

OPENING EVENTS
How To Study The Bible
Part 2
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...disciplines making a life making a living. The Lord called them one day out of their daily routine to follow him. We're going to look at that as we examine together the gospel of Mark tonight. Last week we started by attempting to use the gospel of Mark as the basis for good study. One of the things I noted is that we should get a translation that we were familiar with and like. We should have on hand a notepad and pen or pencil and begin jotting things down for a great part of learning is not simply hearing what is being said but also absorbing it through interaction and through imagination and through writing what is coming to our heart.

I suggested to you that the gospel of Mark in its totality has 116 paragraphs. One of the techniques of study that we can use in the gospel of Mark is to shorthand the book so that this book becomes integral to us and becomes something that is more than an external word that we hold in our hands but becomes an internal word that we hold in our hearts. One of the ways of short handing the gospel of Mark is to simply assign paragraph titles to each of the paragraphs.

Last week we began doing that by looking together at the first four paragraphs in the gospel of Mark. A paragraph always contains simply one unit of thought. So in our studying the Bible it is best not to study it chapter by chapter or even verse by verse. It's best to find where the paragraph divisions are and look at a paragraph at a time. If you're using the King James Bible usually the paragraphs can be found with the verses being printed in bolder type if it marks the beginning of a paragraph. In the modern translations you'll see the paragraphs divided as the paragraph normally would be in the English language through indentation or through double space separating it from the preceding and foregoing paragraphs.

Those of you who were here last Sunday night can you remember the first four paragraphs? One, the Beginning of the gospel. Two, John the Baptist. Three, baptism. Four, temptation. In those four titles we have summarized for us the preparation for Jesus' ministry. Paragraphs begin to cohere together. Those four paragraphs form a unit of thought. Preparation. – beginning of gospel, John the Baptist, baptism, temptation.

As we open tonight to the passage of scripture before us we want to do what is always a good thing to do when studying the scripture and that is survey the ground of what we're going to be looking at. Tonight we're going to take the statement from verse 14 through the end of chapter 1. Immediately as our eyes glance upon the text of the gospel we can notice if we're counting that there are seven paragraphs before us. We don't want to start out with anything super sensational or exciting. I think sometimes people make a mistake in Bible study of immediately trying to get into the text and do something wildly insane with it. One of the things you will find about good habits of Bible study is that it is important in an initial encounter with the Bible to set down and simply observe what is being said without trying to get some inner mystical revelation or immediate application. In fact, good study is the basis of all good application. The reason why some people get such weird ideas from scripture is that they never set down first of all and see what it's actually saying. But they jump to conclusions before knowing what is going on. A good segment of Bible study is simply asking what is happening, who is it happening to, where is it happening, when is it happening. Then we get around to saying why is this there and how can I apply it to my life.

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If we were going to headline the seven paragraphs before us we'll use words right out of the text. Verse 14, The gospel of God. "After John was arrested Jesus began preaching the gospel of God in Galilee saying, 'The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Repent and believe the gospel.'" Then there is the four fishermen, verse 16. The whole of that paragraph deals simply with the call of the two who are fishing and the two who were mending their nets. Then verse 21, the third paragraph. Dealing with a person possessed of an evil spirit, an unclean spirit. We should call them demoniac, a person who has a demon. But since it may be that in the gospel of Mark Jesus will deal with several people who have demons we need to more specifically identify him so that he stands out as unique. Let's call him by the name of the town that he is in. He is the Capernaum demoniac for it is in the synagogue at Capernaum that Jesus touches his life. So we already have three paragraphs. Gospel of God, four fishermen, Capernaum demoniac.

Then in verse 29 we have an incident of a healing of a person and a word of praise stands right out of that paragraph and you always in identifying a title want to go for a catch phrase that's easy to remember. Verse 29-31 – mother-in-law.

Then the fifth paragraph, verse 32. A kind of summary of what Jesus is doing at Capernaum. He is healing. But since it can be assumed that many times in his ministry Jesus will heal what separates this paragraph from the other paragraphs by identification. Maybe time of day would. What time of the day are these healings taking place? Specifically. At sundown or sunset. I simply call this paragraph Sundown Healings. There's no other moment in the Lord's ministry when he does healings at this specific time so that separates that paragraph as unique and special.

