the Kingdom of God to everyone. I might not be able to see any signs that the seeds of the kingdom of God was ever in their life, but I know that God sows to all, the seeds of the gospel. God sows the seed of the gospel message to all - rich and poor - educated and uneducated - wise and foolish - brave and coward - diligent and lazy - warm of heart and the cold of heart - compassionate and hard - thoughtful and careless.

Think about this picture of God: He sows the seeds of the Gospel at all times and everywhere. No fault is to be found with the quality of the seed! Neither the sower nor the seed is to be blamed for any lack of harvest. God is to be praised for his faithfulness to sow to all of mankind. He is to be praised for his willingness to sow to all.

A true Fisher of Men will praise God for his sowing the seed to all - rather than complain that some particular person doesn't show any signs of the kingdom of God. And a true Fisher of Men will be willing to share the seed of the gospel with each and every person - regardless.

Are you ready and willing to become a Fisher of Men?

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

In the last lesson, we looked at the parable of the sower as given in Mark. We shared that the understanding that parable was the key to understanding all the parables that follow it in Mark.

Read Mark 4:10 and make notes:

The record of Jesus teaching of the multitude is interrupted by verses 10-20 of chapter 4. Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables - and then explained these parables to those who were close to him and sincere in their discipleship. Verse 10 informs us that there were "others around him" besides "the twelve, when he was asked about the meaning of these parables.

This is a rather important little fact to grab hold of; it lets us know that while Jesus explained the meaning of the parables to a small group - this small group was something larger than "the Twelve." In other words, the meaning of the parables was, and is, intended for a larger audience than "just the apostles." So, even though you may acknowledge that you are not one of the apostles - it is still God's intention that you understand the kingdom of God.

Read Mark 4:11-12 and make notes:

There are those who look at verses 11 and 12, and teach that Jesus veiled the gospel message about the kingdom of God, so that some people would not understand and repent and be forgiven - "otherwise they might turn and be forgiven." That's a troubling suggestion. We are told in the New Testament that God doesn't want anyone to perish; but rather wants everyone to come to eternal life.

How can you make that fit with Jesus going around and purposefully encrypting the message of the gospel so that certain people can't understand it? And that keeps them from getting saved? And there are those who insist that this is what these verses teach! That makes it sound like Jesus is working against the will of the Heavenly Father!

I will grant you that a quick reading can leave us with this impression. And it would appear to be a rather obvious meaning that some say needs no further interpretation. But it does deserve studying and investigating; and is worth our time to interpret in light of the whole Word of God.

"The secret" in verse 11 is a term that is used in Daniel and other Old Testament era writings. It speaks of "secret things" rather than a specific secret in itself. In Daniel it is used in regards to veiled proclamation of future events appointed by God concerning the end times. Since it is the same terminology as in Daniel; it is reasonable to interpret it in much the same manner here. It is speaking of secret things rather than "a secret."

In verse 11 Jesus calls attention to the contemporary situation of unbelief; then in verse 12 Jesus cites text from Isaiah. This isn't done to explain why he speaks in parables - but as a commentary on why contemporary people have difficulty understanding the messages being given to man.

When we go back and study the text in Isaiah (6:9); we discover that "those outside" does not mean they are denied the possibility of belief; but rather that they are excluded from any further understanding of the revelation because of their unbelief.

It would be wrong to have this text mean one thing when it was first given in Isaiah; and then give it another meaning when it is cited by Jesus. Its meaning and use in Isaiah must be brought to the gospel of Mark for assistance in understanding what is said here.

Also, verses 11 & 12 are only properly interpreted and understood when we keep them in the context of the situation as has been revealed to us in the preceding chapter of Mark. Unbelief and opposition to Jesus has become rather blatant to say the least. In Mark 3:6 Jesus' opponents conspired to destroy him; in Mark 3:22 his opponents declare his power is demonic in nature.

It is against this backdrop that chapter 4:11-12 is to be interpreted. Jesus makes a sharp distinction between those to whom God will entrust the mystery of His Kingdom and those who make up the unbelieving multitude. And it is this unbelieving multitude from whom the full truth is concealed.

All throughout the Old Testament era; the revelation of God to man had a history of acceptance or rejection whenever it entered the scene of man. The term "parable" in verse 11 - expresses an aspect of divine revelation and human understanding of that divine revelation.

