

MARK

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Mark chapter 3 as we continue our study through the Word of God. As Jesus begins His ministry the religious leaders are still coming after Him to discredit Him among the people.

And in our last study we saw that they came after Jesus with issues that were related to the Law. Now please understand, the Law is not bad, it is good. That is not the issue. The issue is that these religious leaders took it to unbiblical conclusions. They were unloving, unhealthy in the way they presented these things and they didn't seem to care.

And the bigger issue is that the Law can't save us, it can only show us how far short we come in keeping it. The Law drives us to Jesus, the One who can save us. It is not that we should then ignore the Law, we strive to keep it, but not for salvation but really for identification with our Lord.

And these religious leaders are not done in their confronting Jesus as we will see this evening. We are going to start out by looking at this controversy over healing on the Sabbath. With that as our background, let's begin reading in Mark chapter 3, beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

MARK 3**VERSES 1-6**

As I read what is taking place here I get the idea that these Pharisees set this man with the withered hand up in the Synagogue because they knew Jesus was going to be there as well. Also, the reason I can say that this was all a set-up by the religious leaders is that anyone with a birth defect or physical impairment was not allowed into the Synagogue. They saw this as a judgment of God on a person's life making them unclean. What a sad picture of God and how uncompassionate they were.

How did they know Jesus would heal Him? Because the religious leaders knew the heart of Jesus, they watched Him enough, and they knew He would have compassion upon this man and heal him.

And here comes Jesus, He sees this man in need, and calls for him to come forward, putting him on display for all to see the healing power of God. For these religious leaders, they must have been excited, their plan was working perfectly and before long they will be able to accuse Jesus of breaking the Law!

Now before Jesus heals this man, He asks these religious leaders a great question. He asks them, “**... ‘Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?’**” And these religious leaders were silent. Their silence spoke of the hardness of their hearts. They did not care about the condition of this man, they only wanted to discredit Jesus among the people. Of course it is lawful, it is good to do good any time, to save a life!

But, according to their Sabbath traditions, and this is a tradition not the Word of God, if you cut your finger you could stop the bleeding. But you couldn't put ointment on it to help heal it. How sad! And as we see here, it was much worse.

And if you think about what they end up doing, how they might destroy Jesus on the Sabbath, they saw nothing wrong with that even though they were plotting to kill and not save a life!

The point is you can justify any action, even murder as they will do shortly, when you place yourself in that kind of self-righteous position. Thus, to this question they kept silent, they knew what they were doing was wrong, but it didn't stop them!

And as Jesus sees their response, He is angry with them. This anger was momentary while the grief over their hard-heartedness was continual. How blind they were to the things of God and yet, they were supposed to help bring people to God.

And I believe Jesus responds the same today, angry for a moment as He sees the narrow-mindedness of man, but continually grieved over their hard-heartedness, their refusal to see the things of God.

So as these Pharisees sat silent, notice what Jesus does here with this man. He calls for him to stretch out his crippled hand. That seems like a cruel joke, doesn't it? It would be like saying to a blind person "Come over here and look at this!" Or a deaf person "Did you hear that?" Or to a person who was crippled "Quick, run over here!" that is just cruel.

Understand this, God will never ask you to do anything He hasn't equipped you for, it is a step of faith on our part, like this man took. What is God calling you to do? Maybe you are afraid to take that step, unsure of what to do. If God has called you to take that step of faith, that's your part. God's part is equipping you for the work He has called you to do. In other words, ***“Stretch out your hand!”***

As this man is healed these religious leaders should have been rejoicing, but instead they went away to plot the murder of Jesus, which of course was against the Law they were so proud of keeping as I have said.

And it is interesting to see who these guys get to help them plot the murder of Jesus, the Herodians. This group of people felt that since Rome was in charge, you might as well live like the Romans do. They were more of a political group while the Pharisees were a religious group. These two groups of people hated each other and yet, when it came to this cause of Jesus and getting rid of Him, they were willing to work together for this cause.

VERSES 7-12

Keep in mind that the religious leaders were not happy with the popularity of Jesus and yet, the more they tried to put Him down, the more the crowds were following after Jesus. Here we see Jesus heading to the Sea of Galilee and as He does multitudes are coming to Him to be healed.

