

94-12-18Mark

As you may recall from the introduction to this book, this is a record of the recollections of the apostle Peter. And one of the great things about this is Peter was an eyewitness. Peter walked with the Lord for those three years of earthly ministry.

And this has the flavor and has the characteristics of an eyewitness account. We get details and insights from Peter's personal experience with the Lord that are so valuable to us. We saw last time that Jesus healed a paralyzed man.

A man who could not come into contact with the Lord because of those that were gathered about him. And what a paradox that is that in the act of gathering to hear the Lord teach, people had actually made him inaccessible to those who needed him most. And we saw last time that this is something we certainly wish to avoid.

We certainly hope that in our assembling, in our association with the Lord, we do not ultimately wind up making the Lord inaccessible, making him less available than what he is. We should be a means for people to come to the Lord rather than the obstacle which must be overcome. And we saw that the hole in the roof last Sunday was the means by which that man in need came to the Lord.

We want to be a means of access, a way of reflecting the Lord, not an obstruction. Now we're going to see a new situation. In Mark 2, verse 13, after this episode at the house, and while the roof is no doubt undergoing repairs, Jesus has left the house, left the noise of the workmen and so forth, and is out again by the sea.

And all the multitude came to him, and he taught them. Now how many times have we seen the Lord engage in this primary aspect of his ministry? We've seen it in chapter 1, verse 21. We saw it in chapter 1, verse 38 and 39.

We see it again here in chapter 2, verse 2. And we see it here in chapter 2, verse 13. Four times now in less than two chapters, there has been the emphasis on why Jesus came. To teach.

Now, this is not teaching carpentry. It's not teaching morality. It's not teaching any earthly form of wisdom.

This is a way of revealing God. Jesus has come to manifest the Father. So when we see Jesus taught by the sea, this is not an academic classroom where people are gaining a skill.

It's not a philosophy. It's not a ritual system. Jesus Christ came to bring people in contact with his Father, with God the Father.

And that's why he's teaching. And this tells us something. It's almost so obvious that we overlook it.

But to come in contact with God the Father, to be in a healthy, vital, growing relationship with God, we have to learn about him. There is a process that takes place. It's not an instantaneous flash of lightning.

It's not a radical emotional experience on a single night. It is a day-by-day walk. In the same way that we come to know our spouse, we come to know a friend, we come to know a family member.

How does that take place? How is a relationship built and maintained? We spend time together, don't we? Here in the holidays, many of us will have relatives that we will see or who will come to see us. We're maintaining that relationship. We're spending time with them.

In some cases, we haven't seen these relatives since last Christmas. Now, you notice what happens. They come in the door.

We say, hello. How are you? How was your trip? And so forth. And then we settle down in the process of catching up on everything that has happened in the past year.

And if you're like me, in those first few minutes and maybe even those first few hours, there's just a little bit of awkwardness. A lot of time has passed. There's a lot of water under the bridge.

And we're not real familiar. We're not real comfortable. And we engage in a lot of what you might call superficial chit-chat just to regain that sense of comfort before we can really get into a level of intimacy that we like to enjoy with our family members.

Don't you find that to be so? That we have sort of a process we go through to reestablish that closeness. We don't just walk in the door and sit down and start sharing our deepest thoughts and feelings, do we? We have to work our way back into that. Well, we don't want to be that way with our Lord, with our God.

We don't want to approach Him maybe once a week and go through a process in the worship service by which we're brought close enough to be intimate with God. We need to spend time with God every day. God needs to be with us in our consciousness all through the day so that it's like living with our spouse.

Hopefully it's much better than living with our spouse because God is perfect and His presence empowers us, enables us, encourages us, strengthens us every minute of every day. He never discourages us. He never fails us.

All of us wind up failing our spouse at some time or another. But God is always there. He's always faithful.

He always loves us. He always forgives us. This is what Jesus wants to bring to His people, the people in Israel.

He's trying to establish in their minds the reality of their God, the God of Israel, the God that delivered their ancestors from bondage. And that's why Jesus teaches. Jesus does not establish a charitable organization.

He did not establish a program. He did not open up a new synagogue. He went about teaching people the truth about God.

So this is what we find Him doing here in chapter 2, verse 13. And now, as He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office, and He said to him, Follow Me. So he arose and followed Him.

Now, you may recall that back in chapter 1, we saw Jesus call Peter, Andrew, James, and John. Remember that? He went out by the seaside, just like He is now. He sees them mending their nets.