Then the next paragraph, verse 35, is a little bit more difficult to title because two things are going on. One thing that is happening is Jesus is praying. The other thing that is happening is he is preaching. So I suppose we can bring those two together in one heading and just simply call it Pray/Preach. It's the only paragraph in the gospel of Mark that both activities are joined together in one paragraph. Pray and Preach.

Then the last paragraph again is rather easy to title. It involves a leper. Verse 40. Since there may be more than one leper whom Jesus heals we'll simply call this Leper Cleansed. There's a whole process that goes on as we'll see in this particular paragraph.

When we get done with these 7 paragraph titles we have first of all Gospel of God. Second, four Fishers. Third, Capernaum demoniac. Fourth, Mother in law. Fifth, Sunset healings. Sixth, Praying/preaching. Seventh, Leper cleansed. That's just skullduggery. Now we know what's in the text, at least in a summary kind of a way.

One of the other things we need to be looking for as we open the Bible and begin to examine it before we look at word by word and verse by verse it always helps to get an overview. If you read Adler's book for example How to Read a Book just in plain good study habits if you'll take the methodology here and apply it to any subject you are studying you will come out a whiz, make better grades. One of the important things in studying, I find that a lot of students what they do is they take a text and they take a yellow marker and what often happens in that process is Why am I marking this yellow? Just because it's a title?

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Years ago I quit marking any text I was reading. I quit marking the Bible. If you look at my Bible there's not a single thing underlined. The textbooks you won't find anything underlined. Why?

I don't underline for two reasons. I find that when I underline, the physical activity keeps me from thinking. You may not be right brained like me. You may need to underline in order to remember what's going on. But it keeps me from thinking. I'm so busy thinking about what I'm underlining I don't have the foggiest idea what I've underlined when I'm done underlining it.

The second thing that happens, when I underline when I go back to read that again two things happen. I say to the stuff underlined "I already know that." When I don't. And in addition I look at the stuff that's underlined and I say if I do understand it I say "That's what it means." And I don't let my self open to fresh ideas. Because I've already got it underlined.

Then if there isn't anything I haven't underlined if I'm reading back over it I say, That must not have been important because I didn't underline it. Or yellow mark it. So I just skip over that altogether.

So I would simply say as a study methodology – and everybody has to do what works for them – underlining and yellow marking doesn't really work for me. Try to absorb it. When you begin working with the particulars of a study like a paragraph unit then you want to kind of back off and say what's the larger movement here. This is part of Adler's studying a book – say where are things going. Rather than just looking at one sentence at a time or one word at a time, what's the movement.

There's tremendous degree of movement in these verses we have read. If anything Mark could have gotten a job at the *LA Times*. Hands down. His writing style is journalistic. He writes with extreme brevity, conciseness and he's moving you along and telling you a lot in as few words as possible. Not wordy. He can say it in a lot fewer words. As he is moving along he is communicating so much information.

For example, he starts out with Jesus preaching in Galilee. He's literally unknown person at the time. Nothing has begun. As you go through the story suddenly you find that Mark is announcing the gathering fame of Jesus – from preaching in the synagogues he comes to Capernaum. By the time he is done in that town the whole town is gathered at the door and nobody can get inside the house. Then he's out on the hill praying and he's going to other towns and when he is done with chapter one Jesus could no longer openly enter a town but was out in the country. Why? Because towns were not sufficiently large to accommodate the crowds that were following him. So he begins preaching in synagogues and the winds up out in the countryside to accommodate the tremendous burst that his popularity is going through.

That's a tremendous growth of movement and direction.

Again, if you're trying to do an overview of the text you ask yourself what is Mark trying to say here? As a writer he has a plot line. He has got to explain in as short of space as possible to people who have never heard about Jesus – that's the purpose of the gospel to tell people who have never heard – who this was that people wanted to crucify in Jerusalem. What's the plot line? What got him in that kind of a jam? And who is this person really?

