

# Mark - Fishers Of Men

## Section 3 – 11 weeks

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## **Mark - Fishers Of Men**

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.

## Mark 23 – Fear No Demon

The passage we will look at in this lesson contains an important message for those us who have decided they wish to become the Fishers of Men God intends for us to be. This passage is often misinterpreted or misapplied to life.

The account of the demon possessed man in the Gerasene district is told with vivid details. You have to admit it would take someone who was an eyewitness and perhaps even took the time to get explanations from the towns people about this man's history. Or, you can accept the fact that the Holy Spirit told Mark what he needed to know in order to write this account - or both.

Read Mark 5:1 and make notes:

In good weather, it would take approximately two hours to make the trip from where they were to this region. We don't know if they slept on the boat that night and landed in the morning, or if they actually landed that night.

They most likely landed just south of the modern town of Kersa. At Kersa the shore is level, but about a mile to the south, the shore is deep within forty yards of the shore. There are caverns that were used as tombs by those who were on the lower economic scale.

Read Mark 5:2 and makes notes:

My wife and I have had to deal with a person who for years has alienated everyone in the family from him. He was sick and he was very alone. We didn't know how much he understood, but he did realize that he is suffering and he is alone. We heard him cry as he stated this simple fact; that he has no friends.

It is really sad to be sick for a long time. You probably know someone who has had the experience of being sick for a long time. It is very sad to be alone and have no family or friends you can call upon. But when you combine these two conditions, this is beyond sad, it is rightfully called pathetic.

Read Mark 5:3-4 and make notes:

## Mark 23 – Fear No Demon

This is that portion of the account that would have come from the towns people or the input of the Holy Spirit. Unless Mark had visited here before, he would not have known of this man and his condition. The details of this man living in the tombs speaks of just how pathetic he and his condition is.

When we combine the “he lived in the tombs” part of his life with the unnatural strength to break chains; it is understandable that the local people would call him insane. “He is a crazy guy.”

Later in the account we read that this man usually ran around without clothes. This didn't help him seem normal or “okay” with the local people. It would have been the normal thing of that day to bind an insane person. Sometimes it was to protect the insane person and sometimes it was to protect the people of the community.

It is interesting in Verse 3 that it says that he could not be bound "any more". This implies there was a time when he could be bound. He is now at a point where no one is strong enough to subdue him.

When I was in the military, many years ago, I was involved in trying to subdue a man that was wild on some drug. He had become violent and had already hurt a couple of people. In the end of the story, it took approximately 10 of us to subdue this one person. He wasn't a small person, but he wasn't a giant either. The drugs in his system simply kept him from feeling pain and he did seem to have unnatural strength. A person like this causes a great deal of concern to those who witness their behavior.

We have the benefit in this account of knowing from verse 2 that this man had an evil spirit. My point here is that if chemicals in the body can give a person unnatural strength and turn off their ability to feel pain – it should be easy for us to understand that an evil spirit could certainly have a similar affect upon a person.

The affect of an evil spirit – or spirits – is something that grew with this man. At one time he could be bound; but not any more!

Read Mark 5:5 and make notes:

While the earlier description let us know just how pathetic this man's life had become; this verse tells us something of the deep torment this man was experiencing.

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You can speak with any counselor and they can confirm to you that it is a common thing to find someone who is literally tormented by their thoughts, their actions, or their lifestyle; but can't find the strength to stop it. These people are truly tormented by their own life and the things they are doing. They are not tormented by friends, family, or neighbors. They seem to be their own torment.

The fact that he would “cry out” at various times of the day and night didn't help his image with the local people. But one of the really important details of today's message is found here in verse 5; he “cut himself.” Please make a mental “sticky note” of this detail because we will refer back to it.

Read Mark 5:6 and make notes:

Please note that the demon possessed man saw Jesus “from a distance.” He ran and fell on his knees in front of Jesus. This is the second important detail to the message in this lesson. This man in torment, the one who frequently would cut himself and cry out in pain, runs and knells before Jesus as soon as he sees him.

Read Mark 5:7 and make notes:

If we had not been told at the beginning of this account about the evil spirit this man had, it would be okay to say this is the man talking here. But since we have been given this key piece of information, it is the evil spirit that is talking to Jesus.

This man would probably not know that Jesus was the "Son of the Most High God". The evil spirit would certainly know that. Remember, evil spirits, or demons, are the fallen angels that were thrown out of heaven with Satan. They would recognize the presence of God in a fleshly body or any where else.

It is a rather common practice for someone to attempt to disarm the person they don't like by “buttering them up.” I am not talking about a sincere compliment, or a sincere word of gratitude. But the common practice for those who come into the presence of one they see as some level of adversary; to say things like; “oh, you are the greatest,” “oh magnificent one,” or today we might hear something like “you the man.”

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This demon was not speaking in respect toward Jesus. He was trying that old deceiver's scam tactic of flattering his enemy so he won't see the attack coming. After calling him the most respectful sound name – he then begs Jesus to “swear” that he won't “torture” him. If you remember, in the Old Testament God said “don't be swearing;” just let your yes be yes and your no be no.

This demon was trying to butter Jesus up by calling him by his divine title; And then try to sneak in a temptation to "swear," of all things, "to God." These demons , who have been thrown out of heaven, know what their eventual situation is going to be. They have been told. They know the day is coming when they are going to be tormented day and night for ever and ever. This demon is begging; "please don't let it be today".

Read Mark 5:8 and make notes:

Jesus has not been moved by the false respect of the demon. Jesus commands the demon to come out of the man. The demon has not “left the building.”

Read Mark 5:9 and make notes:

Why did Jesus ask the demon his name? Jesus knows these things. Jesus knows the thoughts of those around him. Remember, Jesus is not “just ministering” to the needs of the people. While Jesus is ministering to the needs of the people, Jesus is training His disciples to become Fishers of Men.

Jesus asked the demon for his name, to help his disciples learn something about demons. Because Jesus knew his disciples were going to have to contend with demons until the end of earth's time.

The word translated "legion" is not the same word used for a military legion, usually indicating somewhere around a 1,000 soldiers. This was a word that indicated a large crowd or large number. When the demon responded "my name is legion," he was not cooperating!

What the demon was doing was avoiding giving a straight answer. "Oh, there are so many of us, just call me legion." It is also possible that the demon hoped to induce some fear into the hearts of those with Jesus by indicating they had come into the presence of "many demons".

## Mark 23 – Fear No Demon

The real point to be made here is that Jesus did not get a straight and true answer to his question. Fishers of Men, don't waste your time trying to interrogate demons. They lie and they evade giving straight answers. Jesus wanted the disciples in training to see this.

Read Mark 5:10 and make notes:

The demon now begs in a “please, please, please” sort of way not to be sent “out of the area.” We don't have any information as to why they wanted to stay in the area; but it is clear they wanted to stay here, even if they can't stay in this man. Don't you think, that if the demons really had the ability to resist the authority of Jesus; they would simply do so and not be begging? What so many humans seem to doubt, the demons know beyond a shadow of a doubt, they are subject to the authority of God.

Read Mark 5:11-13 and make notes:

The fact that there was a heard of pigs lets us know that "they're not in Israel anymore." They were definitely in Gentile territory.

Please remember this, Jesus took his disciples, whom he was training to be Fishers of Men, to the Gentiles and ministered the Gospel to the Gentiles. There should have never been any doubts in their minds that the Gospel was for the whole world and not just the Jews.

When the demons were "given permission" by Jesus, they went into the heard of pigs.

Now go back and pick up your mental "sticky notes". The primary goal of demons is to destroy life on this earth. This earth - as God created it - was "very good." The demons have been destroying all the good off of this earth that they can. Their primary goal is to distort - and to destroy if possible - the image of God in man.

Don't be fooled into thinking that when the pigs drowned in the lake, that any of the demons were harmed. They demons survived the physical death of their host and remained in the area to afflict others.

When the demons entered into the heard of pigs, the disciples of Jesus were able to witness the real purpose of demons. To Destroy Life! The pigs did not have the strength or ability to stop the demons from tormenting them to destruction.

## Mark 23 – Fear No Demon

The demons had so many times tried to get this man to cut himself in such a way as to destroy his life. They were trying to cause him to commit suicide. This man was not able to stop them from driving him to cut himself; but he was able to stop from cutting in a fatal way.

His screams were most likely from both the physical cutting as well as from the mental and emotional anguish of his situation. It is likely that should these demons remained in this man, his torment would have eventually caused him to give in and just “end it all;” just to get some relief from the pain.

Read Mark 5:14-15 and make notes:

Doesn't your heart just reach out to these herdsman - just a little bit? They were probably a little nervous and on edge just from being in the vicinity of the town's "crazy guy". They weren't going to crowd that man. They surely were not going to bother him, if they could help it. They just wanted to tend to the heard of pigs and get paid at the end of the week.

So, here they are, tending to the pigs for the boss; and all of a sudden, the pigs begin to squeal and run – and squeal and run – and the next thing they know, the whole heard isn't just in the lake; they are “belly up” - drowned “plum dead” as Bubba might say.

Can you imagine the response of the people in town? Who had ever heard of such a thing? A whole heard of pigs running into the lake and drowning themselves? The people from town go out to see 2,000 pigs floating dead in the lake. Wouldn't you if you heard it had happened? When they get out to the area where the heard had committed "suey- cide;" they find Jesus and his disciples and the most amazing thing they had ever seen. Here was their local "crazy guy" and he was "dressed and in his right mind"

Read Mark 5:16-17 and make notes:

Now it's not just the herdsman that are telling the story; but it is now being told by the others who went out to see the pigs floating in the lake. Between seeing their local “crazy guy” now apparently “okay,” and seeing a large herd of pigs “belly up” - this was just too much for them. They begged and pleaded for Jesus to leave. What a wonderful opportunity had come to the Gentiles that day! And the response was “we would rather you leave.”



## Mark 23 – Fear No Demon

How differently things might have been, if they had responded, "please, we want all you have for us." As Fishers of Men - we need to realize this is going to be the response by many today, but that doesn't change the fact that God wants His Salvation presented to everyone.

Read Mark 5:18-20 and make notes:

It is certainly understandable that this man would want to go with Jesus. From a heart of gratitude, how could you not want to just stay with Jesus, when he had given you such great relief? And there is the practical aspect – it might be easier just to leave the region than to face all those people you have frightened and the relatives you have embarrassed.

This is an interesting contrast from what Jesus told so many back in the land of the Jews. To many of them, his instructions were "don't tell anyone" - "keep this quiet." But here, to this Gentile, he says, "Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you."

And the man from the Gerasenes, who was delivered from the oppression of demons, went all around the region telling people what Jesus had done for him. The Gospel was being preached among the Gentiles even before Jesus had fulfilled his earthly ministry.

Fishers of Men:

It is important for us to know that the power of Jesus is indeed greater than the power of demons. It is important for us to know that we will encounter demons. It is important for us to know that they will not tell the truth or give straight answers. It is important for us to remember, the real purpose of demons is to destroy life where they can.

So, in the name of Jesus, we are not to allow demons to have rule in or around us. If demons needed permission to enter a herd of pigs, then we don't have to worry about demons entering a flock of God's sheep. Oh sure, demons may claim to be able to just do whatever they want to do. They may threaten us and try to scare us into thinking they can just come into our lives and take over any time they want to. This is just tactics of fear. And remember Fear Kills Faith!

The truth we need to grasp as Fishers of Men - demons cannot do anything without the permission of God. We have been given the authority to cast them out.

They cannot resist! Let us get on with the ministry - let us get on with the business of being Fishers of Men - And let us never - ever - fear demons! And even though many will respond as did the people in the region of the Gerasenes – they just want to be left alone – still, we must tell them about Jesus!

## **Mark 23 – Fear No Demon**

Please write down the questions you would like to ask the group – and any insights you have regarding Mark 5:1-20 so that you can share them when we meet:

## Mark 24 – Fear Not Death

I will make a confession to you. For a number of years, I didn't like to read this passage and I would do what I could to refrain from teaching on this passage.

When our baby daughter died, I resented the fact that God didn't heal her like he had healed Jairus' daughter. It wasn't that I didn't rejoice for Jairus, but I kept saying why couldn't my daughter have been resuscitated also.

God was so kind and merciful. He understood my confused and misguided resentment. He loved me until I finally got things straightened out in my mind and heart. So today, not only am I able to teach from this passage, but I do so with an eagerness to share the good news that is found within it. This has an important message for those of us who want to be the kind of Fisher of Men God intends for us to be.

The healing of Jairus' daughter is presented in two parts. The account begins and then is interrupted by the healing of a woman who has been bleeding. Then the account of Jairus' daughter is picked back up. It does appear that these two events are intermingled. That is the healing of the woman took place while Jesus was in route to the "little daughter". But the two accounts are also part of the one message. So, we need to look at both of them together, even though a fine sermon can be made out of each individually. However, to stay true to the message God has placed in the Gospel of Mark, we will keep them together as one teaching.

Read Mark 5:21-23 and make notes:

This took place after Jesus had left the region of the Gerasenes and sailed back to the general area where he was before. "One of the synagogue rulers" would be one of the lay persons who was entrusted to overseeing the affairs of the synagogue. The Sadducees, Pharisees and the Scribes, were the religious leaders and teachers.

The physical needs of the synagogue and the everyday affairs of the synagogue was taken care of by several of the lay persons who were part of that congregation. Jairus was one of these lay persons that oversee the needs of the synagogue. We don't know for sure, but it is likely that Jairus was to some degree familiar with Jesus and his ministry. Anytime a teacher or healer would be in the area, at least the leaders of the synagogue would become aware of them. If the teacher seemed kosher, they might be invited to teach in the synagogue on some Sabbath.