We see crowds from Idumea in the south, to Tyre and Sidon in the north and even east of the Jordan River and Judea. Again, this did not go well with the religious leaders, the fame of Jesus grew and their popularity was decreasing.

And as we read this we may think it is wonderful to see the crowds follow after Jesus but keep in mind the reason they were following Him. It was because of all that He was doing and thus, they came so He can do something for them. They were not interested in what He was teaching, who He is and I will tell you this. If that is the reason you are following Jesus, to get something from Him, you will not follow Him for long and we do see that with the crowds of people who praised Him and then said, "***Crucify Him!***"

Mark is the only one who speaks of this, of the crowds crushing Jesus and since Mark is writing from what Peter said, it may be Peter's boat that will be used if the crowds get too dangerous, it was a way of escape so no one would get hurt.

Now let me also say this. In a world that was hopeless back then, in a world that is hopeless today, look at the hope that Jesus gave to these hopeless people who were in bondage to their problem.

Can you imagine as the first few screamed out, "***I'm healed!***" I am sure that just caused the crowd to push towards Jesus so they could touch Him. Too often we prevent people from coming to Jesus because we say you have to look a certain way or dress a certain way. These people came to Jesus just as they were and Jesus healed them! Let's not forget that.

But also remember that the main purpose for Jesus coming was not to heal physically, those miracles authenticated His ministry, who He is, the fulfillment of what the Old Testament prophets spoke of regarding the Messiah. His primary purpose for coming was to heal people spiritually, that was the Good News, the Gospel message. He pointed people back to God and the door to get there was through Him, He is the Door!

And when Jesus delivered those with an unclean spirit, as soon as these demons saw Jesus they fell down before Him and cried out, **“You are the Son of God.”** I find that interesting that the demons know who Jesus is but the religious leaders in Jesus’ day and today many refuse to acknowledge that fact. He is Lord of all and you can bow the knee now or you will bow before Him one day!

Now why didn’t Jesus allow these demons to proclaim who He is? Because He does not need demons to proclaim who He is. Keep in mind that they are lying spirits and thus, how do you know when they are telling the truth? You don’t and thus, God’s Word is truth and we will rest in that. Demons will destroy, kill faith, Jesus will help your faith to grow!

VERSES 13-19

Think about how busy Jesus was, people pressing in on every side it seemed and notice what Jesus does, He goes to pray. In Luke 6:12 we are told of this time, **“Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.”**

When things get overwhelming, when you feel pressed in upon, when you feel pressured, what do you do? We see Jesus go to pray to the Father to get refreshed and to be directed. You see, as He finished, the Father spoke to Him regarding the 12 men who He was to pour his life into, men who were to carry on the ministry after He was gone.

And of these men, we are told that they were His disciples, which means a *“learner.”* But now these 12 are called apostles or *“sent ones.”* These 12 were to be taught by Jesus, to go out and share the light of God to a world in darkness, and to heal those who were sick, to be empowered by God to heal people’s lives.

Now I don't know about you, but when I look at these guys they are not really the guys I would pick on my team. These would be the guys nobody wants. They were confused, arguing over who would be the greatest in the Kingdom, they lacked faith and yet Jesus spent all night praying who to pick and this is who the Father gave Him.

Do you think Jesus thought about going back to the Father and saying, "Are you sure these 12 men? Do you have anyone else?" Not at all! You see, Jesus poured His life into these men, not only by what He said but how He lived, day after day all the way to the cross.

And yet, with all their frailties, with all their weaknesses, God was able to use them to spread the gospel and train up others to do so. And within 30 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus the Gospel was spread throughout the whole known world! (Colossians 1:6).

That should be an encouragement to us, for God uses the weak, the foolish to do His work, for the power is of God and not us! We are told by Paul "**Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God - and righteousness and sanctification and redemption - that, as it is written, 'He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.'**" I Corinthians 1:25-31.

Thank you Jesus for using someone like me! And I am sure you can say the same thing.

Now what about Judas, did Jesus make a mistake? Not at all. There was a man who asked a theologian, “Why did Jesus choose Judas Iscariot to be his disciple?” The teacher replied, “I don’t know, but I have an even harder question: Why did Jesus choose me?” How true!