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As I noted this last week, most people who have the first exposure with the gospel of Mark we are not people who had it in their hands to read it. They were people who sat in audiences such as this and heard a preacher proclaim what was being told them. That's why Paul will say to Timothy, Give attention to the public reading of God's word. That was important in that culture even perhaps more so than ours because people didn't have their own copies. Mark is showing us in these opening events – and that's what we're going to call these seven paragraphs because they are the opening events in the ministry of the Lord.

So that goes together with the first four paragraphs which are preparation. Now we have opening events. We laid have two sections together. If you don't memorize 116 paragraphs, just memorize the 16 section titles and you'll still do a pretty good job of knowing what's in Mark. Preparation – opening events.

He's showing us in those opening events that Jesus has primarily 3 strategies for advancing his ministry. First strategy is he's going to preach. He's going to declare God. What truth is, what reality is, his view of life. He's going to announce it, proclaim it, preach it. That's strategy number one.

Strategy number two is he's going to make disciples. He's going to call people close to him and on a more intense level he's going to share himself and his inner message.

The third strategy that he has is to do deeds of power. He is going to heal demoniacs and heal people of sicknesses, all kinds.

His whole public ministry is wrapped up in these three movements. His ministry today is still wrapped up in these three movements. It is Jesus, through the power of the Holy Spirit preaching to us yet today, announcing the good news of the kingdom of God. It is Jesus who still calls us and disciples us in close fellowship to himself. And it's Jesus who still heals and cleanses those who are possessed of the devil. That's the strategy that he has in his ministry.

That's kind of a broad overview of the passage. We need fro looking at a broad overview of the passage – this is good again, when you're studying a text book instead of just starting out in chapter one and reading the first paragraph and reading paragraph by paragraph take a moment to scan and see where that movement of thought is going. Where is the whole chapter going? What is the author going to wind up attempting to say?

When you get an overview then you begin to fit the parts together.

You say, you've already talked me out of Bible study because it's too complicated. Not at all. Jesus enunciates it in Mark 4 "To him who has more will be given." The whole principle of learning that Jesus adopts is the trial and error method. His whole idea of learning is not just to dump a lecture on people and then expect them to go out and do it but to encourage them and insist to them that they go out and do things themselves. It's in that process of doing that we pick up.

What I'm saying to you if it initially seems like it's over your head or beyond your ability don't worry about that. Take your own Bible, your own pencil and your own notepad and start jotting

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down things you see in the text. You're going to see things that I don't see because God the Holy Spirit is capable of revealing Jesus to each one of us according to the level of our interest and need.

Part of Bible study is what I call observation. It's simply seeing the text. Then as we observe interpreting and applying to our lives.

I think verses 14 and 15 are a classic example of a scripture that is so quickly read. And so easily passed over. "After John was arrested..." That is to say, Mark is telling us that Jesus did not begin his public ministry until John the Baptist and receded. "After John the Baptist was arrested Jesus appeared in Galilee."

Galilee is my favorite spot in the world. Matthew's gospel, if we do any correlation, tells us that the reason why Jesus began his ministry in Galilee was to fulfill the prophets, the word of Isaiah who said, "In the land of Zebulun and Nephtholim, [the tribal area, the ancient tribal area] the people who sat in darkness see a great light." When that prophecy was first given it was given to that part of the nation of Israel which would be first to go into captivity – the Assyrian captivity of 722, they were the first to fall. Jesus begins his ministry in Galilee to fulfill the prophetic connection that the first people to fall into the slavery and into banishment and into exile would be the very region where first the glory of the Lord would shine. Where it is darkest there would the light be the brightest. It's God's beautiful fitting together of life.

When I wonder in my own life and other's lives, Will God ever bring everything together? Will He ever tie things up in a nice package and draw a ribbon around it? Will life always have it's open wounds and gashes where we seem to look at life where it's chopped off with an ax and the pieces don't fit and they're not together. The gospel is telling us again and again it God's time, in his time, he makes all things beautiful in his time. As the prophet Habakkuk says it may not be within our lifetime that God does it but within our experience as people both temporal and eternal people God will bring all things together. He's uniting all things in Christ. So it's a wonderful thing for Galilee.