Jairus was aware that the sickness of his daughter was one that was killing her. Jairus gives us a clue of the level of the faith he has in Jesus' ability to heal his daughter. He falls at Jesus' feet and pleads "earnestly" for him to come and lay his hands on his "little daughter" and she "will be healed and live."

Jairus didn't express great hope that she might be healed; he stated that she **would be** healed. Jairus had faith that Jesus would heal her.

## Mark 24 – Fear Not Death

Read Mark 5:24-28 and make notes:

This woman had been experiencing chronic bleeding for 12 years. Jairus' daughter was 12 years old. This woman had suffered from chronic bleeding as long as Jairus' daughter had been alive. She had tried everything the doctors had recommended and nothing had worked. It tells us she suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors. Many of the treatments were not only un-successful at curing her bleeding - they were painful physically and financially. The condition had not simply continued - it says she grew worse. This is a serious condition that would eventually lead to the death of this woman.

I know a woman that suffered chronic bleeding for a number of years. She did not feel it was a life threatening thing. It was just something she had to deal with as part of her life. Then one day, she experienced another problem - unrelated to the bleeding - which required her to see a doctor.

In the effort to diagnose the new problem it was discovered that her blood count was extremely low. This made it difficult for the doctors to do what was necessary to correct the new problem. In short, the doctor explained that she had been, decreasing her blood count for several years, and had it not been found and corrected, it would have led to one or several complications that would have caused her death.

In the days when this account in Mark took place, they did not have the wonderful technology we have today in the medical field. This woman was going to die if she wasn't healed. Again, making a comparison to a contemporary person with a similar problem, this woman was probably tired and physically weak all the time. Her condition was no doubt affecting her ability to make a living.

She also had a resulting emotional problem that the contemporary woman I know didn't have. In those days a person who was bleeding was considered unclean. Anyone who touched a bleeding person was also considered unclean. This woman had been unclean for 12 years. That's a long time to go without a hug, without someone taking hold of your hand, or even wanting to touch something you have just touched.

For her to be in a crowd was illegal. You see someone might accidentally bump into her in a crowd. So for her to purposefully reach out and touch another person was a bold breaking of the law. This woman shared something in common with Jairus. They both had an intense conviction that Jesus could help them - in their time of having to stare death in the face.

## Mark 24 – Fear Not Death

Read Mark 5:29-31 and make notes:

At the very instant this woman followed through on her faith - she experienced an immediate cessation of bleeding and she knew that she had been healed. Maybe the tiredness and weakness left her body and she had strength for the first time in many years. Whatever she felt, she knew she was healed.

The disciples may have been a little annoyed at Jesus stopping to take the time to find one person out of a crowd who has touched him. They may have been experiencing some of the pressure to get to Jairus' house quickly. No one wants to see a young person die.

Read Mark 5:32 and make notes:

Isn't it interesting that Jesus could sense that someone touched him with faith? With all the crowd pressing in around Jesus, no doubt he was being constantly touched and bumped by someone. But this woman didn't just touch Jesus physically - she touched him with faith!

This is one of those interesting situations in the ministry of Jesus. He wasn't looking around to see who would confess. Jesus was looking around to see who had touched him. When someone touches Jesus in faith - you can tell. I can't give you a count of the numerous people who have claimed to have touched Jesus. But I can tell you that when someone touches Jesus in faith, you can see it in their eyes - their whole countenance changes - you can tell.

Read Mark 5:33-34 and make notes:

When this woman realized that Jesus was aware and that she wasn't going to be able to sneak away - she came forward and confessed. You can imagine some of the reasons she might be trembling with fear. First, she had broken a strictly enforced law. As a bleeding person, she had touched another person.

## Mark 24 – Fear Not Death

Secondly, she wanted to sneak up and exercise her faith, and probably just sneak away. But Jesus was aware of what she had done. She probably realized that he knew it was her.

Here is one of the most important thing for Fishers of Men to remember - it's in V34 - "your faith has healed you." This may very well be the reason Jesus was insistent that the person who had been healed be identified. It was important for them to know it was their faith and not the act of touching him. Can you imagine their testimony to others if they left there thinking it was because they touched him. A new church of the "I'm touched" denomination might have started.

It has never been the magic of touching. It has never been the magic of "laying on of hands." It has always been faith. Jesus wasn't ignorant of the situation. Jesus wasn't uncaring concerning the precarious situation of Jairus' daughter. Jesus was interested in training Fishers of Men. So, this interruption in route to Jairus' house - and the delay in getting to his house was all part of a message Jesus wanted his Fishers of Men in training to grasp.

Read Mark 5:35 and make notes:

The delay in time spent with the woman who had been healed of bleeding appears to be catastrophic for the "little daughter". The party that had gathered at Jairus home, knew that he had faith that Jesus could heal his daughter. Whether they shared that faith or not we don't know. But when his daughter died, they felt sure it was no longer useful to "bother the teacher any more." "Jairus, just come home and take part in your daughters funeral."

Read Mark 5:36-37 and make notes:

Jesus heard the report, but he said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid, just believe." Please remember, Jairus and Jesus were traveling to his house when the incident with the woman took place. What had Jairus just heard Jesus say to the woman who was healed? - "Daughter, your faith has healed you." Jesus said, "It was your faith that healed you" - so he is now saying to Jairus "just believe" - "Jairus, have faith."

We can speculate, but we don't know exactly why Jesus didn't let his other disciples go with them. But let's not get bogged down in that and miss the message.

## Mark 24 – Fear Not Death

Read Mark 5:38-40 and make notes:

The first thing that catches my attention in this report is the sudden change from mourning to laughter! I have been to a fair number of funerals. I have sat with, and sometimes cried with, families in their loss to death. I have witnessed on a number of occasions someone at the funeral just making the most awful commotion and often times making people think they are suffering more than everyone else.

And then someone will come up to them and it seems in a split second, they are laughing and joking. There appears to have been a number of people at Jairus' house like that. When Jesus tells these people who are making "all this commotion and wailing;" that the girl is "not dead but asleep." They switch instantly from all the commotion of wailing - to laughter.

Some have locked onto the words of Jesus and tried say that the girl was not actually dead physically, but was in some extremely low heart rate and such shallow breathing that the people just thought she was dead. They claim Jesus, knowing all these things, tried to enlighten them by telling them she was in a deep coma like sleep and not actually dead.

In the gospel of Luke, we are told that the "spirit returned to the girl" - we can argue about what stage of death and technicalities if you want to, but let's acknowledge that the girl's spirit had left her body, since that is what Luke reports.

Without the spirit, the body is dead!

Verse 40 may give us a clue as to why Jesus left so many of his disciples behind before going to Jairus' house. Once he arrived at the house and found all these mourners who were faking their sadness and wailing - he orders all these people who are faking it out of the house. The only ones allowed to remain in the house are those who are at least having some level of faith in Jesus.

Read Mark 5:41-43 and make notes:

It is interesting also that Jesus would tell these people not to tell anyone about this. It says he gave them "strict orders" not to let anyone know about this.

## Mark 24 – Fear Not Death

All those people who were in the house doing the fake mourning, don't you think they are going to recognize this little girl when she goes out of the house? In Luke's account it says they "knew she was dead." They may fake their mourning but they're not stupid. When this girl shows up in town, they are going to say, "hold on here a minute, I was one of the mourners when she died."

The parents don't have to keep the girl locked up in the house with the curtains closed. They just have to resist giving a report on what Jesus said and did. If the parents keep their mouths shut, all the people can make of it is after all, Jesus did say she was "asleep."

The faith of Jairus was rewarded. The spirit returned to his daughter, she got up out of the bed, and she walked around. She was not only no longer dead; she was also healed of the sickness that had put her in the bed in the first place.

Remember, Jesus didn't ask Jairus to go out and accomplish some great religious act. He didn't ask Jairus to make a sizable donation to his ministry. He didn't even ask Jairus to make a donation to the local synagogue building fund. He simply asked Jairus - "just believe."

There are few things that scare human beings more than the threat of physical death. Unfortunately, this is even true among Christians. Not so many years ago, I went to visit one of my relatives that was in a hospital trying to make it through a bad drug experience. He claimed he wanted to break free of his addiction, but was afraid. He said it was like something or someone kept telling him that he would die from withdrawal if he tried.

I reminded him that a few years earlier he had claimed to have given his heart to Jesus and to have been saved. He assured me this was true and he believed his salvation was real even though he had not been living for Jesus. I shared with him that if he was really saved, then death couldn't be much of a threat, because saved people have a much better place to go to than the best this world has to offer.

If we are really saved, then we can't be scared by the threat of death. If we are saved, and we die in withdrawal, then we are far better off than we could ever be here on earth - with our without drugs.

If we are saved, and we make it through withdrawal alive, then you are better off here without the addiction than you could possibly be with it. I also pointed out that if he wasn't sure he was saved, then maybe it was right to be afraid. But if he was sure he was saved, it looked like a win-win situation to go through the withdrawal to be free from the drugs.

It was the fear of death that was making it impossible for him to cooperate with the people who were willing to help him get off of drugs. And this is the case with a lot of things besides drugs. So many of God's people are being kept from doing the things God has asked them to do, because they are afraid of death.

There are so many people who refrain from doing the right thing - because they feel they are threatened with death - sometimes it is literally physical death, but sometimes they are threatened with financial death or social death, their reputation, sometimes it is career death, and sometimes it is other things.



## **Mark 24 – Fear Not Death**

As long as we fear death, we will be prevented from doing the right thing in so many situations. As long as we fear death, we will be prevented from doing the things God has created us to do. As long as we fear death, we will be locked out of the abundant and wonderful blessings God has in store for us.

The majority of God's people have heard it taught that Jesus is Lord over death; but we don't live our lives as though we believe it.

Jesus, on this day, took his Fishers of Men in training through a couple of experiences that reveals Jesus has authority over the very thing that frightens people the most. Jesus is not only Lord over those things that take us to physical death - such as the woman who had experienced chronic bleeding for 12 years - Jesus is even Lord over death itself.

Death cannot hold onto those it has taken, if Jesus calls them back - like Jairus' daughter. So, it isn't death that determines our future beyond this physical life. It is Jesus who is indeed Lord over all.

Since Jesus has authority and power over physical death – don't we understand he has power and authority over all kinds of death? Jesus can resurrect us from physical, financial, career, social – in short, all kinds of death!

Fishers of Men - the Lord we serve has not just claimed to have authority over death, he has demonstrated his authority over death. Fishers of Men - let us no longer fear death - or even the threat of death.

Let us go forward and tell the news of Jesus - without fear. Let us go forward and tell others what Jesus has done for us - without fear. Let us go forward and live a life that is not ashamed of being a disciple of Jesus - And let us not be controlled by the fear of death.

Please write down the questions you would like to ask the group – and any insights you have regarding Mark 5:21-43 so that you can share them when we meet:

## **Mark 24 – Fear Not Death**

( this page for additional notes )

## Mark 25 – All Receive The Same

Jesus has been training his disciples to become Fishers of Men. As with all good teachers, there is a time of instruction, and this is followed with a time of hands on practice. In some circles we might call this Lecture then Lab.

Many times we don't fully understand the instructions we have been given until we actually try to put these instructions into practice. It is when we actually try to do these things that some of the instructions finally come to have meaning to us. Jesus is very close to giving his Fishers of Men in training - his disciples - a mission to go out and accomplish. The message in this lesson is very important for them to grasp before they begin to be active in the ministry. And so it is for us today as well.

Read Mark 6:1 and make notes:

Jesus left Capernaum and traveled south to the village where he had spend his youth and the early years of his maturing into an adult. When Jesus returned to Nazareth, he arrived in a manner much like that of an arriving rabbi. He was accompanied by a group of disciples. And it is of importance that his disciples are mentioned as being with him.

During this period of Jesus' ministry, he is primarily concerned with training his disciples and preparing them for the mission they are going to be given. And for those of you who have read this passage before and wondered what was the point of having this account included in the Bible; it was to train disciples then and now.

Read Mark 6:2-3 and make notes:

On the Sabbath, Jesus attended the local synagogue and was given the opportunity to teach. The entire congregation was astonished when they heard him teach. His teaching was so profound that questions immediately sprang forth concerning the source of his doctrine and wisdom and the power which he had demonstrated in the miracles of healing and the casting out of demons.

It is entirely reasonable to expect some of the reports of what Jesus had done in the other regions to have made it back to his home town before he returned. It is also reasonable to expect reports of the accusations of him being demon possessed to also have made it back to his home town.

## Mark 25 – All Receive The Same

Remember, these people have known Jesus since he was a very young child. They know that he was not schooled in the rabbinic fashion. They know he was in fact trained as a carpenter and had worked with his earthly dad in their village. They had seen the work of his carpenter's hands. Many of them probably still had the things he had made for them. What could possibly be the source of this wisdom he displayed? Who had empowered him to speak and act with such authority?

There are two answers that lie immediately at hand as far as they are concerned. One is God is the source of this wisdom and power. But the other is he is demonic.

It is interesting at how quickly the impressions of astonishment sprang over to the emotions of resentment; as they recalled the earlier earthly profession they had known Jesus to work in. As they remember that he was trained in one of the vocations of labor, it is as though they suddenly find his office as teacher very offensive. In spite of the wisdom he had shared and in spite of the miracles he had performed - they couldn't bring themselves to see past the ordinary person who had grown up in their village.

"He can't be an anointed teacher — he is an auto mechanic"

"He can't be an anointed teacher — he is a respiratory therapist"

"He can't be an anointed teacher — he is a home builder"

"He can't be an anointed teacher — he is an electrician"

"He can't be an anointed teacher — he is a plumber"

etc. — you get the point.

The rhetorical question, "Isn't this Mary's son?" - deserves a little attention here. When they asked "Isn't this the carpenter?" they are expressing some puzzling over what they see as an impossible transition from a carpenter to that of a religious teacher. But the question of him being Mary's son is very disparaging.

