

95-05-28Mark

Father, we thank you this morning for the wonderful expression of your grace, your mercy, your compassion, your love toward us while we were sinners, while we were your enemies, in sending your Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for us, to die and pay an awful penalty, emptying himself of the glory and the status and the things that were due him as a member of the Trinity, to come and take on the form of a servant and suffer the same temptations, the same trials, the same fatigues and fears that beset us all in this life. Because of his love for us and his willingness to conform himself to your plan, his willingness to go to the cross and die that death, you sought to raise him from the dead and to set him at your right hand. He is our Savior, he is our Lord, he is our example, he is the basis for our future hope and eternity.

We thank you for that and we praise you for your grace in extending salvation to us. We ask now that as we look into the truth of your Word, that these things will become a part of our soul, that we will be more closely conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, and that by these things our lives will reflect your glory. We ask these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. Come with me to Mark chapter 6. In thinking about this weekend and thinking about Memorial Day and making visits to cemeteries, it's always a time of reflection. Like funerals themselves, it causes us perhaps to stop and evaluate the meaning of our own lives, the meaning of the lives of those that have gone before.

In the great flow of history and all of the thousands and billions of people who are born and live and die, what does it all mean? What makes a life really count? What is it that God looks for in a life? What is it that is going to bear eternal value and the truth that will remain and reflect God's glory for all eternity? Many people have given their lives at the service of their country. Many people have spent their lives in a worthy cause. We sometimes die for a cause.

We sometimes live for a cause. But either way, at the end of our life, there is an evaluation that takes place by those around us. We realize that we may be close to the end of our life.

We look back over it and we say, Did it really count? Did it matter that I was here? Did my life make a difference? Did the life of my loved one make a difference? And if so, in what way? Those are the thoughts that preoccupy our minds on a weekend such as this. And it is the subject of the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is purpose and cunning, to give our lives meaning, to give our lives purpose, to define them, and give us the opportunity to live a life that does count, not only in temporal ways and for temporal objectives, but to count in an eternal way, so that, like the characters that we find portrayed in the Bible, like the lives that we see lived by saints in the Old Testament and saints in the New Testament, our lives have the potential of being a monument to the grace of God, a monument to God's provision, God's strength, God's power over circumstance, God's power over evil, can be reflected in our lives. Our lives can be just as great a monument to those characteristics of God as any Old Testament saint you want to name,

or any New Testament apostle you want to name.

It may be written in a different testament of God's grace in the eternal future. We know that God has added to the Bible from time to time, and it is very possible that in the eternal future, the entire record of human history will be a testament that we can examine. Each of our lives has the possibility of either being an example of God's grace, God's power, God's strength may manifest in weakness, or we may be like some of the other personages that we find in the Bible, whose lives reflect the different aspects of God's character, God's righteousness, God's judgment, God's intolerance of evil, God's intolerance of sin, even amongst his own people.

It's our choice each and every day to decide what record will be written in the eternal books, what sort of testimony our lives will bear. We have seen in our recent studies at Mark the lives of two people who were intertwined on a single day at a single time, the life of Jairus, the synagogue ruler, the life of this lady that had the issue of blood. We have seen that they met at the person of Jesus Christ, and at that point was their belief in who he was and their belief in what he said that made a difference, and how all of the people that Jesus healed, and he healed thousands during his earthly ministry, these are recorded, these are remembered.

Jairus' name is written, this lady's history is written for all eternity, because there was a critical point in time when faith was required and they expressed that faith. That's our opportunity. We have seen in the beginning of chapter six that Jesus came preaching the gospel of the kingdom, this opportunity.

What was the message that John the Baptist first brought out there in the wilderness? What is the single sentence that we have of his sermon? Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. What is Jesus' message when he comes, as John disappears from the scene of history, and Jesus begins to preach? What is it that Jesus says? Repent, change your mind, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. What does it mean that the kingdom of heaven is at hand? To the Israelites in this generation, it meant that the promises of the Old Testament were on the verge of being fulfilled.