I think Jesus chose Judas to show that everyone has an opportunity to be saved, the love of God is there for them to receive but it is their choice. And for Judas, he rejected the Lord and in the end, died apart from the Lord. And that love, that salvation is extended to all today as well!

Now after Jesus picks His 12 men He preaches His famous Sermon on the Mount, which is recorded for us in Matthew chapters 5-7. Remember, Mark is speaking to persecuted Roman Christians, so Mark presents to them Jesus, who, under pressure still served the Lord. He was trying to encourage them. So Mark picks up the story as Jesus returns to Capernaum.

VERSES 20-21

As much as the Jewish religious leaders tried to prevent this, the crowds kept coming to Jesus, so much so that Jesus did not have time to eat. And as all this is going on, “**His own people**” or his relatives, not necessarily his close family at this time, come to Jesus to bring Him home for they thought He had lost His mind, He was crazy.

Now keep in mind that they did this out of love for it would have been easier to just leave Him alone, ignore Him. But they didn’t have much success for Jesus is still ministering and in verse 31 we see His brothers and mother come to try and bring Him home, maybe thinking they would have more of an influence upon Him. But Jesus did not lose control. He knew exactly what He was doing. And He was focused on His mission, nothing was going to stop Him!

Remember when Jesus met that woman by the well in Samaria, as she leaves to go to tell others about Jesus, His men return and in John 4:31-34 we are told, **“In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, ‘Rabbi, eat.’ But He said to them, ‘I have food to eat of which you do not know.’ Therefore the disciples said to one another, ‘Has anyone brought Him anything to eat?’ Jesus said to them, ‘My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.’”**

It is amazing that as you are serving the Lord there will be those who are like, “He is doing too much. He needs to take time to relax!” I can honestly tell you that I am refreshed and energized you might say as I serve the Lord. I want to serve the Lord, do His will and I want to finish the work that He has for me and I am sure you do as well!

VERSES 22-30

Here come the religious leaders once again and they came to find fault in Jesus. His following was growing, theirs was decreasing and they wanted to put Jesus out of business. Now what these religious leaders said regarding Jesus was based upon Jesus healing a demon-possessed, blind and mute man. Instead of rejoicing over this, they have come to find fault in His actions, to discredit Him in front of His followers. It was an 80 mile or so journey from Jerusalem, but they were willing to make it to bring Jesus down!

We see this recorded for us in Matthew chapter 12 as the multitudes were amazed and said “**Could this be the Son of David?**” Matthew 12:23. But the religious leaders jump in trying to stop the momentum of Jesus, not being able to deny the miracle, they said this was done by the power of the Devil! They were saying that He is not the Son of David but the son of the Devil! And these religious leaders were saying this over and over again, trying to sway the people into their court and away from Jesus!

Now Jesus is not going to let them get away with this but is going to make five points regarding the statements they made to show how foolish their thinking was.

First of all, how can Satan cast out Satan? That makes no sense and yet, that is what they were saying. Thus, the logical conclusion is that Jesus healed this man by the power of God and not by Satan. That only makes sense.

Secondly, if a kingdom is divided against itself, then that kingdom will not stand, to divide a kingdom would make no sense. Thus, to have Satan heal this man would mean he is fighting against himself. Again, that is foolish. The only thing that truly makes sense is Jesus healed this man by the power of God.

The third point that Jesus makes is that if a house is divided against itself, that house will not stand. You see, a family at war with each other will be divided, weakened, it can't stand strong. Thus, for Satan to fight against His own forces would be self-defeating. Again, this was done by the power of God.

The fourth point that Jesus makes to these religious leaders is this, if Satan rises up against himself, divides himself, he can't stand, he will have an end. Again, it makes no sense for Satan to defeat himself. Thus, the only logical conclusion is God did this miracle.

And the fifth point is found in Matthew 12:27 where Jesus says that if He casts out demons by Beelzebub, then by whom do your sons cast them out? A good question!

You see, in Israel there were Jewish exorcists who tried to cast out demons from people, with little success. We read of some of these guys in Acts 19:13-16, **“Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, ‘We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches.’ Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, ‘Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?’ Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.”**

The point that Jesus is making is this. If their own people are casting out demons, is that also by the power of the Devil? You see, that is what they accused Jesus of. And Jesus nailed these guys, they could say nothing for their accusation against Jesus was destroyed!