It was the Jewish custom to describe an adult man as the son of his father, even when the father was dead and his mother was a widow. The only time they ever referred to an adult man as the son of his mother was as an insult. It was kind of like saying that his mother had lived such a promiscuous lifestyle that no one is really sure who the father is.

It is possible that rumors of Jesus being illegitimate had circulated in that town all of his life. If so, this may be the springboard for such an insulting statement. But it is also possible that this is simply the evil bend of people's minds who are having trouble accepting this carpenter as now being a rabbi.

"Jesus grew up among us.- He is just like the rest of us. How could he possibly have any special anointing from God? I resent him even trying to indicate that he has some anointing that I don't have."

Just as a side note let me point out; even if someone should have been born in an illegitimate situation; they are no less qualified to receive special anointing from God than anyone else.

## Mark 25 – All Receive The Same

When we give ourselves to God - and accept Jesus as our Savior; it no longer matters what our origins were - where we grew up – or where we came from. It only matters that we serve the Lord God Most High. And we have his anointing to minister. But as I said, that is a side note - let's get back to today's message.

Read Mark 6:4 and make notes:

Jesus compares himself to the prophets of old among the Israelites. The prophets of old, for the most part, were dishonored and rejected by their own people. Human beings, in those days as well as today, just have a problem with one of their own receiving anything special from God.

If you remember from chapter 3, Jesus' family expressed the opinion that he had gone insane and even attempted to stop him forcibly at one point. Where his family and neighbors missed it so badly is God had not suddenly given Jesus some special anointing. Jesus had been the special gift of God to them all along and they never even noticed it. And now that the gift is being unwrapped where they can enjoy it; they are demonstrating resentment and rejection instead of receiving the gift with joy and gladness.

Many times today, God is working something wonderful in our life, and we don't notice the work being accomplished. We are just as guilty as those people were in our resentment and rejection of what God sends to us to help us become what he wants us to be.

Read Mark 6:5-6 and make notes:

This does not speak of the inability of Jesus. It does not say that it was impossible from the stand point of Jesus' power. It was the gross unbelief of the people that restricted Jesus' activity of healing and miracle working. God had already set the parameters in which he would perform miracles for his people. It is "faith".

When people give real faith to God, then he heals and delivers. If we approach God with any other attitude than faith, he withholds - so that we don't associate miracle working with actions on our part, with special phrases on our part, with special objects on our part - that we always remember - it was faith.

When a restaurant has a rule that shirts and shoes must be worn to eat in their restaurant; and you are turned away because you don't have on shoes - it is a lie for you to go out and say they wouldn't let you eat in their restaurant because of the way you had your hair combed.

## Mark 25 – All Receive The Same

When we approach God with any other attitude than faith - it is a lie when we blame God for not giving us what we asked for. The conditions to receive from God have always been "faith" - the conditions to receive from God today is "faith."

When there is very little faith - then there is very little healing, very little deliverance, and very little miracle working going on. And it is never the fault of God, nor is it ever the lack of capability on God's part.

V6 tells us that Jesus was amazed at their lack of faith. After all that he had done already. After all the reports they had heard. You would think with all this evidence everyone would have become a believer by now - everyone would have faith. But resentment and jealousy chokes out faith and keeps us from seeing reality.

It was important for these Fishers of Men in training to see the friends and neighbors of Jesus as they responded to his ministry. These Fishers of Men in training are soon going to be sent out to carry the message of the Gospel. They need to know that the Christian message is going to be taken forth in an environment of unbelief. The Christian message is going to be responded to with rejection.

As a Fisher of Men, we will be planting seeds in a field of unbelief. As Fishers of Men, the very people we are so sure will accept us with love and eagerly greet us will be the very ones who resent our ministry and reject us and the message we bring.

One point to carry from this message: **Jesus did not separate from his own people.**

Jesus did not ONLY share the gospel among strangers. Jesus taught in the synagogue of his local people as well as among strangers. If we don't share the gospel in words and actions among our own people, we don't have the right to share it with strangers.

A second point to carry from this message: **It isn't the level of faith among the people where we grow up that determines our ability to serve God.**

The level of faith among the people in the town of Nazareth, where Jesus grew up, appears to be much less than it was in many of the other places Jesus ministered. Don't let the level of faith of your family, friends, and neighbors hold you back from using the faith you have.

A third point to carry from this message: **What people receive from the message we speak and live - is the same among them all.**

What people received from Jesus, was all the same. We can think of the very little Jesus was able to do in Nazareth and we can think of the many people who were healed and delivered in other places and we wonder how I can say they all receive the same. "According to your faith may it be to you".

## **Mark 25 – All Receive The Same**

They all received according to their faith. For those who accept the message we bring with great faith, much will take place. For those who accept the message we bring with little faith, little will take place. For those who accept the message we bring with no faith, nothing will take place. But they all will receive the same - all will receive according to their faith.

For those who are today needing to receive - "may it be done unto you according to your faith"! For the Fishers of Men today - it works on our end as well. May people respond to us according to our faith!

Do you expect everyone to respond positively to the message and to the lifestyle you live? Do you Expect everyone to respond and receive? Have faith for those who are having trouble having faith for themselves.

Please write down the questions you would like to ask the group – and any insights you have regarding Mark 6:1-6 so that you can share them when we meet:

## **Mark 25 – All Receive The Same**

( this page for additional notes )



## Mark 26 – Fishermen And The Fish

Jesus has been teaching his disciples to become Fishers of Men. Following the "faithless" response in his own home town - Jesus gives the disciples one more preparation, and then sends them out to demonstrate what they have learned.

Read Mark 6:6 and make notes:

This is a very concise summary statement. Something we find often in the book of Mark. Some dismiss this as a rather unimportant statement especially since it has been reported twice before in Mark that Jesus went from village to village teaching. They think it adds nothing to the text here. But I disagree strongly with the suggestion as to it adding nothing and even stronger to the suggestion that it be dismissed.

Consider the disciples, these Fishers of Men in training, had been with Jesus as he went from village to village and witnessed the divine power and authority of Jesus. They also witnessed the tremendous responses in faith by so many people in the various towns. Then they went with Jesus to his own home town and saw practically no one responding in faith. They witnessed Jesus being amazed at the lack of faith by his family and neighbors. If this had been the last stop on Jesus' tour of ministry most normal human beings would have become discouraged - maybe even come to the conclusion that Jesus' ministry is over.

It was important for the disciples to learn from Jesus' ministry among his own people. But it was equally important that they see Jesus ministering to other people outside his home town AFTER that incident; so that they could see it was primarily a localized problem. The ministry of Jesus was by no means over.

After the lack of faith in Nazareth; it was very important that the disciples see people responding in faith. This may be the primary reason Jesus went from village to village again after being in Nazareth. Jesus is about to send his Fishers of Men in training out on a mission. They needed to see faith in action before they were sent out - rather than a bunch of people who were dead in faith.

Read Mark 6:7-9 and make notes:

When Jesus called the disciples, he told them he would teach them to be Fishers of Men. From the time they accepted the invitation to follow Jesus they had been with him pretty much day and night with very few exceptions - and even then only for a short time.

## Mark 26 – Fishermen And The Fish

They had witnessed Jesus teach with authority. They had been with him and shared many divine experiences. They had witnessed him cast out demons, heal the sick, encourage and edify so many people, and even raise the dead. And as we learned in chapter 4, they were even given private instructions and explanations.

If you are going to be trained to be a Fisher of Men, it is only logical that there would come a time that you would be asked to go out and “Fish For Men.” This time has come for the disciples. “Fishers of Men in Training - go out there and show me that you have learned what has been taught!”

This wasn't one of those "throw them in the water and see if they could swim" kind of experiences. It tells us Jesus "gave them authority." He also gave them some basic instructions - "don't take food" - "don't take money" - don't take a bag into which you can collect things as you go" - "you can wear sandals but you can't take extra outer clothes."

To the flesh, this can be a risky assignment. You will eat, if someone will listen to God and then be obedient to him and give you something to eat. Since you have no money, you will have a place to stay, only if someone listens to God and is obedient to him.

You don't have to be in the ministry very long before you realize that a lot of people hear God but are not obedient to his instructions. So the flesh can have a problem - not in doubting God's ability - but in doubting man's faithfulness. So while Jesus gave the disciples authority - he also gave them an opportunity to demonstrate the level of faith they have.

There is some significance in this passage that we need to be careful not to overlook. The Jewish law of that day recognized that a person sent by someone to carry out a task was to be recognized as the person who commissioned them. In other words, it was the tradition and custom of that day that the way you responded to a person was considered as if you had responded to the one who sent them.

So by the civil custom of that day, the way people responded to these disciples sent out by Jesus would be considered as though they responded to Jesus himself in that manner. Their law stated, "The one sent is as though he is the one who commissioned him."

Another thing noteworthy here is their being sent out in sets of two. According to the Jewish law everything was to be established by the testimony of two witnesses. Wouldn't it be interesting to know which disciple was paired with Judas Iscariot?

Read Mark 6:10-11 and make notes:

## Mark 26 – Fishermen And The Fish

The disciples, upon arriving in a village, town, or city - were to accept the invitation given them; and then to remain in that particular place until they left that town. They were not to leave that home if later given an invitation to a larger, nicer, more comfortable, or more convenient location. There was to be no hint that they were moved by the offer of worldly goods. The gospel message was not for sale.

And there was to be no hint that the message was only available to those above a certain level of financial or social means. The disciples had already learned that some were going to reject the gospel AND reject the minister. They had seen it in Jesus' home town. Now Jesus instructs them in the proper way to respond when they are rejected.

It was Jewish custom in those days that when a Jew had to travel to a Gentile location - and sometimes this was necessary for business - as soon as they got to the outer limits of the Gentile territory on their way out - they would stop and shake the dust off of the sandals. Often times they would even break off a small limb from a nearby bush or tree and sweep the dust from their sandals. Sometimes they would even take off their outer garments and shake them vigorously to remove the dust.

The Jews did not want to carry even the smallest part of a Gentile land back to their sacred land of the Jews. While their actions were more symbolic than literally removing the stain of the Gentile land from them - it demonstrated their heart's desire to remain pure - and not to be affected by the actions and words of these people.

Since the disciples were going primarily to Jewish villages, you can imagine the message such actions would speak to the towns people - when the disciples who had been rejected were seen on the edge of town dusting off their sandals. Would we consider such actions to be “politically correct?”

Read Mark 6:12-13 and make notes:

The disciples were obedient to the commission given to them. "They went out and preached that people should repent" - "They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them." They preached the message of repentance they had heard Jesus preach so many times before. They anointed sick people and expected them to get well - just like they had seen happen with Jesus so many times before - and people did get well.

The disciples also drove out demons just like they had witnessed Jesus do. The very things Jesus had done in his own power as commissioned by God - the disciples are now doing in his power.

## **Mark 26 – Fishermen And The Fish**

And as perhaps a side note - I would like to bring your attention to the simple statement that demons being “cast out” is distinguished from “healing” the sick. While these were two separate actions - both indicated the kingdom of God was invading the kingdom of man, and the kingdom of Satan. Both of these also indicated God was interested in healing the whole man, not just the spiritual man.

There are three things we should take home with us from this lesson.

**First, we can't allow the gospel to become something that is controlled or limited by the financial or social leaders.**

The gospel we teach must be shared with all regardless of financial ability and regardless of social standing in the community. The gospel we demonstrate in our lifestyle must be the same to all people regardless of financial or social standing in the community. As Fishers of Men - we must treat all persons as though they have equal value to God, Because they do!

**Secondly, we can't allow the lack of faith of the people around us to stop us from sharing the gospel of Jesus in word and in deed.**

When people do reject our message of words or lifestyle - we need to first accept the fact that they are rejecting Jesus rather than us. We need to disconnect from their unbelief and not accept the responsibility for their lack of faith.

Have we said what we are supposed to say to them? Have we done what we are supposed to do for them? Have we treated them the way God has instructed us to treat them? Then we are not responsible in the least way for the response they give to the message of our words or lifestyle.

**Third, we must present the gospel; both in word and lifestyle; in a manner that is appropriate to the people to whom we are sharing the gospel.**

When we go fishing - do we use bait that is attractive to us - or bait that is attractive to the fish we wish to catch? Most missionaries to foreign lands are more faithful to this than most Church People in America are. If we want to reach any people with the gospel message - then the illustrations we use and the demonstrations of our lifestyle - must be something these people can relate to.

There are a number of people who have taken the passage in this lesson and use it as a set of rules for how ministers of the gospel are to go about today. They are to own nothing - carry no food, clothes, or money. They are to get lodging only if it is given to them, etc. But this is focusing so intensely on the details that the message was missed.

The message here was that Jesus instructed the disciples to approach the Jewish people in accordance with their customs and traditions. Even the rejection of the gospel was to be responded to in a manner consistent with their customs.

## **Mark 26 – Fishermen And The Fish**

When we present the gospel in word or lifestyle - We must present it in a manner consistent with where the recipients are. In what manner will they receive it? The gospel message **MUST NOT BE CHANGED!** The package in which it is delivered - Must be adapted to the people to whom it is being delivered. This includes such things as making people read a translation of the Bible that is so different from their everyday language. This includes making the people listen to Christian music that is so different from the style they all listen to. This includes words and examples that belong to some other culture.

Remember, when we decide to be obedient to God's call and live as a Fisher of Men; we should use bait that appeals to the fish we hope to catch rather what is attractive to us!

