



KINGDOM PRACTICE

Forty Daily Devotionals
from the Gospel of Mark
(Based on the NKJV)

Introduction

God has given us four wonderful biographies of the life and ministry of Christ. Each of the men who wrote a gospel did so with a particular group of people in mind. Matthew wrote primarily to the Jewish people and went to great lengths to provide them with adequate and appropriate information to prove to them that Jesus was the Messiah. That is why he went to such great lengths to record the genealogy of Christ for them. Luke wrote with a Gentile audience in mind, and he, too, recorded the miraculous birth of Christ so that his primary audience could be assured that they were not being asked to worship someone Who was not worthy of their devotion. John wrote with the everyday believer in mind and simply assumed that his audience had already placed their faith in Christ and, therefore, believed Him to be exactly Who He said that He was. Mark also wrote primarily to those who had already placed their faith in Christ, so he was led to focus on the things that Jesus had done and said while He was with them on this earth. Some people have referred to the Gospel of Mark as “The Busy Gospel” because it is fast moving, and it reports on the life of Christ in such a way that we see Him very much “about His Father’s business.” Mark’s record is the most chronological of all the gospels. It begins at the outset of the Lord’s ministry and moves straight forward through His march to Jerusalem and the cross. Thank God Mark was not led to end his gospel on that hill called Calvary! He also records, with great detail, the resurrection of Christ and His command to the church to carry the gospel to the whole world! I hope that you enjoy your time in this wonderful book!

Daily Reading Schedule

Day	Scripture Reading	Date
1	Mark 1:1-18	10/25/22
2	Mark 1:19-34	10/26/22
3	Mark 1:35-2:5	10/27/22
4	Mark 2:6-22	10/28/22
5	Mark 2:23-3:12	10/29/22
6	Mark 3:13-30	10/30/22
7	Mark 3:31-4:9	10/31/22
8	Mark 4:10-25	11/01/22
9	Mark 4:26-41	11/02/22
10	Mark 5:1-15	11/03/22
11	Mark 5:16-30	11/04/22
12	Mark 5:31-43	11/05/22
13	Mark 6:1-13	11/06/22
14	Mark 6:14-29	11/07/22
15	Mark 6:30-52	11/08/22
16	Mark 6:53-7:13	11/09/22
17	Mark 7:14-30	11/10/22
18	Mark 7:31-8:9	11/11/22
19	Mark 8:10-21	11/12/22
20	Mark 8:22-38	11/13/22

Day	Scripture Reading	Date
21	Mark 9:1-15	11/14/22
22	Mark 9:16-32	11/15/22
23	Mark 9:33-50	11/16/22
24	Mark 10:1-16	11/17/22
25	Mark 10:17-31	11/18/22
26	Mark 10:32-45	11/19/22
27	Mark 10:46-11:11	11/20/22
28	Mark 11:12-26	11/21/22
29	Mark 11:27-12:12	11/22/22
30	Mark 12:13-27	11/23/22
31	Mark 12:28-44	11/24/22
32	Mark 13:1-18	11/25/22
33	Mark 13:19-37	11/26/22
34	Mark 14:1-16	11/27/22
35	Mark 14:17-34	11/28/22
36	Mark 14:35-52	11/29/22
37	Mark 14:53-72	11/30/22
38	Mark 15:1-20	12/01/22
39	Mark 15:21-47	12/02/22
40	Mark 16:1-20	12/03/22

Day 1: Mark 1:1-18

“It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan.” (Mark 1:9)

A Family Photo

Early into his Gospel, Mark describes the day that Jesus came to be baptized by John. The Jews had been practicing baptism for years. As people heard John, they desired to be baptized in recognition of the fact that they had repented of their sins and that they were now believers in the Jewish Messiah that John was preaching. The Jews that were baptized were actually being re-baptized. You can imagine the problems that this created for John and for those who were following his teachings. Jesus was one of those Jews that came to John for baptism. Scholars estimate that He walked for approximately two days (60-70 miles) from Nazareth to the place at the Jordan River where John was baptizing. Since Jesus was baptized, we can safely assume that He was not baptized to be saved or to have His sins washed away. Because Jesus was physically born as God’s Son, He did not need to be saved. Since He was without sin, He had nothing that needed to be washed away. It should be clear to us that Jesus was not baptized because of His own needs, or even for John’s. Jesus was baptized to set an example for us! It was His first “act” that He performed after His earthly ministry began. No wonder we see all the figures of the trinity mentioned in verses 10 & 11. This is the first appearance of the trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit together in the New Testament. I like to think that the Holy Spirit led Mark to describe this moment just like we might pause to take “a family photo!”

Prayer Emphasis: Kingdom Practices are about fulfilling God’s plan for our lives. **Read** Matthew 3:13-15 and **note** where John was reluctant to baptize Jesus until Jesus explained that He wanted to be baptized, “to fulfill all righteousness.” **Realize** that baptism is for believers who desire to follow Christ’s example.

Day 2: Mark 1:19-34

“Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught.” (Mark 1:21)

“Immediately”

Today’s focus verse contains a word that is found over forty times in the Gospel of Mark. We are told that Jesus and His disciples “went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught.” We have already seen this word three times in our first day readings (vs. 9, 12, and 18). We will see it another four times in today’s verses. This word becomes a key to our understanding the urgency with which Jesus went about fulfilling God’s work during His earthly ministry. Mark has been called the “Busy Gospel” because we see Jesus very busy, moving from one scene to another, being an obedient Servant to His Father and a shining example to His followers. Mark’s gospel focuses on the *deeds* of Jesus more than on the *words* of Jesus. In this Gospel, we see Jesus preaching by what He was practicing in His daily walk. Luke introduced the Book of Acts by stating that his Gospel had been written to provide an “account...of all that Jesus began to *do* and to *teach*” (Acts 1:1). Mark’s record clearly places a great emphasis on the things that Jesus did and at what pace He went about doing it!

Prayer Emphasis: Recognize that a sense of urgency is quite contagious! Perhaps it was, in part, due to the urgency that James and John saw and heard in Jesus that they “*immediately* left their nets and followed Him” (1:18). **Find** a role to fill in God’s work and go about filling it *immediately*!

Day 3: Mark 1:35-2:5

“Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.” (Mark 1:35)

“In the Morning”

It is hard to imagine that any man has ever been more driven by his purpose and busier about his business than Jesus Christ. He often spent many days working feverishly at His Father’s business only to rest for a very short period and then rise up again “in the morning” and get back to work! Notice that it was “a long while before daylight” that “He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.” It is obvious that Jesus had some private places where He would go to be alone with God because even His apostles were not aware of this secret place of prayer. Mark 1:36 indicates that Peter and the other disciples went out and “searched for Him” on this particular morning. When they found Him, they told Him what He, no doubt, already knew – “Everyone is looking for You” (1:37). Without hesitation, He told them that He was ready to “go into the next towns” and “preach there also” (1:38). Why was His life and ministry marked with such urgency? Because He wanted to fulfill His divine “purpose” for which He had “come forth” (1:38). For that reason, “He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons” (1:39). Again, we see the life of our Lord Jesus marked by doing and teaching.