Jesus came preaching the gospel, the good news of God. Imagine that you're in the synagogue, one of the synagogues Jesus is in. The Torah has been read and then afterwards it's the custom if there's a visiting rabbi or distinguished guest that is in the service that he may read from one of the prophets which is the subsidiary reading from the Torah or the law of Moses. So Jesus is in such a position and he is invited to speak. Here's what Mark says he preached. Jesus stands up and says "The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Repent and believe the good news." And we talk about preaching short sermons! So is this all he said? Obviously not. Obviously these are the four main points of his message. Mark always with his cryptic shorthand is telling us that. This is the main element of what Jesus was saying.

Coming from a tradition where it was expected that preachers simply opened their mouth and the Lord fill it and they didn't need to have their material organized, when I ran across the organized Jesus it set some of my preconceptions right on edge. I have yet to read any message that Jesus gave that wasn't outlineable, succinct, logical, correct flow of reasoning – a masterful way of putting things together. Jesus didn't get up and ramble with people. He didn't waste their time by rambling.

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Jesus stood up with message: the time is fulfilled. Notice the four points of Jesus' message. They divide into two categories. They divide in the category of first what God has done. Then secondly what our response is to be to what God has done. What has God done? He has filled up the time. The prophecies are coming to pass. We would have to leave it to our imagination to know what prophecy Jesus was quoting. But since we read the book of Acts and find the apostles always quoting the Old Testament about the stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner. It is not hard to imagine that Jesus was talking a great deal about the people who have sat in darkness have seen a great light and he was extensively quoting the Old Testament and talking about the time is fulfilled and he was saying the kingdom of God is at hand.

I want to say to you, what is the main thing that Jesus taught? We'd probably get a room full of answers. Salvation, eternal life, living a moral and ethical life – he taught about all of those things. But based upon an actual study of the teaching of Jesus the main theme of his teaching was the kingdom of God. We'll see that as we go through the gospel of Mark. He defines that the kingdom of God is not something external. It's not political. It's not Republican, Democrat, it's not Marxist or Socialist. It is the reign or the rule of God within the human heart.

That's what it is and in the age to come it will be God's will external imposed upon the world that he has created. The kingdom of God. Jesus starts talking about it. That's what God has done for us. He's brought his life to us. He's brought the kingdom within reach.

So what are we to do? Repent. Bad word! It's popular today to say, Be positive! Paul tells people to repent. It'll hurt their feelings. Repent.

I'll never forget when Dr. Orr was here several years ago. He preached a sermon called "The First Word of the Gospel." Everything has to have a priority. In the alphabet A is first. We can't say, Why is it first? Who decided it would be first? It's just that A is always A. What's the first word of the Christian response, the response of the human heart to God. It's always Repent. When John the Baptist came preaching. What was his first word? Repent! When Jesus came preaching, what was his first word? Repent. When he sent out the twelve on their first preaching mission what was their first word when people asked what they should do? Repent! When the 70 went out on their training mission, what was the first word they were taught to tell people to do? Repent. When Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, and people said, What must we do to be saved? Peter said, Repent. When Paul began his public ministry what was the thing that he asked people to do as he began? Repent. First word.

The problem with the church today. We have too many people that are saved and not enough people that are converted. They have too many believers and not any disciples. I reject the character of Christianity that is easy believism. And it's just getting saved. It's getting disciplined, it's getting changed, it's getting radicalized by the personality of Jesus Christ in your life. You have no salvation. It's simply pie in the sky in the sweet by and by. It's cost, it's discipleship, it's commitment, it's obeying God when it's uncomfortable, when it disagrees with every emotion you have. It's paying the cost, bearing the cross.

Jesus says repent. *Metanoia*. Change your mind. Throw off the old way of thinking. Bring in the new. Repent.

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And thank God it's not all repentance. There's something to believe in when we repent. It's not just self-cleansing. It's looking to God. It's upward and onward. Believe. Repent and believe the good news. We've got good news in Jesus Christ. This whole gospel will tell us about the good news.

That's what he was doing in the synagogues in Galilee giving his four point message. It's always a comfort for me to know that Jesus had one sermon, which he preached many different places. I worried about that as a preacher. Because I repeat myself. I take great comfort in the fact that Jesus had a set message and he went around the places of Galilee and he preached that same set message. Jesus had his favorite message and he preached it everywhere he went in Galilee. And he's still preaching it to us.