And He says, Follow Me. I will make you fishers of men. And they drop what they're doing and follow.

And sometimes this is presented as sort of a divine election, an effectual call that these were just hapless villagers out there doing their work, and Jesus comes by and calls them, and here they come. But we saw by looking at the Gospel of John that Jesus had known these men for over a year before He stopped by and said, Follow Me full time. Jesus had met them way back a year earlier.

And they had gone with Him to the wedding feast of Cana, and seen Him turn the water into wine. And if you read the first several chapters of John, you discover that Jesus had an association with Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, and Nathanael that had lasted over a period of months. And when this call came to what you might call full time Christian service, they had already established their followership.

They had already come to know the Lord and knew what they were getting into. And this is consistent with Jesus' teaching. Before we commit to something, count the cost.

These men knew what Jesus was doing. They knew what His ministry consisted in. They had been waiting for Him because they had been disciples of John the Baptist.

So they were ready. They were prepared. They knew their Lord when this call came.

And there is a suggestion here in verse 14 that this is also the case with Levi, the son of Alphaeus. Because normally when the Lord or another individual in the Bible finds a stranger, it will present him from that aspect. This verse might have read, and as he passed by, he saw a tax collector sitting in the tax office.

And his name was Levi. In other words, presenting him as someone that's unfamiliar. But it

comes right up and says he saw Levi as though this is someone that he knows.

And on the pattern of the other six disciples that we have established, it's very likely that Levi was a tax collector who had come many times to hear the Lord, who was familiar with the Lord. And at this point when the Lord comes by and says, follow me, he arose and followed, knowing full well who Jesus was and what this following entailed. And again, when Jesus says, no man starts out on a course of action before he first sits down and counts the cost.

Jesus is not going to violate the very principle that he taught when he calls these disciples. Now it happened in verse 15, as he was dining in Levi's house, that many tax collectors and sinners also sat together with Jesus and his disciples. For there were many and they followed him.

And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, they said to his disciples, how is it that he eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners? When Jesus heard it, he said to them, those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Now we notice something right away here.

We have a phrase repeated three times. Can you identify it there in this little story? Something is repeated three times in a row. And usually repetition gives us a clue as to what the point is in a passage.

Many tax collectors and sinners sat together with Jesus. The Pharisees saw him eating with the tax collectors and sinners. And they said to his disciples, how is it that he eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners? What's the issue here? It's the associations that Jesus has established.

Tax collectors and sinners. Now what does this convey in this culture? In this time? Well, think IRS. IRS and homosexuals.

Jesus is eating with IRS agents and homosexuals. That sort of brings it down to our present day, doesn't it? He's eating with liberal politicians and prostitutes. He's eating with people that we identify from a distance as being sinful, as being on the outs, to be rejected, to be avoided.

That's who Jesus is eating with. Now, Jesus went to Levi's house, didn't he? He didn't go to a house of prostitution. He didn't go down to the IRS office.

He went to the house of a tax collector. These people came to him and he did not turn them away. Now there is a fundamental difference.

If Jesus had gone to a house of ill repute, if he had gone down to the pagan temple and had sat down to have a meal, we would be having a different sermon this morning. But he did not. These people came to Jesus.

And what this tells us is there is a difference in the past lifestyle, the past identification that these

people have and what they are currently trying to do. They are trying to come to know Jesus Christ. They're following Him.

They've entered into the house to hear Him, to eat with Him, to listen to Him. Now this speaks of a hunger in the soul. This speaks of a recognition of need.

These people are here for a reason. And Jesus does not hold anything that they have done, anything that they have been, or anything that they are against them. Because that single desire qualifies them to be with Him.

The desire to be with Jesus Christ qualifies anyone. Remember our Scripture reading this morning? Do you recall what it says in John 1? Where it says, that light came into the world and shined to all men? This is a passage that causes deep theological problems for folks that... And I'm going to do this. I'm going to inflict some heavy theology on you from time to time just to sort of stimulate your thinking.

So don't throw anything at me here. But there is a belief that is widespread in Christianity that God issues an effectual call. That the light of the Gospel only shines to those men that God designated in eternity past.

Now my family, my ancestors, my dear departed great-great-grandfather and my great-grandfather believed this. So I'm not just trying to overturn these things for the sake of being a rabble-rouser. Scripture does not teach that God decided ahead of time who would be saved and who would not.

Look at our Scripture reading this morning. He was sent to bear witness of that light, that true light which gives light to every man coming into the world. Now how do you get around that? If Jesus Christ is the light and if He shines to every man coming into the world, now the responsibility for eternal destination shifts because God has shined the light to every man.

The question is, what do you do with that light? What is your response? The light has shined to every man. And you might be thinking of that passage where it says if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost. For the God of this world has blinded the minds of them that believe not.

If you look at that carefully, you will see that that blindness is a result of not believing. It is not the cause. It is not that people can't believe in Christ because the God of this world has blinded their minds.

They have seen the light that shines to every man and have rejected it. And the God of this world is now free to blind their minds. That light will not shine forever.

The door to Noah's Ark did not remain open indefinitely, did it? Behold, now is the appointed time. Now is the day of salvation. There is a window of opportunity.

At most, it starts at the time that we are conscious enough to be aware of God and the gospel and it ends at the point of our physical death. In many cases, the window is even smaller because people by their rejection of that light shut the door and shut the window of opportunity. And the God of this world will blind them.

There are people who have done this. So that's our heavy theological point for today. If you have been exposed to the teachings of Calvinism, as I have, there are many good things that came out of the Reformation.

But the idea that it's all been predetermined and there are those who are not elect, the light does not shine to them, God has not chosen them, He has not given them the ability to exercise faith, and He has basically created them to be consigned to the lake of fire forever is an impeachment of the character of God. It is blasphemy. God does not create only to destroy.

The gospel has shined to every man. And we see this here because Jesus has made a point of going to those that are outcasts and are rejected. He has made Himself available and they have come.

He does not turn them away. And now He's going to get criticism for this from people who consider themselves to be righteous. So He is at Levi's house.

These tax collectors and sinners. Now let's think about this for a minute. Tax collectors, that's understandable.

They probably wear a little tax collector's suit. They sit in the tax collector's office. They come around and take the taxes.

People can identify them. But now this thing about sinners. How do we identify a sinner? Why are these particular people in Israel called sinners? Whose label do you think this is? How many people does God label a sinner? All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

We are hopeless and helpless and useless. We are all sinners. So why is this particular group called sinners? Who do you think has slapped this label on them? Well, it's these very people.

Tax collectors. He's eating with tax collectors and sinners. Making them a distinct and separate category from the speaker, right? They are sinners.

They are social outcasts. Why is He eating with them? Now He's eating with me, but I'm not questioning that, am I? He's eating with me, a scribe, or me, a Pharisee. That doesn't raise a question in my mind.

Of course He would eat with me. But He's eating with sinners. You see the little subtle differentiation that folks have made in their mind here.

Those are the sinners. And I, since I'm not in that group, am not. Well, Jesus is going to point something out here that should have pricked the conscience.

Should have brought these people to a point of awareness. After this phrase comes up three times, in verse 17 we find out that Jesus heard it. And He said to them, Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Let's think about this. Who are the well and who are the sick? If we follow the thinking that has labeled this group as sinners, labeled them as tax collectors and outcasts and those to be shunned, if we use that same method of thinking, we're going to say, Well, they are the sick.

I am the well. I am the righteous. They are the ones who are sinners and in need of repentance.

So, what Jesus says here is, Well, if you're the righteous, I haven't come to minister to you. I haven't come to establish a relationship with you. I haven't come to be the physician that takes care of you because you have no problems.

Now, is this really true? Who is it that are called you snakes, you brood of vipers, you whitewashed tombstones, you limping leaders, you blind leading the blind, you false shepherds? This very same group, the scribes and the Pharisees. So, Jesus very subtly is pointing something out here, isn't He? He's saying, If you consider yourself to be without need, I can't help you. If you consider yourself to be righteous, to be in good shape, to be well, to be strong, this word for well here is *iskios*, which is the Greek word for strength.

It doesn't just mean well in the sense of I don't have a disease. It means you're strong. You're capable.

It's used of God's strength over in Ephesians chapter 1. The might that He works in us. One of those words for strength is *iskios*. And Jesus says, I haven't come to the strong.

I've come to the weak. I've come to the sick. Our congregation is just about decimated by the sick today, isn't it? We have to see the perspective here that Jesus has in contrast to the perspective that the scribes and the Pharisees have.

From their perspective, they are well and they have no need. And Jesus says, if that's your view, I haven't come to minister to you. And isn't this a scary thought? Doesn't this draw us up short a little bit? What is our view of ourselves? Do we see our need? Do we view ourselves as needing Jesus Christ? Needing the ministry of His Word? Needing the ministry of His Spirit every day? Of needing His presence with us? Of recognizing that yes, we are sinners.

Yes, we are outcasts from the presence of God. This is the fundamental difference. We're going to see that when Jesus gets to His hometown, He can do no great miracles there because there

was no faith.

Now, does this mean that the strength of Jesus was diminished? That He had lost somehow the ability to heal and perform miracles? The causative factor there is the response of the people, the reception. This is what we think about at Christmas, isn't it? The birth of Jesus Christ, His entry into the world, the advent. And what is His reception? His own relatives do not take His parents into the house.

Something of a scandal associated with Mary here. She's become pregnant, hasn't been a sufficient amount of time between the marriage and the birth. Something a little fishy there about the conception of this baby.

We don't have any room for you in the house. Now, think about this for a moment. Bethlehem is the hometown of Mary and Joseph's tribe and their family, right? Now, if you grew up here in Tahlequah and your kids grew up and went to school here and they scatter away and you have a family reunion and they come back to Tahlequah, what is it they're going to find here? Family.

You're their family. They have an aunt, they have a brother, they have a cousin in this town. Have you ever thought about the fact that Mary and Joseph went to Bethlehem? They went there because that was their hometown.

That's where the census is taken. That's where their whole family is from. And this idea of no room at the inn, back that up a little bit.

Why are they going to an inn? They're with their family. They're with their relatives. And yet they're not accepted.

You don't match our expectations. You didn't meet our standard. This pregnancy thing here is scandalous.

We don't approve. We're not going to associate with you. You can't stay in our house, says Joseph's family, says Mary's family.

The only family that understands what's going on is the family of John the Baptist, several days' journey away. And so there is no room in the family's homes. Therefore, they go to the inn and there's no room at the inn and they wind up staying in a stable.

This is the idea of reception. Here comes Jesus Christ not meeting people's expectations, not satisfying their requirements for righteousness, not associating with the right people, not saying the right things, not doing the right things, failing to do those things that are thought of as being righteous. And that reception, that false set of standards is putting distance between Jesus Christ and that need that each one of us have.

So we have two categories of people here. We have people that recognize their need and they

don't care. They know when they go to this house of the tax collector, they know the scribes and the Pharisees are going to see them.

They know that they are ostracized. They know that they're social outcasts. But they have come because that's not as important to them as coming face-to-face with Jesus Christ.

They want to hear what He has to say. They want to be ministered to by Jesus Christ. And they're willing to put up with this rejection and so forth.

Now, here are people who ought to know better. On the other hand, you have your scribes and your Pharisees, students of the Word of God, memorized huge chunks of the Old Testament, have memorized Isaiah, memorized Ezekiel, memorized Malachi. Who ought to be recognizing Jesus Christ for who He is, if not these men? And yet, this false set of standards, this false set of expectations has so clouded their vision that God incarnate stands before them and they cannot see Him.

The Lord of glory. Can you imagine the feeling of electricity that you might have if Jesus Christ were to walk in our front door, come down our aisle, and stand before us in the flesh today? I imagine we would lose about two-thirds of us to heart attacks and all the rest would faint. The presence of Jesus Christ, God incarnate among us.

That's where these men are. They are sitting, eating with the Lord of glory and they cannot see Him. Is this not a scary thought? That people who are students of the Word of God, who claim the name of God, who claim to be vocational believers in God, this is their life's work, missed Him when He stood before them.

We can't afford to let this happen to us. So Jesus says, those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Now this is what we fondly refer to as legalism.

This setting of a standard that doesn't conform to Scripture. This making of rules and holding people to a standard and a measure that doesn't come from the Word of God. We call that legalism.

And legalism will always persecute grace. The policy of grace, the policy of free access, whosoever will may come, is anathema to legalism because it tears the system down. I've made my set of rules about how you should dress, how you should look, how you should talk, what you should do with your life, what you should do with your day.

If you're operating on this grace principle and your habits don't meet with my approval and your dress and your appearance and your associations don't meet with my approval, well, my system is going to fall apart. If I can't get you to play my game by my rules, my game is over. And of course, the scribes and the Pharisees have great prestige, they have great standing in the community, and this is a threat.

If religion doesn't mean anything anymore, if it doesn't distinguish the good from the bad, then I'm in big trouble if I'm branded righteous by this system. So this is what they're doing. So we see that those who are well, this is well in their own eyes.

This is well, this is without sin, this is approved in their own eyes. Now, vocational religious people, people whose life's work it is to study and copy and teach the Scriptures are saying this. The people that on a daily basis expose themselves to the Word of God, what do you think can happen to some of us who maybe only expose ourselves to the Word of God once a week or twice a week or three times a week rather than daily watching at the gates, rather than evening and morning and at noon praying and crying aloud and having relationship with God? Our life will be no better than the scribes and the Pharisees if we take this as a casual, once in a while thing.

In John 9, v. 39, Jesus is talking to this same group. And they were talking about whether or not they believed that He was the Son of God and so forth. And in chapter 9, v. 39, Jesus says to these scribes and to these Pharisees, for judgment I have come into the world that those who do not see may see and that those who see may be made blind.

And we have this same perspective. Who is it that is considered blind? Those who do not see. Well, it's these poor, unwashed masses.

It's these sinners and these tax collectors. They don't see as I see because I'm a Pharisee and I'm a scribe and I've got the law in my little phylactery on my forehead and tied to my hand and I've memorized it and I can repeat it backwards and forwards in my sleep. I can tell you how many words there are in the book of the prophet and in the books of the Torah.

I can recite chapter and verse. I know it inside out. I've spent my life, I started as a small boy learning these things.

I see these unwashed heathens who engage in sin, are blind and cannot see. And yet, what does Jesus say? Those who do not see may see. And I've come that those who see may be made blind.

The Pharisees don't understand this. They heard it and they said, are we blind also? Surely you don't mean we are blind. Surely you don't mean that the religious leadership of the nation is blind.

Jesus said if you were blind, you would have no sin. But now you say we see and your sin remains. What a classic case of self-deception.

What a classic case of measuring with the wrong ruler. Because you say we see, because you say we have no sin, because you say there are the tax collectors and sinners, why is Jesus eating with them? Your sin remains. This is a story in all different contexts.

Have we reached the point where we think my need has been filled? I see. There are the tax

collectors and the sinners. I'm okay now.

My need has been satisfied. The fundamental attitude that we need as believers is our need. We need Jesus Christ.

We need the ministry of His Word. We need the ministry of His Spirit every single day. We need His Word in our soul and we need to expose ourselves to it on a regular basis.

It is not enough, and you may quote me, it is not enough to hear a good sermon once a week. It is not enough to expose ourselves to the Word of God or meditate on the Word of God twice a week. What would happen if you ate two meals a week? What would happen to your physical body? Now, what happens in this disease called anorexia and bulimia is people deny themselves food or they take it in and immediately spit it back out.

Boy, I could make a sermon on that. But they fool themselves into thinking I don't need this food. I'll take it in and taste it but then I'm going to spit it back out.

I don't want it to get inside me and make me gain any weight. And these people get skinnier and skinnier and skinnier but they look at themselves in the mirror and they say this is great. This is right where I want to be.

Bulimia, anorexia is one of the biggest problems facing teenage girls in our culture because they see these skinny models on TV and on billboards and in magazines and maybe they come from huskier stock and so they refuse to take in food and they refuse to acknowledge the problem. When they look in the mirror they don't see the gaunt prison camp pallor. They don't see the lack of meat, the lack of health and the lack of strength and they eventually die because they do not recognize the need.

We can't fall into that category. We have seen in our study the relationship between faith and hope and love and we know that that whole process that gives us a worthy walk begins with, notice I say begins with, not ends with. It begins with exposure to the word of God.

That's our fuel, that's our food, that's our manna. That's what sustains us. And one or two meals a week isn't going to do it.

Now there is plenty of great teaching available. The ministry of this pulpit is available on tape and if it's dark at night and you can't drive you can get the tapes. You can listen to Moody Broadcast Network, Radio Bible Class, Back to the Bible, Chuck Swindoll.

There are many good teachers. J. Vernon McGee is on the radio. Pick him up.

I learn something from him every time I listen to him. There is food for our soul and it's available. How can we stand before the Lord at the judgment seat of Christ and say, well Lord, I didn't really bear much fruit.

I looked good. I had a lot of whitewash on me. I recognized the publicans and sinners out there.

And he says, I never knew you. You came and dipped your spoon in the porridge once or twice a week. How could my Spirit teach you anything? How could my Spirit guide you? How could I reveal my will to you? What was there in your soul for the Holy Spirit to work with? Transformation and change and growth are a part of our lives.

None of us reach the point where we can say, we see. None of us can reach the point where we can say, the publicans and the sinners are over there. I've done my bit.

I've learned my quota of the Word of God. If we say that, Jesus is going to say to us, I haven't come to minister to you. I've come to those who recognize their need and are going to do something about it.

They have come. And I'm not going to reject them because they're a tax collector. I'm not going to reject them because they have sin in their life.

What do you think the solution is to sin? What do you think the solution is for the prostitutes and the tax collectors who are cheating with the money and these various categories of sinners? They have come to the solution. They have come to the answer. And these scribes and Pharisees want to turn them away.

We need to recognize which group we are in. And hopefully, as believers in Jesus Christ and recognizing the grace of God, we understand what the author of that hymn said when he wrote, I need thee every hour, O blessed Lord. We will see after the new year the continuation of this passage when first by condemning Jesus Christ for his associations, this same group will now puzzle over Jesus Christ because of what he does not do.

Our disciples fast. Even the disciples of John the Baptist. You're a forerunner.

You're main man. His disciples are fasting and you're not fasting. We're going to see some very interesting things about the concept of fasting in the Bible.

We're going to see the continuation of this very important principle. How hungry are we for the Lord? We're going to eventually see this idea of new and old wineskins. And I'll give you a preview of coming attractions.

We think about the old wineskins and the new wineskins. We know that the old wineskins, once were new, they were filled with wine. The wine fermented and they expanded and stretched to their final shape.

If you take that old wineskin and pour new wine into it, that skin doesn't have any stretch left in it and it will burst. When that wine ferments and the gases are given off, it's got no stretch left and it splits and the whole thing is a waste. Everything is lost.

The idea for us is to be new wineskins. We have a choice. Paul told Timothy, there are vessels of honor and vessels of dishonor.

Depending on what you choose, you can be one or the other. We have a choice whether to be an old wineskin that's got no stretch left or a new wineskin. It's not chronological age.

It's not time in Christ. It's our attitude today. Where are we today? Have we got some stretch? Can we expand to be filled with God's Spirit and with God's Word? Do we want it bad enough to seek it? Are we willing to put up with a little inconvenience or a little ostracism or a little criticism to be transformed, to be changed by that which God desires to fill us with? That's our challenge during the holidays.

It's our opportunity when we engage in fellowship with our relatives, with our friends at this time of year. I'll just close leaving you with one thought. We've thought and said and prayed an awful lot about church growth here at Tahlequah Bible Church.

And I would offer you this thought. Do we strive for, are we anxious for growth because we are looking for that enthusiasm and that excitement and that sense of activity and sense of purpose and accomplishment that we have felt in the past when the church was large, when we could look and see that there were a lot of things going on, there were a lot of people busy. And we said, you know, those were the days of accomplishment.

Those were the days of enthusiasm. Those were the days of excitement. I really enjoyed going down to the church because there was a lot going on.

There was a sense of life and a sense of purpose. Isn't that what we're really after when we think about our church growing? We think about what the church will be after it has grown. I would submit to you this thought.

Are we, when we think that way, looking for an excitement and an enthusiasm to come in from the outside? Are we looking for enthusiastic people, excited people, to come in and revitalize and renew the life in our church? If we are, I submit to you that we're going back to a way of thinking that says I can get something on the outside and work it in. If I was part of a living, vital, excited, enthusiastic church, my life and vitality and enthusiasm in my soul would be renewed and restored. And I would submit to you that what we need is to get the Word of God and the Spirit of God inside us to create that enthusiasm and that excitement and that sense of life that will breathe life into us from within.

And what kind of church would you like to visit? What kind of church would you like to join? What kind of church would you want to be a part of? If we had these Pharisees and scribes out there saying, publicans and sinners, if we had a church full of those people, how many people do you think are going to be excited about going, Oh yes, let me go down there and be criticized. Let me go down there and be judged. Let me go down there and be made to feel small, made to feel

unholy, made to feel like I've got a lot of flaws and sins and problems and bad habits and wrong appearances and I don't talk right and I don't think right and I don't dress right.

What does Jesus do? Jesus didn't have to go beat a drum. Jesus didn't go on a visitation program and have a mail out and a radio commercial. He didn't take out a half page ad in the Jerusalem Post to get people to come to Him.

And Jesus Christ embodied life. He embodied enthusiasm. He was the gateway to the Father, to the source of life and that's what we need to be.

And this is the way to do it. It's one thing to recognize our need. It's equally important to know how to fill that need.

And we're doing it this morning. We're looking into the truth of God's Word. We're asking for the ministry of God, the Holy Spirit, to change us so that as new wineskins, as those who are willing and anxious to be filled and be changed and have that life and excitement placed within us, God can use us to minister to others and that light can shine forth.

Let's close now in a word of prayer.