Prayer Emphasis: Practice urgency! **Be** faithful to your private time in prayer without forsaking your public time in ministry either. **Do** something for Christ today! Make it your personal ambition to **spend time** with God and then spend time sharing what you get from God with the many needy people of this world.

Day 4: Mark 2:6-22

“Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, ‘We never saw anything like this!’” (Mark 2:12)

More About “Immediate” Obedience

Twice more we saw the word “immediately” in yesterday’s reading. When Jesus pronounced that the poor, leprous man was clean, “immediately the leprosy left him” (1:42) and when He had entered the house in Capernaum “immediately many gathered together” (2:2). We see this word twice again in today’s verses. As some of the scribes who gathered with the crowd sat “reasoning in their hearts” (v. 6) as Jesus preached, He “immediately” perceived what they were doing (v. 7). Then, after Jesus healed the paralytic man that some of the people had taken great efforts to bring to Him, Jesus said to him, “take up your bed and go to your house” (v. 11). We can clearly see that the once crippled man did exactly what Jesus told him to do and that he did it “immediately...in the presence of them all” (v. 12). Note how the crowd responded to this man’s immediate obedience. They were “all amazed and glorified God, saying, ‘We never saw anything like this’” (v. 12). They were speaking of the miracle that Jesus had just performed before their very eyes, but they would never have been moved to make such a powerful statement had the man not been “immediately” obedient to the Lord’s command. How much different would our world react to the gospel if they saw such “immediate” obedience in our lives as well!

Prayer Emphasis: Practice immediacy in your own life. **Do** what Jesus has commanded you to do with a great sense of urgency and obedience. Never hesitate to act on His word or to obey His commands. The world will be a better place if we will only learn to be better Christians!

Day 5: Mark 2:23-3:12

“And Jerusalem and Idumea and beyond the Jordan; and those from Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they heard how many things He was doing, came to Him.” (Mark 3:8)

More About “Doing”

In some of the first words that Luke wrote in the book of Acts he reminded us “of all that Jesus began both to *do* and teach” (Acts 1:1). In today’s verses we read about a man that Jesus met in the synagogue “who had a withered hand” (3:1). We also read where Jesus “said to the man who had the withered hand, ‘Step forward’” (3:3). After the man immediately obeyed, Jesus had yet another command for him. Jesus then “said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand’” and the man “stretched it out” and, when he did, “his hand was restored as whole as the other” (3:5). The word “restored” provides some indication that this man was probably not born with a withered hand but that it was possibly now withered after something like a stroke or some accident or injury. Have you ever considered how important this man’s immediate obedience was to the gospel story? Had he hesitated, we might not have read of him being healed in such a miraculous way! However, our story has something more to say about an “immediate” action. As soon as this man was blessed by his obedience, the enemies of Christ decided to take some “immediate” action of their own as “the Pharisees went out and *immediately* plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him” (3:6).

Prayer Emphasis: Recognize that our enemy has people that are willing to immediately obey him and work diligently at trying to stop the work of the ministry of Christ. **Realize** that neither Satan, nor his followers, ever rest from their labors or assigned responsibilities. Neither should we!

Day 6: Mark 3:13-30

“And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. Then He appointed twelve...that He might send them out to preach,” (Mark 3:13-14)

Called, Appointed, and Sent

After spending time in prayer “on the mountain,” Jesus “*called*” His disciples to come “to Him.” We must never forget that the calling that Christ has placed on our lives is an upward calling! If the disciples were to answer His call, they were going to have to climb a mountain to do it! Let us never allow laziness to rob us of the blessings that we will encounter if we only make the effort to do what Christ “calls” us to do! Those who willingly left their own, personal pursuits to climb that mountain received the added blessing of being “*appointed*.” Many Christians miss the blessing of receiving an appointment to the work of God simply because they do not want to spend their time and energy in coming up to where He has called them. But the story does not end there! We are not simply called so that we can be appointed. We are called, and then appointed, so that we can be *sent*. Jesus called and then “appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might *send* them out to preach.” The story gets even better! Those who answered the call and were thusly appointed and sent were then blessed with “power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons” (v. 15). The only way for Christians to have the kind of power that will help needy people is for them to first respond positively to the commands of Christ upon their own lives.

Prayer Emphasis: Believe that the power to go out and help people is first found in our willingness to come up to where Christ has called us. **Realize** that there is great power available to those who are willing to take the time and make the personal to effort join with Christ in His ministry.

Day 7: Mark 3:31-4:9

“And again He began to teach by the sea. And a great multitude was gathered to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat in it on the sea; and the whole multitude was on the land facing the sea.” (Mark 4:1)

Growing the Church

Churches today are doing many things to try to draw crowds. However, in doing so, many pastors and churches fail to practice the one thing that is most important in that effort. What drew the crowds to Jesus? They came rushing to Him when “He began to teach.” In today’s focus verse we see that when “He began to teach...a great multitude was gathered to Him.” Programs may help us to “gather” a crowd but only the teaching and preaching of the Word of God will ever turn a *crowd* into a *congregation*! Our church has made a deliberate decision to focus first on the teaching and preaching of God’s Word and to let God grow His church. When we grow deeper in our faith and obedience God will help us to grow bigger and better in His service. However, becoming bigger is not our goal! Becoming better servants of Christ in our personal lives must be the object of our desire and efforts. When people begin to see the difference that Christ, and His teachings, are making in our lives they will seek us out, and we can then point them to Him. The story of the sower and the seed found in today’s reading helps us to understand that our job is to reach out to people with the promise of the eternal life that is found only in the Word of God.

Prayer Emphasis: Realize that we can best help people by sharing the Word of God with them. **Note** that Christ was not preaching in a synagogue in this story, but “by the sea.” Let this serve as another reminder that, if we want to catch fish, we must go to where the fish are!

Day 8: Mark 4:10-25

“And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts.” (Mark 4:15)

Our “Urgent” Enemy

There is a great warning to be found in today’s focus verse! In His parable of the sower and the seed, Jesus spoke of those who heard the Word of God only to have “Satan” come immediately and take “away the word that was sown in their hearts.” Peter warns us of our “adversary the devil” who “walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). He is urgently seeking to counteract the good that God and His Word can have upon the lives of the peoples of this world. John informed us that Jesus said that this “thief” comes “to steal, and to kill, and to destroy” while He has come that we “may have life, and that (we) may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). In John 10:11 Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.” A “good shepherd” would never stand idly by while a lion attacked his flock and devoured his sheep. As disciples of Christ, we must work at being busier than the disciples of our enemy! When Jesus reminded His followers that they were to be like lights “set on a lampstand” (v. 21), He reminded them that they were to “use” (v. 24) the full measure of the light that was given to them to help those that they encountered along life’s way. Through His Word, God has given us what we need to win the victory over this world and to win many people to Him. If we do not use God’s Word, then we will most surely lose this great battle to which we have been called.

Prayer Emphasis: Share something from God’s Word with someone that you encounter today. **Refuse** to allow Satan and his followers devour the lives of our children, friends, co-workers, and neighbors.