The time is fulfilled. People say, Is the Lord coming in my lifetime? Is it the end of the age? It's always going to be near the end of time. This is the only time we've got. The time is fulfilled. In your lifetime it will all be fulfilled. It will all be over. You've only got one life in the present. It's all going to be fulfilled. The kingdom of God is now, it's at hand. Not something pie in the sky, bye and bye. It's right now. It's at hand. Change your mind and believe the good news.

He preached and he's started to get a following. He's at Capernaum. In Jesus' day this was a strategic village, straddling two major trade routes. A natural place for Jesus to go to. He wanted people to hear his message and spread it everywhere. What better place than Capernaum. Nazareth is tucked off in the Galilean hills and doesn't have to commerce and trade that Capernaum had. He changed his location to be down there. Besides, people believed him in Capernaum and "A prophet is without honor in his home town." So he goes to Capernaum. Outside of Capernaum he's one day walking along and there's these fishermen. If I had no other evidence of Jesus being the Messiah, one evidence all by itself would persuade me. That is what Jesus did with the people he first called. That is a miracle of miracles. That he could take a fisherman and make him an apostle.

In the United States Harvard University is known as kind of the premium school. You either have to be very wealthy and old wealth to get into Harvard or you have to be really broke and get a scholarship. But you do have to be bright. The reason why every year Harvard graduates people who become the leaders of the nation is that they only take in people who are in the upper, upper, *upper* Nth of the percentile. If you're working with A students to begin with you can put out A students at the end. The thing that amazes me about Jesus is he takes D- people.

This is powerful! Some say we must make a distinction between the historical Jesus and the theological Christ. The idea being that those early disciples were geniuses who discovered words which were elevating to their spirits and they took these words and put them back in the mouth of the historical Jesus who never spoke them to begin with. That to me is the height of stupidity to assume that because that means that these people were smarter than Jesus. And when you look at their background, if they had been Harvard people, if they had been in the philosophy department at Harvard or UCI, I could say I believe these guys could have concocted something maybe like this. Although again university may have been able to concoct a philosophy but I'm not sure that those same people are as deeply concerned about moral reality and walking straight.

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But I've spoken and been in the Kawainas club and I've been at Rotary club. That's the kind of people Jesus called – middle class businessmen, making a living, feeding the kids going to the club once a week. They were not concerned about setting the world on fire. Or how to start a new religion. They were just going about life.

Jesus pops right in the middle of their life. Say, I've got something for you! I'm going to make you to become! If there's nothing else in the story focus on that for a moment. I'll make you to become! How do we get to be a disciple? Is it an overnight process and we suddenly jump up and we're a disciple. We're holy and we're a saint with wings on our shoulders. It's a process of growth. I'm not going to do it overnight, Jesus is saying. I'm going to help you to become – fishers of men. I've got something for you to do. He wasn't calling guys just throwing a rod and reel, just catching one fish. His whole idea was to bring humanity and gather them in clumps and groups and families. I'm going to make you to become fishers of men.

By a little correlation we know this isn't the first time Jesus had met these people. In John's gospel, John 1, some of them had been John the Baptist's disciples. There had been down with John where he was baptizing. They already had a preliminary touch with Jesus. As you go through the gospels you're going to find that it took more than one call for the call to take on the disciples life. Jesus had to call them a number of times to follow him. This is one of the significant first times.

Have you found that Jesus has had to call you a number of times? The church background I grew up in continually called me to step out and come down. Often I thought it was telling me to come down and get saved all over again. But whatever it was calling me for I kept coming down. Somewhere in the process of time it took. I kept making myself available to the Lord.

That's what's going on in the gospels. Jesus is saying you've been with me before, come follow me. I'm going to make you fishers of men.