We see Jesus illustrate this point in verse 27. Here we see that the strong man is Satan. His house is this world. And he places man in bondage. That truly is a hopeless situation until the Deliverer, Jesus Christ comes on the scene! You see, we can break free from those things that have us bound, not by our might or power, but God’s. He has set us free! But, too often we let the enemy bind us again. Give it to God and walk in the liberty that Christ has given to us.

Once again the religious leaders are silent, they had nothing to say and really, what could they say to the words that Jesus spoke? He nailed them! Now understand this, the truth was right before them, but they refused to see it, they rejected it. And because of the hardness of their hearts, Jesus is going to warn them that they are getting close to committing blasphemy of the Holy Spirit!

Steadman makes a good point in regards to this as he wrote, “Notice that these men had not yet committed the unpardonable sin . . . Otherwise Jesus would never have warned them. By his own words, there is no use warning a man who has committed the unpardonable sin; he is beyond help.”

Now, what is blasphemy of the Holy Spirit? It is not lying, stealing, cheating, taking the Lord’s name in vain or even murder. You see, all those sins can be forgiven. The blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is a process of denying the works of the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit has come to testify of Jesus, to bring us to Jesus. In John 15:26 we read **“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.”**

Thus, if you continually reject the Holy Spirit’s call for you to turn to Jesus, there comes a point where your heart can become so hard that you are eternally separated from God. There is no salvation for you, you have passed the point of no return!

Keep in mind that at this point Jesus is warning those religious leaders that they are very close to committing blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. They had hardened their hearts so much to the things of God they were getting to the point where they could no longer see.

In fact, in John chapter 12 it seems that they passed the point of no return, they could no longer be saved. In John chapter 12, beginning in verse 37 we read **“But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him, that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke: ‘Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?’ Therefore they could not believe . . .”** John 12:37-39a.

Like then, many today do the same thing and what a sad place to be in. American's have heard about the Lord so much that many times it seems that people are just cold to the things of God, they have heard it all before. I pray that America as a nation is not past the point of no return! And we don't know that point in a person's life, only God does, but don't take the chance, give Him your life before you pass the point of no return! Today is the day of salvation, don't pass it up!

VERSES 31-35

Keep in mind that crowds of people have come to hear Jesus, to be touched by Jesus. And as Jesus is teaching inside a home that is packed with people, His brothers and His mother come to rescue Him, to bring Him home, to stop the madness! Some texts also speak of the sisters of Jesus coming as well.

You see, His family did not fully recognize who Jesus was until after His death and resurrection. Then, His half-brother James became the head of the church in Jerusalem and wrote the epistle of James. His other half-brother that we know of was Jude who wrote the book of Jude. So His family did turn to Him but at this point they thought He was nuts!

Now instead of going out to greet His family, which was the polite thing to do, the common thing to do, He looks at all the people and says they are his family. What is that all about?

He is speaking of the bond that occurs in the family of God, which is stronger many times than family relations. You see, there is divisions within families many times when someone comes to Jesus. On the other hand, Jesus is the one who unites us together as brothers and sisters in the Lord. How are we adopted or placed into this family of God? **“For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother.”** Mark 3:35. Obedience is a conformation of your faith. You have received Jesus as Lord and Savior and thus, your actions reflect that relationship with Him.

Now the religious leaders, because of their rejection of Jesus were close to committing blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. But the people, they were given an invitation to come to Him, to receive Jesus. The choice is there for man to come but God will not force you to come. It is your choice, your free will.

One more point here before we move on and that is Mary, the mother of Jesus. Notice that Jesus did not elevate her to some high position, not at all. We know that she was a sinner like everyone else and in need of a Savior for the forgiveness of her sins. Please don't let tradition, church doctrine, cause you to believe in something that the Scriptures are silent upon. Mary is not co-redeemer, not at all. Jesus is the only Mediator between God and man, period!