The Palestinian covenant that said that God would give Israel a mandated promise to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. The Davidic covenant that said there would be a son of David on the throne of Israel forever. All of the promises of God that were contained in the books of the law and the books of the prophets.

I will cut out your heart of stone, I will give you a heart of flesh. You will no longer need anyone to teach you because your laws will be written. My laws will be written in your hearts and in your minds.

All of the promises of Israel came to a potential fulfillment in the coming of Jesus Christ as the Messiah of Israel. But what is the principle there? We are not waiting for the fulfillment of Israel's covenants today. We are not watching for Christ's first advent today.

But the principle is still there. God's plan should be important to us. God's purpose, God's design for our lives ought to be important.

Our lives ought to count for something. They ought to make a difference on a daily basis in an eternal way. That's the message that John brought.

It's the message that Jesus brought. God's kingdom is at hand. God's plan and God's purpose is the most important issue in life.

Wake up and change your mind. That was the message then and that's the message today. Jesus went to Nazareth, His hometown, with that message.

And what happened? We saw this last time when He went to His own country and He taught at the synagogue. Many were astonished. And they said, where did this man get this wisdom? What are these mighty works that are performed by His hand? These were the evidences.

These were the confirmations. The mighty works that Jesus did were not unique. The prophets healed.

The prophets cleansed lepers. The prophets raised to death. These were signs.

They were testimony. They were a witness to who Jesus was. They were a sign and a testimony and a witness to what Jesus said.

And Jesus taught very clearly that the kingdom of God was at hand. That people needed to wake up and pull themselves out of their view of life, their earthly pursuits, their earthly objectives, their earthly designs, and wake up to the plan of God and wake up to the purpose of God. That was His message.

He brought that message to Nazareth and they said, we don't accept these testimonies. We don't accept the fact that your message is valid because of these witnesses of your works and these witnesses of the authority by which you teach. We don't accept the authority and we don't accept the message.

And they scorned it. They said, we know you. You grew up around here.

You're nothing special. Don't come back here and presume to tell us that we're not living to please God. We saw you when you were a little boy.

You fixed my plow. Are you going to come back and advise me in spiritual things and tell me that my life is not pleasing to God? How dare you? And they ran him out of town. Jesus said a prophet is not without honor except in his own country among his own relatives and in his own house.

We find this in our own lives. Many times there are people in our own household who don't acknowledge the power of God manifested in our life. They don't see the message.

They don't see the issue that God's plan and God's purpose is the most important thing in the universe. We see it and we try to live in the light of it. But there are people under our own roof, in our own family, in our own circle of acquaintance, in our own hometown who don't recognize that.

They will dismiss any evidence of the power of God in your life and in my life as coincidence or good fortune or human wisdom or a lucky break. Well, you don't have the problems that I have. If you had the problems I had, your life wouldn't be so good.

You were privileged from birth. You had a better environment. You had better opportunities.

You got a better break and that's why you're happy in my life. People in our own periphery tell us these things and we face rejection of the work of God in our lives. What are we going to do about that? What should our approach be? We saw last time that Jesus gives us an example.

He came to Nazareth two times, separated by his baptism, 12 to 18 months, and he brought the message. He communicated the truth clearly, honestly. He didn't pull any punches.

He didn't sugarcoat it. He didn't soft-pedal sin. He didn't soft-pedal righteousness and judgment and the fact that the axe was being laid at the root of the trees and that if people did not respond to the plan of God, the character of God, the purpose of God, God's wrath and God's discipline would come upon them.

Jesus didn't go in and say, well, I know these people. I shouldn't really rock the boat. I shouldn't make waves.

I shouldn't annoy them. I shouldn't make them angrier. Jesus was true to his message.

He was true to the truth of the word of God. He communicated it and because of that he was rejected. By people that I am sure he loved and had known for many years.

We face this ourselves. Because of their lack of faith he could do no mighty work there. What does that tell us? There is none so blind as he who will not see.

And the God of this world has blinded the minds of a certain class of people. Who is it that the God of this world has blinded? Remember that verse? The God of this world has blinded the minds of them that believe not. It isn't that they were blinded and because of that they couldn't believe.