What attracted these people to Jesus? He didn't say "Follow me. But before you follow me let me tell you what I'm going to do." Or he didn't say to them, "I know it's only fair that if you're going to follow someone you hardly know that you know what's in store for you. So Peter I'm going to all you out of that boat in just a moment. But before I call you out of that boat I think in all fairness to you, I should tell you what's going to happen to you if you follow me. Thirty years from now, way off in the distant city of Rome as a result of your following me they're going to take you to a cross and nail you upside down to it." The one thing I've discovered about discipleship with Jesus and it's why I get a little scared at times of an over emphasis on propositional truth – that is believe this set of facts and the gospel does have facts to it. But the problem is when we begin following Christ we don't know everything here is to know about him. We know little about what he has in mind for us.

My mom was a great Christian. When I got to seminary and got educated I'd come home and talk theology with her. I discovered that she had very insufficient view of the trinity. I would torture her poor mind with all these arguments on why her view of the trinity was not even theologically consistent with the assemblies of God of which she was an ordained minister. I think sometimes we put too much upon people. That Christianity is for the experts and the intellectuals and the people who've got it all together.

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It's for people to grow. "I'll make you to become..." They didn't know much about him and they didn't know much about themselves. But it's day by day. Striking up a relationship. Going on with life.

Jesus is doing that with us today. Saying, Come. I want you to follow me. I've got something for you.

Maybe for you it's a call like Peter and James and John and Andrew. A call to leave one thing and do another thing. There was a person that Jesus one time touched and he wanted to go with Jesus and do something different. Jesus sent him home instead. Jesus call you to do your old thing or he can call you to do something new. The important thing is that he calls you.

These people as I said were middle class. We know that Zebedee the father of James and John owned the boats and they had hired servants which tells you a little bit about their social class. Jesus called that middle class to follow him.

What did they see in Jesus the first few days they were with him? They saw someone who had power over evil that's for sure. The Capernaum synagogue incident demonstrated that. There's a thing that goes on in the gospel of Mark where the identity of Jesus is gradually revealed. It's not seen all at once. In fact when the disciples first begin following Jesus they think they're following something that they learn later they're not. That is, the political messiah. No one at the beginning really knows his true identity except one group of people always know his true identity. That is the demons.

I have seen so much excess in the charismatic renewal and our attempt to rediscover the spiritual gifts. We have two dangers. We can go crazy overboard or in trying to be safe and balanced we can go to the other extreme which is dead and dry and nothing's happening. We went through a craze in the charismatic renewal of prognosticating demons. The one thing that you'll notice about the deliverance ministry of Jesus is he never had to tell anybody "You have a demon." Never, never did he say that to a person. In the book of Acts or the whole of the New Testament does any believer ever say to any other person "You've got a demon." You know why they don't say that? Because around the power of Jesus Christ the demons are forced to reveal themselves. Nobody's got to tell anybody anything. I've seen a lot of psychological damage done to poor people – people who have been pressed down and weighted with a load of things in their life. Then some idiot in the church comes along and says, "My sister, you've got a demon!" Talk about being crushed in self-esteem! If you've got a demon, friend, you won't be able to set through a gospel meeting. You'll pitch out of your chair.

That's what happened in the Capernaum synagogue. This man pitches out of his chair. "I know who you are! The holy one of God!" You better believe that he was stern when Jesus kicked the fallen angels out of heaven. He knew who he was. He had access to that realm of knowledge. "I know who you are! Jesus doesn't want the witness of the devil. He says Shut up! The demon, convulsing the man, came out of him.

Everybody said, "This person teaches with authority!" When Jesus teaches profound change takes place in our life. It's not idle teaching.

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Someone has defined lecturing is “The communication of what is in the professors notebook to the student’s notebook without it going through the head of either the student or the professor.” That’s teaching.

Teach with authority is when it gets a hold of our life and it compels change. If you get around the real Jesus he’s going to compel change in your life. Here was one who had authority over evil.

He had authority over illness. He still has authority over illness. In my days in my own experience in college where I was doubting whether or not the Christian faith was valid and real, it was two healings in my own family that I couldn’t doubt that kept me close enough to home base that I didn’t get too far. He heals.