MARK 4**VERSES 1-9**

Again we see the crowds all around Jesus and as they gathered around Him we see that Jesus got into a boat and began to speak to the people about the things of God. Now the crowds came to Jesus for a variety of reasons. Some came to hear the words of God. Others came to receive physical healing. And still others came to try and find a way to bring Jesus down, destroy His ministry, even put Him to death! And I'm sure there were a variety of other reasons people came to Jesus, but Jesus was concerned about one issue, He wanted their hearts, He came to save that which was lost!

As you read this you can easily see that people are no different today. There are those who come to church that are interested in the Word of God, they want to learn and grow. Then there are those that are just plain curious. And some who can care less. And a variety of other reasons. And the point is this, the Word of God still needs to go forth as Jesus shows us, if they want to hear it or not. And then it is up to each person how they will receive it, and we see that in the Parable of the Sower.

As we have seen in our study of Matthew, a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. Jesus taught openly the things of God and many refused to hear. Now He is going to teach in parables and those who have ears to hear will understand the message and for those who reject Him, they will not understand that message.

And as Jesus begins to teach we see that He is painting a picture for them to understand His teaching. In fact, as He spoke of the farmer sowing the seed, there might have been some farmers out in their fields sowing their seeds.

And we see here Jesus is speaking of four different types of soil that this seed fell upon and what happened to this seed as it tried to grow in these soils. And as you look at this, only one of the soils that the seed fell upon actually produced fruit. What is Jesus speaking of? We don't have to guess for in a few verses He will tell us what this parable is all about. But keep in mind that the seed is the Word of God and the soil is a person's heart!

VERSES 10-12

Now most of the crowds were gone. With Jesus now were the 12 apostles and some other believers. They heard what Jesus said but they don't understand it. So Jesus will explain it to them.

But before He explains this parable to them He tells them why He is teaching them in parables. And in this we see the contrast of two kinds of people. Those who are hungry to know God and His Word, and those who aren't.

You see, to understand these parables is not a matter of intelligence, but a matter of the heart. If you reject God these parables are meaningless to you. Jesus isn't trying to hide these things from people, but since they refused to receive the truth, they won't understand it and they will die in their sins.

Now Jesus will explain what this parable is all about.

VERSES 13-20

As I read this Jesus seems to be saying that in understanding this parable it will unlock the other parables He will speak. You see, the symbols used in this parable will be consistent in the other parables. It is kind of the key for the other parables. For instance, the seed is the Word of God and that should flow through the other parables.

The sower is Jesus and I also think it speaks of anyone who sows the seeds of God's Word, you and me. The thing we need to remember is the seed is of equal quality. The potential for growth, for fruit is the same in every seed. So the issue is not the seed but the soil the seed falls upon, which represents people's hearts and how they receive the Word of God.

So first of all we see that the seed falls on the wayside. And the wayside was a path that had its soil so pounded down that nothing could penetrate it. So as the seed was sown, it would not penetrate the soil and thus, the birds of the air came and snatched the seeds away.

The idea here is for those who have heard the Word of God over and over again and they keep rejecting it, their hearts will get harder and harder towards God. The Word of God can't penetrate their hearts and the birds or demonic forces come and snatch away the truths of God. These people are not saved, they bear no fruit in their lives.

Also keep in mind that the birds represent the evil one or demons.

The next type of soil is the rocky soil or stony ground. Keep in mind that the land of Israel is very rocky and there is a limestone shelf under the soil that at times would come up very close to the surface. Thus, as the seed was sown and began to grow it could not sink its roots deep down into the soil, and when the sun would come up it would kill these plants for they had a shallow root system, there was no depth to it.

And this is a picture of a person who hears the Words of God, it looks like they are growing, but as soon as the heat of tribulation or persecution comes their way, they wither and fall away. All their growth was superficial, all emotional, they were not saved for they produced no fruit.

The third type of soil is one that is filled with thorns. You see, intermixed with the seeds are thorns and weeds. Thus, as the seeds began to grow, so will these weeds and they will eventually choke out the seeds, the plants.

The first thing that chokes out the work of God in a person's life is the cares of this world. There is a competition here between the Word of God and the work of God and the things of this world. These things can consume your life so much that the Word of God can't grow in your life. To change that, Jesus said, "**But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.**" Matthew 6:33.