The situation spoken of by Jesus is one where those who have their heart hardened will experience the truth in a veiled manner. Those who have open hearts that are at least turned toward God will have truth opened to them with no veil to obscure its meaning. That the Kingdom of God has come to man in Jesus - can only be discerned through faith.

When Jesus speaks in parables it is like someone giving an example from everyday life to help explain the principle they are teaching. It gives a vivid picture to help fix the principle in one's mind and memory. Jesus' presence brings about disclosure for some - and veiling for others. Jesus' presence brings about grace for some - and judgment for others.

What was veiled for one group, was truly enlightening and revealing for another group. The question we must ask ourselves - is the veil that is covering the truth of God's kingdom - a result of God's action to place a veil there? Or, is it in place as a result of the unbelieving heart?

Since Jesus gives us the reference from Isaiah; I submit to you - the veil that covers the truth for the multitude is a veil that is caused by - or put in place by - and sustained by - the unbelieving heart. If it were not for the unbelieving heart; there would be no veil. They would see the truth and would repent and be saved.

All churches have received the same message; the Bible. And yet, look at all the different responses and understandings to this same message!

We have two groups of people spoken of here - and both groups of people have experienced the same event. God has come to man in a fleshly form - Jesus. The significance of this single event is entirely different for each group of people. Not because of the event - not because of the one who has arrived in the event - but solely due to the response of each group to the event.

Those whose hearts are open and teachable - see the "kingdom of God come to man." Those whose hearts are hardened and unteachable - see nothing but a troublesome enigma.

The parables each reveal something of the kingdom of God and the mission of Jesus Christ. And unbelief renders every aspect of the mission to appear as something alien.

If we are finding God's Word to be meaningless; then the problem is not with God's Word. The problem is with our heart! If we are finding God's message to be meaningless; then the problem is not with God's Message. The problem is with our heart! Some have enough faith to be saved; but unbelief keeps them from understanding the rest of God's message. Those glorious truths that go beyond the need for salvation and into living the joyous and victorious life.

If we are not finding meaning and understanding from God's Word; please recognize the Alarm is sounding. We need to come to God and confess to him that we don't understand. We need to admit to him that we are having trouble believing. We need to ask Him to help us with our unbelief.

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:



This parable is probably a well studied passage for most of us. Some have no doubt heard it used a number of times in various teaching and preaching. Please don't shut this lesson out before we get started. There is a message for us in this parable; that is probably different from what most of us have heard before. So please, pay attention as we look into this very important message for Today's Church.

Read Mark 4:13 and make notes:

As we study the other gospels, we come to the conclusion that the parable of the sower is probably not the first parable Jesus taught. But the Holy Spirit inspired Mark to record this parable first. This parable furnishes a good starting point for understanding the other parables of growth which are recorded in Mark. Look at what Jesus said to those around him, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable?"

Jesus basically stated that in order to understand the other parables, it was necessary to understand the parable of the sower. This lets us know that the true meaning of the parable does not lie in generalities of the listening abilities of the hearers. There is an important message in this parable that we can carry with us to all the other parables that will help us unlock the message in each one.

Let's take a look at some of the specifics of this parable and then look at the main message for us from it.

Read Mark 4:14 and make notes:

This is an appropriate analogy - don't you think? In the beginning; God created man from "earth." You know - dirt - we are in a manner of speaking; "soil." The simple statement, "The farmer sows the word;" focuses attention on the word of proclamation that has been given concerning the "secrets of the kingdom" of God.

As Jesus teaches - the Kingdom of God is disclosed and is demonstrated as having come to man. Just like when a farmer sows seed, there must be a "reception" of the seed in order for a harvest to take place. The seed is the "Word of God." The heart is the "soil."

This is an important principle, so allow me to restate it: When "The Farmer" sows "His Word", there must be a "reception" of "His Word" in order for a harvest to take place. In chapters 2 and 3 of Mark; Jesus has already called attention to the negative response to the Word.

Read Mark 4:15-17 and make notes:

These are the people who cannot hold onto the Word they have received! Seed that is not allowed to take root, is easily taken away. When seed is allowed to take root; it doesn't blow away when the winds come, and it doesn't wash away when the water comes. It is so very important that we do more than simply "hear the Word of God." We must allow it to take root in our lives.

Read Mark 4:18-19 and make notes:

These are the people who hold onto the Word; but it never produces a harvest. The real problem in the garden is not that vines and thorns come up. The real problem in the garden is that we allow the vines and the thorns to grow.