Day 9: Mark 4:26-41

“And with many such parables He spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it.” (Mark 4:33)

“Able”

Our focus verse speaks of Jesus using parables to speak “the word” to the people so that they would be “able to hear it.” The word translated “able” in our focus verse could just as easily have been translated “capable.” Unfortunately, there are many who are simply not able, or capable, of understanding many of the things that God has to say. The apostle Paul informed us that the “natural man” (the unsaved people of this world) “does not receive the things of the Spirit of God” because they are “foolishness” to them because such things are “spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14). As such, much of what God would have us to say to people is often rejected and sometimes ridiculed. We would do well to realize that we often do not fully understand all that God has to say to us because there is a lot of the old, natural man that is alive and thriving within us. Why else would Jesus, when He was “alone” with His disciples, explain “all things” to them (4:34)? The word that is translated “explained” in verse 34 is sometimes translated “expounded.” It comes from a Greek word that means “to unloose” or “to untie.” This word is found here in the Gospel of Mark and then again only in Acts 19:39 where Alexander spoke to the rioting people in Ephesus and asked them to allow a “lawful assembly” to “determine” legally and rightfully what should be done in a very desperate situation. Thank God that we are afforded the opportunity to have “all the facts” so that we can make our own determination as to whether we will follow Christ.

Prayer Emphasis: Praise God for His Word and for His willingness to lovingly lead us to a place where we can understand and obey it! **Read** your Bible daily and **ask** God to “explain” the things that you do not fully understand.

Day 10: Mark 5:1-15

“And when He had come out of the boat, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit,” (Mark 5:2)

Yet Another “Immediately”

It seems that there was no rest for Jesus. After He had calmed a raging sea and brought His disciples safely to land (4:39), He was “immediately” met by “a man with an unclean spirit.” This man sought refuge from those who sought to bind him “with shackles and chains” (v. 4). He was “dwelling among the tombs” (v. 3) because no Jew would follow him there. Jews considered themselves to be unclean if they approached a site where dead bodies were found. This poor man somehow heard that Jesus had arrived in his area and, “when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped Him” (5:6). This poor man’s immediate action brought an immediate reaction from the Lord. When some others (those pig farmers that had just lost their pigs) “came to Jesus” they “saw the one who had been demon-possessed...sitting and clothed and in his right mind” (5:15). How wonderful it was that Jesus was never too tired or too busy to meet the spiritual needs of desperate people. He could help those who had been determined to be helpless. He could help people no matter how desperate their situation might have been. Because of the power of Christ in our lives, there is so much that we could do for people if only we would do it.

Prayer Emphasis: Take the time and **make the effort** to **reach out** to some needy person today. There are many people who have been forsaken by others that desperately need to be forgiven and freed by Christ.

Day 11: Mark 5:16-30

“Now a certain woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years...When she heard about Jesus, she came behind Him in the crowd and touched His garment.” (Mark 5:25 & 27)

Along the Way

Verse 22 of today’s reading introduces us to a man that desperately needed some help that he believed only Jesus could provide. He had a daughter who was “at the point of death,” and he “begged” Jesus to come and heal her (v. 23). Even though verse 21 reveals that Jesus had been ministering to “a great multitude,” Verse 24 reveals that “Jesus went with him” (v.24). As He travelled *along the way* to that man’s home, His path crossed that of a pitiful woman who had been sick for twelve years. She had spent all that she had on physicians but was “no better” for it. In fact, we are told that her condition had continued to “grow worse” despite her many efforts and expenses (v. 26). “When she heard about Jesus,” she made the effort to get to where He was and when she got close enough to Him, she reached out and “touched His garment” (v. 27). In this story we see the word “immediately” again and not just once, but twice. In verse 29, we see that “immediately” after she reached out in faith “the fountain of her blood was dried up.” In verse 30, we see that Jesus was “immediately” aware that someone had touched Him in a powerful, believing way! It is wonderful to see that He who created the world would care so much about a desperate man and his dying daughter. It is even more wonderful to see that Jesus did not consider Himself too busy to help a hurting woman along the way!

Prayer Emphasis: Refuse to allow yourself to be so busy with your church work that you forget to pay attention to those that you might encounter by divine appointment along your way. **Realize** that there is more work to be done in this world than that which we do while we are in church.

Day 12: Mark 5:31-43

“As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, ‘Do not be afraid; only believe.’” (Mark 5:36)

“Only Believe”

As Jesus finished His brief conversation with the newly healed woman some alarming news came “from the ruler of the synagogue’s house” that his daughter was dead (v. 35). That same verse clearly reveals that it was while Jesus “was still speaking” to the woman who had just been healed that the bearers of that sad news had arrived. Jesus did not hesitate for one moment, but “as soon as (He) heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, ‘Do not be afraid; only believe.’” When He arrived at the home where the dead girl had once lived and played, he entered the room where her body was lying and took her by the hand before saying, “Little girl, I say to you, arise” (v. 41). In addition, we should in no way be amazed to read that “immediately the girl arose and walked” (v. 42). Even death must respond immediately to the command of our Lord and Savior! Verse 42 also tells us that those who saw this once dead girl alive and walking about were “overcome with great amazement.” That statement is powerful, but it becomes even more powerful when we consider that this now amazed crowd was the same crowd that had moments before “ridiculed” Jesus when he had told them that, “The child is not dead, but sleeping” (v. 39-40).

Prayer Emphasis: Never underestimate the power of Christ. **Refuse** to allow the unbelieving world to distract you from believing everything that is in His Word! There is much to achieve if we will only **believe!**

Day 13: Mark 6:1-13

“And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing Him were astonished, saying, ‘Where did this Man get these things? And what wisdom is this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands!’” (Mark 6:2)

“Wisdom” and “Works”

Today’s Scriptures continue the great lessons to be found in the marriage of preaching and practicing. Upon His arrival in Nazareth, Jesus entered the synagogue on the Sabbath Day and “began to teach.” I am always amazed at the word “many” in verse 2. How surprising it is to read that not “all” who heard Jesus teach on that day were impressed or “astonished.” The word that is translated “astonished” here in the NKJV is translated “amazed” in other places in the New Testament. Many Christian leaders, pastors, and Christian workers become discouraged today due to a less than overwhelmingly, supportive response to their sermons or lessons. However, if Jesus did not get a 100% approval rating on His teaching and preaching, how foolish we are to think that we will ever do anything that will please everybody! Because of His common upbringing as the supposed son of a lowly carpenter, the religious followers that faithfully gathered at the synagogue wondered at the source of His knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures. However, whatever doubts that they had about His “wisdom” seemed to be erased by His “works.”

Prayer Emphasis: Remind yourself that “works” provide punctuation marks to the “wisdom” that you attempt to share with others about Jesus Christ and salvation. Diligently **seek** to live in such a way that what you practice in your personal walk with Christ supports what you preach to others.

Day 14: Mark 6:14-29

“Immediately she came in with haste to the king and asked, saying, ‘I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter.’” (Mark 6:25)

More About Our “Immediately”

Satan is urgent in his work to destroy the work of Christ, and he employs those who will adopt that same sense of urgency. We see it in two characters from today’s Bible reading and we see it every day in the world in which we live. Twice more we encounter the word “immediately” in Mark. First, we find the daughter of Herodias “immediately” obeying her mother’s evil suggestion that she request the head of John the Baptist from King Herod. The urgency of her efforts is clearly noted in her evil request of the king. We are told that, “Immediately she came in with haste” and stated, “I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter.” The urgency in her statement was, no doubt, instilled in her by her evil mother and the god of this evil world. The word that is translated “with haste” is most often translated “diligence” in some translations. The word that is translated “at once” is sometimes translated “immediately” in other places in the New Testament. The daughter of Herodias was both immediate and intentional in her desire to see the work of God stopped. King Herod was no less diligent to perform his part in this vicious attack against John the Baptist. Even though we are told that he was “exceedingly sorry” (v. 26) he still, “immediately...sent an executioner and commanded” that the head of John the Baptist “be brought” to him (v. 27).