Please write down the questions you would like to ask the group – and any insights you have regarding Mark 6:6-13 so that you can share them when we meet:

## **Mark 26 – Fishermen And The Fish**

( this page for additional notes )

## Mark 27 – Necessity Of Fishermen

Jesus sent the disciples out in sets of two. While they are away on their mission trip, Mark is inspired by the Holy Spirit to give us the account of John the Baptist. He also inspires Mark to record the reaction of Herod to the mission of the disciples. The account of John the Baptist inserted at this point, helps mark a significant turn in the ministry of Jesus - and the gospel.

Read Mark 6:14-15 and make notes:

An interesting thing to notice in this passage is that it was "the people" who had recognized Jesus as a prophet. This is what "the people" were saying of Jesus as they report to Herod. "The people" weren't doubting Jesus being a prophet. They were however, apparently unsure of his identity.

Some were saying he was an "ordinary" prophet - "you know we get one from time to time". Some were saying he was Moses, some were saying Enoch, some saying Jeremiah. Others were saying he was Elijah who was believed to be coming back at the end time. And still others were saying that he was John the Baptist who had come back from the dead. And many - or maybe most - of these reports were making their way to the court of Herod.

Read Mark 6:16 and make notes:

Superstition was common in those days. Herod was obviously a superstitious person, but it would appear at this point Herod's superstition was fanned by a guilty conscience. This passage also serves to let us know that Herod did not know Jesus. He was hearing reports "about Jesus" and was coming to a very wrong conclusion. Can I just say that people with a guilty conscience are very prone to come to wrong conclusions! It is recorded two times that Herod thought this was John the Baptist; v14 and v16.

Now we get a little history. The account of things in these next verses had taken place earlier. The Holy Spirit prompts Mark to record them here because it helps us understand Herod's guilty conscience.

Read Mark 6:17-29 and make notes:

## Mark 27 – Necessity Of Fishermen

In a boldness that was typical of John the Baptist, we are told of his having denounced the unlawful marriage of Herod to Herodias - his brother's wife. Herod's brother was still alive when this marriage took place. A whole sermon, or several, could be preached from this account of John the Baptist, but we will leave that for another time. Let's stay focused on the becoming Fishers of Men.

Why do you suppose the Holy Spirit would inspire Mark to record this account of Herod having John the Baptist killed right in the middle of the account of Jesus sending out his Fishers of Men in training to practice what he had taught them? Well, I have already told you that the account of John the Baptist being killed helps us understand why Herod had a guilty conscience. But why would the Holy Spirit want Mark to even record Herod's nervousness at this time?

Because it lets us see the effectiveness of Fishers of Men doing what they are called to do. Because it lets us see the importance of Believers becoming Fishers of Men rather than career "pew-sitters".

Consider the effectiveness of Jesus having traveled around ministering to the needs of people and teaching about repentance and the Kingdom of God. Reports circulated, people got interested, people would come out to wherever Jesus was. Now consider the effectiveness of Fishers of Men - all out sharing their testimony, sharing the message of repentance, and sharing about the Kingdom of God.

It reached from the lowest socio-economic level all the way up to the highest governmental office in the area. When Jesus was traveling from village to village ministering the word and healing diseases and casting out demons - there were reports that went ahead of him.

But, when there were sets of disciples in 6 different villages at the same time, doing the very things Jesus had been doing - now the reports were flying like never before. Reports coming in one after the other.

When it was just Jesus teaching and ministering, it was like a sound that echoed and bounced off of one wall then another and then another. You could follow the echo and be amazed at it. But now, with the disciples teaching and ministering, it was like the sound was coming from every direction all at one time.

We only needed to hear about the circumstance of John the Baptist being killed to understand why Herod had a guilty conscience. But we needed to hear that Herod was greatly troubled by the ministry going on in the region to realize that the message and the ministry was affecting every part of society - at every economic level - and at every level of government. Let me say that "you don't", before I say the next thing - "You Don't!"

But if you had a pastor who was the most anointed teacher in the land - if you had a pastor who's teaching just continuously astonished those who came and listened - if you had a pastor who prayed for people's needs and God moved in their lives - it would NOT make a big impact in the community - and it would NOT change the community!



## **Mark 27 – Necessity Of Fishermen**

But when those who come and listen to the teaching - go out and share what they have been taught - When those who come and witness - go out and pray for those in need - it will impact every level of our society - it will CHANGE our society - our community – and our nation !

When Believers become Fishers of Men instead of Church Spectators; we will see many lost people accept Jesus Christ as their Savior. We will see people at every level of our community and society receive healings and miracles. We will see our nation "once again become One Nation Under GOD!"

We can assess that the disciples did learn from their time with Jesus. They were faithful to go out and teach what they had heard. They were faithful to go out and pray for people to be healed and to receive miracles. But the purpose of this account in Mark is not so that we will know the disciples "got it." We will see in some later passages that the disciples did not "get it" all at this time. There is still much for them to learn.

The purpose of this passage in Mark is to show us the effectiveness of Believers becoming Fishers of Men. It is to show us the importance of sharing what we have been taught and shown. It is to show us that just attending church faithfully is not acceptable. Every Believer is to become a Fisher of Men!

If we are going to see the hearts of people change - If we are going to see our community change - If we are going to see our nation change; then it is going to take Believers becoming Fishers of Men. Believers are going to have to get up off of their "Blessed Assurance"; where they are sit around singing about the "Sweet by and by." Believers must go out as Christian Soldiers marching out to war! Sharing what God has done in their life - Sharing the message they hear taught from God's Word - Praying for people to be healed - Praying for people to receive miracles.

How many hurting people can we just walk by and say, "man, you must be hurting" and then just keep walking on by?

Believers, pick up the spiritual tools you are being offered and take them to those who need help.

Believers, take note of the things you are being taught and teach them to those you meet.

Believers, want you please become Fishers of Men?

## **Mark 27 – Necessity Of Fishermen**

Please write down the questions you would like to ask the group – and any insights you have regarding Mark 6:14-29 so that you can share them when we meet:

## Mark 28 – Rest And Provision

Jesus had previously sent the disciples out in sets of two. He gave them instructions as to how they were to prepare for their trip, what they could take with them, and what they were to do on the missions trip. Now these Fishers of Men in training return to Jesus.

Read Mark 6:30 and make notes:

The disciples have returned from the mission trip Jesus sent them on. It is very appropriate that they should return and report on how they did in fulfilling the mission they were given.

Today, when an ambassador is sent out, it is fully expected and required that this ambassador report back after performing the task on which they have been sent. It was the same in those days. It would have been wrong, and highly inappropriate, had the disciples just gone out on their assigned mission and then never returned to Jesus and give a report.

This term "apostles" used here in Mark to refer to the twelve disciples sent out by Jesus is worth our time for a minute or so. This is a descriptive term indicating the type of service, or mission, they were given to do. It WAS NOT a title of office or a title of position. The Church had not been established at this time, so there was No Church to hold a title, office, or position within.

In today's English language, it would be most appropriate to call them missionaries rather than apostles. These men had been empowered and sent out by Jesus to preach the gospel, to heal the sick, and to cast out demons. There was no office to give - nor was there any office to hold.

Today, the Church is well established, and there are offices to be held, and positions to be filled - but let me go on record - while God does call some to be "apostles" and God does empower them, anoint them, and give them "charisma" gifts of the Holy Spirit. Today - it is still more of a descriptive term of the assignment than it is a title of office or position within the Church.

I am not going to say that you should totally ignore them, but I am saying, you need to be careful around those people who are quick to tell you they hold the office of "apostle". Those who simply say they are doing the work of an apostle - instead of saying they "hold the office of an apostle" are usually not to be feared and they are more likely in a right relationship with the kingdom of God.

For that person who is wondering why this is being mentioned in a series on becoming Fishers of Men - it is to alert Fishers of Men to be on guard against those who will intentionally come to lead you away from your assigned task by getting you excited about being promoted to a higher office which they will call "apostle".

## Mark 28 – Rest And Provision

Read Mark 6:31-32 and make notes:

In much the same way as the ministry of Jesus had caught the attention of large numbers of people - now the ministry of the twelve has caught the attention of "many people." So many in fact that it says "that they did not even have a chance to eat." Two things catch my attention in this passage right away. The first is obviously the ministry of the Twelve is effective - people are responding to them.

The second is that these twelve are dedicated to the mission given to them by Jesus - even though they have returned from going to the villages. They just keep on ministering after their return. So many people are coming that the Twelve are finding no leisure time - not even a chance to sit down and have a meal.

Fishers of Men - and Fishers of Men in Training - This is a very very important word right here. Jesus said to the Twelve; "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." I had to learn this lesson the hard way. We cannot go continually without some rest. But being Fishers of Men, we don't just need rest - we need rest WITH JESUS!

When Satan cannot get us to give up on ministering - he will usually resort to the tactic of showing us so many opportunities to minister, that we don't get any rest. We find ourselves being burned up and burned out. And just as surely as if we had given up on ministry - as burned up and burned out disciples - we can't minister.

Jesus does in fact want us to be sharing the Gospel in our everyday lives. Some of us are to teach with words and others are to teach with our actions. Some of us are to share the Gospel in spiritual ways and some of us are to share the Gospel in physical ways. Some of us are to share the Gospel by meeting people's spiritual needs and some of us are to share the Gospel by meeting people's physical needs.

But all Fishers of Men - need to get away to a quiet place with Jesus and get some rest from time to time. I have also learned from experience that there will be those who will condemn you for getting away for a little while. There will be those who have become convinced that you are never to take a break from ministering - and they will say hurtful things to you when you do, as well as say hurtful things about you to others because you do.

Fishers of Men - don't be controlled by the condemning and controlling words of man; but rather be encouraged by the edifying word of Jesus Christ.

## Mark 28 – Rest And Provision

Have you ever gone on “vacation” and needed to get back to work so that you could get some rest? I have to say this - taking a vacation from your secular job and going and doing so many things that you have to go back to work to get some rest is not what we are talking about here. This is talking about - getting away to a quiet place with Jesus and getting some rest for you entire being: body, mind, spirit, soul.

Satan is going to tell you that you can't afford the time. Remember, Satan is a liar. The truth is, Fishers of Men can't afford not to get away to a quiet place from time to time.

Read Mark 6:33-34 and make notes:

The people - so hungry for the Gospel - could not appreciate the need for rest by the disciples. Instead of chastising the people for invading the disciples retreat space - Jesus had compassion of them; "because they were like sheep without a shepherd." It is interesting to make a note that Jesus did not say; "okay, disciples, you've got people needing ministry out here - break is over - get back to work."

Jesus had just called the disciples to a rest and restoration time - so Jesus began to teach the large crowd that had come and it says he taught them "many things." We are not told what the "many things" are that Jesus taught. So, the subject of the "many things" is not the message here. The message is that Jesus called the Fishers of Men to a time of rest. And Jesus picked up the slack so these Fishers of Men could complete their time of rest and restoration.

Those who are truly in need - won't go with their real needs unmet - while the Fisher of Men gets some rest and restoration.

Read Mark 6:35-36 and make notes:

Don't you find it interesting that the disciples felt it was necessary to point out to Jesus that "it's getting late" and "we are in a remote place" and "you need to send these people away so they can get something to eat." They are talking to the Jesus who has already demonstrated to them on more than one occasion that he knows the thoughts of those around him. He is so in tune that he even knows when someone touches him "in faith" in the midst of a crowd of pushing and shoving.

## Mark 28 – Rest And Provision

Isn't this a lot like us today? Don't we try to tell Jesus just how bad things are here? Don't we keep trying to tell Jesus what's "really" happening here - like he doesn't know? For all of our technological advances, we haven't progressed past where the original Twelve Fishers of Men were; have we?

Read Mark 6:37 and make notes:

Jesus didn't deny the people needed to eat. Jesus didn't suggest that the people be made to fast since he is in their presence teaching them. He suggested the disciples feed these hungry people.

The disciples - these men who have been healing the sick and casting out demons in the power of Jesus' name; are still stuck on the physical limitations of the fleshly life.

This is evident in their response to Jesus' suggestion that the disciples feed the people. "Say What? That would take 8 months of wages - don't you remember Jesus, we're the guys you sent out - without any money; and you told us not take a bag to bring back offerings in." "Jesus, we are financially challenged at the moment."

Read Mark 6:38 and make notes:

The best guess is that these "five loaves," were more like large biscuits we have today rather than like the loaves of bread we find in our stores. The "two fish" were either salted dried fish or roasted fish. Either way, five loaves of bread and two fish seemed insignificant considering the size of the crowd.

Read Mark 6:39-40 and make notes:

## Mark 28 – Rest And Provision

Does anyone notice a parallel to the 23rd Psalm here? "He causes me to recline in green pastures - he prepares a table before me in the presence of my enemies. Enemies of hunger and being in a remote place where there are no restaurants or stores." For those who like to do Bible study, there is a lot of references to be made to the Old Testament records of Israel in groupings of 50 and 100.

Read Mark 6:41 and make notes:

It appears that Jesus is always mindful of the customary practices. In Judaism, it was a strict rule, that nothing was to be eaten without thanking God for it. Jesus followed the prescribed form of the host taking the bread, giving thanks, then breaking the bread and passing it around. The one thing Jesus did differently - is that he looked toward heaven, where the rules call for bowing the head.

We don't know what Jesus prayed since it is not recorded; but let me share with you a portion of the customary Jewish prayer that would have been said in a Jewish home as they sat down to eat. The host would take up the bread and say, "Praise unto you, O Lord our God, King of the world, who makes bread to come forth from the earth."

What an appropriate thing to say on this occasion - for the people did not have sufficient bread - if they were all going to get bread this day, it was going to be God for sure who would make bread come forth.

Read Mark 6:42-44 and make notes:

There has been some debate on whether the fish and bread multiplied in Jesus' hands; or in the hands of the disciples as they distributed it. Such a debate gets our focus off of the message at hand and we are not going to spend any time there. The point is clear. This great number of people were in need of food. The disciples did not have the physical resources with which to provide the needs of the people.

