

An Explanation of

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK



BEHOLD, MY SERVANT

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SERIES
2

The Gospel According to Mark

The Gospel According to Mark

Behold, My Servant

Ger de Koning

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Contents

Abbreviations of the Names of the Books of the Bible	10
Old Testament	10
New Testament	11
Explanation of general format	12
The Gospel According to Mark	13
Introduction	13
Mark 1	15
Mk 1:1-3 Beginning of the Gospel	15
Mk 1:4-8 Preaching of John the Baptist	16
Mk 1:9-11 Baptism of the Lord Jesus	17
Mk 1:12-13 Tempted in the Wilderness	18
Mk 1:14-15 Start of the Service	20
Mk 1:16-20 The First Disciples	21
Mk 1:21-28 An Unclean Spirit Cast Out	22
Mk 1:29-31 Healing of Peter's Mother-In-Law	26
Mk 1:32-34 Many Healed	27
Mk 1:35-39 Preaching Throughout All Galilee	28
Mk 1:40-45 A Leper Healed	29
Mark 2	32
Mk 2:1-4 A Paralytic Brought to the Lord	32
Mk 2:5-12 Forgiveness of Sins and Healing	33
Mk 2:13-17 Call of Levi	35
Mk 2:18-20 Question About Fasting	37
Mk 2:21-22 New and Old Are Incompatible	38
Mk 2:23-28 Picking the Heads of Grain on the Sabbath	39
Mark 3	42
Mk 3:1-6 A Withered Hand Healed	42
Mk 3:7-12 Healings by the Sea	44
Mk 3:13-19 Calling of the Twelve	45

Mk 3:20-27 The Lord Jesus and Beelzebul	47
Mk 3:28-30 The Blasphemy Against the Spirit	49
Mk 3:31-35 The True Family of the Lord	50
Mark 4	52
Introduction	52
Mk 4:1-9 Parable of the Sower	52
Mk 4:10-12 Why Parables?	54
Mk 4:13-20 Explaining the Parable of the Sower	55
Mk 4:21-25 Under a Basket or Under a Bed	58
Mk 4:26-29 Parable of the Seed Growing by Itself	60
Mk 4:30-32 Parable of the Mustard Seed	61
Mk 4:33-34 Using Parables	62
Mk 4:35-41 The Storm at Sea	62
Mark 5	65
Introduction	65
Mk 5:1-5 The Gerasene Demoniac	65
Mk 5:6-14 A Demon Possessed Set Free	66
Mk 5:15-20 Set Free and Sent Out	68
Mk 5:21-24 An Official of the Synagogue Comes to the Lord	69
Mk 5:25-29 A Woman Healed of the Flow of Her Blood	70
Mk 5:30-34 The Woman Sent Away in Peace	72
Mk 5:35-43 The Daughter of Jairus Healed	73
Mark 6	77
Mk 6:1-6 Rejection in Nazareth	77
Mk 6:7-13 Sending Out the Twelve	79
Mk 6:14-16 Herod Gets Restless	81
Mk 6:17-20 The Testimony of John	82
Mk 6:21-29 John Beheaded	82
Mk 6:30-33 With the Lord	84
Mk 6:34-38 You Give Them to Eat!	86
Mk 6:39-44 The Five Thousand Fed	88
Mk 6:45-52 The Lord Jesus Walks on the Sea	89
Mk 6:53-56 Healings in Gennesaret	91
Mark 7	93
Mk 7:1-5 The Traditions of the Elder	93