When you look at the garden that is overgrown with vines and thorns; we might all agree that it is not likely to get much of a harvest from the garden. Every gardener understands that steps **MUST BE TAKEN** to prevent vines and thorns from growing in the garden.

It is not possible to prevent these enemies of the good seed to come up in the garden of our lives. But **IT IS POSSIBLE** for us to keep them from growing and taking over the garden of our lives.

Allow me to make a side note while we are here: There is nothing wrong with wealth. I hope each one of you receives all the wealth you can handle. The problem is when we allow wealth to have an inappropriate place in our life. If we allow ourselves to be deceived and begin to think that wealth is the answer to any of our life's problems; then we will find the "deceit of wealth" will choke out the real harvest in our life.

The problem is never upon the worlds goods that we possess. The problem is always in our corrupt mind and the place we give the worlds goods in our life.

Wealth can be a wonderful tool to help us in our life; but "the deceit of wealth" will choke our prospects of a real harvest in the things that really matter. There is nothing wrong with luxury in this life. There is nothing wrong with living comfortably. The problem is when luxury in this life, or living comfortably, is given a primary place in our priorities.

When we allow this to happen, we have just taken the things that were intended to help us; and turned them into something that will choke out the real harvest of our life.

Read Mark 4:20 and make notes:

The un-fruitfulness of the Word is easily traced to a variety of circumstances in peoples lives. The references to the superficial adherence to the Word and the offenses taken at the Word; both are appropriate to the historical situation at that time. We see an unwillingness to endure tribulation and persecution. We see a desire for security in the world. Basically we see an unwillingness to suffer.

The people of the world in that day, were not different from people of the world today. No one in their right mind is interested in suffering. We are interested in pleasure, ease, and comfort. Try getting someone to invest their money or any of their time and resources in something by telling them "you may have to suffer some;" or "you may have to suffer some loss." You are not likely to get any investors. We are in fact only interested in investing our resources or ourselves in those things that promise to bring us pleasure "right now" or at least in the very short term.

Right here, in verse 20, Jesus also makes reference to the positive response to the Word, indicated as the receiving and understanding of the Word on the part of genuine disciples. Do you remember in chapter 3; where Jesus made a contrast between his "true family" and his physical family? It's as clear of a distinction as there is between believers and unbelievers. It is the distinction between those who will bear fruit • and those who will not bear fruit for the kingdom.

The veiled message of the kingdom is hindered by many obstacles; basically all of which are in some way connected with Satan's influence. The manifested message of the kingdom results in fruitfulness. And this is striking when we consider it is fruitful in spite of the fact that it has encountered opposition.

The foundational emphasis of this parable lies in the central act of sowing. The secondary emphasis of this parable lies in the kind of reception to what is sown. The coming of God into the world happened in the manner of a seed that was sown. In the appropriate time, there will be a harvest.

Whoever understands this simple fact - understands that in spite of the opposition and the obstacles, there will be a harvest. Whoever understands this simple fact - understands that the kingdom of God is already present in this world and has a yet undisclosed glory. Whoever understands this simple fact - understands that Jesus is in this world much like the seed that has not yet brought forth its full crop.

From this parable, it is only natural that the Church would find an exhortation to true hearing and to be faithful in proclaiming the Word. But it is important for the church to recognize that the results cannot be fully appreciated until the whole crop is complete.

Let me bring your attention back to Verse 20:

*"Others, like seed sown on good soil,  
hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop -  
thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown."*

Consider the seed that fell on good soil, and produced a bountiful harvest. Did these seeds simply fall in good fortune and "live happily ever after"? I read an article some years ago in a gardening magazine that connects with this text. This article told of a study that had been done on various types of plants and their environment.

Whether it was trees, shrubs, or flowers; they all shared something in common. When the plants were subjected to stressful environments - they grew bigger and developed stronger stems, trunks, and branches. When the plants were protected from strong winds, harsh rains, etc. - they grew, even bloomed; but were consistently smaller and weaker than the same variety that had been exposed to stressful environmental conditions periodically. It is not realistic in this world to think that the seeds that produced 30, 60, or 100 times - never experienced any hardships.

These seeds experienced the same environmental conditions as the seeds that produced nothing - or very little. The difference in results was due to the soils' willingness and ability to receive the Word of God.

There is only one cultivator of the human soul - that is our Heavenly Father. From the beginning of man's existence, He has been sowing good seed. In every age of man's existence, the Word of God has come down like the rains. The rains come and fall upon the pavement, the house top, and the grass; just like it does upon the gardens and each of these areas receive the rains differently. The Word of God has come to all people; but we don't all receive it the same, do we?