In a sharp contrast to the vast size of the crowd and the meager resources available - we find the simple statement that "they all ate and WERE SATISFIED." This was not sacramental meal were each person just received a morsel. They all ate to the full. When you consider how much some of us can eat before we "are satisfied;" that is saying a lot.

## Mark 28 – Rest And Provision

From the way this account is recorded we can't tell if the people seated in these groups of 50 and 100; were aware of the incredible miracle that took place. Just taking this account at face value, it might have been only the disciples that were aware of the miracle. But who is in training here - the crowd or the disciples?

Jesus involved the disciples in a conversation prior to the feeding that baffled them. Jesus had the disciples to distribute the food. The people would have most likely continued to see Jesus as the great prophet and teacher. The crowd might also see the disciples as having provided them with a "satisfying meal". Probably, only the disciples would be aware of the meager resources and the extent to which the resources were miraculously transformed.

It is understandable that the people might have missed the message here, but it is a big deal to realize that the disciples missed the message. And we will see in a later text that they did - miss the message. This is sad at first, because the message was primarily to them. And second, because the message is so important for every Fisher of Men to grasp. There are those who make a great deal out of the significance that all of this took place in the wilderness. Much is made to connect these events with things that happened to the Children of Israel in the Old Testament. I won't try to take away from those messages. But that really isn't the significance to be found in the message in Mark.

The emphasis is for Fishers of Men to first realize that even in the midst of "so much" that needs to be done - even in the face of "so many" who need to be ministered to - Jesus doesn't just approve or okay our getting some rest - Jesus instructs Fishers of Men to periodically get away to a quiet place with him and rest. Do we really think Jesus calls us to rest from our worldly burdens just so we can "burn out" on our spiritual burdens?

Secondly, Fishers of Men are to know that Jesus is our provider. He is the all sufficient one – he is more than enough – he is whatever we need him to be even before we realize we have a need. AND, Jesus is this for those we are ministering to as well. We are not their provider, Jesus is!

Fishers of Men, don't be discouraged by the apparent limitations - and don't be controlled by perceived physical shortages. Not only will Jesus provide for the needs of those we are concerned about - Jesus will provide for our personal needs as well.

Did you not notice that after all the people had eaten to their satisfaction; that the disciples collected 12 baskets of food. That would be a whole basket for each disciple. Surely that would be more than they would eat at one meal. Don't allow yourself to be overused as a Fisher of Men to the point that you get no rest. But don't allow yourself to be discouraged by worldly limitation either.

Come on Fishers of Men - Let's keep our eyes on Jesus - let's not miss even one of the miracles he performs right before us on a daily basis.

Please write down the questions you would like to ask the group – and any insights you have regarding Mark 6:30-44 so that you can share them when we meet:



## Mark 29 – Jesus Passes By

Following a short time of rest and restoration for the disciples - after returning from their assigned missions trip - they witness the miracle of Jesus turning 5 loaves and 2 fish into enough food to feed 5,000 men and have 12 baskets of food left over. These Fishers of Men in training had just collected the leftovers:

Read Mark 6:45-46 and make notes:

Here again in Mark, we read of the abruptness of which Jesus sometimes does things. "Immediately" Jesus made his disciples get into the boat. He instructed the disciples to go on ahead of him to Bethsaida and Jesus stayed behind to dismiss the crowd.

In the Gospel of John, it states that after the disciples collected the leftovers; some of the people began to realize a miracle had just taken place and these people began to say; "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world."

The tension of messianic excitement was dangerously high at this point. Had the disciples been allowed more time to talk to more of the people regarding the miraculous nature of this meal - it would have been like throwing fuel on a small fire!

This may explain the "immediately" on Jesus' part of sending the disciples away from the crowd. And it very likely plays a large part in Jesus going up to a quiet and lonely place on a mountainside to pray.

Here are all these people - just on the verge of being at fever pitch. How little it would have taken for them to erupt into a civil revolution. In an effort to throw out the ungodly civil government; with the intention of installing this Prophet from God as their new earthly king. Jesus, on more than one occasion, refused to become the warrior-Messiah that was the popular expectations of the people.

He sent the disciples away so that they could not, in their ignorance of the divine plan, add fuel to this fire. He sent the crowd away from him so that they would not in their excitement begin to make an attachment to him that was contrary to the divine plan. And he took himself into the presence of the Father for a time of prayer. Maybe to make sure he was not becoming infected by the fleshly excitement of the people

There would be a time when it would be appropriate for the people to draw near to Christ and lift him up - during the time we call the Passion week. But at this particular time this irresponsible excitement was more of a threat to the divine plan of salvation.

## Mark 29 – Jesus Passes By

While these considerations may have been the primary reason for the "immediately" aspect of sending the disciples away in the boat - there was another reason for them to get into the boat without Jesus and to set sail. These Fishers of Men in training had another lesson to learn. And so do many of us today.

Read Mark 6:47 and make notes:

When Jesus finished praying - it was the very dark hours before dawn. The boat was in the middle of the lake. They had not made it very far across the lake.

One thing that is worth noting for those of us who are Fishers of Men in training, as well as those who are already Fishers of Men, have you noticed that every time the disciples find themselves alone - or away from Jesus - they get into trouble? Jesus is alone on the mountain side. The disciples are in the middle of the lake and they are in trouble.

Read Mark 6:48 and make notes:

The "fourth watch of the night" was about 3:00 a.m. They had been out on the boat since sometime the previous evening. These guys had to be tired; rowing for hours against the wind and ruff waves. At least six hours, and probably more.

Verse 48 has been interpreted a couple of ways. The original language is difficult to translate into English. And English speaking people have a tendency to become very rigid in analyzing a word for word meaning in the text. In a number of English translations it says, "he would have passed by them." In some other translations it says, "he intended to pass them by."

This has led many people to see this as saying, "It was Jesus' intention to pass by them and leave them in their trouble;" or to say "Jesus intended to by-pass them." This would be much like taking the "by-pass" highway around a city rather than traveling through the city.

The logical understanding from this interpretation is that Jesus didn't go out to help these disciples in trouble. But changed his mind after they pleaded with him. This naturally leads to a doctrine that says Jesus will just let you suffer in your trouble until you convince him to come and help you.

## Mark 29 – Jesus Passes By

When we take the time to look closely at the original text - we see something different in this passage. Please pay close attention to these next few statements.

If Jesus had no intention of helping these men - he could have just went over the lake far enough away from their boat that they didn't see him. The text tells us the thing that prompted him to go near where they were is; "He saw the disciples straining at the oars." Jesus saw how hard his disciples were struggling. He saw how exhausted they were becoming. He intended to "pass by them" so that they could see him; so that they might be prompted to call out to him.

The original text uses words that lead us to recognize that Jesus was intending to "pass their way" - as opposed to his passing some other way. In much the same way as God "passed by" Moses. He wanted Moses to see all of Him that Moses was capable of handling. And so he does for the rest of us as well.

The disciples had found themselves away from Jesus. They were in trouble. They were struggling against their trouble and it seemed they were not making any headway. They were reaching the point of complete exhaustion. Jesus saw their trouble and their exhaustion. Jesus passed by where they were so that they could see him; so that they might be prompted to call out to him. Because he desperately wanted to help his disciples in their time of trouble. He is just waiting for them to call out for his help.

How long did Jesus watch from the mountain side as the disciples struggled against their trouble? How long had Jesus been just waiting for them to call out for his help? Since the text doesn't say - we don't know how long. But can you see Jesus watching and waiting and no plea for his help comes. The disciples just continue to struggle against their problem in their own strength until they have little or no strength left.

These men had witnessed Jesus speak to the wind and make it calm down on an earlier occasion much like this one. And they had, just days before, been telling demons to get out of people "in Jesus name," and the demons got out. These men had been speaking to sickness and disease "in Jesus name," and people had been getting healed. They had first hand experience with miracles taking place as they spoke in Jesus name. And they also had first hand experience that told them Jesus has authority over the things of nature like the wind and the waves.

Why didn't at least 1 person out of the twelve stand up and speak to the wind "in Jesus' name," and tell it to be still? Or why didn't at least 1 person out of the twelve call out to Jesus for help? After all, he had helped them before in a similar time of trouble.

And when would it have been a good time to do either of these things? After they were completely spent in trying to fight the battle on their own? Or after 3 or 4 hours instead of 6 or 7 hours? Or maybe, when the trouble first began?

Even though they didn't call out to Jesus when they really should have; Jesus makes himself available to them before they go completely under. He fully intended to pass by where they were so that they could see him and if they ever were going to call for his help this would be the time.

## Mark 29 – Jesus Passes By

It appears, in the midst of their struggle - they didn't even think of asking Jesus for help! Doesn't that sound just like disciples today?

Read Mark 6:49 – 50 and make notes:

This is a very interesting passage. They had tried with all their might to overcome this enemy. And they had just about lost the battle. In all those hours that they fought hard, they never once called out to Jesus for help.

He was ready and he was available to help them but they never asked. It sounds like a tremendous act of grace and mercy for Jesus to pass by where they could see him. Have you ever wanted to help someone and you just waited for them to ask? Perhaps you felt sure they knew by now that you wanted to help them, and you watched as they continued to sink deeper into trouble. And they never asked you for help? Didn't you think, at least at some level, "well if they don't want my help, they can just go under" and you sort of just go on your way?

I think Jesus would have been justified to have gone across the lake without coming close enough for them to see him. But he made it a point to get close enough for them to see him. Maybe seeing him would prompt them to ask for help. So here comes Jesus, in an act of mercy and grace and when they see him - how do they respond ?

Instead of responding with thanksgiving that Jesus has come. Instead of responding with slapping their head and saying "wow, we could have had Jesus' help all along." They cried out in fear! They were terrified!

And if it had been many of us; we would have said, "well I tried to make myself available - I went out of my way to let them know I was willing to help - I'm out of here." But Jesus, being full of mercy, called out to them and said, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

In the darkness of their battle and in the weakness of their bodies' exhaustion - their physical eyes could easily have been deceived. And it is really hard to think clearly when we are just worn out physically. Jesus understood how they could think "ghost" and respond in fear instead of responding in faith.

Even if we are a person of good faith - when we find ourselves totally spent - it is hard to speak and act in the way of faith that we should. Just a side note: this is the reason we should respond to family issues BEFORE we get totally spent!

## Mark 29 – Jesus Passes By

Read Mark 6:51 – 52 and make notes:

Jesus assured these physically and emotionally spent men. First with his word and secondly with his presence.

Here we are told that these Fishers of Men in training had failed to understand the message of the loaves. And it tells us why they had failed to understand the message of the loaves. Their hearts were hardened. Now please remember these are the men who had been with Jesus personally for some time. They had witnessed his miracles, they had heard all his public teachings, and they had even had private teaching from Jesus. These men had been anointed with special power to teach like Jesus, to heal like Jesus, to drive out demons like Jesus, and they had done these things. And yet, these men are said to have hard hearts.

Even though these were disciples. Even though these were Fishers of Men in training. Their hard heart prevented them from fully grasping the messages from God. Their hard heart prevented them from fully grasping the meaning of the actions of God through Jesus. Believers Can Have A Hard Heart!

There are 3 things we can take home with us from this text:

First - Even though we are a Believer; if we still have a hard heart, even if it is hard in just some areas, it prevents us from fully grasping the messages from God. Let us ask God to remove our hard heart and to please give us a teachable heart! This is what we will do if we want to fully grasp God's message!

Second - Disciples of Jesus Christ today - when we find ourselves in trouble - we can call out to Jesus for help - because he is waiting and ready. We don't have to struggle in our own strength to the point of exhaustion. We don't even have to struggle for some time before we ask for his help. Call out for Jesus' help at the first sign of struggle!

Third - Jesus set the example for us. When we see others struggling in a battle against their enemy, we should do more than simply be ready and willing to help. Sometimes we need to "intentionally" pass by where they are to make ourselves available to them. And even when they fail to call out to us, we may need to just "step into their boat" - so we can reassure them with not only our words; but also with our presence.

## **Mark 29 – Jesus Passes By**

Please write down the questions you would like to ask the group – and any insights you have regarding Mark 6:45-52 so that you can share them when we meet:

## Mark 30 - What's The Lesson

The passage in this lesson is passed over by many teachers. Most believing this is just some summary statement of Jesus' ministry about the Gennesaret countryside. But there is a very important message for us as Fishers of Men in this short and frequently ignored passage.

Read Mark 6:53 and make notes:

Do you remember in the previous passage, Jesus had told the disciples to get in the boat and set out for Bethsaida? They landed in Gennesaret! Bethsaida was a fairly short distance from the North-East corner of the lake; close to where they were. Gennesaret was on the south part of the Western shore of the lake. And this was a fairly long distance from where they were.

The winds against which they had spent themselves had driven them a considerable distance off their intended course. I ask you to consider - if it was truly the intent of Jesus for these Fishers of Men in training to go to Bethsaida - and the winds had driven them off course - after Jesus calmed the winds down - wouldn't he have had them to correct their course? After all, the text tells us they were in the middle of the lake. So it would have been about the same distance to any particular shore.

So, what I am asking you to consider is this: Jesus did not intend to go to Bethsaida; neither himself or his Fishers of Men in training. But he instructed them to go to Bethsaida; BECAUSE there was a lesson for them in the exercise of "going to" Bethsaida.

Jesus actually sent those disciples into a situation where he KNEW they would accomplish nothing and become completely exhausted. I submit to you that the place where Jesus and the disciples ended up on this voyage is actually where Jesus intended to go with his Fishers of Men in training in the first place. The coastal region in the fertile plain of Gennesaret was heavily populated in the first century. What a great place to take the gospel message.

Read Mark 6:54 – 55 and make notes:

If any of the people who had been fed from the 5 loaves and 2 fishes had overheard Jesus telling the disciples where to go, they would have heard Bethsaida. If they were going to run ahead of the boat again, like what had happened before, they would have run to Bethsaida and told the people there that Jesus was coming to their town. But no one would have run to Gennesaret and said Jesus is coming here.

## Mark 30 - What's The Lesson

While there is no reason to think the people of this region were expecting Jesus, it does indicate he was recognized right away. The reports of his ministry had traveled throughout the surrounding regions. Jesus' presence created an intense excitement among the people. Look at how their response to Jesus' presence is reported. They "ran throughout that whole region" and brought the sick people to wherever they heard he was.

This paints a picture of people who are determined to take advantage of the divine opportunity that has been presented to them. At least as they saw it! "My relative has been sick for a long time - I'm going to take them to the healer." "My friend has been suffering far too long - I'm going to take them to the healer."

Read Mark 6:56 and make notes:

No doubt many of the different reports of people being healed had made it to this region prior to Jesus personally arriving. But there is indication that the report of the woman who came up and touched just the hem of his garment had certainly made it to this region. Verse 56 tells us that everywhere Jesus went - villages, towns, and the countryside - the local people brought the sick to where Jesus was and they "begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak." And all who touched him were healed! Isn't this a very different response than what occurred in his home town? But it isn't much better! This is a poor response, considering the Gospel.

This short passage is very important for us as Fishers of Men today. There are two things we need to take home with us from it:

First: Has anyone noticed the absence of any mention of teaching or preaching in this passage? These people don't appear to have any interest in having him teach - no interest is apparent in being taught. These people were believing that some kind of divine power was "some how" channeled through this person Jesus and they wanted this divine power to take away the pains in their lives. They wanted their friends and loved ones healed. Jesus patiently bears with the limited insight of this people, and then in mercy and grace heals those who are brought to him.

Let's not talk about all the local churches that are spiritually dead and nothing more than social clubs. Let's talk about the local churches that are truly interested in being the kind of church God wants us to be. Today, we find these churches divided into basically Two Camps.

One camp we will call the Word Camp. These churches emphasize the importance of the Word. They are faithful to teach the Word in a manner that is true and faithful to the original message - as best as they understand it.



## Mark 30 - What's The Lesson

The other camp we will call the Spirit Camp. These churches emphasize the importance of the Spirit of God. They are faithful to encourage people to receive the Spirit of God and to make every effort to allow the Spirit of God to work and move in their lives and in their church services.

The Word Camp usually omits the Spirit - concerned about fleshly outburst, fanaticism, and some merited concern over getting so taken with Spirit that we might become shallow in our understanding and knowledge of the Word.

The Spirit Camp usually omits the Word - at least with any depth to it - concerned that too much emphasis on the Word and study of the Word might not leave room for the Spirit to work and move in a spontaneous manner. They often refer to places where the people have become great students but so rigid as to deny the Spirit the freedom to move.

It was never God's desire that His people divide into these camps. God has always desired that His people Know His Word - AND - that His people be Open to His Spirit.

A "Word Only" church may become knowledgeable of the Word of God. But they will never truly grasp the depths of Scripture without the input and influence of the One who Wrote the Bible - the Spirit of God.

The "Spirit Only" church may become sensitive to the Spirit of God. But they will never truly grasp the true fullness of being in the Spirit without a real knowledge of the Word of God.

The Word of God is the standard by which we are to evaluate every other thing. The Word of God is the standard that tells us if this prophetic word, or this word of knowledge, or if this teaching is actually from God.

The Spirit of God is the one who helps us understand all things that God has said. The Spirit of God is the one who helps us understand all that Jesus taught. Without the Spirit of God, the best we can do is to come to the understanding according to the wisdom of man.

God is speaking to the ministers today in the Pentecostal and Charismatic communities - as well as to the ministers in mainline denominational Word communities. God is calling all of us to be "Word & Spirit" churches. God is calling us to build our church standard on the Word of God and build our church ministry on the Spirit of God.

God is calling you and me as individual Fishers of Men; to study the Word to make sure we make ourselves available to faithful teachers of the Word - and then for us to speak, act, move, and respond in the Spirit of God.

If we claim to be a Christian and yet we just don't like to be taught the Word of God; we need to repent and ask God to change our heart and attitude. If we claim to be a Christian and yet we just don't want any of that Holy Spirit stuff; we need to repent and ask God to change our heart and attitude.

## Mark 30 - What's The Lesson

I am not saying that everyone needs to speak in tongues. I am not saying that everyone needs to prophesy. I am not saying that everyone needs to give words of knowledge. I am not saying that everyone needs to have and use any one of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

I am saying that Every Believer needs to be willing to receive all of the Spirit of God and whatever gift God so chooses to give us. I am also saying that without a deep and solid understanding of God's Word, we probably won't understand much of what the Spirit actually directs us to do. And as a result of lack of understanding will probably fall way short of being the person God desires for us to be. And fall way short of doing the work God desires for us as an individual Fisher of Men to do.

Are we today, acting like the people in Gennesaret? Are we only coming to Jesus when we hurt - or when the ones we love hurt? Are we like the people of Gennesaret, in the sense that we only come to church when it sounds like there might be some entertainment; like someone being miraculously healed; like some Word of Knowledge; like some Prophecy. Well you know, like something other than just teaching the Word of God!

Are we like the people of Gennesaret in that we don't care about the teaching or preaching. We just want to receive some physical relief? When we should be coming to be taught the Word of God so that we can more fully respond in the Spirit of God. Physical healing is Great! But it is nothing compared to being saved. And it is a small thing compared to be in a personal relationship with Jesus.

I said there were two things we should take home with us; so here is the second: Jesus will sometimes send us into a situation where we will apparently accomplish nothing. We are apparently going nowhere. And if we don't look to him, we can literally exhaust ourselves in this "going nowhere" situation.

Why did Jesus sent the first disciples into a situation where they would wind up exhausting themselves going nowhere? Because there was something for them to learn in that situation. There was something that would be helpful and useful to them in the rest of the ministry. That's still the same reason He sometimes sends Fishers of Men into such situations today.

So, when we find ourselves in a "going nowhere" situation; and we are wearing ourselves out going nowhere; Oh, yes, as we said in the last lesson, the first thing to do is "Call on Jesus." But the next thing we should do is to ask, "Lord, what is it that you want me to learn in this?" If God allows you and me to wind up in any situation, He has a purpose for allowing it. Our goal is to find out what His purpose is and to accomplish it. The quicker we find out what we are here for - the quicker we get out this situation.

Remember, no Believer ever fails God's class. We just keep recycling through each class until we finally get it; then we move on to the next lesson. Jesus did not come into a fleshly body, live a perfect life of holiness, suffer the most painful death; JUST so we could be healed.

Jesus lived and endured SO THAT - we could come into a full loving relationship with the Father in Heaven. We can't do that without knowing His Word AND being filled with His Spirit.

### **Mark 30 - What's The Lesson**

Each of us should in fact, invite our sick and hurting friends and family to come to church with us to be prayed for - to receive healing in any and every area. But we should be coming to church to hear the Word of God taught so that we can know and understand the fullness of what God has for us. Sometimes it is taught to us through music, and sometimes through preaching or teaching.

Will we make ourselves available to the teaching of God's Word and to the fellowship of God through His people. Why do we come to Jesus? Do we look for the message in all situations we find ourselves in?

Please write down the questions you would like to ask the group – and any insights you have regarding Mark 6:53-56 so that you can share them when we meet:

## **Mark 30 - What's The Lesson**

( this page for additional notes )

## Mark 31 – From The Heart

There is nothing in Mark that tells us when the events recorded in this lesson's passage took place. It could have taken place at some time prior to the events in the preceding passage or it could have been latter. However, the Holy Spirit having Mark to record it here has instructive value. This discussion on defilement is placed right in the middle of the accounts of Jesus' ministry to Gentiles. So it isn't as important for the message concerning "when" this took place; as it is important to the message that it "did" take place.

Read Mark 7:1-2 and make notes:

Jesus' teaching frequently differed fundamentally from that of the Pharisees on essential points of common piety. Here the issue is being raised over the ceremonial washing of hands before a meal. The issue is not about the disciples setting down to eat with mud, grease, and other visible signs of contamination on their hands. The issue is about the disciples not going through the ceremonial washing of hands the Jewish tradition required.

All of us today understand that simply running some cool water over our hands and drying them with a cloth does not remove contamination from our hands. Any of us who have raised small children have had the privilege of trying to teach this concept to them. "You have to use soap if you want the dirt to come off." And most moms want the dirt off before they dry their hands with the towel.

The fact that these Pharisees and teachers of the law came from Jerusalem, brings some detail to the picture. If you remember, it was in Jerusalem that the Pharisees and Scribes of the law accused Jesus of being demon possessed; and that he was doing the miracles by the power of devil. Knowing the background of a relationship between persons, we better understand what is about to happen. Knowing what these people have already said about Jesus, we can understand the accusation that these men are not following proper ceremonial ritual is just a door opener. The real issues they have with Jesus are much deeper than any ritual.

Read Mark 7:3- 4 and make notes:

In the book of Exodus we see the priests had to wash their hands and feet prior to entering the Tabernacle. By the end of the second century B.C., many of the Jewish laypersons were voluntarily washing their hands before morning prayer and before eating bread. God had many times rescued them as a people and had restored them to their land after most of them were carried off to foreign lands. The Jews held the conviction that their daily bread should be eaten as if it were a priestly food.

## Mark 31 – From The Heart

As compared to Gentiles, even the lowest Jew felt he was like a priest. The very word "Pharisee" is a name which means "those who are set apart." These people followed a way of life which they were sure was the more perfect lifestyle. They affirmed the resurrection of the dead - they believed in the existence of angels - they taught the importance of holiness of life - they fasted typically twice a week - they were faithful to ceremonially clean their pots, plates, cups, and all their utensils - they were faithful to tithe - faithful in the offering of first fruits - and faithful in the saying of many prayers. No one who looked at their lifestyle could say these are bad people!

Read Mark 7:5 and make notes:

A careful study of Jesus' life reveals he always followed the law as given by God. However, he frequently ignored the traditions that had been handed down by respected teachers of the Jews. It was never Jesus' failure to obey the written law that got him into trouble with the Pharisees. It was his failure to support the validity of their oral laws that made them so angry. And this question regarding the actions of his disciples was in fact a charge against Jesus. The leader is always responsible for the actions of those under him.

Read Mark 7:6–8 and make notes:

Jesus gives a two-fold answer to their question. The immediate response is a pointed citation from Isaiah 29 - "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you. . ." The second response is when Jesus speaks to the whole crowd in the following verses.

When Jesus says things like "they worship me in vain;" "their teachings are but rules taught by men;" and "you have let go of the commands of God and are holding onto the traditions of men;" - He is categorically denying the authority of their oral traditions.

The oral traditions should have been nothing more than a fence that helps the people know when they are about to exceed the Law of God. But the Pharisees had elevated their oral tradition to an exaggerated reverence and it was nothing but false piety. And Jesus wasn't giving it any place at all. Isaiah in the Old Testament at one point challenged the Jews by saying "your merchants mix water with wine."

## Mark 31 – From The Heart

You can take water that is unsafe to drink - and by adding some wine to it, make it a little safer to drink. You can take water that has an unpleasant taste to it - and by adding some wine to it, make it taste good enough to drink. Both of these circumstances would be good applications of adding wine to water.

But the merchants in Isaiah's day were adding "water" to "wine" in an effort to make the wine go further - so that they could make more money. And this process made the wine of a lesser quality.

This is an important principle to understand in order to grasp the importance of this lesson's message: Adding wine to water can help the water – it can make the water better. But adding water to wine weakens the wine - it destroys the wine.

When we add the traditions of man to God's Word - we weaken and destroy God's Word. But by basing our traditions upon God's Word - we make good traditions.

Remember, Fishers of Men in training - he wants us to worship him in spirit and in truth. There is no acceptance of false piety, regardless of how pretty we dress it up. Our worship of God must not be of words only - because God looks first at our heart and after examining our hearts - only then looks at our works.

Read Mark 7:9 and make notes:

Jesus was not about to allow his adversaries to invoke a charge against him that in itself would violate the command of God. They charged him with violating their oral traditions. He referenced Isaiah and pointed out to them that these were the traditions of men and not God. Here in verse 9 he clearly calls them "your own traditions."

Read Mark 7:10-12 and make notes:

One of the many things I truly enjoy about Jesus' teaching is that he keeps it practical. Jesus doesn't just teach in some spiritual sounding manner that you go away wondering what he really meant. Jesus cites Moses, the unquestioned father of the Jewish Law.

## Mark 31 – From The Heart

The Law, as given through Moses, made clear the honor and respect that was required by God toward fathers and mothers. The Pharisees had allowed their tradition of devoting something to God, calling it “Corban,” to actually violate God's command. Even though God has given an outline that makes it clear there is family responsibility; they have set their tradition above that responsibility.

Many Bible scholars understand that Jesus was teaching part of honoring your father and mother is taking care of them; even providing for their needs when they become unable to provide for themselves. The Pharisees had put forth an oral tradition; that if a person declared their extra wealth to be dedicated to the Lord, then it was acceptable to allow your parents to go without the necessities of life.

The Pharisees were teaching the people that it was acceptable to allow your parents to go without proper food, medical care, or maybe even proper housing; while you give generously to the work of God. Jesus is saying "this kind of thinking and acting is violating God's commands."

Read Mark 7:13 and make notes:

This verse makes it clear that Jesus didn't see this example as the only place where they have set their tradition above the command of God. Jesus said, "And you do many things like that."

Read Mark 7:14-15 and make notes:

The Pharisees were highly concerned with the ceremonial "cleanness" of the hands which are used to place food into the mouth. When Jesus addresses the crowd, who no doubt heard the Pharisees make a charge against Jesus. He makes a clear and radical opposition between material purity and moral purity.

A man IS NOT DEFILED by what he eats - even if his hands are unclean. A man IS defiled by what comes out of him. This is a powerful statement on Jesus' part - especially in light of the major emphasis the Pharisees place upon ritual and ceremony. If it isn't what goes into a man that defiles him - then the sinful man can never become acceptable to God by carefully observing all the rituals and ceremonies of the Pharisaic traditions.



## Mark 31 – From The Heart

This had to give the people something to think about. But it should give us something to think about. We have destroyed the message of salvation by telling our lost friends and neighbors that it is about a list of “do's and don'ts.”

Read Mark 7:17-19 and make notes:

Do you remember from the account of the disciples exhausting themselves on the lake; fighting against the wind? It told us they didn't understand the message of the feeding of the 5000. Here is another place where Mark points out the disciples didn't understand the teaching of Jesus.

In spite of the fact that these men had a privileged position and relationship with Jesus; they still did not automatically understand everything. They needed some things explained to them.

It was Jewish thought that the heart was the source of all spiritual and moral conduct. Jesus explains that what we take into our bodies does not go into our heart. At best, we digest what we can of it and then it passes from our body. For those who are paying attention, they wouldn't have had to wait until Peter had the vision regarding all meats being acceptable to eat. And yet we have people today who hold to strong religious laws forbidding the eating of certain foods.

Some people have biological problems with their bodies which make it very unwise for them to eat certain foods - but there is nothing Scripturally or spiritually to forbid these foods.

Read Mark 7:20-23 and make notes:

Verse 20 is so direct and clear that it should be presented in every church in America. It is what comes out of the mouth that makes us unclean! Let's slow down here for a moment – look at verses 21-23.

The person who is committing sexual immorality; we can't blame that on the environment. The person who is stealing - we can't blame that on their hunger or great need. The person who is murdering - we can't blame that on a few bad breaks. The person who is committing adultery - we can't blame that on the other person. The person who is greedy - or responds in malice - the person who deceives their family and friends - the lewd person - the one filled with envy - the person who is slandering others - the person is so arrogant - and the one who is always acting foolishly; all of these people are doing what they do because of the condition of their heart! It is not because of environment, circumstances, or how they were treated as a child! All these evils come from inside and make a person “unclean.”

## **Mark 31 – From The Heart**

Some want to claim Jesus is declaring all the rituals of purification as null and void. They claim He is alleviating the demand for purity. Jesus has in no way alleviated the demand for purity. If anything, Jesus has sharpened and focused the demand for purity. Jesus is saying that the main thing is purity of the heart.

The Pharisees and other religious leaders of that day had become so focused on external purity that they had allowed their hearts to abscess. What Jesus was saying is the people needed to work on the cleanness and purity of our heart.

What is the message we should take home from this lesson:

The capacity to fellowship with God is not so much determined by material cleanness of food or hands, or any other external thing. The capacity to fellowship with God is clearly destroyed by our personal sins - which have all originated in our own heart. If we want to be clean and pure - then it will be necessary to have a clean and pure heart. Fishers of Men - and Fishers of Men in Training - we must guard against the natural tendency of our flesh to get so focused on the ritual and the tradition that we allow the heart to slide into corruption.

Today we find people who are pretty faithful to do the right thing outwardly, but in their heart they are resenting doing the very things they are doing. People who are doing the right things in public, maybe even being recognized and congratulated for what they are doing, but in their heart they are committing all manner of sins. We can't be this way and be the Fishers of Men God wants us to be. The Call is for God's people to strive toward a clean heart.

Please write down the questions you would like to ask the group – and any insights you have regarding Mark 7:1-23 so that you can share them when we meet:

## Mark 32 – Humble and Confident

In the previous lesson, we looked at the passage the Holy Spirit inspired Mark to place in the middle of Jesus' ministry to Gentiles. It dealt with what makes a person unclean. Now that we have the message clearly in our hearts and minds about what makes a person unclean; the Holy Spirit inspires Mark to continue recording Jesus in his ministry to the Gentiles. So, we need to keep that message in the forefront of our minds as we look into the passage for this lesson.

Read Mark 7:24 and make notes:

It seems Jesus has left the plains of Gennesaret and has gone somewhat northward to the region of Tyre; which is in the territory of Phoenicia. This would place Jesus and his disciples about 20 miles northwest of Capernaum.

The text does not say Jesus went to the city of Tyre - only that he went to the vicinity of Tyre. Many Bible scholars take this to mean Jesus stayed in the rural areas in this Gentile region. It does tell us Jesus entered into a house and it states he "did not want anyone to know it." So some have taken this text to say Jesus was trying to find a quiet place to rest. He wanted to get away from everyone and just rest - and as we have seen in an earlier passage - Jesus does want his disciples to rest - but "rest" does not appear to be the motive in this passage. Before we get to the remainder of this passage - I want to submit to you that I am convinced Jesus did not want a large crowd of people coming to him because of the excitement of what miracle he might do next - or what healing they might get to witness next. I am submitting to you - Jesus wanted to keep his presence as quiet as possible - because in this instance he wanted only those who were coming to worship and demonstrate their faith!

You will see why I say this a little later. And this text tells us it simply wasn't possible to keep Jesus' presence in this area a secret. The local people found out Jesus was in their area. And at least one found out which house he was in.

Read Mark 7:25-26 and make notes:

It is not just that someone found out where he was and entered the house. Do you notice how much the fact is stressed - this is a non-Jewish person that has approached Jesus? It states both that she is a Greek AND she was born in Syrian Phoenicia. Either one of these factors would make her unclean to the Jewish people. To have both of them stated is much like putting a printed word in **BOLD FACE - ALL CAPS** - and underlining it. We are not to overlook this detail concerning this woman. There is nothing in any of the Gospels to indicate this woman had any prior contact with Jesus. So we are left to believe she had only heard of him and what he does in the way of ministry.

## Mark 32 – Humble and Confident

In the text it calls this woman's daughter "little daughter" - and this is a phrase that was used of very young girls in those days. We might equate it to some where in the range of older toddler to second grade; or maybe third.

And the detail that this "little daughter" is possessed by an evil spirit also provides some picturesque detail. In other passages of the Gospels we read where children with demons tended to have severe convulsions, throw themselves into the fire, throw themselves into water, and a number of other life threatening things.

Many of us have experienced a child doing something that placed them in danger. The pain is significant when a parent faces the prospect of losing a child - or even having the child experience great pain, causes the parent to suffer. So these two facts given in this passage help us to understand this mother was in anguish over her "little daughter's" condition. And we can understand why this woman is so bold and persistent in her "begging" Jesus to cast the demon out of her little girl. We have no problem understanding why this woman would come in quickly and throw herself prostrate at Jesus' feet as she begs with great earnest for his help.

This is not the kind of prayer request most of us make at church: "oh yeah, I have this problem I want you to pray about for me" – and we are thinking in our hearts - "it probably won't make any difference but I let everyone know I have a problem." This is not the attitude this woman had as she fell prostrate in the presence of the Savior! Since Jesus knows the heart and thoughts of people, he must have known the anguish this mother was in.

Read Mark 7:27-28 and make notes:

For those Gentiles who understood the Jewish attitude of that day - and for His Jewish disciples - there was no confusion in interpreting Jesus' statement. By Old Testament and later Judaism teachings - the people of Israel were God's children. They were a privileged people - a called out people - called out from among all the other peoples of the world. The others were not special - they were not privileged - they were as dogs - who traveled about and lived their lives as scavengers. Like the dogs, they gave no consideration as to the cleanliness of a food. Like the dogs, they gave no consideration as to where this food had come from - how this meat might have died - who had touched it, etc.

All the non-Jewish people who lived in the regions around Israel understood they were seen as dogs by the Jews. Now the Gentiles might not understand the second aspect of Jesus' reply to this woman - but His Jewish disciples most likely did. There is coming a time when God's blessings will be extended to the Gentiles - and Jesus' statement to this woman was saying - the time for God's blessings to be extended to the Gentiles has not yet come.

## Mark 32 – Humble and Confident

Jesus didn't say to this woman "no" and he didn't say "never." What Jesus said - it was right for the children get to eat all they wanted first, before the food was thrown out to the dogs. In fact Jesus said "it is not right" to take the bread provided for the children and throw "it" to the dogs. But we have already seen where Jesus has ministered to Gentiles.

Pay close attention to the response of this woman! She did not get up and leave the house and begin to complain to people that she was "talked down to" by this "teacher." She didn't get bent out of shape because he insinuated she was a dog. She didn't get furious because Jesus insulted her in her time of need. This woman - rather than getting upset - took the analogy given by Jesus and responds to Jesus' statement within the context of that analogy - without denying she was a dog - without complaining that others might see her as a dog; she replied, "but even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."

We need to take a close look at what Jesus said to her in order to fully grasp this woman's response. Jesus did not say it was wrong to "hand" bread down to dogs. Jesus didn't say it was wrong to "drop" bread down to dogs. What Jesus said was - it is wrong to toss bread to the dogs. All of this in regards to the "children's bread."

In those days - as in many third world countries today - there were dogs who were not domesticated. There were dogs that would not allow people to pet them. They would hang around close to where people lived because people "throw out" food scraps and these dogs would eat this "thrown out" food.

But, again just like today, there were those dogs that had become domesticated. They not only allowed people to pet them, they played with the people, and even lived in the houses with the people. To "toss" out the children's bread is a reference to giving the bread intended for the children to those un-domesticated dogs. Jesus said this would be wrong!

Look again at what this Gentile woman said, "Yes, Lord, . . .but even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." The dogs under the table is a reference to the domesticated dogs. The dogs that choose to live with the children – the dogs that want to be part of the children's lives. "Yes Lord, I agree it would be wrong to toss the children's bread to the wild dogs." "But Lord, I'm a dog that chooses to live with the children, I hang out under table where you feed them, and it is right that I should get to eat what falls from the children's table."

And anyone who has ever fed children knows that a lot of food finds its way to the floor around where the children eat. Isn't it a help when the family dog gets the scraps off the floor for you? This woman was saying "okay, I'm a dog, I'm not asking for the main course, I'm not asking to get the first serving, I'm just asking for your precious scraps."

Read Mark 7:29 and make notes:

## Mark 32 – Humble and Confident

This woman demonstrated what we might call an irresistible confidence in Jesus. And it appears this delighted Jesus. This woman's response to Jesus' statement bears an eloquent witness of her personal humility and her trust in Jesus' power to meet her need. This is another example of the kind of faith Jesus has already told the disciples is the kind that receives miracles. And this foundational humility and foundational faith is coming from one that most of his disciples would call a dog. In the other gospels, we learn that the disciples wanted Jesus to send this woman away, because she was begging! They did not want this “dog” bothering Jesus.

Jesus speaks no word of healing. Jesus speaks no word of "casting out." He simply tells her there is no need for her to continue petitioning him - "the demon has left your daughter."

Read Mark 7:30 and make notes:

Church tradition has this woman's name as Justa and the daughter's name as Berenice. I find it interesting that the Holy Spirit did not inspire Mark to record the names - only the account of true humility and true faith toward Jesus. The humility and the faith was the point – not who the people were.

Isn't it interesting - the Pharisees and Scribes forget the reality of life in their attachment to tradition and ritual - the disciples remain dull and to some degree hard hearted - but this "dog" shows the kind of humility that allows repentance to grow and bear fruit. And this "dog" shows the kind of faith that has a profound confidence in Jesus meeting what most people would declare a hopeless situation.

What is it that we should take home with us today from this passage? What is the message for us as Fishers of Men?

First, let us recognize that the "Bread" that is designed for God's Children is NOT going to be thrown out to where the wild dogs are. This would be wrong. But, even if we are a dog, when we choose to come in and live where God's children live, then all of God's miraculous power is available to us. This is a clue that we can't just go our own way and expect to receive God's richest blessings. Let us choose to come to where the children of God are!

Secondly, we can choose to be like the Pharisees and miss out on God's great blessings and miracles. And we can choose to be like those disciple who remained dull of understanding and miss out on God's great blessings and miracles. Or we can come to Jesus with a humble heart - repent where we need to repent - and approach Jesus with faith that produces confidence. And we can receive the blessings and miracles of God right here in this life.

### **Mark 32 – Humble and Confident**

The miracle doesn't necessarily come to those who have the most religious training. The miracle doesn't necessarily come to those who are living daily by meeting all the ritual requirements to "be clean." The miracle comes to those who have true humility which produces repentance; and who have faith that produces confidence.

Fishers of Men - are we showing confident faith in Jesus meeting our needs? Are merely showing a wavering hope that he might help us a little? Fishers of Men - do we need to present ourselves to Jesus and ask him to help us with our faith? Today is a great day for some more dogs to come into the house where the children of God live and are fed.

Please write down the questions you would like to ask the group – and any insights you have regarding Mark 7:24-30 so that you can share them when we meet:

## **Mark 32 – Humble and Confident**

( this page for additional notes )



### **Mark 33 – Touched by God's Finger**

The account we are going to look at in this lesson, is recorded only by Mark. And there are those who think since it is only recorded in Mark and Mark's gospel is kind of passed over because of its brevity, we shouldn't spend too much time on this passage. But if you have been paying attention to these lessons for any length of time, you know that I believe - if God had it written down for us - then He had something He wanted us to get from it.

Read Mark 7:31 and make notes:

The details of Jesus leaving the vicinity of Tyre and going back to the Sea of Galilee is of some importance. Sidon is located some 20 miles north of Tyre. This means Jesus traveled northward to Sidon, then went southeastward to the Sea of Galilee. His route would look somewhat like an inverted "V" upon the map. This route, while only vaguely described, does leave us with a couple of possibilities.

One is the commonly held view: Jesus was avoiding the region of Galilee by taking this route. The second is - Jesus was trying to come into contact with a larger segment of the Gentile population.

Many Bible scholars have agreed that Jesus was avoiding Galilee at this time in his ministry. But this leaves them with a question of why is Jesus spending so much time in Gentile territory while avoiding an area where there is a heavy Jewish population such as Galilee?

I am submitting to you that Jesus took the route he did for the same reason he was in this Gentile territory in the first place. Jesus was not avoiding Galilee as much as he was making contact with as many in this Gentile region as possible. Now, why is Jesus making the effort to reach these particular Gentiles?

This Gentile region had a sizeable number of Jews who had married into these families and were living here. The Jews who had become part of this society were not only looked down upon by those who were orthodox Jews, but they looked down upon themselves – spiritually. They accepted themselves as having become "dogs."

It isn't important to argue whether it was Jewish people or Gentile people who came to Jesus while he was in this territory. Let's accept the fact that the majority of the Jews who were here would probably feel they do not deserve to come near a Rabbi or a Prophet. And these are some of the things Jesus was being called.

But don't you think these Jews who were condemning themselves would witness what Jesus was doing? They would see the Gentiles being reached out to by this Jewish teacher and healer. But, more importantly, the disciples would be seeing Jesus reach out to these Gentiles and witness him giving to the Gentiles the same measure of God's power for miracles, the same measure of God's grace and mercy - as he did to the Jews.

### Mark 33 – Touched by God's Finger

AND, now this is a big "and", the disciples would witness Jesus reaching out to these Jews who had abandoned Jewish traditions - for whatever reason they had done so. The disciples - these Fishers of Men in Training - witnessed Jesus going out of his way to make sure these "fallen ones" had the message of deliverance, healing, and salvation taken to them.

The outcast were being reached out to by the most holy and sanctified person on the face of the earth! This had to say something to these Fishers of Men in Training! Does it say anything to the Fishers of Men in training today?

Read Mark 7:32 and make notes:

There has been some debate as to whether this man "could hardly talk" because of a speech impediment or because he was deaf and could not hear. I'm not sure this is worth much of our time to debate but let me address it for a moment. If the man had been born deaf and as a result of being deaf had not learned to talk - then it seems meaningless for Jesus to have ministered healing to the man's tongue. It seems reasonable that Jesus would have only ministered healing to the man's ears.

However, since Jesus ministered both to his ears and his tongue, it seems reasonable to accept it to mean this man had an impairment to his tongue, or some facial muscles which caused him difficulty in trying to speak.

Today, we have been able to teach many people who were born deaf to sound out words and learn how to speak to some degree. In those days they did not have - as far as we know - the ability to teach a deaf person to speak. It is most likely that if this man had been born deaf, he probably would not be speaking at all. So the description would not have been that he "could hardly talk" - but would have probably said he was deaf and mute.

The statement that he "could hardly talk" sounds more like he had been born able to hear, and at some later time lost his hearing and began having some difficulty in speaking. This could have been the result of an accident, an injury from some battle, or from a stroke, or the like. Mark used a not so common word to describe this man's speech. Considering the word used by Mark, a number of Bible scholars have concluded that this is an allusion to Isaiah 35:5 which celebrates God as the one who comes to unstop the ears of the deaf and provides song for those who have unintelligible speech. The fulfillment of prophecy is one of the things expected by the Messiah, so this isn't out of the question.

And maybe that is a secondary message in this text. But I don't believe this is the primary reason this account was recorded. My first reason for coming to this conclusion is that if this was a fulfillment of prophecy, the Holy Spirit would have had the other Gospel writers to record it.

## Mark 33 – Touched by God's Finger

Secondly, the focus of the accounts recorded in Mark is to help train Fishers of Men.

In the light of this being to train Fishers of Men - take another look at verse 32; "and they begged him to place his hand on the man." This was a practice of the Jews, the placing of the hands upon a person. The Jews didn't place their hands upon a person for healing. Touching a sick person would put them at risk of becoming "unclean."

The Jews usually placed their hands upon a person to impart their blessing upon that person. This would be done when setting someone apart to a place of ministry, when sending them forth to carry out some mission - and the like. The simple fact that these people asked Jesus to place his hand upon this man tells us two things:

The first is that they had some knowledge of this Jewish practice - Jesus was Jewish. The second is they wanted Jesus to impart a blessing upon this man in his pitiful situation. It does not say that they asked Jesus to heal the man, only that he place his hands upon him. These people may not have been looking for healing - only for this man to be blessed.

Read Mark 7:33-34 and make notes:

The first thing I ask you to take notice of in Jesus' response is this. Jesus took steps to connect with this man on a personal level. Jesus did not minister to this man from a distance - physically, spiritually, or emotionally. Jesus took this man aside as if to show this man that he regarded a personal relationship to be of importance.

If you think of the kind of life this man was probably living in his community, this action on the part of Jesus is huge. This man has probably had to come to terms with people dismissing him for the most part. He can't hear what they say and they can't understand what he tries to say. So there probably wasn't much in the way of personal relationships left for this man. And here comes Jesus, after being asked to impart a blessing on this poor pitiful soul, and Jesus takes him aside and gives him very personal ministry. Jesus could have spoken a word of healing and we know the man would have been healed.

Jesus could have said, "take him home, it has been done." Jesus has already demonstrated this kind of ministry miracle working power in other situations. But Jesus took time to be personal with this man. In doing so, even before the man experienced any healing, he was able to communicate to this poor soul, "you are important to me - you are worth my time - I care about you." Considering the type of life this man was probably living - even if he hadn't been physically healed - wouldn't this message alone be of great comfort and meaning to him?

### **Mark 33 – Touched by God's Finger**

Jesus did not simply hold this man's hand. Jesus didn't just lay his hand upon the man's head or shoulders. Jesus got rather intimate and personal with this man - didn't he? Wouldn't you call someone you don't know - putting their fingers in your ears getting personal? How about them touching your tongue? The inference is that Jesus spit on his hands and then touched the man's tongue with the spit laden hands. I'd call that intimate and personal.

I really like the way Jesus spoke the words he did. Jesus touched the man's ears, and then touched the man's tongue, - after this - Jesus spoke the command, "Be Opened."

Jesus didn't say "ears be opened" and Jesus didn't say "mouth be opened." Jesus said "be opened." This command without any specific designation - would be a command to the whole man that stood before him. Jesus commanded this man to "be opened" in every aspect of his being – "man, be opened to healing of your ears, - man, be opened to healing of your tongue, - man, be opened to healing of your hurts and injustices man, be opened to the healing of your mind, soul, spirit, body – be open" - "man, be opened to healing of your condemnation – man, be opened to healing of your rejection – man, be opened to being fully accepted by God — because You Are!" Do you think Jesus still says things like that to people today?

Read Mark 7:35 and make notes:

In a manner typical of Mark's gospel, we get the results of Jesus' actions in a short summary statement, "the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly." The man didn't just speak - he spoke "PLAINLY."

Read Mark 7:36 and make notes:

It tells us that Jesus' command for them to keep silent about this was completely disregarded. In fact - the more Jesus asked them to keep quiet about this the more they talked about it. This is like an echo of chapter 1. Jesus healed a man and asked them to keep quiet about it - and they did not honor Jesus request. In chapter 1 - the result of them not obeying Jesus was that it became quite difficult for Jesus to move about and minister because of the excessive crowds trying to get to him for healing.

It may be that Jesus desired to stay in this region for a longer period of time and did not want to be hindered from moving about by large crowds frantic to be healed. Whatever Jesus' reason for asking them to keep silent, the people didn't obey Jesus in this matter.

## Mark 33 – Touched by God's Finger

Read Mark 7:37 and make notes:

The conclusion of this event is also noteworthy. The people were "overwhelmed" and the people were "amazed." They had brought this pitiful man to Jesus for a blessing and Jesus went beyond simply imparting a blessing to him - Jesus healed the man. The people who wanted this man to be blessed - were confessing Jesus does "everything well." And let me say, that today Jesus still does everything well!

What are we to take home with us from this passage?

One thing we should take home with us from this passage is that if we are going to be the Fishers of Men that God has called us to be - then we cannot write people off, even if they have chosen to live and move in circles that has degraded them, even if the circles they have chosen to live in has led them further away from their relationship with God.

The Savior, the Messiah, was willing to leave the Promised Land of the Jews and move among the dogs to get the gospel out to those Jews who were living "as dogs." That's an example for us as Fishers of Men. Jesus has demonstrated before - his acceptance of those who were outcasts - such as the time he accepted the woman with an issue of blood - but this time is different - this time Jesus actually went into the territory of the outcast! It sounds a lot like the shepherd who goes out looking for the lost sheep doesn't it?

Another thing we need to take home with us is this: A number of the Ancient Church Fathers called the Holy Spirit the "finger of God." What did Jesus put into this deaf man's ears - his fingers. What did Jesus touch this man's tongue with - his fingers. More than programs - more than equipment - more than facilities - more than anything else - what we need today is for people to allow the Holy Spirit (the finger of God) to come into their ears and upon their tongues.

More than intellectual words - more than make me feel good messages - more than entertaining illustrations - what we need today is for people to be willing to allow the Holy Spirit (the finger of God) to touch our ears and tongues.

We need to be careful what comes into our ears today. We need to be careful what is touching our tongues today. My grand-dad would say, "don't say anything you wouldn't put in your mouth - because when you say it, you just did." Too many people who profess to be God's children are saying things - allowing things to touch their tongues that just shouldn't happen.

### **Mark 33 – Touched by God's Finger**

And we need to be careful that we don't "pull away" when the Holy Spirit reaches out to touch our hearing or our speaking. Do you think things would have been different for that man if he had pulled away when he saw Jesus reaching toward his ears with his fingers? What if after Jesus had stuck his fingers in the man's ears when he reached toward the man's tongue with those spit laden fingers - the man had pulled away and said that is not a sophisticated enough of an action for me?

Another thing we should take home with us - is the simple command of Jesus - "BE OPENED!" Are we being open to healing of our ears, - are we being open to healing of our tongue, - are we being open to healing of our hurts and injustices - are we being open to the healing of our mind, soul, spirit, body - are we being open to healing of our condemnation – are we being open to healing of our rejection – are we being open to being fully accepted by God?

Where are the people today who are willing and ready to be "touched" by the finger of God? Come Holy Spirit - touch me in any way you desire - I am ready and I submit myself to you.

Please write down the questions you would like to ask the group – and any insights you have regarding Mark 7:31-37 so that you can share them when we meet:

# Mark - Fishers Of Men

Other sections of the “Mark – Fishers Of Men” study:

## Section 1 – 9 weeks

- 01 - Prepare The Way 1:1-3
- 02 - Acknowledge Our Need For Forgiveness 1:4-8
- 03 - Pattern Yourself After the Holy Spirit 1:9-11
- 04 - Satan Will Tempt Us 1:12-13
- 05 - Time To Become Fishers 1:14-20
- 06 - Cast Out Demons 1:21-28
- 07 - Healing The Sick 1:29-34
- 08 - Ministry Requires Prayer 1:35-39
- 09 - Compassion and Obedience 1:40-45

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- 10 - Stop Being Paralyzed 2:1-12
- 11 - Respect and Dignity 2:13-17
- 12 - A Change In Behavior 2:18-22
- 13 - Love Governs The Sabbath 2:23-28
- 14 - Stewards of the Lord's Day 3:1-6
- 15 - Good News For Everyone 3:7-12
- 16 - Time With Jesus Changes Us 3:13-19
- 17 - Real Family 3:20-35
- 18 - God Sows To All 4:1-9
- 19 - Believing is Understanding 4:10-12
- 20 - Different Seed Reception 4:13-20
- 21 - Growing In The Kingdom 4:21-34
- 22 - Fear Kills Faith 4:35-41

## Section 4 – 10 weeks

- 34 - Taking To All 8:1-8
- 35 - Be Careful of Yeast 8:11-21
- 36 - Hear and See to Speak 8:22-26
- 37 - Not Ready To Share 8:27-30
- 38 - Followers May Suffer 8:31-9:1
- 39 - Look Ahead Not Back 9:2-13
- 40 - Connected To The Source 9:14-29
- 41 - Greatest In The Kingdom 9:30-37
- 42 - Believers Are Authorized 9:38-42
- 43 - Believers To Have Salt 9:43-50

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- 44 - Spouse Equality 10:1-12
- 45 - Let The Children Come 10:13-16
- 46 - Holding Onto ? 10:17-27
- 47 - Jesus Over Family 10:28-31
- 48 - Servant Of All 10:32-45
- 49 - Spiritually Blind 10:46-52
- 50 - Obedience Necessary 11:1-11
- 51 - Fruit Not Optional 11:12-14
- 52 - Our Outer Court 11:15-19
- 53 - Forgiving People of Faith 11:20-25
- 54 - Handling Truth 11:27-33

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- 56 - Render The Image 12:13-17
- 57 - Know God's Word 12:18-27
- 58 - Greatest Command 12:28-34
- 59 - Humble Extraordinary Faith 12:35-40
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- 63 - Be Vigilant 13:24-37

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- 65 - Am I A Betrayer 14:10-21
- 66 - Living the Passover Celebration 14:22-26
- 67 - Potential In All 14:27-31
- 68 - Personal Prayer 14:32-42
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- 70 - False Charges 14:53-65
- 71 - Repentance 14:66-72
- 72 - Please God First 15:1-20
- 73 - Obedience is Fruitful 15:21-39
- 74 - What Does Jesus Need 15:40-47
- 75 - Minister to Living 16:1-8
- 76 - Signs For Today 16:9-20