Mk 7:6-13 Setting Aside the Commandment of God	95
Mk 7:14-23 Education About Defilement	96
Mk 7:24-30 The Syrophoenician Woman	98
Mk 7:31-37 A Deaf and Difficult Speaking Man Healed	100
Mark 8	103
Mk 8:1-3 Compassion for the People	103
Mk 8:4-9 Feeding of the Four Thousand	104
Mk 8:10-13 The Request for a Sign	105
Mk 8:14-15 The Leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod	106
Mk 8:16-21 Teaching About the Leaven	108
Mk 8:22-26 A Blind Man Healed	109
Mk 8:27-30 The Confession of Peter	110
Mk 8:31 First Announcement of Suffering	112
Mk 8:32-33 The Interests of Men	112
Mk 8:34-38 Conditions to Follow the Lord	113
Mark 9	116
Mk 9:1-8 The Transfiguration	116
Mk 9:9-13 Elijah Must Come First	119
Mk 9:14-20 The Powerlessness of the Disciples	120
Mk 9:21-24 The Father	122
Mk 9:25-27 The Boy Healed	123
Mk 9:28-29 The Cause of the Failure	124
Mk 9:30-32 Second Announcement of Suffering	124
Mk 9:33-37 Who Is the Greatest?	125
Mk 9:38-41 Who Is Not Against Us ...	127
Mk 9:42-48 Seduction to Sin	129
Mk 9:49-50 Fire and Salt	131
Mark 10	133
Introduction	133
Mk 10:1-2 A Question About Divorce	133
Mk 10:3-9 Divorce and Remarriage	134
Mk 10:10-12 Divorcing His Wife	136
Mk 10:13-16 The Lord Blesses Children	136
Mk 10:17-22 To Inherit Eternal Life	137
Mk 10:23-27 With God Everything Is Possible	140

Mk 10:28-31 Those Who Have Left Everything	141
Mk 10:32-34 Third Announcement of Suffering	142
Mk 10:35-40 A Place in the Kingdom	143
Mk 10:41-45 Come to Serve	145
Mk 10:46-52 Healing a Blind Man	146
Mark 11	149
Mk 11:1-6 The Lord Needs a Colt	149
Mk 11:7-11 The Lord Is Hailed	151
Mk 11:12-14 A Fig Tree Cursed	152
Mk 11:15-18 Cleansing the Temple	153
Mk 11:19-26 The Lesson of the Withered Fig Tree	155
Mk 11:27-33 Question About the Authority of the Lord	157
Mark 12	160
Introduction	160
Mk 12:1-8 The Unjust Vine-Growers	160
Mk 12:9-12 This Came About From the LORD	162
Mk 12:13-17 Question About a Poll-Tax to Caesar	164
Mk 12:18-27 Question About the Resurrection	166
Mk 12:28-34 The Great Commandment	168
Mk 12:35-37 Question About the Son of David	170
Mk 12:38-40 Beware of the Scribes	172
Mk 12:41-44 The Sacrifice of the Widow	173
Mark 13	175
Mk 13:1-2 The Tearing Down of the Temple Foretold	175
Mk 13:3-4 Questions About the Future	176
Mk 13:5-8 The Beginning of Birth Pangs	176
Mk 13:9-13 The Servant Is Persecuted	177
Mk 13:14-20 The Abomination of Desolation	180
Mk 13:21-23 Warning of Misleaders	181
Mk 13:24-27 The Coming of the Son of Man	182
Mk 13:28-31 Parable of the Fig Tree	183
Mk 13:32-37 Day and Hour Unknown	184
Mark 14	186
Mk 14:1-2 Jesus Must Be Killed	186