The Word of God is available to all people; but some of us aren't even interested in receiving it, so we don't accept it when it comes. We often are somewhat abusive to those who have difficulty receiving the Word of God. We find the Word of God to be enlightening - encouraging - and instructive. And we get really aggravated with those who "just don't see" what we see in God's Word.

Now, let's focus on the point of the message in this lesson. If the "soil" is packed hard from the continuous tramping down by the many feet that have traveled this path; Is it reasonable for us to get angry with "this hard soil" for not readily receiving the Word?

If the "soil" that is filled with rocks is having difficulty allowing the Word of God to take root in their lives; Is it reasonable for us to get angry with "this rocky soil" for not holding onto the Word they are given? If the "soil" - that is filled with vines and thorns keep choking out the Word of God we give them - is it reasonable for us to get angry with "this vine and thorn infested soil" for choking out the Word of God?

**#1-**

The first point from this message, as Fishers of Men: Be understanding when others have difficulty allowing God's Word to produce a harvest in their life.

The people of the church are often expecting more from an individual than they are capable of performing. This parable reveals the different abilities to receive The Word! We must understand it is ability or lack of ability to receive!

#2-

The second point from this message; Don't "cram" God's Word down their throat.

Instead, help them to become "good soil". When the soil becomes "good soil;" it will be only natural for the Word to produce a harvest in their life.

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

When we look at the other gospels; we get the impression that the parables we are going to look at today probably were not taught, one right behind the other as they are recorded in Mark. But the Holy Spirit inspired Mark to record them together as one teaching.

First, let's read the last two verses at the end of the parables; and then look at some of the parables recorded in chapter 4.

Read Mark 4:33-34 and make notes:

The Holy Spirit prompted Mark to write down o these parables out of all the many parables Jesus taught and the Holy Spirit inspired Mark to write these parables down together; as though they are all talking about the same subject. These parables may each have a slightly different interpretation; when studied in the context of the other gospels. But here in Mark, if we don't keep them in context of the subject being taught by Jesus; we will miss an important message. It is a message that God really wants us, as Fishers of Men, to understand.

Please keep in mind, Jesus was teaching on the Kingdom of God and the Holy Spirit inspired Mark to record these particular parables along with that teaching. So the simplest way to begin to interpret these parables is to interpret them in the context that they have something to say regarding the Kingdom of God.

Read Mark 4:21 and make notes:



I'm sure I don't have to explain the simple concept that a lamp is meant to be placed upon a "lamp stand" and not under a bowl - or a bed - or under anything that would block it's light. Previously we read Jesus' teaching of himself as the Kingdom of God coming as a seed to be planted; which will grow and mature and bring forth a harvest. We know from the gospels, Jesus acknowledged that He is the "light of the world." So it is reasonable to understand that "the lamp" being discussed is Jesus!

Jesus states simply and clearly that He did not come to earth for the purpose of being placed somewhere "out of sight;" but he came to earth to bring light to everyone. This simple parable stands strong against the perverted teaching that has been bounced around during the last couple of generations in this country. The teaching that says "my religion is personal and private, I don't discuss it with others." Jesus did not bring light to this world to be placed in some private place where only one or two can see it. Jesus came to this world to bring light to all.

If we have received "the lamp" Jesus is talking about in this parable; then we cannot place it in some private place. It must be placed in the most prominent place. And the most prominent place in our life for "the lamp" of the world - is in our everyday lifestyle.

Just to keep us on the same page; "a lamp" in those days was an oil lamp, or sometimes a candle that has been lighted might be referred to as a lamp. But a lamp was never an electrical lamp such as we have today.

Here is the reality - if we place a lamp under a bowl - not only will the light be prohibited from shining in the whole room; but pretty soon there will be no light, even under the bowl. The placing of a lamp under a bowl will starve the lamp of the oxygen it needs to burn and the light will go out. Even if a person truly received the light of the world - Jesus - if they are misled to place that light in a private place; it will not be long until there is no light in the life. Their life will go back to just like it was before they received the light.

Jesus came to shine out a light to the whole world. If we have received the light of the world; then we need to make sure the light we have received is placed upon the lamp stand of our lifestyle. If we are going to be the Fishers of Men Jesus has called us to be - then we CANNOT place our light anywhere else; but out in full view where others can benefit from it.

Now, before we read the next verse; let's acknowledge that many people have heard it said; "some things were never meant to be uncovered."