It is that they have been faced with this message that Jesus preaches. They have been faced with the message that is communicated in your life and in my life. And they have rejected that message.

And because of that rejection, because of that failure to exercise faith in God and in the word of God, blindness sets in. The God of this world will blind those that believe not. Otherwise the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, would shine into them.

That is why in the town of Nazareth Jesus could do no great work. They were blinded by a lack of faith. What is the point of affirming the authority of his message when the message has already been rejected? They have already seen the authority.

They have already seen the validity. They have heard of his mighty works. There is no point in continuing to do the mighty works when the purpose of those works is to get the message accepted.

That message has been rejected. So the mighty works cease in Nazareth. Now we find ourselves in chapter 6 verse 7. After this rejection Jesus leaves Nazareth and he goes about in a circuit, teaching in the surrounding villages in this area of Galilee.

And he called the twelve to himself and began to send them out two by two and gave them power over unclean spirits. He commanded them to take nothing for the journey except a staff, no bag, no bread, no copper in their money belts, but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. Also he said to them, in whatever place you enter a house, stay there until you depart from that place.

And whatever will not receive you or whoever will not receive you nor hear you when you depart from there, shake off the dust under your feet as a testimony against them. Assuredly I say to you it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city. So they went out and preached that people should change their minds, people should repent.

And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them. One of the great keys to understanding this particular episode is found in the very first verse of chapter 6 verse 7. Jesus called the twelve to himself and began to send them out two by two. Mark is the only one that records explicitly that Jesus sent the disciples out in pairs.

But if you look back in Matthew at his account of this episode, this is in Matthew chapter 10, and one of the things we see is that Matthew begins his account with a listing of the disciples. If you read it closely in Matthew, you'll notice that the disciples are listed in pairs. Peter and Andrew, semicolon.

James and John, semicolon. Philip and Bartholomew, semicolon, and so forth. And we get the idea that Matthew was also giving us a hint that the disciples were sent out in pairs.

There have been great applications made from this, the importance of encouragement and fellowship on the part of believers, that two heads are better than one, essentially. Of course, the Old Testament says that it's a three-fold cord that is not quickly broken. But the idea of iron sharpening iron and the complementary aspect of two believers together, one bearing the other

up as necessary.

It's a wonderful concept, and all those things are true. I'd like to point our attention in perhaps a little bit different direction this morning with regard to this being sent out in pairs. And to understand it, we have to understand what Jesus' purpose is here.

Why has Jesus picked this time to send out the disciples? We know, as we review Jesus' ministry in our minds, that there are two occasions where he sends out disciples. This is the first, where the twelve are sent forth. A little bit later, he's going to send how many? Seventy.

Is seventy a significant number in Scripture? Yes, it is. Is twelve a significant number in Scripture? Yes, it is. What does twelve signify? What does it represent in Scripture? What does it remind us of? The number of Israel.

How many patriarchs were there? Twelve. How many pillars will there be in the new temple of Jerusalem? Twelve. How many apostles are there? Twelve.

Where did Jesus take his message during his earthen ministry? I am sent to whom? The lost sheep of the house of Israel. If you read the parallel accounts, Mark doesn't mention this, but Matthew mentions the fact that Jesus sent the disciples to Israel. He said, don't go to the Gentiles, don't go to Samaria.

Your mission is to Israel. Twelve disciples sent to Israel. There is a message that they have for Israel.

It's the same message that John the Baptist preached. It's the same message that Jesus Christ preached. Change your mind.

The kingdom is at hand. What does that translate? We've heard that so many times that it's almost lost its meaning. If I was an Israelite in this day and Jesus or John or one of these disciples came to town and started preaching, what would it mean to me? This message would confront me that I need to change my mind.

Here I am. I'm an Israelite. I've been brought up steeped in the law.

I wear my square garment. I've got my tassels. I've got my sacrifices.

I go to synagogue and I observe the feasts and I observe the law and I pay attention to the rules that the Pharisees have explained and added to and solidified into this giant barnacle covered ship that drives my life. I do all of these things. I'm religious.