Mk 14:3 Anointing by Mary	187
Mk 14:4-9 Reactions to the Anointing	187
Mk 14:10-11 The Betrayal of Judas	189
Mk 14:12-16 Preparation of the Passover	190
Mk 14:17-21 Celebrating the Passover	192
Mk 14:22-26 Institution of the Supper	193
Mk 14:27-31 Denial by Peter Foretold	196
Mk 14:32-42 Gethsemane	197
Mk 14:43-49 The Capture	200
Mk 14:50-52 All Flee	202
Mk 14:53-54 To the High Priest	203
Mk 14:55-59 Interrogation by the Council	203
Mk 14:60-61 Interrogation by the High Priest	204
Mk 14:62-65 Condemnation	205
Mk 14:66-72 Denial by Peter	206
Mark 15	209
Mk 15:1-5 Delivered to Pilate	209
Mk 15:6-15 Jesus or Barabbas	210
Mk 15:16-20 Mocked	213
Mk 15:21-28 The Crucifixion	214
Mk 15:29-32 Mocked on the Cross	216
Mk 15:33-37 The Death of the Lord Jesus	217
Mk 15:38 The Veil Tears	219
Mk 15:39-41 The Centurion and the Women	219
Mk 15:42-47 The Burial	220
Mark 16	222
Mk 16:1-8 The Resurrection	222
Mk 16:9-11 Appearance to Mary Magdalene	224
Mk 16:12-14 Various Appearances	224
Mk 16:15-18 The Missionary Command	225
Mk 16:19-20 The Ascension	227
Other Publications	228

Abbreviations of the Names of the Books of the Bible

Old Testament

Gen – Genesis

Exo – Exodus

Lev – Leviticus

Num – Numbers

Deu – Deuteronomy

Jos – Joshua

Jdg – Judges

Rth – Ruth

1Sam – First Samuel

2Sam – Second Samuel

1Kgs – First Kings

2Kgs – Second Kings

1Chr – First Chronicles

2Chr – Second Chronicles

Ezra – Ezra

Neh – Nehemiah

Est – Esther

Job – Job

Psa – Psalms

Pro – Proverbs

Ecc – Ecclesiastes

Song – Song of Songs

Isa – Isaiah

Jer – Jeremiah

Lam – Lamentations

Eze – Ezekiel

Dan – Daniel

Hos – Hosea

Joel – Joel

Amos – Amos

Oba – Obadiah

Jona – Jonah

Mic – Micah
Nah – Nahum
Hab – Habakkuk
Zep – Zephaniah
Hag – Haggai
Zec – Zechariah
Mal – Malachi

New Testament

Mt – Gospel of Matthew
Mk – Gospel of Mark
Lk – Gospel of Luke
Jn – Gospel of John
Acts – Acts of the Apostles
Rom – Letter to the Romans
1Cor – First Letter to the Corinthians
2Cor – Second Letter to the Corinthians
Gal – Letter to the Galatians
Eph – Letter to the Ephesians
Phil – Letter to the Philippians
Col – Letter to the Colossians
1Thes – First Letter to the Thessalonians
2Thes – Second Letter to the Thessalonians
1Tim – First Letter to Timothy
2Tim – Second Letter to Timothy
Tit – Letter to Titus
Phlm – Letter to Philemon
Heb – Letter to the Hebrews
Jam – Letter of James
1Pet – First Letter of Peter
2Pet – Second Letter of Peter
1Jn – First Letter of John
2Jn – Second Letter of John
3Jn – Third Letter of John
Jude – Letter of Jude
Rev – Revelation

Explanation of general format

PERSONAL PRONOUNS are capitalized when pertaining to Deity.

BRACKETS [] are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words which are not found in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek but implied by it.

SHARP BRACKETS < > are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words possibly not in the original writings.

When **ASTERISKS** * are used in New Testament quotations, it is to mark verbs that are historical presents in the Greek which have been translated with an English past tense in order to conform to modern usage. The translators recognized that in some contexts the present tense seems more unexpected and unjustified to the English reader than a past tense would have been. But Greek authors frequently used the present tense for the sake of heightened vividness, thereby transporting their readers in imagination to the actual scene at the time of occurrence. However, the translators felt that it would be wise to change these historical presents to English past tenses.

ALL CAPS in the New Testament quotations are used in the text to indicate Old Testament quotations or obvious references to Old Testament texts.

The Gospel According to Mark

Introduction

If we give a personal description of someone, we can do it from different angles. For example, we can highlight someone as the father of a family. It is also possible to describe the same person as a colleague or neighbor. In this way we see how four evangelists – under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit – report on the life of the Lord Jesus during His stay on earth. Thus, in the four biographies we have in the Bible, Matthew talks in his Gospel about the Lord Jesus as King, Mark presents Him as a Servant, Luke describes Him as the true Man and John finally writes about Him as the eternal Son of God.