Read Mark 4:22 and make notes:

Not only will everything hidden one day be revealed; but the truth is that everything hidden is MEANT to be revealed!

For those who are more worldly minded - I can say it this way: the laws of physics tell us that everything in this earth cries out for balance. Vacuum cries out to be filled; pressure cries out to be relieved; electric positives seek out a negative; the whole earth seeks balance.

For those who are a little more spiritually minded – I can say it this way: the spiritual laws tell us that everything will one day be balanced. There is coming a judgment day and everything will be judged.

If we will be honest; most of us have, at some time, had something in our life that you desperately wanted to keep hidden from others. Do you remember the pressure you felt every time it appeared someone might find out your secret?

Everything we hide in our lives creates a pressure! Hidden things create emotional pressure - spiritual pressure - and also mental pressure. Just like everything in this universe - one day there will be balance. All of this pressure will be relieved.

This pressure is actually MEANT to be relieved. That is why the Scripture can say "every thing that is concealed is MEANT to be revealed. We simply cannot be the Fishers of Men we are intended to be as long as we have hidden things in our life!

It isn't wisdom to make the whole public aware of some things. Remember, the public is filled with sinful people; many of whom will do bad things with such information. But it is also great spiritual wisdom to find those you can trust and those you can be accountable to and let the secret out now. We don't have to wait until the Great Judgment Day to find balance. And might I say find RELIEF in our lives.

Obedient Fishers of Men will find that balance now.

Read Mark 4:23 and make notes:

This statement lets it be known that there is something deeper than the simple fact that candles are not meant to be lit and then placed in a private place. This tells the reader - if the only thing you heard was "don't light candles and then place them under a bowl;" then stop and linger here for awhile. There is something richer and deeper.

Now with this thought of something deeper in mind –

Read Mark 4:24 and make notes:

Continuing with the concept that there is something deeper to this; Jesus says, "Consider carefully what you hear." This is talking to us as Fishers of Men right here and right now!

The measure we choose to use with our fellow man - is the same measure that God will use with us. If we use a measure that is a generous helping toward others

then God will use a measure that is a generous helping toward us. Let me say that God's generous helping is by far greater than our generous helping. But if we use a measure that is tight and stingy – you know, the least we can get by with and still be called helping; then the bare minimum is what God will measure out to us.

And here is where the words "and even more" become a concern for us. Can God's stringent holding down to the least possible amount be even tighter than ours?

We like the idea that God's generosity is bigger than ours; but how do we feel about God's minimum being smaller than ours? Fishers of Men - this is something we need to be mindful of. We can't be the Fishers of Men we are called to be if we are tight and stingy with the light we have received, or with the understanding of the Kingdom of God we have received, or the spiritual gifts that we have received.

This is a good place for us to stop and take inventory. With what “measure” are we using our Spiritual Gift?

Read Mark 4:25 and make notes:

This text is most often interpreted in light of us being given more in this life when we are good stewards and having what we have taken from us when we are bad stewards. Please remember Jesus said he was going to teach us to become Fishers of Men. And these parables are about the Kingdom of God.

When the harvest comes - those who have received some understanding of the Kingdom of God will be given even more understanding of the Kingdom of God. When the harvest comes - those who never accepted the Kingdom of God will have whatever understanding they think they have taken away from them. When the harvest comes - whoever has been faithful in sharing the light they have received will be given even more light.

When the harvest comes - those who have made sure to hide the light they received will have the candle taken from them. But it has probably gone out already anyway.

As Fishers of Men - we cannot wait until the "Sweet By And By" - and hope to receive our reward. Fishers of Men will get more of what they have while others will lose what little they have. If we would like to have more faith; then we must use the faith we have. If we would like to more of the spiritual gift we have; then we must use the spiritual gift we have.

Read Mark 4:26-29 and make notes:

We have already been given the parable of the sower - but the Holy Spirit knows we need more help; so He inspires Mark to record this parable along with these others.

The farmer, certainly in those days, didn't understand how the seed sprouted, grew, and produced a crop. The farmer just knew that you place the seeds out there and before long there was a plant - then there was fruit.

This is important for us as Fishers of Men. The farmer doesn't plant seeds without expecting a harvest. This parable tells us this is what the Kingdom of God is like. God has planted the salvation message within us - and he is expecting a harvest! One Day - when the crop has reached maturity - He WILL HARVEST!