I'm observant. I've kept the law from my youth. Now here comes some raggedy man to tell me that I need to change my mind, that my life is not right, that somehow I'm not a child of God, that I'm not pleasing to God, that I need to change.

What sort of reception do you think I am going to give that message? If I am satisfied with myself, if I am satisfied with my own level of righteousness, if I'm satisfied with my understanding of God. In fact, that's one of the reasons that I will never, when we pick hymns for the bulletin, there's a hymn, I don't even know if it's in our hymnal, it's called I Am Satisfied. Well, that has a wonderful message in it, but we have to be careful about saying, I am satisfied with myself.

I am satisfied with my righteousness. I'm satisfied with my understanding. I'm satisfied with my testimony.

I'm satisfied with my impact in human history. I'm satisfied with the record that is being written for all eternity in that great eternal testament to God's grace and God's glory. I am satisfied.

That was the attitude in Israel. That was the attitude in Nazareth. That's the attitude that Jesus faced when he came to earth.

Who was a greater teacher than Jesus Christ? Who was a greater embodiment of God's character than Jesus Christ? Who manifested the love of God in a greater way than Jesus Christ? Who was a better walking Bible, walking picture of God's truth than Jesus Christ? Are any of us comparable? Do any of us even come close? What was the reception of Jesus Christ? God in the world and among his own people, among the people of God, the people who had the law as their heritage, who had the Bible in their hands and were supposed to be a light for the Gentiles. What reception did Jesus Christ get? He was despised. He was rejected.

He was crucified. And he has continued to be despised and rejected and crucified in the minds and in the hearts of people all the way down to the present time. Read Hebrews chapter 6. It is impossible to bring someone to repentance as long as they continually crucify the Son of God and put him through an open shame.

It happens today. It can happen to your life. It can happen to my life.

We as believers in Jesus Christ with eternal salvation can be failures in our life. We can develop this attitude. We can develop this satisfaction with our righteousness, with our understanding.

We think, I don't need the teaching of the Word of God anymore. I don't need a change in my life. I don't really need a change in my thinking.

I'm satisfied with the attitude in my soul. I'm satisfied with my level of patience. I'm satisfied with my level of long-suffering.

I'm satisfied with the amount of endurance that I have for the failures and the accusations and the sins that others commit against me. I'm satisfied. I'm there.

I cope with that in a way that is adequate and that God is happy with. I don't need a change. We have got to guard against that.

Look at this situation in Israel. The Son of God is walking among these people and they can't see Him. He is teaching in their synagogues and teaching on their hillsides and they cannot hear Him.

The Son of God. Jesus was rejected by His own people, the people who should have known and should have identified Him from their knowledge of the Old Testament and they missed Him. Why? Could that happen to us? Could we miss the ministry of Jesus Christ in our souls? Can we miss His presence? Can we miss His Word? Can we miss the opportunity to change our minds and receive the Kingdom of God? Yes, we can.

And yes, we do. What can we do about it? Jesus is going to send His disciples forward here in this section. He called the twelve to Himself.

He began to send them out two by two. How many witnesses does it take to establish a matter of fact in Israel? In the mouths of two or three witnesses it was established. Why are these disciples sent out two by two? Because they are establishing an accusation.

They are establishing a matter of fact. These pairs of disciples would go to town. Isn't it interesting the instructions that Jesus gives? He says, don't take an extra staff.

Don't take a bag of provisions. Don't take bread. Don't take an overcoat.

Don't take anything extra. Why does He say that? Great dead seas of ink have been spilled on this. Lots of applications have been made.

And you can go to the individual items. But what's the overall point here? This is an urgent matter. Nothing should get in the way.

Don't show up to these towns carrying your suitcases looking like you're there to set up a ministry and you're there to be a while. You're there to become a notable local personage. This is an urgent mission.

Don't bother to pack. Get on the road and deliver the message. You two witnesses go to town X and proclaim that people need to change their minds.