I’m not here to quarrel with people but I want to note that the Bible text tells us that Peter had a mother-in-law. If he had a mother-in-law he would almost had to have been married. The great thing is that they were concerned, Peter was, about his mother-in-laws healing. They told him about her. They liked their mom-in-law. So Jesus came and a wonderful thing occurs. So very few times in the healing miracles there are 18 healing miracles in the gospels – in most of them we never read what happened to the person after they were healed. He never said to people, I’ll heal you if you pay your tithes. I’ll heal you but first you’ve got to enter a blessing pack with me. Them that gets is them that gives. I think the whole thing on financial blessing as a kind of a gimmick for the work of God and the church today stinks to high heaven. If Jesus were here he’d say yuk! But Jesus can overturn that tables of moneychangers in the temple I think he can overturn few computers that spit out these nutty letter to Christian contributors. We live in a day, because the church of Jesus Christ has departed from the word, because it doesn’t take the word seriously, it just reaches on emotion, that we’ve got anything passing in the name of Christianity. It must be a shock to the system of Jesus to see sometimes what passes as his kingdom and his name. The name of Jesus Christ is to be honored.

I have a friend whom I respected dearly who was a real example to me in the ministry. Whenever he’d take an offering he’d say, Jesus is the king, and kings don’t beg. There’s a dignity and honor to bring a Christian and a Christian minister that we shouldn’t soil it.

Jesus gave things away free. He didn’t lay requirements and heavy things on people. Of Peter’s mother-in-law it is said that when she was healed she served them. Isn’t that beautiful? Doesn’t that describe the kind of attitude of a disciple when the Lord has touched our life? We serve him.

Then the paragraph Pray and Preach. It has always amazed me that Jesus needed to pray. He was God in the flesh. Could he operate without prayer? He chose not to operate without prayer. After his busiest evening, the sundown healings, when the whole town had gathered, notice again he is stopping the demons from talking about him. He always does that to the devils – Be quiet! After that tremendously busy day of preaching in the synagogue, healing Simon’s mother in law, sundown after the Sabbath. Everybody can come out, the Sabbath is over. After that exhausting time.

I think I can identify with Jesus in terms of being exhausted in ministry because sometimes when I’m done preaching I’m ready for the repacking house! There’s a strength that goes out of your

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life when you're ministering to people. Jesus certainly knew that far more than I'll ever know it. Yet it says, "A great while before day [the next day] he went out to pray." I wonder if that is what impressed the disciples even more than anything else? In their heart of hearts they knew whoever we are falling here is one who intimately knows God.

They want to capture Jesus and bring him to people who are looking for him. But Jesus is going to be unlike John the Baptist. Here Mark tells us in verse 38 the difference between Jesus and John. John stayed in one place. But Jesus is going to bring the good news to others.

Let's go to the next town. He would teach them that Christian witness is to be aggressive. They were not to simply settle down in one place. I periodically have people say to me, "We've got so much work to do in our own community why is it that we should be interested in the world and in missions and starting new churches and things like that?" It's because that comes right out of the life of Jesus. There were more people to be reached in Capernaum. There were more things to do there probably. They said, No we've got to go elsewhere. The gospel is like fingers in a fire. You just need to throw them out and get a lot of places lit up.

That opening event section in Jesus' ministry concludes with a leper being cleansed. It's a great story.

I know there is a distinction that's been made between the modern Hansen's Disease and the leprosy we read about in scripture. As kid in China, between 6 and 8 years of age, I had the opportunity to see the kind of leprosy described in the Bible. People sitting by the side of the road with stumps for arms, facial features gone, stumps for legs – poor, swabbed in dirty bandages. A hideous sight. Luke is a medical doctor in contrast to Mark whose not a doctor. Luke at times shows an interest in the detail of the diagnosis. None of the other gospel writers do. One of the things we want to do in Bible study is correlation. Compare this gospel with other gospels. There are two medical facts that Luke notes of the healings of Mark's chapter 1 that Mark nor Matthew note. That is Peter's mother-in-law was ill not just with a fever but Luke says she was ill with a *high* fever. A doctor would know that. He'd be interested in that. Mark tells us that the man has leprosy. And Luke tells us this added detail that he was *full* of leprosy. Which means he was in the terminal stages.