When the farmer harvest grain; there are always some plants that did not produce fruit. These are cut down along with the plants that did produce fruit - but they have nothing to place into the harvest receptacle. When God harvest the earth - there will be many who have produced no spiritual fruit. They will be harvested right along with all those who have produced spiritual fruit; but they will have nothing to be placed into the Heavenly Harvest.

We must be careful not to separate these parables at this point. God wants us to understand that we are expected to place the light we have been given out where others can benefit from it. As we make our light available to others - we will be given more. As we make our light available and as we are given more - we will produce fruit.

When the great harvest of souls takes place – we should not expect a happy greeting if we approach the judgment seat with nothing more than the candle we received on day a long time ago. It will not be a successful defense to argue that we have protected this candle in a private place and made sure nothing damaged it. That we made sure it didn't burn up.

God will only be happy with those who used their candle to benefit others. God will be pleased with those he had to keep giving more light to - because they kept using their light to help others. Spiritual gifts are tools to help us share the light. Hiding the tools is just as bad as hiding the light!

Read Mark 4:30-32 and make notes

Almost as if to say, I don't fully understand it yet - "What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it?"

Well, let's try this - the Kingdom of God is like the smallest seed that we plant - but one day becomes the largest plant in our garden. The Kingdom of God started out in this earth seemingly very small - maybe even seemed insignificant to many people - but during the years it is growing larger and larger. The Kingdom of God is so big that today people come to take refuge in it's large branches. The Kingdom of God is so strong today that many people come to the Kingdom of God seeking nourishment - as well as shelter - and the Kingdom of God is very capable of providing all of this.

The truth is that one day, the Kingdom of God will take over everything on this earth! I can't call that insignificant! Can You?

Believers in Jesus Christ, we cannot simply accept Jesus as our Savior - and then sit quietly by for the rest of our lives. The result of that is like placing a lighted candle under a bowl - it will not remain lit. Believers in Jesus Christ, we cannot keep our faith quietly and privately to ourselves - as we use what we have - we will receive more. As we refuse to use what we have - it will be taken away.

Believers in Jesus Christ, we cannot allow ourselves to be stopped because we, and our faith, might look insignificant to others in our community. How insignificant do you think the Kingdom of God looked to the whole world when Jesus was crucified upon Calvary's cross?

It was God's plan - it's was God's intent - that the Kingdom of God put down deep roots - establish big strong branches - and produce much fruit. So that others could find refuge within the shade of the Kingdom of God. So that others could find nourishment within the branches of the Kingdom of God. So that others could find new life within the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of God will one day reach maturity, and a harvest will take place. Will we be brought to the Harvester with out fruit? Or will we be brought to the Harvester with nothing more than the seed we were given to begin with?

**Fishers of Men CANNOT be Inactive!**  
**Fishers of Men MUST BE Growing In The Kingdom!**

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:



We are continuing with our look at the message of what is expected of us as Fishers of Men as found in the gospel of Mark. When we began Chapter 4; it was recorded that Jesus went down by the lake and began to teach. Then the Holy Spirit inspired Mark to record several parables Jesus taught that all revealed something about the Kingdom of God.

We have already acknowledged that these parables, as indicated by the other gospels, were probably not taught one after the other as they are recorded in Mark. But the Holy Spirit wanted Mark to record them together as some kind of major reference on the Kingdom of God.

In this lesson, we pick back up with the account of Jesus teaching long the lake. Please don't disconnect the principles regarding the Kingdom of God that was revealed in the parables. Since the Holy Spirit wanted these recorded along with this account - it is important for us to keep them with this account.

Read Mark 4:35-36 and make notes:

This isn't a major point - but it is an interesting point. When Jesus requested they go over to the other side of the lake - that would take them to another country. It kind of lets us see that Jesus was interested in taking the gospel message he had to "all the world" and not just one country. To all people and not just one people.

It is also interesting that Mark was prompted to record Jesus was taken along "just as he was." Jesus didn't pack a bag, change clothes, or make any arrangements. He just got on the boat with nothing more than his "preaching and ministering" clothes that he was wearing.

There were also "other boats with him." We don't know who was on these other boats; but the first thing we can assess is that there were those who owned boats near where Jesus had been teaching - that did not want to let him get away. They wanted to hear more - and if it meant following him over the sea - then that is what they would do.

The other thing this tells us is that when the perilous situation arises upon the sea; it wasn't just one boat in danger, and it wasn't just one crew that was in danger. The fact was that there were several boats in danger of being destroyed - and many lives were at risk.