Why would you need to change your mind unless your mind is wrong? That's the message that these men bring. Change your mind. The kingdom of God is at hand.

The plan and the purpose of God is moving forward. The axe is laid at the root of the trees. Change your mind.

Wake up. Don't be satisfied. Don't be complacent.

Don't assume that you're there and that you don't need what Jesus Christ brings into the world. That's the message. These pairs of disciples are bearing testimony.

Notice Jesus doesn't give any instructions on what to do if the people enthusiastically accept the message. Where are the instructions for those towns that warmly welcome and greet the disciples with this message? Does he say, set up a synagogue, train some pastors, get a youth ministry going? What instructions does Jesus give for those who accept the message? He gives none. Why is that? Because he knows what the reception of this message is going to be.

He says, you're going to be lucky to find a house that will take you in and if you find one, stay there. Don't move around. Don't circulate.

Don't say, well, if I stay in six houses, I can have an impact on six families. Go to the town, find a house that will accept you, stay there, and get busy to proclaim the message. It puts us in mind of Jonah going to Nineveh.

Yet, forty days and Nineveh will be destroyed. One message, succinct, clear, to the point that makes an issue of God and his plan, God and his purpose. The disciples are not to make an issue of themselves.

They're not to distract people by coming in carrying a cartload of suitcases and lots of provisions. They're not to distract people by having extra clothing and extra money and people wondering, well, what can they be up to? Are they trying to start a movement? Are they trying to build a new synagogue? Are they trying to undermine the government? What can be their purpose? The messenger is not the issue. It's the message.

If Jesus says, don't make an issue of yourself, you need to make an issue of God and his plan because that's what people have to make up their mind about. That's what people have to change their mind about. Not you as disciples, but God as the God of Israel.

God as the God of purpose and the God of plan and the God of design. Wake people up to their personal, individual relationship with God. That's the message.

I will submit to you that in our day and in our generation, we as believers have deluded that message. We make an issue of ourselves. We make an issue of our standards.

We make an issue of dress. We make an issue of observance. We make an issue of ritual.

We make an issue of lifestyle and habits. We make an issue of so many things when the issue is God and his purpose. God and his plan.

We should be going forth with a message that confronts people saying, change your mind. God's plan is moving forward. Change your mind.

The kingdom of heaven is at hand. It's not our job to wreak social change. It's not our job to change society and change the world as has become a part of so many Christian endeavors today.

We want to change the world. We want to make the world a better place. Jesus said, the world will never be a better place until he returns and sets up his millennial kingdom.

When God, in his purpose, in his plan, in his time, decides that he's going to show how the world should run, he's going to do it with Jesus Christ on the throne of David in Jerusalem ruling with a rod of iron, breaking in pieces the nations like a potter's vessel, executing perfect justice, perfect righteousness, perfect court system, perfect criminal justice, perfect administration, perfect taxation, perfect representation, perfect implementation of worship life and social life and civic life, perfect environment control, perfect handling of the atmosphere and the ozone and pollution. Jesus Christ is going to show us how that's done when he comes in glory, but he hasn't made that a part of our mission today. It doesn't mean we can go out and trash the world and ignore it, but the point is, our message is that God is in his heaven and he has a plan and a purpose.

He has a righteous standard and each person needs to stop and think about where they stand in their relationship with God. We can't afford to dilute that message. We can't afford to distract people from that message by adding to it and saying, it's salvation plus church membership, it's salvation plus getting rid of your bad habits, it's salvation plus anything.

That's not our job. That's the job of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God to work in the life of a believer and face them with this very same issue, change their mind and be with God as they can. So they don't take any improvements, they don't pack a bag, they go forth with nothing but a staff and they go in pairs to bear testimony to this truth, to these decisions.

Whatever place you enter a house, stay there until you depart from that place. Whatever place will not receive you nor hear you, notice. It doesn't say whatever place will mend their ways, whatever place will stop oppressing the poor, whatever place will change their worship life, whatever place will acknowledge me and begin a program of social reform.

It doesn't say any of those things. It says they either receive you and hear you or they don't because the issue is the Word. What's going to happen to the seed when it gets sown on the ground? If it's receptive soil, great.