Prayer Emphasis: Be immediate and intentional in your service to Christ and your ministry to the people you are commissioned to evangelize and disciple. **Ask** God to instill a sense of divine urgency in you that will inspire you to act upon what God’s Spirit tells you to do.

Day 15: Mark 6:30-52

“Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught.” (Mark 6:30)

Meeting Spiritual and Physical Needs

After the death of John the Baptist, “the apostles gathered to Jesus” to report to Him “all things...they had done and...taught.” How interesting it is that the Lord listened to the reports of the disciples even though He knew more about them than they knew about themselves. He then took His disciples to “a deserted place” so that they could “rest a while” (v. 31). Luke’s gospel reveals the location of this “deserted place” as being near the “city called Bethsaida” (Luke 9:10). Bethsaida was a small, fishing village located on the Sea of Galilee that is only mentioned in the gospels. The name of the city is a Hebrew name that means “the house of fish.” The remaining verses of today’s reading clearly indicate that there were many “fish” that lived near this city. Even though Jesus and His disciples were “by themselves” in the desert, they were not alone for very long (v. 32). We read that “the multitudes...ran there on foot from all the cities... and came together to Him” (v. 33). The story of the feeding of the five thousand follows and it continues to reveal to us the wonderful marriage of preaching and practice. In verse 34 we read that “He began to teach them many things,” while verse 37 finds Him saying, “give them something to eat.”

Prayer Emphasis: Remember that there is a spiritual witness in helping to meet the physical needs of people around us. There is a lot of “John 3:16” in providing even the most basic needs to those who are suffering and destitute. **Seek** to put your hands where your heart is and do a good deed for someone today.

Day 16: Mark 6:53-7:13

“When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret and anchored there. And when they came out of the boat, immediately the people recognized Him,” (Mark 6:53-54)

“Immediately,” Repeatedly!

We saw the word “immediately” twice more in yesterday’s reading (6:45, 50) and it appeared yet again in today’s verses when we are told that, after Jesus landed in a boat at Gennesaret, “immediately the people recognized Him” and “ran through that whole surrounding region” reaching out to Him by bringing to Him “those who were sick” (6:55). These verses contain a wonderful truth. If people only knew who Jesus is, they would run to Him, reaching out to Him for help and healing. I love the first word of verse 56 where we are told that “wherever He entered, into villages, cities, or the country, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged Him that they might just touch the hem of His garment” for “as many as touched Him were made well.” Jesus never refused to help people in any location or situation. “Wherever” He was, He did “whatever” the people needed Him to do! Obviously, He never had to look far or wait long for an opportunity to help someone! Chapter 7 opens by informing us that the fame of Jesus drew more than just those who desired to be helped by Him by disclosing that “the Pharisees and some of the scribes” came to hinder Him by accusing His followers of not obeying some of the ceremonial rituals prescribed by their interpretation of the law. Jesus made short work of these pious people by calling them “hypocrites” and showing them where their own practices did measure up to their preaching (7:6-13)!

Prayer Emphasis: Evaluate your life to see if you truly practice what you preach. **Avoid** the temptation to hold others to a higher standard than that which you willingly bear. **Live** like a Christian today!

Day 17: Mark 7:14-30

“From there He arose and went to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And He entered a house and wanted no one to know it, but He could not be hidden.” (Mark 7:24)

“He Could Not Be Hidden”

Our focus verse states that, “From there He arose and went to the region of Tyre and Sidon.” The “there” that is mentioned in that verse is “the land of Gennesaret” that was referenced back in Mark 6:53. Upon His arrival in that area, He had obviously desired to have some privacy but only found that His arrival and presence there could not be kept secret. When you know the histories of Tyre and Sidon, you become even more amazed that the people there were so eager to meet Jesus. These two cities were situated closely together and were well established, leading cities in the Phoenician Empire. Sidon was mentioned in the Bible as early as Genesis 10:15. Its people were some of the earliest oppressors of Israel as God’s people sought to inhabit the Promised Land (Judges 10:12). Some of the vilest people ever mentioned in the Bible were associated with Tyre and Sidon. For example, Jezebel was “the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians” who “went and served Baal and worshiped him” (1 Kings 16:31). Nevertheless, even the people that lived in a land marked by such an evil history desired to see and hear from Jesus.

Prayer Emphasis: Avoid thinking that there is anyone that God does not love or for whom Jesus did not die. **Realize** that even the vilest people are hungry for the truth and hungry to be loved. **Share** some Christian kindness with someone for whom Christ died today.

Day 18: Mark 7:31-8:9

“Again, departing from the region of Tyre and Sidon, He came through the midst of the region of Decapolis to the Sea of Galilee.” (Mark 7:31)

Tyre and Sidon

As Jesus departed from the region of Tyre and Sidon and headed back towards the Sea of Galilee, “He came through the midst of the region of Decapolis.” Decapolis is only mentioned three times in the New Testament with two of those mentions coming in these early chapters of Mark. If you recall, after Jesus healed the demon-possessed man who, afterwards, begged Him to allow him to stay with Him and His disciples, Jesus said to him, “Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you.” So, the man “departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him” (5:18-20). A careful look at Mark 5:32 helps us to see that the “they” who “brought to Him one who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech” were some of the citizens of Decapolis. We also see from that verse that these people “begged” Jesus to help this poor man. One must wonder if the people here would have been so eager to bring people to Jesus had the once demon-possessed man been granted his request to travel with Jesus and His disciples. He had obviously obeyed the Lord’s command to give testimony of his own healing to his neighbors, and it sure seems that his witness and testimony had made some impact on their lives. Jesus was able to heal this man and, after the Lord’s touch, “immediately his ears were opened” (7:35). Notice that the people who witnessed this miracle were “astonished beyond measure” (7:37) even though they had heard the earlier reports of the Lord’s healing and saving power from the demoniac.

Prayer Emphasis: Realize that we will never be able to adequately describe all that the Lord has meant to us. **Encourage** others to come and see for themselves! **Invite** someone to attend church this Sunday!

Day 19: Mark 8:10-21

“Now those who had eaten were about four thousand. And He sent them away, immediately got into the boat with His disciples, and came to the region of Dalmanutha.” (Mark 8:9-10)

More About the “Urgency” of Christ

Mark 8 begins with the wonderful story of the feeding of the 4,000 then tells us that, after that great miracle, Jesus “immediately got into the boat with His disciples” so that He could continue to meet others and minister to their many needs. Throughout the Gospel of Mark, we see Christ being busy about His Father’s business. We clearly see Him on the go, preaching the gospel and practicing good works. In the NKJV, verse 11 begins with “then.” Does it read, “Then everyone praised Jesus for all that He did?” Or does it say that “Then the people showed great appreciation to Christ for His grace and mercy?” Perhaps we would expect it to say, “Then all of the people believed that He was Who He said He was.” No. It sadly reports that, “Then the Pharisees came out and began to dispute with Him.” The word that is translated “dispute” in 8:11 is often translated “question” and it means to be “examined by interrogation.” One of the many wonderful things that can be said about Jesus is that He never allowed criticism or opposition to distract Him from His mission. When Jesus told His disciples to “beware of the leaven of the Pharisees,” (v. 15) He was telling them to carefully avoid the false truths and inappropriate attitudes that emanated from those pious men.