Also, another weed that can choke out spiritual life is the deceitfulness of riches. People who are looking to riches to bring them love, joy, peace, happiness and-so-on. People can allow riches to choke out the Word of God and the work of God in their lives. Jesus gives us the right perspective of things when He said, "**For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?**" Matthew 16:26.

Another weed that can choke out spiritual life is the desire for other things. Instead of hungering and thirsting after God, they go after other things and they will never be filled, they will never be satisfied outside of Christ. You see, the cares of this world are more important to this person than having a relationship with God. This person is not saved, they produced no fruit, and the work that was started in their lives was choked out by the things of this world!

The fourth type of soil is good, it is rich, it is deep, it is clean and as the seed is sown it takes root and grows and it produces abundant fruit. These are those people who receive the Word of God in their lives as they hear it and believe it. Those are the ones who are saved!

The point of the parable is this. The more you sow the more you will reap! Thus, sow the seed of God's Word as much as you can and see that harvest that comes in! Yes, many will reject it, but there are those that will receive it, and thus, the more you sow, the more you will reap! We see here 75% rejected it, they were not saved and only 25% were saved and produced fruit!

VERSES 21-23

What is the purpose of light? It is to reveal things to us, help us to see clearly. Thus, to hide this light would be foolish and it can be dangerous as you can't see where you are going!

Now let's apply this light to God's Word. God's Word is not to be hidden but to shine brightly so people can see the way to God and that is through Jesus Christ. To hide the light, to cover it up, to decrease its shine would be dangerous and yet, how many are doing that very thing from pulpits across America!

Imagine having a cure for some deadly disease and instead of broadcasting it around the world, you put it in your safe and hide it. What good is that cure if no one can obtain it, if they can't see it? It is absolutely worthless.

We have the truths of God found in the Word of God and we are the light of the world. We have the cure of sin. Thus, may we share the Word of God with people, may we bring them to the One that the Word of God speaks of, Jesus, the Lamb of God who has come to take away the sins of the world! God does not want people in the dark but the Devil loves the darkness!

VERSES 24-25

Also, if you want to know more about God, get into His Word and God will open it up to you more and more. If you are faithful to what God has given you, He will give you more. But, if you are not, God will make your thinking darker and darker. There will be no desire to grow. To sum it up, if you don't use it, you will lose it!

And here is a warning. As Christians we need to be wise, we need to use the discernment that God has given to us. Thus, don't put yourself under teachers that are not teaching the whole counsel of God, that are twisting the Scriptures for their own gain. In other words, "**Take heed what you hear.**"

VERSES 26-29

Here we have the Parable of the Growing Seed. And it is pretty straightforward. The farmer goes out and plants seeds in the ground and they grow by night. And when he gets up the seed has sprouted.

What is that all about? Well, from our other parable we see that the seed is the Word of God. So as we go out and spread the Word of God, that is our part. We have done all that we can do. But then God steps in and brings forth life, a person comes to saving faith. Man and God working together, not that God needs us to but He uses us to bring forth this new life in Christ.

Remember what we are told in Isaiah 55:11, "**So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.**"

I know, you are thinking, “Wait a minute pastor Joe, it says that the Word of God goes forth from the mouth of God and now you are telling me that we are to share it. What is up with that?”

First of all, the Word of God comes from God, Paul said that in II Timothy 3:16, “**All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.**” So yes, all Scripture comes from God.

But keep in mind that we have been given the responsibility to sow the seed of God’s Word, that is what we are to do. It is the Lord who then brings forth the life! God’s Word will accomplish in the heart of an individual what God wants it to, it will accomplish what He desires!

Even Christians, as they hear the Word of God it is working in their life in an invisible way but it will be manifested in a very visible way, how they live out their faith!

Now, at the end of the growing season, what happens? It is harvest time. And the Lord of the harvest will gather His Church together at the end of the age.

James puts it this way, “**Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!**” James 5:7-9.

VERSES 30-34

Jesus is now going to give us a picture of the kingdom of God on this earth. The first parable spoke of salvation. The next one spoke of letting our light shine. Then the fruit that is born in our lives. And now we come to the summation of what the church age is like.

Keep in mind that the mustard seed was a very tiny seed and yet it would grow into a bush, but not a tree, as we see here. The birds of the air are Satan's forces and thus, the picture here is the church will look a lot bigger than it really is. There will be deceivers within the church, workers of Satan. Now some are obvious and others are not, they will not be exposed until the harvest time!