If it's not receptive soil, this is what you do. Go outside from there, shake the dust off of your feet as a testimony against them. We're familiar with what this meant in Israel, when the Jews would travel outside the borders of Israel, if they had, God forbid, to pass through Samaria or go up the Tyre or Cyprus or go across the Jordan into the cities of the plain and they returned to Israel, they considered the land holy and when they reached the border, they would shake that pagan dust off of their feet.

They considered themselves unclean because of their contact with the outside world. Shaking that dust off said that dust is unclean. Those people, those places are unclean.

What does it say when the disciples walk outside one of these Jewish cities, these Israelite towns

full of the people of God, the children of Abraham, and they shake the dust off of their feet? What are they saying? They're bearing witness. Two men in the mouths of two witnesses, it is established, and they're saying, your town is unclean. I don't care how big your synagogue is.

I don't care how many priests and rabbis and scribes you have operating. I don't care how much you give. I don't care how many sacrifices you offer.

If you don't receive this message, if you don't hear this word, you're unclean. That's the testimony of an unclean. It's terribly hard to accept.

It's terribly hard to think people have lived their entire lives a different way. This message confronted them with something they did not want to hear. They rejected it.

And they missed the opportunity to see the Son of God in His place. All of us at some time, I think, fantasize what would it have been like to be in Galilee, to be in Jerusalem, in Jesus' name, to actually see the Son of God in the flesh walking amongst us. We would probably give anything, do anything, to have that privilege.

Here are people that had that privilege and missed it. Didn't even know it was there. Upright people, law-abiding, moral, Mosaic law-keeping people missed it.

We can't afford to miss it. We can't afford to be complacent. We can't afford to think.

I've been in church X number of years and I'm pretty well set. I've got my stray threads here and there, but I'm basically good to go. My righteousness is satisfactory in the sight of God.

My thought life, my verbal life, the conversations that I have, the way that I talk about people, the way that I talk to my spouse, the way that I talk to my children, the way that I engage in conversation with people in my prayer group, it's totally human. It's just what God wants. Can we really say that and believe it? Can we really say it and believe that God has completed his work in our soul? These people drew that conclusion.

Who are you to come in with a different message? We're doing fine. Jesus sent his disciples out to deliver that same message. And that's the message that our lives ought to deliver today.

And we should be prepared for rejection. We should be prepared for misunderstanding. We should be prepared for people to impute wrong motives to us and say, you are just trying to control my life.

You're trying to dabble and meddle in my affairs. You've got an agenda. You're trying to make points.

You're trying to hang scouts on your belt. You're living in a dream world. You're not living in real life.

You're not taking advantage of the wisdom that we've gained here. Whatever it is that people say about us, they will dismiss your life. They'll dismiss what God does in your life and in my life.

They'll say, you attribute that to God and I attribute that to luck. I attribute it to you taking my advice. Sometimes people give us advice that actually conforms to what we were going to do based on the Word of God and that people will take credit and say, see, I told you that was my word and it has nothing to do with your advice and it has to do with the grace of God.

They went out and preached that people should repent. Notice the disciples obeyed. Notice also that this was a special time and a special mission.

Let me ask you this. Did the disciples routinely travel with Jesus through Israel without a bag and without bread, without a second pair of sandals? Was that their normal way of life? It was not. We know that there was a bag keeper.

Judas was the keeper of the treasure. They had a bank account. They had provisions.

Jesus would send disciples ahead to a town and say, find a room and get the meal ready. Get provisions. This wasn't normal.

This was special. And we need to keep that in mind. A lot of people go to this passage and say this is how we should live our life all the time.

Take no thought for tomorrow. Don't worry about savings. Don't worry about insurance.

Don't worry about being prudent. Don't worry about taking any thought. All we should do is run out and preach the gospel to every preacher regardless of cost.

Don't worry about your family. Don't worry about your other responsibilities. And we can't do that.

This is an extraordinary mission. Out of the three and a half years that Jesus traveled out with his disciples, this took the space of perhaps a month. And it's not normal.

It's not usual. It's special. And the reason it's special is that we're supposed to look at it and draw the principles out.

This isn't an example for us to live our lives by any more than the communism of the first generation of the church is an example that we should live by. We draw principles from it. We see God working in it.

But it's not our permanent example. But this idea of having a witness, this idea of getting a message across is the principle. And that's what our lives should do.

Remember what Jesus said back in Matthew when he said, Let your light so shine before men that what? That they may see your good words and glorify their Father who is in heaven. Now, if

you don't think about that too carefully, you'll come away saying Jesus says get busy with your good words. But what did Jesus say? He didn't say let your light shine by doing good works.

He said let your light so shine. Your light has to shine in a particular way. What is that way? Let your light so shine so that when men see your good works, they will glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Now, there's a whole different proposition. Lots of people can do good works. How many people can do good works in such a way that the glory that is reflected is the Father's glory? Let your light so shine so that people see the Father.

You know, kids play this game and get a flashlight and you can shine it on other things or you can shine it on their own face. Well, how does our light shine? Does our light shine so that all men see our face and glorify us? Or does our light so shine so that men see God the Father and glorify God? That's the challenge. How can we do that? In many cases, we've got to change our mind.

It is not enough to do good works. The cults do good works. I could name some and you can think of them yourself.

There are good works-based cults here in America that are extremely large and extremely popular and extremely well-thought of in the community because they do good works. But who is it that's well-thought of? They're a group. They're a people.

You see them riding bicycles. You find them knocking on your door. Who is it that's well-thought of? It's not our Father in Heaven.

We've got to make sure that we're not just shining a light on good works, but that it shines in such a way on our Father to glorify Him. That takes a whole different way of operating. We have to change our mind from traditional Christianity, from traditional get out and do good deeds type of thing.

That's the message that Jesus sends out here. Turn with me to 1 John. I found it perhaps more than coincidental that the adult Sunday school began a study of 1 John this morning.

I didn't know that they were going to do that. But I want to point something out in 1 John and hopefully it won't skew anything in your future study of 1 John. But it has to do with the idea of testimony.

What is it that testifies to us today? What are our two witnesses? How do we know where the message is? How do we know what we're supposed to know in Christian life? How can we be faced with this message in such a way that we make a good decision to fulfill God's purpose? Very quickly we're going to just scan through 1 John for the answers. Look at 1 John chapter 2 verse 3. Why is it we know that we know Him if we keep His commandments. We're going to find

in 1 John that there are two witnesses in our soul.

It's the Spirit of God and the Truth of God. John is going to weave these throughout the book. And the key here, if you are not horrified by the prospect of marking in your Bible, you might want to circle around the phrase that you're going to find in each of these verses.

We know. The key to fulfilling God's purpose, the key to having a life of impact is knowing the truth. That's what the messengers bring is a word of truth.

That's what the witnesses bear testimony to is the Truth of God. How is it that we come to know that truth? Well, it says here in 2.3, we know that we know Him if we keep His commandments. Look at 2.5. Whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him, and by this we know that we are in Him.

We know. Circle around. Look at 2.24. Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning.

If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. If that that you hear becomes the knowledge that's in your soul, you will abide in the Son and in the Father. Abiding in Christ, abiding in the will of the Father comes by knowing the truth.

Look at verse 27. The anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you. But as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.

We don't abide in Christ by works. We abide in Christ by what we know, by what is the object of our faith. We have to change our minds and our deeds will follow.

We change our minds and our attitudes will follow. We change our minds and love and joy and peace and patience and endurance will spring up in our soul and that will result in the good works that testify to the grace of God. Look in verse 29.

If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born in Him. How can you identify who is righteous and who is not? Who to trust and who not to trust? Know the righteousness of God and you will be able to spot righteousness in others. Look in chapter 3 verse 10.

In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest. Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother. Can you identify righteousness? Can you identify genuine love? Then you will know the children of God and you will know the children of the devil.

You don't have to worry about being deceived. You don't have to worry about being taken to the cleaners. Look in verse 14 of chapter 3. We know that we have passed from death to life.

Because we love the brother. Look in verse 16. We know love.

How do we know love? Because He laid down His life for us and we ought to lay our lives down for the brethren. Look in verse 19. By this we know that we are of the truth.

You begin to see a pattern here that John says if you want your Christian life to hit on eight cylinders, if you want your life to count, if on Memorial Day five or ten years hence, or five hundred million years hence, if you want your life to have matter, you've got to know something. You've got the key to the message. The key that you've got to hear it, and more than once a week, more than twice a week, it's the knowledge of the truth of God that witnesses to the power of God and the grace of God in our life.

That's what the Holy Spirit uses. If we don't immerse ourselves in the Word of God and the truth of God, we will never reach that level of growth, reduction that pleases God and replaces glory. We can't do it without knowing.

John continues on. You can look in verse 24. By this we know that He abides in us.

By the Spirit that dwells within us. Chapter 4, verse 2. By this you know the Spirit of God. Verse 4, verse 6. We are of God.

He who knows God hears us. He who is not of God does not hear us. It reminds us of Nazareth.

It reminds us of the disciples. Doesn't it? Those who know God will hear the truth. Those who don't know God won't hear the truth.

Look in verse 9. In this, the love of God was manifested toward us. It was made clear. It was made evident.

We know the love of God because God sends only begotten Son into the world. Verse 13. By this we know that we abide in Him.

And He in us. Because He has given us of His Spirit. Verse 16.

We have known and believed the love of God. Chapter 5, verse 2. By this we know that we love the children of God when we love God and keep His commandments. What is the great commission? If you had to fire from the kit without quoting Matthew 28, 19, you said, what's the great commission? We'd say, well, it's to preach the gospel.

It's to tell people about heaven and hell and get them saved. What is the great commission of Matthew 28, 19? As you go into all the world. It isn't even a command to go.

It says as you go. While you are going. It's a participle.

It's not an imperative. It doesn't say go into the world. It says as you are going about in the world.

It does not say preach the gospel to every preacher. It says make disciples. What's the difference? If you make a disciple, you're going to teach the whole realm of truth.

You're going to teach all of the good news which goes way beyond salvation and hell and it goes to the commandments of Jesus Christ. It goes to these things that John says we must know. The great commission is to make disciples.

The great commission is to communicate the truth. The great commission is to be a disciple. So we're going to make disciples of others and to be disciples of others who know the truth.

Israel didn't figure this out. Nazareth didn't figure this out. Nazareth rejected the Son of God in the flesh because they didn't figure this out.

It is the message that counts. They dismissed the message and they dismissed the messenger. And they dismissed the opportunity to have lives and to be counted in front of God.

So on this Memorial Day weekend, if we are instructed by the example of those who have gone before, we will think afresh about our individual responsibility to know the truth. To be changed by the truth. And if that's going to happen, we've got to expose ourselves.

It can be from this pulpit, it can be from the radio, it can be from books, from tapes, from teachers that God has put throughout our land to faithfully communicate the Word of God. There is no excuse. And on the day that we stand before Christ at the judgment seat and He says, how come you didn't know more? How come your life didn't reflect my knowing more? What will your response be? What will my response be? Well, Lord, I was pretty busy.

Well, Lord, I had limitations. I had distractions. I had responsibilities.

And I really couldn't get down there to hear the Word of God. I didn't really take the time to turn on my radio. I didn't really sit down and read books by faithful men who have studied and taught the truth.

What excuse do you think we'll have for not following John's exhortation here? And it isn't just John alone. Take a look at 1 Corinthians chapter 6. Seven times in half of that chapter, Paul says, do you not know? Do you not know? Do you not know? The Corinthian church is one of those Spirit of the Churches that Paul wrote to us had lots of problems. What was their major problem? They did not know.

And Paul breaks it out. He says, do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit? Do you not know that you are members of Christ? Over and over again throughout that book, throughout his writings, all of the Apostles, all of the New Testament all of the Old Testament all of the New Testament.