Prayer Emphasis: Commit now to being faithful to Christ no matter what opposition may come your way. **Pray** for God to help you to approach people with an attitude of faith and love. **Refuse** to be judgmental and critical of those who are striving to serve the Lord.

Day 20: Mark 8:22-38

“...He asked His disciples, saying to them, ‘Who do men say that I am?’ So they answered, ‘John the Baptist; but some say Elijah; and others one of the prophets.’ He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Peter answered and said to Him, ‘You are the Christ.’” (Mark 8:27b-29)

A Very Good Question

We find this story of Jesus walking on the road to Caesarea Philippi and questioning His disciples about what people were saying about Him in three of the gospels. After Jesus asked His closest companions, “Who do men say that I am?” the disciples answered, “John the Baptist; but some say Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.” You might wonder if John’s name being mentioned first indicates that this was the opinion of the majority of the people. Matthew’s account (Matthew 16:13-20) is the longest and mentions Jeremiah’s name as one that was listed as who Christ might be. When we think of men like John the Baptist or Elijah, we think of fiery prophets who thundered God’s Word to those who heard them preach. When we think of Jeremiah, we think of the man who is often referred to as “the weeping prophet” (See Jeremiah 13:17). I am always amazed at the balance that was exhibited in what Jesus taught and the way that He served others. To those who needed to see the *fire* of God – He clearly displayed it. To those who needed to see the *compassion* of God – He displayed it equally as well. We need to be careful to be balanced in our preaching and teaching today. We must be careful not to be so fiery that we dry up our tears, but we must also be careful not to be so compassionate that we allow our tears to drown out our fire!

Prayer Emphasis: Take a few moments today to **ask** yourself the hard question: “What do people say about me and my personal ministry?” **Seek** to be the kind of person in whom people can clearly see Jesus.

Day 21: Mark 9:1-15

“And He said to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.’” (Mark 9:1)

“Transfigured”

The Lord’s statement to His disciples on this day has created a lot of conversation and confusion among believers. Some say that Jesus was speaking about the kingdom that He will establish after His second coming. That was obviously not the case since none of those to whom He was speaking is still alive today. Others conclude that Jesus was speaking only of John, who, on the Isle of Patmos, would see Jesus in His glorified state. However, the fact that Jesus spoke of “some” (plural) and not just “someone” (singular) who would see Him in His glorified state before they died leads us to believe that He was not talking about the Patmos revelation. Most agree that Jesus was referencing the event that took place some six days later on the Mount of Transfiguration. We are told that “Jesus took Peter, James, and John...up on a high mountain.” Early Christian writers believed that Jesus took this inner circle of disciples up Mount Tabor for this special meeting and revelation. Others believe that these events took place on Mount Hermon because it is the “higher” of the two mountains. However, understanding *what* happened in that private setting is infinitely more important than *where* it happened! The three men that followed Jesus up that mountain saw Him as he was “transfigured” into a glorified state like what John later saw on Patmos (See vs. 2-3).

Prayer Emphasis: **Pray** for the soon return of Christ and the rapture of His church. **Speak** boldly to others about this soon coming event. **Be** a faithful witness for Christ wherever you are.

Day 22: Mark 9:16-32

“Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth.” (Mark 9:20)

More About “Immediately”

Although I did not mention it in yesterday’s devotion, we saw the word “immediately” again when we read Mark 9:15. We see it twice again in today’s assigned verses. We first see this word when we are told that after Jesus and His three disciples came down from the Mount of Transfiguration, they were confronted by a father who had brought his desperately ill son to the disciples for help. The disciples had not been able to do much for the poor boy, so, upon seeing Jesus the father explained his situation to Him. One must wonder who the “they” that are mentioned in verse twenty included. We assume that this word was used to describe the desperate father and the disciples. As they approached Jesus with the boy, “immediately the spirit convulsed him.” We have written about the urgency of Satan and his demonic disciples being exhibited in their efforts to thwart the work of Christ and we see it again in this story. However, in this case, the father of this poor boy was just as urgent in his actions as the evil ones that sought to destroy his son’s life. We are told that “*Immediately* the father of the child cried out and said with tears, ‘Lord, I believe; help my unbelief’” (v. 24). If there ever was a generation of parents who should be acting with great urgency, it should be those of us who are called and blessed to be parents or grandparents today.

Prayer Emphasis: **Pray** for your children on a regular basis and be *immediate* in your efforts to deliver them from the evil influences of our day. **Realize** that it is never too early to begin teaching the Word and ways of God to your children.

Day 23: Mark 9:33-50

“*And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire— where “Their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.”*” (Mark 9:47-48)

A Truth Worth Repeating

Depending on the translation you have, the phrase mentioning “the fire” that “is not quenched” can be found up to five times in today’s Scripture verses. Some translations omit verses 44 and 46 entirely but include verse forty-eight, which reads the same as those two verses. Has it ever occurred to you that almost everything that we know about hell is found in the words of Christ? Paul never wrote about hell. James and Peter mentioned hell only once each. It seems that the only person who truly understands the mystery of hell is the One who was, no doubt, there at the time of its creation. Since Jesus described hell as, “the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels,” (Matthew 25:41), we assume that He was involved in its creation and that He would know what hell was like. In today’s verses, Jesus repeatedly states that hell is a place where “the fire is not quenched.” The word for “fire” there means just that – literal “fire.” Jesus not only described hell as a place of “fire,” He clearly described it as a place of *unquenchable* fire. The word that is translated “not quenched” here is found in only four places in the New Testament with all four being in the gospels. All four places describe the eternal torment that is associated with hell.

Prayer Emphasis: Reject any teaching that hell is only a figure of speech or a state of mind. *Believe* that Jesus preached about hell as a literal place that is filled with literal, eternal torments. **Pray** for those who are lost and on their way to such a place. **Witness** to someone about salvation today.

Day 24: Mark 10:1-16

“*Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them.*” (Mark 10:13)

“Little Children”

Here is something to consider. Do you read anywhere in the New Testament about Jesus refusing to see or help anyone? Then consider this, do you read anywhere in the New Testament about Jesus taking anyone “in His arms” (v. 16) other than the little children? Isn’t the Holy Spirit trying here to press upon our hearts the image of a Savior who loves little children and greatly desires that they be allowed to come to Him? It is as if the Lord wants us to understand how much little children need to be held and loved. In what better place could that happen than the home and the church? When Jesus “took them up in His arms,” He also “laid His hands on them, and blessed them” (v. 16). I can understand the disciples’ desire to be protective of Jesus and his privacy. I am sure that they were trying to act in His best interest when they “rebuked those who brought” the children to Him. We are told that He was “greatly displeased” (v. 14) at His disciples’ attempt to restrain the little children. Jesus said to them, “Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it” (v. 15). He was not saying that the opportunity to be saved is limited to childhood but that everyone who comes to Him for salvation must come with a child-like faith.