I do realize that some see this as a beautiful picture of the church growing so large that it provides refuge for all of the world. It sounds nice but keep in mind that these birds that come and pick up the seed that was sown or the Word of God that has come into people's lives and remove it are the workers of Satan, demons!

Warren Wiersbe put it like this in regards to this parable, "The growth of the kingdom will not result in the conversion of the world. In fact, some of the growth will give opportunity for Satan to get in and go to work!"

When I look at the false doctrine that has come into the church, when I see the horrible things that go on inside a church service, and then I hear how the church is growing stronger and is going to take over the world, I see what Jesus meant here.

Let me share with you this article about World Vision. This is a supposedly Christian organization and yet, look at what is happening, look at what they are involved in and from what I have read, as you will see, they are supporting this work that is going on. We are told,

Mohammad El Halabi, age 38, the regional operations manager at the international NGO World Vision, is not what the spokesperson of World Vision claims he is. The world's largest Christian charity issued a statement saying, "World Vision stands by Mohammad who is a widely respected and well regarded humanitarian, field manager and trusted colleague of over a decade. He has displayed compassionate leadership on behalf of the children and communities of Gaza through difficult and challenging times, and has always worked diligently and professionally in fulfilling his duties."

Among El Halabi's "duties," according to Israel's security, the Shin Bet (in Hebrew Shirut Bitahon), was to divert millions of dollars intended for Gaza's civilian population, to the Hamas's military wing.

He also stole food and health packages intended to reach poor Gazans and injured children, to be used by Hamas terrorists. In the indictment filed against El Halabi last week, he is accused of funneling tens of millions of dollars in aid money from the U.S. and Europe, which was intended for the people of Gaza to fund the construction of terror tunnels aimed at kidnapping and killing Israeli military personnel as well as civilians. In addition, World Vision money went to fund Hamas' rocket buildup and the construction of military posts.

On June 15, 2016 the Shin Bet arrested El Halabi at the Erez border crossing, charging him with serving six years as an agent of Hamas' military wing, Izzadin al-Qassam Brigades. According to the Shin Bet, El Halabi, a resident of Jabalia (in the Gaza Strip), was tasked with infiltrating World Vision, a U.S. based Christian aid group, and covertly funneling \$7.2 million a year in aid money to Hamas. Of that sum \$1.5 million a year went to the Izzadin al-Qassam Brigades. Simultaneously, Halabi also monetarily supported and cooperated with organizations supporting the BDS movement.

Additionally, Halabi admitted that the humanitarian aid money, about \$4 million a year, was used to build tunnels and for purchasing arms. He told his interrogators that food stores for the needy Gazans and funds to support children were also transferred to Hamas. To cover his schemes, Halabi set up fictitious humanitarian projects, and fictitious agricultural associations. Hamas operatives were registered as workers in non-existent projects. Halabi used invoices for such projects and passed the cash to Hamas. Shin Bet investigators also alleged that Halabi initiated a project that involved building greenhouses that were actually used to mask tunnel building activities.

El Halabi also used \$80,000 in British aid to pay salaries to Hamas operatives, and give bonuses to terrorists who fought against Israel during Operation Protective Edge in 2014. And, as already mentioned, funds were used to build Hamas military bases, including one code-named “Palestine” that was built in 2015, using British money.

Luke Akehurst, who is campaigning for membership in Britain’s Labor party National Executive Committee, had this to say about British funds going to Hamas. “Kind-hearted Brits have given tens of thousands of pounds to a Christian charity to help needy children in Gaza, only to find that they were duped and their money stolen and diverted to fund Hamas’s terrorist activities. It’s outrageous that instead of helping Gazan children to be fed and clothed, Hamas prefers to build terrorist infrastructure, dig attack tunnels into Israel, pay their terrorist fighters, and buy missiles that will be used against Israeli civilians.”

(Puder, “Christian Charity ‘Stands By’ Its Terror-Funding Official,” FrontPageMag Online, 8/12/16)

- <http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?m=1101870705073&ca=4688c31b-f4e0-47ea-9456-c72ec460c627>

So if you are supporting World Vision look at who you are supporting as well. Very sad and yet, the church today is growing but many times not in a good way. We are moving away from the truths of God found in the Word of God and thus, what is manifested in our lives is not of God!