"If you will master have mercy upon me. Heal me." Jesus does something which is going to show his whole attitude toward the rabbinic law and tradition. In fact toward the Levitical law that says don't touch the unclean thing. Jesus goes over and breaks the barrier of that man's loneliness. He probably hadn't been touched by a whole person in years. At least if they'd been keeping the religious law, he hadn't been touched. Jesus could have healed him without touching him. But he chooses to restore him to community and to love. And he says, "I will. Be thou clean." Immediately the leprosy left him and the man was made whole. Jesus sternly charged him and sent him away at once saying, 'See to it that you says nothing to anyone but go, offer for cleansing what Moses commanded as a proof to the people.'"

What's going on here? The medical doctor of Jesus' day was the priest who certified when a person was free from illness. Leviticus 13 and 14 is relevant passage. A priest had to give the proper certificate for the person to return to community life. Jesus simply wanted this man to go through the proper credentialing process. Sometimes a person will ask me, "I believe God has healed me. Should I go see a doctor and get it verified?" What's the scriptural text for that? Of

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course, go see a doctor. Jesus healed a man and said, Go see the doctor. The priest was the equivalent of the doctor. Go and get a clean bill of health then show it to everybody. That's all the more convincing proof if you're got the bill of health.

There are some that think that Jesus here had an evil intention. If you want somebody to not tell something you say, "Now don't tell anybody." If that is true then it attributes evil intentions to him. Double speech. I think if you look at Mark you will find what is called the Messianic secret. That is "Who's the Messiah?" Jesus taught his disciples to give their alms even in private, in secret. "Don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing." Jesus gives himself. I think Christians who believe in the miraculous power of God ought to be very, very careful how they advertise the power of the Lord Jesus Christ. I never see Jesus using his miracles as simply bait to get people in the tent. In this particular case with the leper cleansed he had something in mind. He was going on this training mission through Galilee taking the disciples with him, preaching in towns and here was the greatest miracle he had now done. The leper cleansed. There's two kinds of illness miracles in the gospels. One is acute and the other is chronic illness. Chronic illness is long term, on going. Peter's mother-in-law there was an acute illness. Temperature maybe of 105. The chronic leprosy, ongoing condition, I would suspect that this is not only a healing miracle but a restorative miracle. That is, the parts grew back. I don't know that for sure but I kind of feel that was about this miracle. A powerful miracle. Jesus knows that if the word gets out on this miracle prematurely to people – this man goes and ignores the 2 week waiting process that's necessary to go through the proper certification by the priests. Jesus knows if he goes telling it, Jesus is not going to be able to go to towns any more. The mobs around him are going to be so vast. Sure enough that's what happened.

He went out and began to tell the word so that Jesus could not longer openly enter a town. He was out in the country and people came to him from every quarter. Isn't it interesting that the man Jesus healed causes him some problems by messing up his itinerary through premature talking about the healing.

Sometimes Jesus lays strange requests on people. But whenever he does he has a motive. He'll lay strange requests on us at times and wants us to carry them out.

As I said when we dived into this gospel last week at the opening verse says it's the beginning of the good news. It is just getting underway. Jesus is calling people in this room to follow him. Jesus is in this room tonight to deliver and to heal. Jesus is in this room to preach his good news to our hearts.

Our Lord, we think of the little song that says, "I serve a risen savior. He's in the world today." We think of the scripture that says, "No one ever taught like this man." We think of the word which says to us, "By what authority he teaches? Even the demons are subject to his name." We your people are gathered anew in your presence and ask Lord that you would accept us as available to your service. And to your call. We're just ordinary people Lord. Ordinary like those fishermen you first used. We want you to do something with our life. We want to place our life in your hands. We don't know all that that means. We don't know everything there is to know about you. We don't know everything that you have in mind for us. But such as we are in this moment that we are, we give to you. And we ask you Lord to make something of us. I pray for discouraged friends here that maybe feel like

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they are not becoming. Maybe they feel more like they're becoming unbecoming and undone that become. Lord I pray a word of faith in to their hearts. Help them to know that in your hands they will become fishers of men. We simply make ourselves available to you. And open our lives to you. We love you and want to serve you with all of our heart. Thank you, Lord. Amen.