Read Mark 4:37-39 and make notes:

The sea of Galilee is surrounded by high mountains. The sea is much like a giant basin. Morning and evening storms were quite often experienced on this sea. As the sun would rise or set - the sudden temperature changes would cause notable "thermals" and the winds would whip up.

The disciples of Jesus included some experienced fishermen. They had made their living on the sea. They were in a sense "at home" on board a ship on the sea. This storm was so severe that even experienced fisherman became terrified. Their awakening Jesus may have occurred in a rather rude manner. The words they spoke to him seem to indicate a certain level of rebuke - "don't you care if we drown?" Jesus gets up from his sleep - rebukes the storm - and the wind and the seas became quiet and still. As suddenly as the storm had come - it had departed - at the command of Jesus "Quiet, be still"

There are a number of things revealed in this passage:

#1 -

God's sovereignty reaches out to the point of silencing the howling winds and stills the roaring sea.

Our God is a personal living God who does in fact intervene in the lives of His people. He is our God who acts and one of revelation. He is never some abstract idea or ideology.

When our God chooses to reveal Himself - even the forces of nature must bend to His will. And this is not a new message here in the New Testament. God, in the Old Testament, had already revealed this in the parting of the Red Sea - and in the crossing of the flooded Jordan river. It can also be noted that in stilling the storm, the prophecies of Habakkuk and Nahum are fulfilled.

#2 -

Forces that rage against God - or God's people - are not an alarming concern for God.

It is noteworthy that Jesus was able to sleep through a storm which raged so much that it caused experienced fishermen to fear. God knows He is sovereign. He knows everything must obey His command. No matter how much some force may deny any submission to God - He knows there is no other choice. Satan may go about as a roaring lion - but he WILL submit to the commands of God - there is no other possibility.

Which is the greatest of powers - the one who can cause the seas to rage and roar, or the one who can over-ride that command and make the seas be calm instead?

#3 -

In the book of Revelation; the "sea" is used prophetically to represent mankind - or the great numbers of people upon the earth. Even if some outside force should whip the masses of people into a fury against God's people - like the wind whipped the sea into a raging storm - it only takes the command of God to make the outside force retreat - and the masses of people to calm down - there is no other possibility at the command of God.

If the wind is the outside force that churns the sea into a fury - what is the outside force that so frequently churns the people of this world into a fury against God's people? It is Satan and his many fallen angels - we call them demons. What do you think this account tells us about how concerned we should be regarding the raging threats of demons?

Read Mark 4:40-41 and make notes:

Jesus challenged his disciples; "Why are you so afraid?" - "Do you still have no faith?" This lets us know there was a time when the disciples of Jesus had "no faith." Is this where we are today? "Do you *STILL* have no faith?"

Jesus had been teaching them about the kingdom of God and had been demonstrating things of the kingdom of God to them. It was time for them to *HAVE* faith - and to *USE* their faith. But look at how they responded to his challenge - "They were terrified and asked each other, 'Who is this?'"

Here is the question we need to consider: "were the disciples terrified because Jesus just calmed a storm?" or was it because of being in the presence of one who could calm a storm something to cause terror?

Maybe - and that's the way many people interpret this text - but let me share with you another principle that I believe is being presented here. Jesus had been teaching his disciples important keys to the kingdom of God. While the masses of people were hearing parables which amounted to not much more than riddles to them - his disciples were having the things of the kingdom revealed and explained to them.

The disciples did not just have principles taught to them - they had witnessed Jesus demonstrating the power of the kingdom of God to heal disease – to cast out demons - and even to reveal the secret things of peoples lives – which included the thoughts of some of his enemies. If these disciples had not become afraid of Jesus when he healed people - or when he cast out demons - it isn't likely to have caused them to be afraid of him when he calmed a storm.

Now if you want to consider real people - responding in a real manner - these disciples would have more likely to have become afraid of Jesus when he began to reveal he could know the thoughts people were having and the secret things of their lives.

Just let God begin to move in someone with the gifts of knowledge or discernment in a group of people. Someone - or several someones - begins to fear - "oh no, what if he reveals the dirt I have hidden in my life?" Ministering in the word of knowledge or the gift of discernment - now there is something that causes people to fear!

Rather than having us focus on the idea that the disciples became fearful when they saw Jesus calm a storm - Let us consider this principle - and it is important for us as Fishers of Men to get hold of - **FEAR KILLS FAITH!**

These disciples - who at one time not long before - had no faith. As a result of walking with Jesus and receiving from Jesus - had developed **SOME FAITH**. When they allowed fear to come into their life - they began to respond as though they had **NO FAITH**.

