

95-02-05Mark

It is what lets us get to know Him as a person. The Word of God is far more than just a collection of do's and don'ts. It is the thinking of God.

And in getting to know anyone, we get to know the way they think. We find their likes and their dislikes, their passions, the things that they are very intense about. In thinking about the Bushrys this morning, I was talking yesterday, and Mrs. Bushry mentioned that they had been married for 57 years, and that in all that time, Mr. Bushry has taught in one capacity or another.

When they were missionaries in Haiti, and in the various churches that they've attended, he has always taught Sunday school. And no matter how many times she has heard him teach, it has never wearied her. It's never been dull.

She's never gotten bored with hearing her husband teach the Word of God. And it speaks of many things. The relationship that they have with each other, his faithfulness in teaching the Word of God, which never grows stale and never grows dull, because it's the very thinking and the very life of God Himself.

And what a wonderful testimony that in nearly 60 years, in listening to the same man communicate the Word of God, one would never grow tired, never lose enthusiasm, but always enjoy hearing the sound of his voice as he communicated that Word of God. And what a great crown of righteousness is laid up for each member of God's family who has that enthusiasm and that faithfulness to God's Word. It's our privilege to look into God's Word this morning and to learn a little bit more about Him.

And we seek the ministry of the Holy Spirit to clear our minds, to cleanse us, and to make us receptive and help us to understand these things. Shall we go to the Lord in prayer? Father, we always are grateful for the ways that You have expressed Your grace toward us. Sometimes we hardly know where to begin.

You have given us life and breath. You have sustained us in all of our trials and adversities. We have made it to this point in our lives.

In Your grace, You have lifted us up and sustained us. And most of all, You have transformed us from creatures that are temporary and creatures that pass away like a fading flower into creatures that look forward to eternity. We are Your children.

We have a life that has meaning and purpose both now and in the future. We realize that the way that we spend each day, the investment that we make of the time and the resources that You have given us is no longer something that is bounded by time. It's no longer bounded by the circumstances of this life.

We have been made spiritual creatures by Your grace. And the opportunities that we have and the decisions that we make, the thinking that we do each day, has eternal impact. We have the opportunity to reflect the glory of Jesus Christ.

As You work within us and transform us and bring us closer to His image, that opportunity becomes greater and greater. We can have a greater and greater reflection and transmission of the glory of Jesus Christ. We pray now that as we look into the truth of Your Word, that God the Holy Spirit will take these things and use them as His sharp sword that pierces to the dividing asunder of our soul and our spirit.

We pray that He will operate on us with that Word and will show us the places where we fall short, that He will cleanse us and renew our minds by the washing of water and the renewing that He brings through Your Word. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

We are in the middle of a very exciting story. It's a story that's recorded for us in the New Testament in the Gospel of Mark. It is an eyewitness account.

These are the recollections, the memoirs, if you will, of the Apostle Peter. And if you see the books in the bookstore these days, most of the famous people who write a book have an amanuensis. They have a helper, someone who ghost writes or who helps them put together the book in a literary form.

And in this case, the person who set down the preaching and the recollection of Peter is Mark. And in some ways, this might be appropriately titled The Gospel According to Peter because Mark set down in order the things that Peter taught. There's an outline of a sermon that Peter gave over in the book of Acts, and if you check that brief summary of his preaching in Acts against the structure of the book of Mark, you see that they correspond one for one.

The elements are the same and it's an accurate reflection of his preaching. We also see a lot of dynamic language in the Gospel of Mark. He has a sense of immediacy and he often slips into the present tense.

We do this ourselves when we're telling a story, particularly younger people these days. If you hear teenagers or young adults talking, they start out saying, oh, yesterday I was over at my friend's house. Then they slip into the present tense.

And a car drives up, and you'll never guess who gets out. Sally gets out. She comes up and she says, and we slip into the present tense.

This is what Mark does over and over again because he's telling a story, Peter is telling a story that he witnessed at first hand. We saw first of all the ministry of John the Baptist. This is something that Peter witnessed.

Peter was a follower of John the Baptist. John the Baptist pointed the way to Jesus Christ. He said, behold, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.

And those disciples of John that recognized Jesus Christ as the Messiah from the Old Testament Scriptures turned and followed him. John said, I must decrease, he must increase. He is the greater One that will come.

And John pointed his disciples to Jesus Christ. And Peter, Andrew, James, and John were some of those disciples. We then saw in the Gospel of Mark how Jesus began by teaching in the synagogues.

He went to the places where the religious people, the people that you would think would be seeking God, would be watching for the Messiah, this would be the logical place to address them. Jesus taught in the synagogues. And yet in the synagogues He met with rejection.

The formal religious leadership in Israel did not follow Jesus Christ. They did not respond to His teaching. They did not identify Him as the Messiah in the way that the disciples did.

And we saw after the first episodes in chapter 2 and in the beginning of chapter 3 of Mark that Jesus has now left the synagogues and has gone out among the people. He's gone down by the seashore. The seashore is the place where people congregate.

There's a natural amphitheater there. It's an easy place for huge crowds to sit and to hear someone speak. It's next to the major thoroughfare.

The big roads tended to follow the shoreline. And so this is a place where people passing by would see the huge crowds and would be interested in stopping and hearing what all the fuss was about. Jesus has gone out among the people.

There's a sense in which He has given up on communicating through the established religious tradition of the day because their hearts are hard. And He's gone out and taken His message directly to the people. We've had political leaders in our country, national leaders, who have done this in recent days, haven't we? We've had presidents in recent decades who have decided that they can't get their message across by working through the normal channels.

And they've gone directly to the people. President Reagan, in his two terms, would often speak directly over the airwaves to the American people because he was a gifted communicator and he could get his message across by addressing us directly. This is what Jesus is now doing.

It makes sense that He would go to the religious leadership that would, in a sense, follow the chain of command and would give His message to those who could then turn and communicate it to others. But the religious leadership did not respond. So Jesus will now train up new leadership.

And He's going to do this through His disciples. We see in Mark 3 that in verse 6, the Pharisees,

the religious leaders that were currently in place, went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him how they might destroy Him. But Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the sea.

And a great multitude from Galilee followed Him and from Judea, Jerusalem, Edomia, beyond the Jordan, Tyre and Sidon. A great multitude. Every point of the compass.

These people, even people that were not Jewish, could pass by on the road and could hear the teaching of Jesus Christ. The synagogue was off limits to those who were Gentiles, but the roads and the seashore were not off limits. All those who passed by had the opportunity to stop and listen.

You'll notice at the same time, Jesus did not set up a toll booth. He did not set up a barricade up on the road. He did not have His disciples diverting traffic down to Him.

He did not force Himself on people. He simply made Himself available. He put Himself in a public place where those who wished to listen and wished to respond could do so.

In fact, the response was so great that He had to have them prepare a small boat to avoid being crushed by these huge crowds. Many had heard that He healed. They knew that a simple touch from Him could heal their diseases.

And people began to fling themselves. We saw last time this word, means to throw yourself upon someone. This is the word that was used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament when a prophet, Elijah, saw the widow's son and he was dead.

He cast himself upon the lad. He put his body on top of his own and the lad was restored to life. And later on in Acts, one of the apostles will do the same thing.

Will raise someone from the dead. You remember when Paul preached so late into the evening and the young man fell out of the third-story window and was dead on the ground. And Paul went to him and cast himself upon the young man's body and his life was restored.

It's the same word, epibalo. These people were flinging themselves upon the Lord in an effort to be healed. And in so doing, made it difficult for him to communicate, to teach and to preach, which was his goal.

So he had the disciples set aside this small boat so that he could put a distance between himself and these people to accomplish his mission. He healed many, in verse 10, so that as many as had afflictions pressed about him to touch him. And that pressed about means they flung themselves at him.

Also, the unclean spirits whenever they saw him fell down before him and cried out saying, You are the Son of God. But he sternly warned them that they should not make him known. We saw in

Paul's example last week that although these demons are speaking the truth, their speaking the truth causes it to be a negative factor.

The demon-possessed girl that followed Paul and his associates around and said, These men are from God and they are teaching you the way of salvation. She was speaking the truth, but coming from a demon-possessed person, this destroyed their credibility and associated them with demons, with the enemy, evil, unclean spirits. And there is a way that the enemy can speak the truth and in speaking it can distort it and twist it and use it against us.

Satan in the Garden of Eden substantially told Eve the truth, didn't he? If you eat this fruit, you will know some things that only God knows. You will know the difference between good and evil. And that was true.

But that truth in the mouth of the tempter, in the mouth of the adversary became a weapon that he used against her because it was partial and it was incomplete and the source of it was faulty. So Jesus warns these demons He doesn't need the endorsement of Satan's forces. He doesn't need the preaching of demons to substantiate who He is.

He will reveal Himself using God's means, using the power of the Holy Spirit, fulfilling the signs that were written in the Old Testament prophecies. Then in verse 13, having been down by the seashore in this very accessible place, seeing the people and recognizing the need now to raise up a new leadership in Israel, a new set of witnesses who can teach and can carry this message forward, He is focusing on the disciples. But He doesn't sit by the seashore and appoint them.

Instead, He leaves and He goes up on the mountain and calls to Him those that He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. He makes them climb the mountain, doesn't He? He goes up and He calls them and they climb that height to reach Him.

And we have a list here of the disciples who are called. Simon, who was surnamed Peter or nicknamed Peter. The three disciples that were closest to the Lord were Peter, James, and John.

And it's interesting that this is reflected not only in the events that are recorded in the Gospels, but also in the fact that He gave them nicknames. People that we're familiar with that we have known for a long time, maybe we went to school with, a lot of times people develop a nickname or it's a term of endearment or a term of familiarity. And Jesus does this with these disciples who were closest to Him.

He renames Simon Peter and He calls James and John Boanerges, or the sons of thunder. Now this comes from, if you wonder where that word comes from, Boanerges, this is actually Aramaic. The first part of it is B'nai.

You may have seen, there's a Jewish organization called B'nai B'rith. You might have seen their name or their sign in a town someplace. That means sons of the covenant.

B'rith is from B'rit, which is the Hebrew word for covenant. And B'nai B'rit is sons of the covenant, literally. Well here, these are B'nai Ragesh, sons of thunder, sons of the lightning and thunder, and so forth.

And evidently, they had a powerful presence, and they may have been somewhat unpredictable and somewhat forceful. And Jesus reflected this in His nickname for them, the sons of thunder. James, the brother of John, is always mentioned in connection with John.

He was also the first martyr. And I'll give you just a few interesting facts about each of these disciples. We could spend a lot of time analyzing their personalities and their later ministry.

The tradition of the early church records where each of the disciples went and ministered and where they ultimately met their death. Most of them were martyred. But James was the first of the martyrs.

We find this out in the book of Acts chapter 12. Acts 12.2 tells us that James was killed very early in the life of the church. John, the other son of thunder, is the most prolific of our New Testament writers outside of the Apostle Paul.

He wrote five books. The Gospel of John, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John, and the Revelation. He is referred to several times as the disciple whom Jesus loved.

And you may notice as well, do you recall when Jesus sent the disciples out to minister the first time that He sent them in pairs? He sent them two by two to the surrounding cities and villages strictly in Israel. He said, don't go to Samaria. Don't go to the Gentiles.

Go to the house of Israel. And He sent them in pairs. If you notice this list and all of the lists of disciples that are given in the New Testament, group them in these pairs, and you can pretty well discern the teams, the pairs of disciples that Jesus sent out.

Peter and Andrew, being brothers, were a natural pair. James and John, being brothers, were a natural pair. And the next two disciples that are mentioned here in verse 18 were also a pair.

Philip and Bartholomew are generally mentioned together. Philip, you may recall in the first part of the Gospel of John, he was the one that recognized Jesus Christ from the Old Testament Scriptures. He said, this is the one that the Law and the Prophets foretold.

And he went back and told Andrew that he had found the Messiah. And Philip is the one that seems to have known the Old Testament Scriptures. And he likes proof.

It's clear that he liked that documentation from the Old Testament. This man matches what I know of the Old Testament. Later on when Jesus is talking to them in the upper room, he will ask Jesus, he'll say, show us the Father, and then we'll be content.

He likes things documented and supported. And so when Jesus starts talking about the Father, he says, well, show us the Father, and then it will be enough for us. Andrew, of course, was Peter's brother.

Andrew seems to always be bringing people to the Lord. He brought his brother Peter. He introduced Peter to the Lord.

Later on in the feeding of the 5,000 when Jesus says, what food do you have with you? It's Andrew who brings the boy that has the five loaves and the small fish to the Lord. Later on some Greeks will come seeking the Lord, and Andrew and Philip will be the ones who bring these Gentiles to the Lord. He seems to get on well with people and to know them and to be a conduit through which they come to Jesus Christ.

The other disciples are less well known to us. We have Bartholomew. He's also sometimes called Nathanael.

You might notice from his name, the first syllable there, Bar, is the word in Aramaic that means son of. You may recall Simon Bar-Jonah was Simon's son of Jonah. Here, Bartholomew means son of Ptolemy, but his actual name was Nathanael.

So Nathanael and Bartholomew are the same person. He was probably called Nathanael Bar-Ptolemy or Bartholomew. He was the man that Jesus saw sitting under the tree and He said, Behold, here is an Israelite in whom is no guile, in whom is no deceit.

He seems to have been one of those people that really comes across at face value. What you see is what you get. He didn't put up a front.

He didn't have a false persona. He was himself at all times. He didn't put anybody on.

We also have Matthew or Levi who wrote the first gospel, was a tax collector. We have reviewed him in some detail recently in his call from the Lord to be a disciple. There was James, the son of Alphaeus.

You may recall that Levi was the son of Alphaeus, but evidently these were not brothers. There were probably two different men named Alphaeus. Otherwise, Scripture would probably have mentioned that James and Matthew were brothers.

They don't appear to have been. And this was a fairly common name. Thaddeus is also called Judas in some lists, in some passages.

And in a couple of manuscripts, he's also called Labaius, but that may be a scribal error. But Thaddeus or Judas. Also, Simon the Canaanite.

Actually, Canaanian. Simon the Canaanian or Simon the Zealot. And finally, Judas Iscariot.

Have you ever wondered about that word Iscariot? Now when we hear Iscariot, it sounds like, well, he's a bad man. But what did this term Iscariot actually mean? There's a little confusion about it, but it appears to mean that he was from the region of southern Judah called Kerioth. K-E-R-I-O-T-H And Judas from the region of Kerioth.

Judas Iscariot. There are some that have tried to see an etymology and this word is related to a word that means dagger man. And that's a possibility, but it probably was a regional designation.

He was from the southern part of Judah. Now, I'd like to give you about seven observations about Judas because he becomes important in the story of our Lord's ministry and the end of His ministry here on earth. And he is something of a puzzle.

Not only in his motivation and in the things that he does when he eventually betrays the Lord, but also in his role as a disciple. I'd like to point some things out that may be food for thought here as it relates to the ministry of God the Holy Spirit. First of all, he is called Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Him.

Judas is mentioned about 22 times in the New Testament. And there is not a single time that he's mentioned that the fact that he betrayed the Lord is not also included. This seems to be a permanent part of his identity.

Judas who betrayed Him. He's never mentioned without that fact also being mentioned 22 times in Scripture. That's the first thing.

Secondly, and this is something to think about, Jesus desired Judas as a disciple. Jesus wanted Judas to be a disciple. This is right here in our passage.

Mark 3.13 He went up on the mountain and called to Him those that He Himself wanted. Now this is emphatic in the Greek when it repeats that word and it says He Himself wanted them. Jesus Christ carefully evaluated those that had come to Him and He selected 12.

And that includes Judas Iscariot. Jesus desired him as a disciple. Third, Judas Iscariot is given the power of the Holy Spirit.

I find this a little startling. We know Judas from what he will ultimately do, but at this time, he receives exactly the same blessing from Jesus Christ, the exact same power of the Holy Spirit that the other 11 disciples receive. He receives the power of the Spirit with the other 11.

This is found right here in this passage. It's also in Matthew 10. It goes back and it says that when Jesus had called His 12 disciples in Matthew 10.1, He gave them power.

This is all 12. He gave them power over unclean spirits to cast them out and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease. He says, I send you out and as you go, I want you to preach the kingdom of heaven.

In Matthew 10.8, Jesus told these 12 disciples heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. Judas is in this group and I don't know that I had really meditated on this all that much.

We generally regard Judas as an unbeliever, but it presents us with an interesting point to meditate on if he received and used the power of the Holy Spirit in this role as Christ's disciple. He participated in the ministry of the Gospel. Here in Mark, if we go over just a page or two to chapter 6, we find that in Mark 6.12, the disciples went out and preached that people should repent.

And they did follow the Lord's instructions. They cast out many demons. They anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them.

And as they went out in pairs, Judas was one of two disciples in a two-disciple team that went out and did these things. And it would have been remarkable had he not participated just as the other disciples. It would have been something to bring up that only half the team seemed to be functioning.

But apparently, he did the very same things that the other disciples did in this regard. Preaching, healing, casting out demons. He was given this very same power and authority from Jesus Christ.

We also find out, though, from John 6.70 that he was a devil. Jesus says, Have I not called the twelve of you? And one of you is a diabolos. The very same word that is used for Satan.

Diabolos in Greek means accuser. Adversary. One who confronts and opposes.

And he says, One of you is an enemy. One of you is an opposer. One of you is an adversary.

And he's, of course, referring to Judas Iscariot. And he calls him a diabolos in John 6.70. We also know from John's Gospel in chapter 12 that Judas was a thief. He pilfered money out of the treasury.

Jesus, I'm sure, was aware of this. The other disciples obviously were. John knew it.

Recorded it in his Gospel. Jesus did not remove him from that function even though they were aware of it. That's another point to ponder.

But he was a thief and we know this from John 12.6. We also know from Jesus' prayer to the Father that Judas Iscariot was classified as lost. We find this in John 17.12. You may recall after the upper room meal and discourse and so forth, Jesus prays to the Father and He discusses the standing of His disciples and He says, Of those that you have given Me, I have lost none except the Son of Perdition that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. And He's again referring to Judas Iscariot.

But notice He says, Of those you have given Me, this is the twelve, including Judas, I have lost none except the one, the Son of Perdition. So God gave Jesus these twelve disciples. Of those, He took eleven and lost one.

And that one that He lost was Judas Iscariot. I did some work on the word there for lost. It's the Greek word apolumi, which is used for losing something.

It can be used for destroying something. But it has the idea of loss, of something that was in one's possession and was lost through robbery or whatever else. If you look in John 6.39, we find the balancing side of this episode with Judas.

Because in John 6.39, Jesus says, This is the will of the Father who sent Me that of all that He has given Me, I should lose nothing, but raise it up at the last day. And it's the very same word here in John 6.39. Apolumi. Jesus says it's God's will that of those that He has given Me, I should lose none, but raise them all up at that last day.

And yet in chapter 17, He says of those that the Father gave Me, I lost one. I lost Judas. Apolumi.

We know from John 13.27 that Satan entered into Judas Iscariot. John 13.27. In the upper room there as they completed that Passover meal, that last supper, and before the ritual of the bread and the cup, we find out that Satan enters into Judas and he departs. So after the piece of bread where he says the one who dips with me in the dish is the one who will betray me, Satan entered into him, and Jesus said to him, What you do, do quickly.

We know, of course, that Judas did go on to betray the Lord Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. We know that almost immediately thereafter he was filled with remorse. In Matthew 27.3-10 we find the end of Judas' career and the end of his life.

Judas, his betrayer in Matthew 27.3 seeing that Jesus had been condemned was remorseful and brought back the 30 pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders saying, I have sinned by betraying innocent blood. And they said, what is that to us? You see to it. So he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed and he went and hanged himself.

We know from Acts 1 that he hanged himself outside the city and fell from the tree and was dashed in pieces. A terrible end. But Judas Iscariot is a real puzzle and it reminds us of what we've seen about King Saul in the Old Testament.

We know that King Saul was given the very same assets, fulfillment of the very same promises to the King of Israel that David would enjoy. God's Spirit was given to King Saul just as it was to King David. The promises of God's support and God's help.

Whatever you put your hand to do, do it and I will be with you, God told Saul. Samuel told Saul, if you had been faithful, God would have made you a dynasty in Israel. He would have perpetuated

your sons and your sons' sons on the throne of Israel.

The same promises, the same support, the same Spirit that God gave to David, God gave to Saul. But there was one fundamental difference between Saul and David. David was a man seeking after God's own heart.

He was a man who pursued the knowledge of God, the understanding of God and the obedience to God that characterized his life. Saul never did that. Saul didn't know who the man of God was in Israel.

Saul constantly turned to human solutions, human ways of motivating the army. We see that same difference. Even though he received the calling, even though he's in the very presence of Jesus Christ and will live with Him day and night for three and a half years, Judas Iscariot didn't have that heart of response, didn't have a heart of obedience, didn't respond in faith and in trust in Jesus Christ.

He has even been given the gift of the Holy Spirit. He goes out and preaches the Gospel. He heals the sick.

He goes out and performs these functions that Jesus assigned to all twelve disciples. And you look at where he winds up for the simple reason that given all of those advantages, he did not respond to Jesus Christ in faith. And what a terrible end.

What a terrible attachment to His name. Every time that He's mentioned, He is the betrayer. Every time that He's mentioned, He is the one who fell away.

He's the one that did not believe in Jesus Christ and did not fulfill the opportunity that God gave Him. And it's a powerful lesson for us. When we think about King Saul, we think about Judas Iscariot.

God has put so many things at our disposal and each and every day of our lives we make decisions about how we use what God has put in our grasp. God has given us His Spirit. You recall our Scripture reading this morning? What Jesus said the mission of the Holy Spirit was.

What is the mission of the Spirit? What is His reason for being with us? He leads us into all truth. What does all truth center in? Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the focus.

He is the crux of human history. God's plan revolves around and lifts up and centers in Jesus Christ. When God the Holy Spirit reveals all truth, His witness, His message, His entire reason for ministering to us is Jesus Christ.

The communication of Jesus Christ. The lifting up of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ should be at the center of our life.

He should be the object of our faith. There is no other goal. There is no other objective than the presence of Jesus Christ and the glory of Jesus Christ reflecting itself in our lives.

If we miss that, we have missed our reason for being left in this life after salvation. There's no other reason to be here. We were talking this morning in Sunday school and thinking about the health problems and the coming to the end of our life that all of us inevitably face unless the Lord comes back.

And we look back over the years. We look back over the number of days. I was talking to my grandmother this past week who is in her 90's.

And I was calculating. I said, grandmother, I'm trying to figure out how many days you have lived. 90×365 .

I couldn't do the math. I just rounded it off and said 100×365 . That's 365×100 is 36,500 days.

Is that right? 36,500 days minus a year or two if one lives into their 90's. Think of those thousands and thousands and thousands of days. I can't even wrap my mind around 30,000 days.

Yet each of those days are composed of time that God has given us. And it's a resource. It's a gift that God gives us.

What do we do with that time? What do we have to show for it? When Jesus told the parable of the talents, different servants were given different talents. Some were given five. One was given five.

One was given three. And one was given one. It wasn't how many talents were given, but what that servant did with the talent.

Some of us have short lives. It startles me to realize that my friends from my generation that are in their 30's are already dying from strange things. I've had friends that died in high school and friends that died when we were in our 20's.

And now that I'm in my late 30's, people from my generation are already seeing their lives cut short. And we go forward. As we come to look back over our lives, we say at this point right now, if I went home to be with the Lord, what would my balance sheet show? Where would I be? And what would be the standard of measurement? Would God ask the bank down here for my bank statement and say, well, how many dollars did you wind up with at the ripe old age of 37, 38? What physical assets did you have? Was your car paid for? What did you have in savings? What material possessions did you have? Obviously not.

How does God evaluate our lives? What does He look for? Does He look for Christian service? Does He say, well, Sam, you became a pastor. I'll put you in a nice cozy spot here in the eternal future. It isn't even based on our vocation or what we do.

Those things are important, but those are just the arena where we express what's in our soul. There is no difference in being a housewife, in being a farmer, or in being a missionary or a pastor in God's evaluation. It isn't the nature of the vocation.

It's what did we do in that vocation. Look at Judas Iscariot. He's a disciple.

He has lived day and night with the Lord Jesus Christ for three and a half years. What did he do with that opportunity? Nothing. The status of being a disciple is not going to help Judas Iscariot in the eternal future, is it? Twenty-two times he is condemned as the betrayer of the Lord.

He didn't respond in faith, and that is the logical outworking of failure to respond. We are called to be disciples of Jesus Christ, and we can't afford to make that mistake. Each and every day is a challenge.

And it isn't, should I go work at the church? Should I help cut out Sunday school materials? Should I put money in the plate? Should I go down and be seen at the service? Or should I go and hear the sermon Sunday night or Wednesday? God is looking for far more than that. That's too easy. It's too simple.

Any Pharisee could show up at the synagogue and give. Any Pharisee could show up and be seen. Any Pharisee could hit those little marks that we associate with righteousness.

God's standard is far higher. God is looking in our soul. That's why the God, the Holy Spirit is there, because our life is our thinking.

Our life is our thought process. How do we face the challenges of today? How do we face the challenge of tomorrow? What goals do we set? What priorities do we seek? That's the standard of evaluation, and it's a high, high standard. There is no standard higher than God's standard.

It's a perfect standard of righteousness, and the only way that we can approach it is by using what God gives us, God's Spirit and God's Word. You look at King Saul, given all of the advantages and the magnitude of his failure. You look at Judas Iscariot, all of the advantages and the magnitude of his failure.

These things are recorded for our instruction, and we are challenged to not make that mistake. You can argue about Judas' salvation, pro and con. I don't think that's really the point.

The Bible doesn't make an issue out of that. The Bible points out that given this great opportunity, Judas failed. We have been given a great opportunity.

This same Holy Spirit that was given to the disciples has been given to us. We have the complete Word of God that even the disciples did not have. The complete and connected thought of God regarding Jesus Christ in 66 books written over 2,000 years has been given to us and put in our hands.

We have multiple copies. We have 16 different English translations. We have helps and concordances and a Christian bookstore full of study aids.

We have pastors and teachers and men on the radio and men on television. We have resources on every hand to get that power of God inside our souls and change us and make each of those thousands of days of our life count for something, to have something that lasts, an eternal result. It horrifies me to think I haven't calculated the number of days that I have lived, but I am sure that I am going to be shocked and disappointed to see how many of my days I have completely wasted.

God gave me the day, sustained me through it, gave me all of these advantages, and I have nothing to show for that day. There's nothing of eternal value. I didn't let God work in me in many of those days.

I didn't judge myself. I didn't look at my thought life to see is there anger? Is there bitterness? Is there worry? Is there fear? Am I frustrated? Am I seeking my own good at the expense of others? Have I sacrificed my opportunities for witness and to have the Holy Spirit work through me because I'm busy trying to get ahead, trying to achieve a goal? So many of our days are wasted in that regard. The good news is each of us sitting here this morning has at least one more day ahead of us, don't we? And we can start now.

It doesn't matter what's in the past. We can be informed by this example. We can take what God has put before us as a challenge and starting today, buy up the time.

Redeem the time because the days are evil. Left to themselves, each and every one of our days is evil. But we can look at Judas and say, I'm not going to squander what God has given me.

I've got the Word of God. I have God's Spirit. And I know that it's my thought life that counts.

When I leave here and I'm in conversation this afternoon, am I going to be short-tempered? Am I going to be impatient? Am I going to lash out at people because I think they have misbehaved or they've failed in some way? Am I going to find fault? Am I going to be bitter as I face my responsibilities the remainder of today? Am I going to say, why me? Why is it always me? Why do I always have this test? Look at other people. They don't face what I face. Why does it have to be me? Why can't my circumstances be different? That's sin.

That's wasting the day. That's squandering the presence of the Holy Spirit and the power of God's Word to change the way we think. God will evaluate us based on what we think.

Look at our Scripture reading again from this morning. What is it that the Holy Spirit is here to do? He is the Helper. He is the Spirit of Truth.

What is always associated with Judas' name? Betrayal. Failure. What is associated with the Holy

Spirit's name? Truth.

In the armor of God, what does it call the Bible? What is one of the terms that is used for the Word of Truth? The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. We want to seek the Holy Spirit. We're constantly praying for God's guidance, aren't we? We reach a decision point.

We need to decide the future. We know that we want God's will because that's what is best. And we say, I pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance.

I pray for the Holy Spirit's leadership. I'm going to startle you here. The leading of the Holy Spirit does not come in response to prayer.

Does that surprise you? The leading of the Holy Spirit does not come in response to prayer. If I am an extremely skinny guy and I want to have muscles, I don't sit and go to the man who runs the gymnasium and say, please give me strength. Please muscle me up.

I'm too skinny. I've got to put on weight or I'm going to be unhealthy. Could you please give me some strength? Give me some muscles.

That's absurd, isn't it? And it's obvious. If I want muscles, I'm going to have to work out. I'm going to have to take advantage of the equipment that's at the gym.

The expertise of the trainers who are there to tell me, this is how to build up your pectorals and your biceps and triceps and quadriceps and so forth. There's expertise there. There's equipment there.

There's everything I need. But I can't just go down there and say, hey, give me some muscles. And that's too easy.

That's too easy. The good things in life don't come that easily. And in our spiritual life, our spiritual muscles and our spiritual discernment does not come by request.

You cannot find an example in Scripture where people are praying for the leading of the Holy Spirit to make decisions. The Spirit is the Spirit of truth. He will lead us into all truth.

That's His job. The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. That's why we're a Bible church.

That's why we spend the bulk of our service and the bulk of our time looking into the truth of God's Word. That's what God the Holy Spirit uses. When we face a decision, we have choices to make, we don't have to go to God and say, oh, God, please show me Your will and ignore His Word.

We need discernment in His Word. If we know God, we know how He works. We know the resources that He's put at our disposal.

We know the promises that He's made. We know the priorities that He has set. We know the way His plan works.

It will become clear where His path lies, where His will is in our life. Because He has earmarked it. If we know His Word and we know His will, it's obvious.

Have you ever come into your house? There are other people that live in your house and you look around and you can tell that they've been there while you were gone. You see telltale signs. One person in your family is a big fan of orange juice and you find an orange juice glass there on the sink and you say, well, so-and-so has been here.

There's that orange juice glass. Or the morning paper is always in the same spot in the house and you say, well, there's the paper. I see that so-and-so got the paper and read it.

There are telltale things. When we know each other well, we can see the signs of our presence. You know that someone is very fastidious.

They never leave their socks on the floor or they never leave their washcloth in the sink or they never leave the lid off the toothpaste or maybe they always do. You can tell when they've been there because we know them and we know their characteristics and we identify certain things with them because we know them well. This is how God leads us in life.

If we know the characteristics of God, God manifests His strength and weakness. God delights in providing in an unexpected and unforeseen way. God typically puts us in a position where we cannot see His provision and we cannot see where the answer is going to come from.

That's typical of Him. That's what He always does. He works through the unorthodox, the unexpected.

It is the elder that serves the younger. It is the foolish that confound the wise. When we learn to know God and to recognize Him, and then we look at the landscape of our life, it becomes easy to recognize His path, His fingerprints on a particular direction or a particular solution.

It just fits. It's so typical of God to do it in this way. And we don't need to be constantly worrying and praying and say, Oh, God, give me a sign.

Oh, God, if this is Your will, give me the money. Or if this is Your will, make the fleece wet. Or make the fleece dry.

And so many things that we look to for divine guidance, and we're so puzzled because we face a decision, we pray, we say, Oh, God, may the Holy Spirit guide me in the right direction. We make a decision and it doesn't really seem to pan out. We say, I'm not sure that was really God's will after all.

Have we overlooked the means of discerning God's will? It doesn't come by request. It comes by what the Spirit works through. God cannot guide me and God cannot guide you apart from the presence of the Word of God in our souls.

That is His voice. It's the presence of the Word of God that gives us knowledge of the will of God. Let's close now in a word of prayer.