And this is only going to get worse as the church, I should say the apostate church joins together to form a one-world religion and we are quickly moving towards that happening!

One more point here and that is when Jesus was done, when the disciples were alone, He explained these parables a little more with them. It is not that they didn't understand anything Jesus said, but He helped them to better understand it.

VERSES 35-39

Mark tells us that at the end of this long day for Jesus, He tells His men to get into a boat to cross to the other side. He said to them, "**Let us cross OVER to the other side.**" And Jesus also gets into the boat and falls fast asleep.

And as they are sailing a violent storm, a windstorm hit them and they were taking on water, the boat was beginning to sink! Keep in mind that these storms were well known to this area as the Sea of Galilee is 680 feet below sea level and then, to the north is the snow covered Mount Hermon which reaches up some 9,280 feet above sea level.

And you know what happens when a cold air mass hits a warm air mass, don't you? A violent storm, a tempest arises. And what happens here is that this cold air will descend down from Mount Hermon, through a small ravine in the valley and funnels into the Sea of Galilee. That is why these storms can erupt very quickly, and they can be intense with 25 foot waves! Make no mistake about it; this was not a little storm.

So these men are doing everything they can to save themselves and where is Jesus? Jesus is sleeping; while the disciples are bailing! And the conclusion the disciples came to is that Jesus didn't care what was happening to them, that they were going to die!

And that is the way we think many times as we go through the storms of life, and obviously that is wrong. So these guys finally wake Jesus up from His sleep, and they are rebuking Him for getting them in this mess and then not helping them out.

What I find interesting is that they did not come to Jesus for help but to rebuke Him. How foolish. In fact, they said to Jesus, "**Do You not care that we are perishing?**" Think about that one. If they are perishing then so would Jesus, which was not going to happen! And of course Jesus cared what was going on, He was fully aware of the situation!

And think about this. They have witnessed all the power that Jesus had to heal the sick, power over all of creation and yet, they refused to come to Him and lay their request at His feet. You see, they had a choice, as we do. To rest in the Lord as we go through the storms of life, or to tremble in fear. God was not anxious over this situation. And notice that Jesus saw them through this storm and on the other side of this storm was perfect calm, peace! That is what God has for us if we would only rest in Him! We will have storms but we will also have times of calm, of peace.

VERSES 40-41

Put yourself in Jesus' shoes or sandals for a minute. Imagine waking up in the midst of this violent wind storm and the boat is sinking, what would you say? "Wow, I can't believe this storm! We are in trouble!"

But Jesus did not say that. He said to His men in the midst of this storm, in the midst of the boat going under, **“Why are you so fearful. How is it that you have no faith?”** Please understand that there is no storm, there is nothing that can happen to us that causes Jesus to fear or wonder if He can get us through!

And Jesus rebuked them for their lack of faith? Why did He rebuke them, this storm was intense! Because in verse 35 Jesus said to His men, **“Let us cross over to the other side”** not **“under.”** Now me might think that is cute but it is not meant to be. It is a truth; it is a reality!

They had no faith because they did not believe the Word of God, what Jesus had told them. Now how does that apply to your life? Do you feel like you are going under? Do you feel like your boat is about to sink? Trust in the Lord. I don't know what He is going to do but He is in control and thus, instead of fear, trust in Him. You see, fear is the opposite of faith. Trust in Him and He will see you through those storms of life.

And Jesus rebukes the wind and it stops and they are on the other side of the Sea of Galilee, they made it to their destination. And we are told that **“they feared exceedingly”** and this fear was not terror, but a reverential fear towards God, towards Jesus.

That is the fear we as believers are to have, not terror. On the other hand, unbelievers should be in terror of the Lord and the judgment that is coming upon them for their rejection of Him. The solution to that is to receive Him into your life.

And I will close with this. The disciples said, **“Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!”** I will tell you, it is Almighty God who became flesh, went to the cross of Calvary to pay in full the penalty for our sins and thus, by repenting and believing in Him you can have your sins forgiven and enter into eternal life with Him!