Prayer Emphasis: Thank God for our children, our Children’s Department, and its workers. **Pray** specifically for someone who works with our children today and **let them know** that you have prayed for them.

Day 25: Mark 10:17-31

“Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, ‘Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?’” (Mark 10:17)

“As He Was Going”

Today’s verses share another of our Lord’s along the way experiences. Jesus was “on the road” when “one came running” and “knelt before Him” asking Him, “Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” By the way, after yesterday’s lesson against restraining the little children from coming to Him, I do not see any of the disciples trying to stop this young man from approaching Jesus! From our story, we can clearly see that this young man wanted “eternal life,” and he was willing to kneel and humble himself before Jesus to get it. We have been considering some interesting thoughts about our Lord’s earthly ministry over the past few days, but here is something else to consider. Do you know of anyone who came to Jesus and left saddened by what he heard? In this case, the young man left very sad because the Lord brought him to a place of decision when He told him to, “Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven” (v. 21). The Lord’s bold promise was followed by the command, “come, take up the cross, and follow Me” (v. 21). How sobering it must have been for this young man to see that he had obviously grossly overestimated his own spirituality.

Prayer Emphasis: Consider your own life and see if there is anything that you would refuse to relinquish at the Lord’s command. **Humble** yourself before the Lord today and **kneel** before Him when you pray.

Day 26: Mark 10:32-45

“Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, ‘Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask.’” (Mark 10:35)

Some Poor Timing

After His meeting with the rich, young ruler, Jesus was once again “on the road” (v. 32), heading to Jerusalem. Sensing that His disciples were “afraid,” Jesus “took the twelve aside again and began to tell them the things that would happen to Him” (v. 32). He told them that He would be betrayed, condemned, mocked, scourged, spit on, and killed (vs. 33-34). (A comparison of the four gospel accounts reveals that all these things happened in the exact order that He predicted!) How sad it is to see that our focus verses come just after such a sad disclosure was made to the Lord’s closest followers. It was “then,” as He was on His way to Jerusalem to die for the sins of the world, that James and John...came to Him” with a request to “sit, one on (His) right hand and the other on (His) left” (v. 37). This story allows us to see that even those who spent nearly three years walking with Jesus could still not fully understand everything that He had been saying to them. They still believed that Jesus was marching to Jerusalem to establish a kingdom on this earth, and they wanted to make sure that they were going to be prominent citizens in that kingdom. I am sure that, as John stood at the foot of the cross watching Jesus die, he was suddenly aware of how trivial his selfish request must have been, and how inconsiderate he and his brother had been to approach Jesus with that request at such an important time.

Prayer Emphasis: Carefully **weigh** the words that you speak to the Lord in prayer. **Root** out any seeds of selfishness that might come to your mind and flood your heart with matters of your own ambition and greed. **Seek** to live and love as unselfishly as Jesus!

Day 27: Mark 10:46-11:11

“Now they came to Jericho. As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging.” (Mark 10:46)

Blind Bartimaeus

Today’s focus verse provides one of those moments that helps us to understand what John said at the closing of his gospel when he concluded, “There are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that could be written” (John 21:25). Mark 10:46 states that Jesus “came to Jericho.” There is a period there and not a comma. He “came to Jericho.” The next statement is, “As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus...sat by the road begging.” If we were listening to Mark tell his gospel story live, at this point we might bombard him with some very typical questions. “Why did Jesus go to Jericho?” “How long was He there?” We last see Jesus traveling with just His disciples and then entering Jericho only to now read where He left Jericho with a “great multitude” following Him. Because of that, we might ask, “What great miracles did He do there?” Sometimes things just occur to me as I read along in my Bible. Jesus may very well have gone through Jericho for one, very important reason. To meet and heal one blind beggar by the name Bartimaeus!

Prayer Emphasis: **Refuse** to underestimate the great love that Jesus has for you! **Believe** that He loved you enough to leave Heaven and die on a cross in your place! **Thank** Him for some of the great and wonderful change that He has brought into your life.

Day 28: Mark 11:12-26

“...Then Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves.” (Mark 11:15)

“House Cleaning”

When we began reading Mark 11 yesterday, we turned a very important corner in the earthly life of our Lord. From that point forward, Jesus had just one week to live before His foretold crucifixion. When Mark 11:1 states that Jesus and His disciples “drew near to Jerusalem” when they arrived at “the Mount of Olives,” because He was only about two miles outside of Jerusalem. The first thing that Jesus decided to do after being away from His House (the temple) for such a long time was some “house cleaning.” The closing verse of yesterday’s reading found Jesus going “into the temple” and when He had “looked around at all things, as the hour was late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve” (11:11). Today’s reading reports that it was “on the next day” (v. 12) that “they came to Jerusalem” (v. 15), and “Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple” (v. 15). The temple had become a marketplace where people exchanged their money for temple currency and bought some animal to sacrifice. Can you imagine that? People coming to “church” having not done anything all week long to prepare themselves mentally or spiritually to worship God and then expecting to be blessed because they had “done their duty” or “gone through the motions” of making their obligated sacrifice to God? That could never happen today – could it?

Prayer Emphasis: **Invite** the Lord into your “temple” to do a little house cleaning today! **Allow** Him to remove the cobwebs of complacency or the dirt and soot of sin. **Commit** your “house” to Him and never walk another day without dedicating it to Him and His service.

Day 29: Mark 11:27-12:12

“But Jesus answered and said to them, ‘I also will ask you one question; then answer Me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things:’ (Mark 11:29)

“One Question”

Our reading today begins with Jesus coming “again to Jerusalem. And as He was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came to Him” (11:27). They approached Him to question Him. In verse twenty-eight, they asked Him, “By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave you this authority to do these things?” Obviously the “these things” that they were questioning was a reference to the Lord’s cleansing of the temple just the day before. Jesus wisely answered their questions with “one question” of His own. His question was regarding John the Baptist and his authority. Knowing that the people had held John the Baptist in the highest regard and had accepted him as being a messenger from God, the chief priests knew that any negative response about John was going to cast a negative reflection on them. Being the professional “fence straddlers” that they were, they decided to respond to the Lord’s question with a simple, “We do not know” (v. 33). Although others may have been deceived, Jesus knew that the answer they gave was a strategic response that allowed them to avoid answering His “one question” truthfully. They knew the real answer, but they were really choosing not to answer His question at all. That is why He responded, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things” (11:33).

Prayer Emphasis: **Allow** the Lord to have real authority and lordship in your life. **Seek** to become more surrendered to Him on a day-by-day basis. **Be** ready to answer those who have questions about Jesus, Who He really is, and what He can do for them.

Day 30: Mark 12:13-27

“Then some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him...” (Mark 12:18)

Another Meaning for “One-World”

We often hear or read about the coming “one-world” government or its “one-world” currency. The implication is that there is someday going to be a great unification of all the peoples of the world under a “one-world” ruler. What the Sadducees believed provides a different meaning to the term, “one-world.” They were known for their belief that “there is no resurrection” (v. 18) and, therefore, that there was no eternal, spiritual world after death. We do not know much about all their beliefs. We do know that they were Jewish people who believed that life was limited to a one-time human experience. Their question about the woman who eventually was married to seven different brothers was asked for one purpose, that being to ridicule the idea of the resurrection. In verse twenty-four, Jesus said that they were “mistaken.” The word that is translated “mistaken” there is most often translated “deceived” in other places in the Bible. What was the cause of this great “mistake” or “deception”? The answer is found in the words of our Lord when He that it was “because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God” (v. 24). Because they did not know the Scriptures, they did not know that God has the power to raise the dead and give new life. I am sure that these men could quote much of the Bible to you, but, sad for them, the Scriptures were something that they had in their heads and not in their hearts.

Prayer Emphasis: **Remain** faithful to your daily Bible reading schedule. Make your time with God and His Word a priority in your life. **Share** something that you have read recently with someone you meet today.

Day 31: Mark 12:28-44

“Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans.” (Mark 12:42)

Two Small Coins

I am often amazed to read the Bible and see Jesus doing unimaginable things. Today we see Him peeking during the offering. The Bible clearly says that He positioned Himself “opposite,” or “across from” the treasury (the large containers into which the people put their offering money) and “saw how” the people gave their money. The Scripture states that He saw not only “how” the people gave but “how much” the people gave (v. 41). We are told that He noticed that “many who were rich put in much” (v. 41). Verse 42 states, “Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites.” Two mites are not very much money. Together those two little coins were worth less than a penny. After seeing this poor woman’s gift, Jesus “called His disciples to Himself and said to them... ‘this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury’” (v. 43). He didn’t say that she had given more than anyone else had given. He said that she had given more than everyone else *combined*! What did Jesus notice most about this woman and her generosity? He noticed that she had “put in all that she had, her whole livelihood” (v. 44). From this short, simple story, we learn that Jesus measures gifts not by how much we have but by how much we have left!

Prayer Emphasis: **Strive** to be a faithful and generous giver! **Trust** God enough to share with others and to **invest** in His Kingdom work. **Believe** that God has the right to observe “how” and “how much” we are willing to give to help support His church and its ministries.

Day 32: Mark 13:1-18

“Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, ‘Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!’” (Mark 13:1)

The Temple

Just a few days ago, I mentioned that Mark 11 “marked” a very important time in the life of Jesus. Everything that is recorded after the beginning of that chapter transpired in the last week of His physical life on earth. This would mean that the chapters that follow will contain many “last” things for Jesus. For instance, “as He went out of the temple” (v.1) in today’s reading He was probably doing so for the last time in His earthly life. If He ever went to His Father’s house again as a man, that visit was not recorded in any of the gospels. We may better understand why “one of His disciples” would comment on the beauty and immensity of the temple when we consider that it was very new then and parts of it were still in the process of being completed. This new temple was being built by Herod and it was the third temple that had been built on that same site in Jerusalem. However, this temple was much larger than either of the others. Its grounds covered about one-sixth of the entire city and it, with all its buildings and grounds, would have included an area as large as thirty-five acres. The temple structure was so large that some of the stones were twelve feet high, eighteen feet wide, and forty feet long! Our Lord’s prophecy of the destruction of this magnificent building was fulfilled less than forty years after His death. It had not even been fully completed before it was utterly destroyed. One would have to wonder what was going through His mind when Jesus “sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple” (v. 3) and looked at it for what had to have been one of His last times.

Prayer Emphasis: **Remind** yourself that any Sunday could be your last Sunday to serve the Lord. **Speak** to people as though every conversation could be your last. **Live** as if each day could be your last day.

Day 33: Mark 13:19-37

“It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch.” (Mark 13:34)

The Last Parable

Although the Parable of the Watchmen is brief, it is the last of our Lord’s parables that is recorded in the Gospel of Mark. The storyline of this important parable focuses on the anticipated return of Christ. In this parable Jesus compares His soon departure to “a man going to a far country.” In those days there was no certainty as to the time that it would take to make such a long journey so there could be no certainty as to the actual time of someone’s return. A wise householder would give authority to his servants so that the work could continue even in his absence. He would then appoint one person to be the “doorkeeper” (v.34) who would “watch” or oversee the work that was to be done. Different translations use different English words to describe this person who is referred to as a “doorkeeper” in the NKJV. Though the doorkeeper bore the main responsibility to watch in this parable, Jesus concluded this story with an emphasis on the fact that all Christians are to have the attitude of watchmen in these last days. We are to be like people who are waiting on the final event to transpire. We are to live every day as if we are at the last ten seconds of a final countdown because Christ’s return to rapture the church is imminent! We can rest assured that Christ had every believer of every generation in mind when He said, “what I say to you, I say to all: Watch” (v. 37)!

Prayer Emphasis: Remember these three important responsibilities for the believer: We are to *wait* patiently, *watch* perceptively and *work* persistently! **Live** as if you are on duty today! Amen!

Day 34: Mark 14:1-16

“...in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured it on His head.” (Mark 14:3)

A Touching Story

The story recorded in today’s verses has always been special to me. When you put it all into perspective, you must see that the act of kindness that this woman showed our Lord may have been the last kind thing ever done for Him in His earthly life. I also appreciate this story because it helps me to remember that those who we might least expect are those who are the most aware of the times and the necessity of putting Christ first. The dinner described here was held at the home of “Simon the leper.” However, we must conclude that this man might now be known as “Simon the former leper” since no one would have been willing to sit at the dinner table with a leper. If this dinner is the same dinner mentioned in John 12, then we know that Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were among those who attended. The point that I am making is that many who shared this meal with Jesus were, no doubt, greatly indebted to Him! You would think that Simon or Lazarus, or even one of the sisters of Lazarus, would have been the one to offer some type of gesture of appreciation to our Lord. Simon’s gratitude was surely shown in the giving of the dinner. The gratitude of Lazarus and his sisters may have been shown in their taking time to attend. However, the gratitude of one special lady was to become a “memorial” for all of us (v. 9).

Prayer Emphasis: Refuse to judge others or minimize their importance in the service of our Lord. **Resist** the temptation to be critical of others and politely excuse yourself from such conversations. **Show** some special appreciation to Christ for all that He has done for you.

Day 35: Mark 14:17-34

“Then He said to them, ‘My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch.’”
(Mark 14:34)

“Watch”

Since everything that is recorded from Mark 11 forward happened during the last week of our Lord’s earthly life, we must conclude that this prayerful night in Gethsemane came only a day or two after the Lord’s teaching about “watching” that we read about in chapter 13. Just as He had done when He went up on the mountain to be transfigured, Jesus took Peter, James, and John with Him when He went deeper into the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. He said to eight of His disciples, “Sit here while I pray” (v. 32). Then He said to His inner circle, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch.” Whether it was to “sit here” (as it was with the eight) or to “stay here” (as it was with Peter, James, and John), every one of the remaining disciples were given a place to be and something to do. We would do well to see that prayer was to be an important part of the final assignment that was given to the disciples during the final hours of our Lord’s life. To the final three, He gave the dual command to “stay” and “watch” (v. 34). Soon He was going to face great suffering in His body as He was crucified on the cross. He was now facing great suffering in His spirit as He realized that the moment for which He had come was now drawing near.

Prayer Emphasis: Find your place in God’s Kingdom work and faithfully fill it. **Refuse** to see yourself as being insignificant to God’s work or plan. **Get involved** in some area of ministry within the church.

Day 36: Mark 14:35-52

“He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him.” (Mark 14:35)

“A Little Farther”

After Jesus stationed Peter, James, and John in a safe place and requested them to pray, He “went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed” asking God that, “if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him.” Jesus was not asking to be spared from the cross. The hour of the cross was His purpose for coming to this world. Jesus was now looking into the dark night of sin – something which He had never allowed to enter His life – and dreading the wretchedness of that which would momentarily separate Him from His Father. As He prayed, He used the Aramaic term “Abba” for Father. This is the first time that this word is found in the Bible and the only time that it is found in the gospels. As Jesus looked into the horror of the sin that He was to bear for all humankind, He used a very intimate term for Father as He appealed for strength to carry on. There was one thing Jesus wanted above all else and that was for the will of His Father to be done. When this time of agony and grief was over, Jesus returned to gather His sleeping disciples and to get on with His Father’s business. “The hour had come” (v. 41), Judas and the armed soldiers were approaching. Verse 43 states that, “immediately” Judas and his evil entourage appeared and that, “immediately” the traitor went up to Jesus and identified Him with a kiss. Now the Son of God was ready to march forward and face death once and for all.

Prayer Emphasis: Refuse to allow anyone to convince you that Jesus was asking God to spare Him from the cross. **Realize** that it was not the cross, but the sin that Jesus dreaded. **Note** the peace that entered the heart and soul of Jesus as He prayed. **Believe** that prayer can do the same for you.

Day 37: Mark 14:53-72

“Then he began to curse and swear, ‘I do not know this Man of whom you speak!’” (Mark 14:71)

Peter’s Denial

How difficult it is to imagine and visualize the moments that are described for us in today’s Scriptures. In them we see the man who bravely drew his sword and fought to protect Jesus in the garden now cowering at the accusation of a little girl and swearing that he did not even know Jesus! We would do well to delay any final judgment on Peter until we have lived out our own lives and faced our own temptations to deny Him when the going gets rough. It is interesting to me that Peter was always the one to speak up and have something to say in some critical times and places. In times where others were silent, Peter often offered his opinion or made some comment. Here, in these final hours of opportunity to take a stand for Jesus, it was his speech that partly betrayed him. We will all have our moments when we should speak up and take a clear stand for Christ. As sad as it is to admit, we will all fail Him in some of those moments. If we are honest, we will all have to admit that it was our cowardice that kept us from speaking up when we had the opportunity to do so. Let us never forget that the Lord did not hold this moment of cowardice against Peter – and that He lovingly forgave him and put him right back to work. We should expect no less from such a loving God when we must face our own failures and seek His forgiveness.

Prayer Emphasis: Pray for the courage to acknowledge and face your own cowardice. **Recognize** it for what it is and **confess** it as a sin that can bring great damage to our walk and testimony. **Refuse** to allow Satan to convince you that such moments permanently disqualify you from service to Christ!

Day 38: Mark 15:1-20

“Immediately, in the morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council; and they bound Jesus, led Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate.” (Mark 15:1)

One Final, “Immediate” Action

As if the Holy Spirit wanted us to see one final example of the urgency with which the enemies of Christ operate, we see the word “immediately” a final time in the first verse of this chapter when we read, “Immediately, *in the morning*, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and the scribes and *the whole council*.” I emphasized the two phrases, “in the morning” and “the whole council” for an important purpose. The chief priests had to meet with such “immediacy” and “in the morning” because they had, against their own laws, met and condemned Jesus at night. The Sanhedrin followed strict laws and policies. Their own law forbade them to meet at night. They believed that justice had to be carried out by the light of day. They had made an exception to their own laws when they met in the night and ordered the arrest of Jesus. Now they had to meet quickly and cover their own dark path. The law of the Sanhedrin was also violated when they met without all its members being in attendance. Notice that it was only “in the morning,” and after the fact, that the chief priests met with “the whole council.” The reason that they had to send Him to Pilate was because the Sanhedrin could condemn a person to death, but they did not have the authority to carry out the execution. Only Rome’s designated representatives had the authority to execute anyone.

Prayer Emphasis: Refuse to allow the enemies’ armies to outwork you! **Commit** yourself to do whatever it takes to ensure that the gospel is faithfully and freely proclaimed until Jesus sounds that final trumpet blast and the church is raptured from this world. **Be** prepared to practice what you have preached!

Day 39: Mark 15:21-47

“Now it was the third hour, and they crucified Him.” (Mark 15:25)

On the Clock

Since Jesus lived His entire life being “about His Father’s business,” it is not a far stretch at all to say that He was “on the clock” and very much busy at His work while He was dying on the cross. Mark reported that it was “the third hour” (about nine o’clock in the morning) when “they crucified Him.” Those who passed by the site of the cross mocked Jesus. The chief priest mocked Him and came to at least one false conclusion. They said, “He saved others” but “Himself He cannot save” (v. 31). They falsely concluded that Jesus *could* not save Himself when the truth was that He only remained on the cross because He *would* not save Himself! It is only by a divine miracle that, “when the sixth hour had come there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour” (v. 33). Since the Jewish day began at 6:00 am – the “sixth hour” would have been at noon time when the Sun is at its highest and the world is most exposed to its brilliant light. One can only imagine how the people involved in the trial and mockery of Jesus must have felt when the darkness engulfed them. Then, “at the ninth hour” (v. 34), Jesus spoke again before He “cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last” (v. 37). One of the closing verses of chapter 15 reveals why the Sanhedrin did not meet with the whole council on the night that they arrested and tried Jesus. It is apparent that “Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member,” (v. 43) might have never agreed to the actions that were taken against Jesus in that impromptu and illegal night meeting.

Prayer Emphasis: Live every day “on the clock” and ready to go to work for Jesus. **Create** a daily routine that puts Christ first and keeps Him there on a permanent basis. **Be** an “on time” servant of the Lord!

Day 40: Mark 16:1-20

“Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons...After that, He appeared in another form to two of them as they walked and went into the country.” (Mark 16:9 & 12)

Busier Than Ever

We are told that Jesus “rose early on the first day of the week” (Sunday) and that “He appeared first to Mary Magdalene” (v. 9). Verse 12 adds, “After that, He appeared in another form to two of them (disciples) as they walked and went into the country.” Then we read, “Later He appeared to the eleven” (v. 14). Later, Paul confidently reported to us that, “He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once” (1 Corinthians 15:6). Even after what might have been considered His greatest work had been completed, Jesus lived as though His work had just begun! After the resurrection, He was still busy! When Jesus took the form of a man, He placed on Himself certain limitations. It was those limitations that forced Him to walk wherever He went and then allowed Him to ultimately die on the cross. Now, after the resurrection and in His spiritual body, He could be busier than ever! I am convinced that He is at His busiest today as He accompanies all of those who choose to heed His great commission to “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (v. 15).

Prayer Emphasis: Thank God for His presence as we go about our **Kingdom Practice!** Pray for Christians everywhere and **ask** God to strengthen them in their work for Him. Contact us at gary@seminolebc.com or 850-562-8069 if we can pray for you or help you in any way.