This is the point of this passage - instead of seeing the message that God's people need not fear the forces that cause the masses to rise up against us. Because they had allowed fear to come into their lives - they could only ask "who is this?"

This helps us see that God does in fact have a sense of humor. For you see - in their "fear killing faith" moment - they asked "who is this?" "Who this is" is exactly what Jesus had been revealing to them since He had called them to become Fishers of Men. Who he is - He is the Christ - He is the Son of God - He is God come to man - he is God concerned with the everyday affairs of man - He is God revealing his power to man - he is the Living Lord.

When the disciples allowed fear to come into their lives - they lost the very insight that had been divinely given to them. And the same thing still happens today! As Fishers of Men - we cannot allow fear to have any place in our lives! Because FEAR KILLS FAITH! And "worry" is another word for Fear.

Fear doesn't just kill spiritual faith. Fear kills faith in ourselves. When we allow fear to have a place in our lives - we lose faith that we can even do the things that we have done hundreds of times before. Those things that God has so gifted us to do physically that we don't even have to think about them - we just do them almost as a reflex.

But fear comes in and we say - "I don't think I can even get up" - "I don't think I can go on" - "Pastor, I don't even think I can take just one day at a time." Fear kills our faith in the things that God has given us. "I'm afraid to get in the car." "why are you afraid, you've driven this car many times and nothing bad has ever happened." "I know, but I am afraid today."

Fear kills our faith in the ones who love us. We become afraid and we don't have faith that they will love us. We don't have faith that they will have anything to do with us - even though all previous evidence indicates they will love us no matter what. All of this is because of fear.

When we let fear into our lives - we don't have faith that God will do the very things he has promised He will do. When we let fear into our lives - we don't have faith that God will work through us even though He has given us a gift with which to minister - and even though he said His gifts are irrevocable. (Rom 11:29)

Do you understand now, why Satan spends so much time coming up with things that have no other purpose but to cause fear?

Never would I encourage anyone to sit around and do nothing in the face of threat to yourself - to your family - or to your country. But I am saying, in the name of Jesus, while you respond to put down the threats to you - DO NOT FEAR!

Remember the Power of God over every other force in the universe. Remember that Jesus later tells his disciples, "I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy" (Luke 10:19)

If the neighbors house is on fire - and the wind is blowing the sparks toward my house and threatening to burn my house - it would be the right thing for me to go out and keep water on my house - and speak the Word of God over the situation.

But it would not be right for me to FEAR!

If you enter into a building where everyone seems to be suffering from the very serious flu epidemic - It would be right for you to take precautions to protect yourself from such a threat - but it would not be right for you to FEAR!

When the forces of evil whip up the masses of people to threaten to destroy God's people with legislation that will take away our privilege to worship God - It is right for us to take the necessary steps to defeat such legislation - while speaking God's Word over the situation - But it would never be right for us to fear!

As Fishers of Men - there is NO PLACE for FEAR in our hearts, minds, and lives? There is no fear in the perfect love of God. Perfect love drives out all fear. The one who fears is not yet fully accepted the love of God.

That boat carried the humanity of Jesus that day - but that boat, and all who were in it were being carried by the divine. It wasn't the wooden ship - it's structural strength - the abilities and skill of those who manned the ship - upon which the safety of God's people depended. It was upon the ability and grace and mercy of the one who carried the ship - that the safety of God's people depended. Jesus knew that and that is why he was able to sleep - the disciples had yet to learn that.

As Fishers of Men what are we to do when the storms begin to rage against us and begin to threaten us? First, Remember that Christ is within us! Next, Remember that Christ has given His disciples the authority over demonic forces and the authority to cast out.

I am a child of the King! I have His promise to watch over me and to protect me. I have His promise that He will never allow anything to come against me that I am not able to handle and even overcome. I have His promise that He will always provide a way of escape when I am tempted. I have His promise that He is preparing a place for me to live with Him forever. I have his promise that in Christ Jesus I have already defeated death. Oh death where is your sting - Oh death where is your victory? What have I to fear?

God is here to give us a spirit of confidence to replace that spirit of fear. Has fear come into your life in the area of finances? Has fear come into your life in the area of relationship? Has fear come into your life in the area of personal safety? Has fear come into your life in the area of health?



Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group: