

94-11-13 Mark

Our gifts and offerings and in the study of your word, we pray that at this time in our worship service, that God the Holy Spirit will be with us, will enlighten us and lead us into all truth. As Jesus promised, we pray that the things we learn will become a part of the resources in our soul and equip us for every good work. For we ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. I went to Broken Arrow yesterday in my green suit and my jungle boots and did my Marine Corps thing. And I told Patty when I got back, apparently I have passed some sort of invisible line in my thinking because as I arrived and sat down with these colonels and other people in this large conference room and prepared to do this Marine Corps business, I had the feeling that we should open in prayer.

If you could have heard the conversation in language that was going on at the time, it would have been quite a strange combination. And I actually mentioned it to Mrs. Graham's nephew, Colonel Gill, who I work for up there, and I said, you know, sir, I really kind of feel like we ought to open in prayer. And he said, well, you know, we probably need it.

It's not a bad idea. But it's an odd thing because the phases of our life change, don't they? We find ourselves at different stages in life, engaged in different things with different priorities and different objectives, and it's important to not get stuck in the past. And it's a hard thing for some of us to live in the present and to recognize what today's opportunities are, what today's operating priorities are, and to not be constantly dwelling in the past, living in the past, resting in the accomplishments of the past, but to take advantage of what God gives us today.

I studied this morning, and Mark chapter 1 is going to point that out to us in a very graphic way. And I think you will find this a thought-provoking study this morning. We are going to hear sort of an uncommon perspective from Jesus Christ this morning.

Before we begin, let me announce something that was mentioned to me this morning. Some of you may know or know of Mr. Phil Benedict, who is a part of the prison ministry of Go Ye Mission. He was airlifted to Tulsa this morning with medical problems of a severe nature.

The doctors suspect that this may be a recurrence of the meningitis that he experienced some years ago. And we might pause at this point and just offer a special prayer for him as he is in dire straits medically this morning. Let's bow our heads for just a moment.

Father, what a privilege it is to come before you at any hour of the day with any of the issues that come to bear on our hearts and on our minds. We are reminded this morning of those who have been faithful in your service. We think particularly of Mr. Benedict this morning, and we hear of his physical problem that has cropped up.

We know that the doctors are concerned, and we pray that your hand will be upon him and that

you will work your will in that situation. We pray that your purpose in allowing this into his life and this interruption of function will serve its purpose. We pray that you will strengthen him and give him the comfort that comes from being a child of yours and of being comforted in Jesus Christ.

We pray that the opportunities that will be created by his medical necessity will be taken advantage of, that all of those concerned will be able to exercise their gifts in ministry and in evangelism. We ask, Father, that if it is in your will, that you will grant him recovery and return to strength and function. We know that the laborers are so few in some of these fields, and we pray in particular that in this case you will work and that your will will be accomplished.

We pray that comfort and healing will be provided by your mighty hand, and we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. The introduction, the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and we have noted that there is a signal for change.

There is the need for change. There is the opportunity for change, and this time in the plan of God is a time of change. It's signaled by the ministry of John the Baptist.

John the Baptist reminds Israel of the whole Old Testament economy, the system of ritual that identified sin. Paul says, By the law comes the knowledge of sin. And this was the ministry of John the Baptist.

He was preaching a baptism of change of mind with regard to sin. Identify the problem of sin. Change your mind about sin.

This is the way to prepare the way of the Lord. He says, The one coming after me is mightier than I. I baptize you with water. It's a ritual system.

It makes no internal change. He will baptize you with the Spirit. It came to pass in those days Jesus was baptized by John, and we saw the issue in that baptism that there is a change.

We saw the contrast between God's change in the Old Testament. When the Mosaic Law was introduced, there was thunder and lightning, thick darkness, a cloud, a mountain, and the people were afraid. This change is marked by a complete opposite.

We're at a river with living water, water that is not stagnant, not pooled in one place. It is a ministry where, in the course of that baptism, the heavens are torn open, and the Spirit of God does not descend in thunder and lightning and thick darkness. It descends in the form of a dove, a symbol of peace, a symbol of tranquility, a symbol of hope.

And it descends, and the voice that comes from God, that comes from heaven, is not a thunder and a quaking that causes fear. It is the voice of God saying, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. The arrival of Jesus Christ is the answer to the problem that is identified in the Old Testament.

The problem that was identified at Mount Sinai, the solution is identified at John's baptism of Jesus at the Jordan. What a contrast we see there. So, this event marks a new phase in the kingdom of God.

The baptism of water, this ritual system, is going to be replaced by reality, the fulfillment of those shadows, the fulfillment of those rituals that look forward to the coming of Jesus Christ. And that Old Covenant, one of the things we talked about in our Sunday School class this morning with the 7th and 8th grade, is the fact that God has a purpose in human history. Dr. Bruce Waltke has summarized this by referring to a passage of Scripture.

You recall the passage that says that God wants a peculiar people, a special people, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. And this is one way of summing up the purpose of God throughout history. God is looking for a special people.

He is looking for a kingdom of priests. He is looking for a holy nation. In the Old Testament economy, He accomplished those three purposes through the Old Covenant, the covenant of the law, the covenant of ritual.

The Mosaic law had the religious code, the civil code, and the moral code. This was a means of accomplishing God's purpose. In this age, God has the same purposes.

Peter tells us that we are to be a peculiar people, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. In this age, God has given us a new covenant. We are not under the Old Covenant.

God's purpose is the same, but His means of accomplishing it is different. We are under the New Covenant, the New Testament in my blood, Jesus said. And the introduction of this new phase of God's plan begins with the beginning of Jesus' ministry here.

Now, we notice that Jesus begins His ministry as an adult. We know from other passages that He was about 30 years old when He began to minister. This is 30 years of preparation, 30 years of training in the Word of God, 30 years of pursuit of understanding in the humanity of Jesus Christ.

We know that He was not born in His humanity with access to the full understanding of the plan of God that He had in His deity. He learned it as He grew, just like a normal human being does. And so for 30 years, Jesus was being prepared and trained and learned those things which He needed in His humanity to fulfill this function.

After His baptism and the descent of the Spirit like a dove, we see that He still does not begin His active ministry. What happens? The Spirit that comes down in the form of a dove and bodes this new message of comfort and encouragement now drives Jesus into the wilderness. What do we know about the wilderness? What happened in the wilderness in the Old Testament? What happened to Israel in the wilderness? Did they succeed or did they fail? The wilderness was the place of Israel's failure.

God gave the Old Covenant to accomplish His purpose of a special people, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. And that generation that came out of Egypt under the Passover Lamb's blood failed in the wilderness and they all died in the wilderness. Hebrews tells us God was not pleased with that generation.

Jesus Christ, continuing to fulfill that Old Testament symbolism and that Old Testament typology, is now driven into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tested, just as Israel was. And yet, Jesus Christ, in fulfilling all righteousness, passes that wilderness test. It tells us in verse 13, He was there in the wilderness 40 days, one day for each year that Israel spent in the wilderness.

He was tested, tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts. And this is not an accidental detail. The wild beasts.

What do the wild beasts represent? Not only is Satan there with these intellectual tests and these tests of thinking, but you have the basic instinctual tests. Your instincts tell you, run away. Your instincts tell you, be afraid.

Your instincts tell you, I am powerless against the wild beasts. Yet Jesus is out there with those what are sometimes viewed as uncontrollable forces of evil. And His faith in God is tested for physical preservation as well as these tests that come from Satan in the area of evil.

And then the angels ministered to Him. And this is one of the only times in Scripture that we see angels ministering to Jesus Christ. And what do we draw from this experience of Jesus in the wilderness? First of all, Jesus Christ was not led into the wilderness as a child of 12.

He was not led into the wilderness as a young man of 18 or 20. At the point that He was prepared, at the point that He was ready to assume His ministry, at the point that He knew the Word of God and was equipped with those Scriptures that would enable Him to use that shield of faith against the temptations of Satan, that's when God tested Him. And we see the example in the humanity of Jesus Christ of the Scripture that tells us that we will not be tested beyond what we are able to bear.

With every test, God provides the way of escape. And we tend to think, well, I'll be trapped and then there will be a magical way of escape that will open up. Many times God provides the way of escape in advance.

The principles of the Word of God that we learn in church may be academic this morning and they may be a very stark reality two or three days from now or two or three weeks from now. God provides the resources that we need that prepare us to pass the test. And in many cases, those things are prepared in advance.

Jesus Christ, when Satan came up and said, cast yourself off of this high place and the angels will bear you up, He didn't say, now just a moment, let me dig out my Moses scroll here and come

up with a verse that will help me give you an answer. He was already prepared. The way of escape, the way to protect Himself from that temptation was already in His soul.

And that's the function that we exercise every time we meditate on the Word of God, every time we listen to a broadcast or study the Scriptures by whatever means, we're equipping our souls, we're following the Lord's example in being prepared people, prepared for every good work, prepared to endure those tests that come, whether from the forces of evil or from the uncontrollable things that are symbolized here by the wild beasts. Now, the message that Jesus preaches in verse 15 is, the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the good news.

Notice what the message is that Jesus preaches. Change your mind and believe. This is a challenge to attitude.

This is not a challenge to action. Jesus does not say, start doing good deeds. Now, contrast this with the message of John.

It's not here in the Gospel of Mark, but if we look, for example, in Luke chapter 3. In fact, turn just a few pages over to Luke chapter 3. This is the message that John the Baptist preaches. This is the message which, by extension, we see the Mosaic Law preaching. Look in Luke chapter 3, verse 8. This is the message that John the Baptist preaches.

This is the message of the ritual system. Bear fruits worthy of repentance. John here isn't preaching repent and believe the Gospel.

He's saying, look, do the actions that are in keeping with repentance. And this was the call of the Mosaic Law. The Law didn't come out and prescribe attitudes of the heart in general.

Other than the attitude to love the Lord your God, the vast majority of the Mosaic Law is a prescription for behavior. The ritual system deals with those external things of behavior. And even John in the wilderness says, in verse 10, the people ask him, what shall we do? They didn't say, what shall we be? What shall we believe? What shall we think? What attitude shall we have? They said, what shall we do? What action can we perform that will please God? They're still thinking in terms of the ritual system.

John answers and says, if you have two tunics, give to him who has none. He who has food, let him do likewise. The tax collectors, teacher, what shall we do? He said, collect no more than what is appointed for you.

Doesn't this remind you of the rules and regulations of the Law? It's supposed to reflect an internal attitude. It's supposed to be motivated by right thinking. But it is a prescription for action.

It is a code of behavior that is prescribed. Notice the contrast in Jesus' teaching. He says, repent, change your mind, and believe the good news.

Now, the second thing we notice here by way of review is what the word gospel means. At this time, the day that Jesus begins preaching, and he says, believe the gospel, what is the content of the gospel? Is the content of the gospel, Jesus Christ has died for your sins, believe and be saved? Not at this point, is it? This is still a future event, and yet the word gospel is used. And it's important for us not to be locked into our preconceived notions of some of the terms that are used in Scripture.

We've used them so long that they no longer carry their original meaning. Eu-angelos, which means good message or good news in Greek, was used for a wide variety of things. One of its most common usages was in Rome when the emperor would change.

Caesar is dead, long live Caesar kind of thing. They would send runners all through the empire to announce that there was a new emperor on the throne. This even went back to the days of the Greeks when the Greeks ruled after Alexander the Great.

This was a common practice. When the king would die or when there was a change in the rulership, runners would be sent all through the land to alert everyone with the eu-angelos, with the good news. And that's what this term came to mean.

It was the announcement of a change in rulership. It was an announcement supposedly of good things to come, a good thing has happened. We have a new king.

We have a new rulership. And this is the baggage that that word carried in the minds of people when they heard it when Jesus began to preach. And he says, change your mind and believe the good news.

There's a change in the way God is ruling. There's a change in the way God is going to implement His purpose in history. So this is the content of the good news.

We know that Paul also used this word in a way other than the simple message of salvation by faith when he says, I preach the mystery of the gospel. And we know that the mystery of the gospel is all of that information that was unknown in the Old Testament, all of the teaching related to the church and to our position in Christ and our future and so forth. So the gospel is a very broad term.

It is the content of truth that God is communicating. And Jesus says, change your mind and believe that truth. So Jesus spent 30 years in preparation for his earthly ministry.

And when he now calls his followers, calls the disciples, he is not calling rookies. He is not calling people that have no previous experience, no previous exposure. We saw last time that the disciples knew Jesus.

They were there the day after Jesus was baptized and Jesus spoke with them. Peter and Andrew

and James and John have already been to the wedding feast of Cana. They have already spent close to a year with the Lord here before this call that is recorded in the gospel of Mark.

Many events have taken place because there is a long period of time when John the Baptist continues to minister and Jesus and John are both present in the land. And then at a certain point, we are going to see that John the Baptist is imprisoned. But when Jesus goes by the Sea of Galilee in verse 16, sees Simon and Andrew fishing and he says, follow me and I will make you fishers of men.

This is not a first time meeting by any means. This is a call to service. And notice that these disciples, Peter, Andrew, James and John have been pursuing the life of faith.

They have been pursuing knowledge of the plan of God for some time. They were followers of John the Baptist. They work up in the Sea of Galilee area and yet they have left their business and have located themselves where the truth is being preached.

They are down in the Jordan area with John the Baptist when Jesus comes. They are not up fishing and getting this at second hand. They are down following and listening to John the Baptist.

When Jesus comes and John identifies him as the one who is to come, they begin to follow Jesus and they accompany him to Cana and the wedding feast. And they spend time with Jesus Christ trying to learn and understand. These are men of faith.

These are men who have made their decision about Jesus Christ. Now they certainly have a long way to go in their understanding as we all do. But they have made that change of mind that Jesus is calling for.

They have repented. They have changed their mind and they are pursuing knowledge and belief of that good news. So Jesus was prepared when God called him into active ministry.

These men are prepared men. They are men who have made the decision for faith and Jesus calls them. When we notice that they left their nets and followed Jesus when he called.

Because faith compels obedience. The book of James makes it clear that faith without works, faith without obedience, is a dead faith. It is fruitless.

It is unproductive. And the faith that these men had compelled them to obey. When Jesus said, It's time.

Come follow me. They dropped what they were doing. Now think about this.

We know this story so well we don't often stop and think about the implications of it. Let's say that I came here to Tahlequah back last April and I said, I want you to follow me. I'm going to go up to Locust Grove and preach.

Come with me. How easy would that be? Well, do I need to pack an overnight bag? Should I keep my apartment at Goyi? Should I keep my house in Tahlequah? What do you mean? I've got things going on. I've got obligations.

I've got responsibilities. I have employment. I have positions to fulfill.

You're saying go up to Locust Grove. For what? Tell me more. You better give me a rationale.

How will we eat? How will we live? The disciples lived by faith. They had learned the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. What does Hebrews 6 tell us? The first principles of the doctrine of Christ begin with repentance from dead works and faith toward God.

What is faith? Faith is believing something you can't see. These men didn't know where Jesus would live or how He would eat, how they would be sustained, what His ministry would entail. The one thing they knew is this is the man that's identified as the Son of God.

I don't know what's going to happen, but I'm going to stick with Him. I'm going to follow Him. Oh, but John, Peter, listen, your fishing business is going to fall apart if you're not up here.

What about your competitors? What about your people up here that you sell fish to? They're going to go to a different fisherman. You'll be out of a job. What's your family going to live on? Common sense experience says this is a crazy thing to do.

Go off and follow some wandering rabbi someplace. This is what we are called to do. This is the life of faith.

And it's hard. It's a hard thing. We look at our lives.

We look at our future as a church. Not all of the indicators are bright. We don't have huge throngs of young people coming through the doors and swelling our ranks.

We don't seem to have people to do everything that needs to be done. And there's a strong temptation there. What does experience tell us? What does human viewpoint tell us to do? Well, we need to get busy.

We need to shake the trees. We need to get out and get our elbows and knees flying. That is not the life of faith.

Now, there are things we can do that are in line with faith. But faith is believing when you can't see where it's going to come from. If God says that He is the one that adds to the church, He's going to give us an opportunity to trust Him for that.

He's going to say, alright, I'm going to put you out here and I'm going to leave you a little short. I'm going to leave you a little small. I'm going to leave you in need and I'm going to see what your

response is.

Will you have faith for a week or a month and then fall apart and seek a human solution? This is what Israel did in the desert. This is how Israel failed in the wilderness. We're short of food.

We were crazy to leave Egypt. Let's stone Moses and go back. God purposely left them short.

God purposely gave them an opportunity for faith and said I'm going to put you in a position where you can't see where it's coming from and I want to see if you have faith. Can you trust me when you can't see the answer? That's the challenge that we face on a daily basis, isn't it? And it's a hard thing, particularly when the test spans a period of time. Days go by.

Weeks go by. Lord, my pain's not going away. My shortcoming is not going away.

My need is not going away. My problem is not going away. Lord, it's been weeks, it's been months.

I don't see a solution. And God says, trust me. This is a test.

Are you going to trust me or are you going to seek some other solution? These men, although they're a long way from being the apostles that they will become, have made that first decision of faith. Jesus says, come, I'm going to come. I'll worry about the details later.

It's faith. And this is an exercise in faith. Now, one of the things that I find interesting about this account, as you recall, Mark has written down the preaching of Peter.

These are Peter's personal recollections. And one of the things I didn't point out to you last week is in this section where Jesus calls the disciples, Jesus says, follow me, I will make you become fishers of men. They immediately left their nets and followed him.

Sounds like, well, Jesus called, they answered, they hopped out of the boat and walked away. We know from the other Gospels, you remember the story of the miraculous catch? Peter's out there, we've been fishing all night and haven't caught a thing. This is that day.

This is that day when Jesus walks up by the sea and talks to Peter. He knows Peter. Peter's followed him for many months.

And Peter says, oh, Lord, we've been here all night, we haven't caught a thing. And Jesus says, throw your net over on the other side of the boat. And Peter, somewhat skeptically, tosses the net over the other side and it is so full that he can't raise it up.

And Peter, as one of the more spiritually advanced disciples, in my opinion, recognizes the implications of that event. And he says, Lord, get away from me. I am an unclean man.

I'm not worthy. You truly are the Son of God. I'm not even worthy to be associated with you.

And Jesus says, come follow me. I will make you a fisher of men. But here in Peter's preaching, Peter's account, he does not include that incident.

Don't you find that interesting? The first major event that personally involves Peter. This is a miraculous thing. What a great testimony.

What a thing to include in your preaching, and yet Peter does not mention it. We're going to see several things that we know about Peter's experience with the Lord that he does not include in his preaching. And we ask ourselves the question, why? Why does Peter not say, the Lord gave me this miraculous catch and I followed him? Peter's making a point by what he does not say.

Peter's making the point that the issue in following Christ is not what is the Lord going to do for me. How is the Lord going to impress me? What is the mighty work that he's going to do in my life? The issue is, Jesus Christ is the Son of God. If he calls, will we follow or not? Miracle or no? The issue is, Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

When he calls, do we respond? His sheep hear his voice and follow him. It doesn't matter what he does for the sheep. And that can be a real distraction because it is so easy to start viewing God as the great band-aid, the great aspirin, the great problem-solving device.

I have problems. I want an answer. God says he's the answer to my problems.

I'll follow him. That's not the right motivation, is it? God doesn't say, follow me and I will solve all your problems. Jesus says, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

No man comes to the Father but by me. Follow me. Repent and believe that news.

And we are not called to seek God as the answer to our problems. And we know as believers that we continue to have problems after salvation, don't we? But now they have a point. Now they have a purpose.

Now God uses them and works them together for good. God uses them as an occasion for faith. God will give us problems where we can't see the solution.

It's very interesting to hear about the history of the finances out there at the GoUnion. And looking at a \$330,000 indebtedness at the beginning of a year with no apparent way of paying it, and then to see a year later that it is down in the neighborhood of \$40,000 and that in the space of a year God has accomplished what God wants to accomplish. He owns the cattle on a thousand hills.

He has the means. But he provided this as an occasion for faith. And believers who look at that and say, we're going to trust God to solve this problem, it's an occasion for faith.

And that's the experience of the disciples. So Peter doesn't mention the miraculous catch. He

says, the Lord called and I followed.

So now, in verse 21, they went into Capernaum, they being this group of disciples that the Lord has now called to follow Him on a full-time basis. Immediately on the Sabbath, he entered in the synagogue and taught. We're going to see throughout Mark that the focus of Jesus' ministry is teaching.

What did he announce? The very first words of the Lord recorded in the Gospel of Mark. The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God is at hand.

Repent and believe. Change your mind and believe. And now Jesus is going to give the information that they're supposed to believe.

He's going to give them the truth of God. He's going to give them that which should be the object of their faith. So he went in the synagogue and taught.

And they were astonished at his teaching for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes. Now, what does this tell you about the teaching of the scribes? If people... I think it would be so amazing to walk into the synagogue and hear the Son of God Himself expounding the Scriptures, opening up the Isaiah scroll and teaching out of it. What could be more wonderful than hearing Jesus Christ teach the Scriptures? Wouldn't it be great to be there and be able to ask Him questions and to hear Him explain and to hear Him amplify and expound on those truths? It would just knock our hats in the creek.

And here is Jesus teaching in the synagogue. And people are astonished. They say, this is nothing like the way the scribes teach.

If you want to know the way... the typical teaching that was going on at this time, get a copy of the Talmud, which is a collection of the written teaching of the scribes from around this period of time and read it. It is some of the most hair-raising biblical interpretation you've ever seen. Somebody stuck something between the storm door and the front door of the parsonage the other day.

I copied several copies of things that they thought I would be interested in. And one of them was a page out of the Talmud. And these rabbis were explaining what happened when Adam and Eve were created.

And in this passage of the Talmud, this rabbi decided that in the beginning, Adam was both male and female. And that God basically sort of separated Siamese twins when He created Eve. Which is just... where does that come from? Who knows? But there are so many bizarre, bizarre teachings.

And this is what was being taught in the synagogues. This is what was passing for truth. So when Jesus comes and presents the truth of the Word of God from His own lips, it's astonishing, it's astounding.

It's like nothing they've heard in recent days. Now, this is the first demonstration that there's something unique about Jesus Christ. His command of the Scriptures, His 30 years of study of the Scriptures and His humanity has given Him the ability to communicate truth in a way that astonishes people.

Now, verse 23 of chapter 1, there's a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out saying, let us alone. What have we to do with you, Jesus of Nazareth? Did you come to destroy us? I know who you are.

You are the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him saying, be quiet and come out of him. And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him.

Then they were all amazed, so they questioned among themselves saying, what is this? What new doctrine is this? What authority he has. He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him. And immediately his fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee.

Now notice here, the unclean spirits are active at the time that Jesus is active here on the earth. Their physical possession of people seems to coincide with the physical presence of Jesus Christ on the earth. And what is the demon's objective here? Why is he speaking up and making an issue of himself? You would think if a demon was possessing a man and he didn't want to be cast out, the last place he would go is to the synagogue where Jesus is teaching where he is likely to get cast out.

He knows who Jesus is. He thinks Jesus may be there to destroy him. So why is he there? Why is he there? Why is the man at the synagogue? This tells us something and we are going to see this in other demon possession cases as we go through the career of Jesus Christ.

God will not permit any force of evil to prevent someone from coming to Christ. And the man who is possessed here wants to be free. And it is not the demon that brought the man to the synagogue.

You can tell from what he said. He said, you may be here to destroy us. The demon is not going to go to the synagogue of his own free will.

But God will not permit the demon to keep the man away. There is no level of evil that can prevent someone from coming to Christ. Even if you are possessed by a demon, if you have the desire to come to Christ, that demon cannot prevent.

That is why this man is here. The demon is not going to go where Jesus is. He ought to go across the lake, go over there where the herds of swine are where he can be safe.

But this man is in the synagogue. But now the demon speaks up. He says, well, if I am going to have to be here, I will try to gum up the works.

So he cries out, interrupts the teaching of the Lord and says, what have we to do with you, Jesus of Nazareth? Did you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God. Now this is an attempt on the part of the demon to mess up the ministry of Jesus Christ because this is a progressive revelation. What is Jesus doing? Is Jesus saying, I am the Son of God, believe in me for salvation? At this point in his ministry, he is not.

He is teaching the Word of Truth. He is teaching the Word of God. And there is method in this because the Old Testament Scriptures point to Christ.

If Jesus teaches the very Scriptures that identify him as the Messiah, this is a more elegant way of preparing the people. This is a way for the people to come to that understanding on their own. Anybody can come out and say, I am the Messiah, believe in me.

But if people learn the Scriptures and see in the Scripture, this is the Son of God. Now people have arrived. Isn't it easier to arrive at your own conclusion than have someone tell you what you should think? We don't like to be told what to think.

And sometimes, even when we realize in an argument that someone else is right, we don't want to be told from that person that that is the right thing. And we will argue with them even though we know they are right. We don't like to be told.

We would much rather, and this is a skill that we can develop, is in presenting the Gospel or in presenting the truth of the Word of God, to try to plant those pieces of truth in a person's mind so that they can draw their own conclusions. This is the principle of being a living witness. This is the principle of a wife being the means by which her husband is saved without a word.

Observing a person's life, observing a person's priorities, observing a person's thoughts and actions on a daily basis puts pieces of information in someone's soul and they can draw the conclusion from watching you and watching me that there is something to the Gospel. There is something to the truth of the Word of God. And they draw that conclusion on their own.

Their interest is stimulated. Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason for the hope that's in you. If people see that hope that's in us and if they're looking for a hope themselves, they'll put it together.

This is what Jesus is doing. Jesus is not out there proclaiming Himself as the Son of God at this stage of His ministry. He's teaching the Word of God, saying, look, if I give you this information, you should be able to take that and identify me for yourself.

Even with His disciples, how do the disciples finally come out with the statement you are the Christ, the Son of God? Did Jesus tell them that or did He ask them a question? He taught them. He trained them. They followed Him.

They observed Him. And at a certain point He said, now, who do men say that I am? Oh, Elijah, John the Baptist. Who do you say that I am? He has never come out and stated this specific truth to them.

He has taught them so that they can draw that conclusion for themselves. So this demon is trying to gum up the works. He's trying to make a statement that will throw the ministry of Jesus Christ off track.

Jesus rebuked him and said, be quiet and come out of him. One of the things that we sometimes overlook in reading this account is this is a fallen angel. What is the definition of a demon? What is the definition? This is a fallen angel.

This is an angel that rebelled against God, disobeyed God. And notice the disobedience of this fallen angel. What does Jesus tell him to do? He tells him two things.

Be quiet and come out. So now, does this fallen angel obey Jesus Christ? He says, be quiet and come out. What's the very next thing the man does? He screams.

He's not being quiet. He's disobeying. Have you ever had to work with a child, probably not your own children, perhaps some other person's child, you tell them something, you keep telling them, do this, do this, do this, and just a bare minimum compliance, just barely enough to keep from getting a spanking or getting in complete trouble.

You say, I want you to come to the table. And so they sort of move in the direction of the table, but they don't really come. Now, wash your hands, come and eat.

They just kind of run their hands under the water. They just do the bare minimum. It's not really obedience.

It's just grudging, halfway compliance. That's what this fallen angel does. Jesus says, be quiet and come out.

He doesn't be quiet, and he doesn't immediately come out. He yells. He screams.

He convulses the man. He's not coming out. He's doing everything Jesus told him not to do.

He's not doing anything Jesus told him to do. If you're familiar with convulsions, you know that this is not a point in time event. A convulsion is something that takes place over a period of minutes, isn't it? Have you ever seen someone in an epileptic fit, someone going into convulsions? This takes time.

Convulsions are contractions and contortions and a terrible experience that goes on for minutes. This demon is disobedient. Even the Lord Himself standing there, He will eventually obey, but not without demonstrating His rebellion.

So after He had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, He came out of him. He does have to respect the authority of Jesus Christ. So now these people are all amazed, just like they were amazed at His teaching, now they're amazed at His actions.

In verse 27, they questioned among themselves, saying, what is this? Now, let me ask you a question. If somebody comes in and they teach the Word of God like you've never heard it, they have authority over demons, and if you have any knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures and know the timing in the book of Daniel that says, this is time for the Messiah to show up, it doesn't take a great rocket scientist mentality to figure out this man is either the Messiah or a prophet of God or something. These people are just bumfoozled.

What is this? Demons are leaving. This guy can teach the Scriptures. We're just totally confused.

It tells you that these people are not in the same category as the disciples. The disciples, on the Word of John the Baptist, start following Jesus Christ. John says He's the Messiah, okay, let's go.

They drop their nets, they drop their fishing business, they follow Him. These people see a demonstration of the teaching of Jesus Christ, see a demonstration of authority over demons, and it's like, I can't understand this. It just mystifies me completely.

What new doctrine is this? With authority, He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey Him. Immediately His fame spread throughout Galilee. And the principle that we draw from this is it is critically important for us to be alert.

It's critically important for us to know the Word of God because this power, the authority that Jesus has to teach, the authority that He has to cast out demons, has a purpose. The title of our message this morning is Power for a Purpose. We're going to see in our next lesson that Jesus Christ, His fame has spread throughout Galilee and a huge crowd is going to come and He's going to heal many people and the crowds are going to grow.

He's got this wonderful big audience there. Jesus has come to teach. Here's a built-in audience that have all come because they've heard of His miracles.

Jesus is going to get up and leave. Now, imagine this. Next Sunday morning, we come to church and the church is packed.

There are people standing in the aisles. There are people in the foyer. There are people in the education building listening on speakers.

People standing out in the front lawn straining to hear. Comes time, comes 11 o'clock, time to preach. I look out at the crowd, pack up my Bible, and walk out.

What kind of sense does that make? Oh, we've been waiting for this. Here's this huge crowd of people. What a great opportunity.

And to walk out. This is exactly what Jesus does. Later on in this chapter, after people have been attracted by this, and we've got to figure out why.

This is a bizarre thing if you think about it. If Jesus' message needs to get out to as many people as possible, here's a built-in audience. And Peter is going to say, Lord, what's up with you? All these people are already out there waiting for you and you're out here by yourself praying.

It's something to think about because the power of God has a purpose. There is purpose when God implements His power. And the answer to that question, the answer to that puzzle, lies in the power of God.

We don't have anything to please God in our natural state. God did not leave us in that state. He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on our behalf, to sacrifice Himself for us.

And He being the Son of God and being perfect is an object of God's love and an object of God's acceptance. Jesus came and took our place, took our punishment, and received what we deserve as sinners. He took our place.

By faith in Him, we can enter into His place. And at the point of trusting Christ as Savior, we can become sons of God. We can receive those things that God gives to Jesus Christ Himself, acceptance, love, righteousness, an eternal purpose.

The only requirement for salvation and for acceptance by God for the solving of our sin problem is believing in Jesus Christ.