The purpose of this Gospel is that we look at the Lord Jesus as a Servant. That is why the call: “Behold, My servant” (Isa 42:1) has been chosen as the subtitle for this book. Whoever reads this Gospel with the desire to see Him as a Servant will come to know Him as the One Who has taken on the form of a slave (Phil 2:7), to be a Servant for all eternity (Lk 12:37).

Ger de Koning

Middelburg, September 2009, new version 2018, translated 2020

Purpose of the Gospel according to Mark

Of the four evangelists, Mark gives the clearest account of the historical order of the Savior’s service. He presents Him as the true Servant (Isa 53:11), in which He stands opposite Israel that has become an unfaithful servant. We see Him in this Gospel in the humble form of a slave (Phil 2:6-8; cf. Exo 21:6; Lk 12:37; Heb 5:8). Mark writes to Christians of the Gentiles, that they may learn how to serve in imitation of the true Servant.

In comparison with the other Gospels there are not many words of the Lord in this Gospel, but we read more about His work and service. This is expressed concisely in the key verse of this Gospel, which can also serve as a heading for it: “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mk 10:45). This verse is

also the connection between the two parts of this Gospel. The part before it is about His service, while the part after it is about Him as the sacrifice, as the sin offering.

The writer Mark

The fact that especially John Mark was allowed to write this Gospel is a special proof of the grace of God. As a companion of Paul and Barnabas, he abandoned them on their first missionary journey because of the Lord's work (Acts 12:12,25; 13:13). He even becomes the cause of bitterness and separation between these two servants of the Lord (Acts 15:37,39). But God is the God of the second chance. Mark has been restored from this failure (Col 4:10; 2Tim 4:11; 1Pet 5:13), so that he who himself has been an unfaithful servant can and may now write about the faithful Servant.

Mark 1

Mk 1:1-3 | Beginning of the Gospel

1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. 2 As it is written in Isaiah the prophet:

*“BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU,
WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY;*

*3 THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS,
‘MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD,
MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.’”*

From the beginning of this Gospel precautions are taken to ensure that we do not forget that the perfect Servant is also the Son of God. Therefore, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Mark first of all presents Him in His glory. He is “Jesus Christ, the Son of God”. He emphasizes this in verses 2-3 with some Old Testament quotations.

His dignity as the Son of God shows that He voluntarily became a Slave, without being forced to do so by anyone. Also a genealogy is missing here because that is not important for a servant. Nor is anything communicated about His birth and youth. Only one thing is important to a servant, and that is his service.

The “beginning” Mark speaks of here does not refer to creation (Gen 1:1) and even less to His eternal existence (Jn 1:1). Nor does it refer to His coming to earth (1Jn 1:1). It refers to the beginning of His service on earth (cf. 2Thes 2:13; Phil 4:15). It is the beginning of the “gospel”, which means “good news”. Jesus Christ comes with a good message from God.

In the quote, which comes from Malachi 3 (Mal 3:1), it becomes clear that He of Whom the way is to be prepared is seen in His Godhead, which is ‘*Yahweh*’. Here, in Mark, it says “ahead of You” (“You” is the Lord Jesus) and in Malachi it says that God says, “before Me”, that is before *Yahweh*. The “messenger” is John the baptist. He prepares the way in people’s hearts so that *Yahweh* can come into their hearts. This humble Man is none other than *Yahweh*, God Himself. This is also clear from the second quote.

In it Isaiah speaks of preparing “the way of the LORD”, and that too is none other than *Yahweh* Himself (Isa 40:3).

The place of John’s action is “the wilderness”. This place indicates the spiritually dead state of Israel before God. John is nothing more than a “voice”. It is not about who he is, but about his message. Preparing the way must be done in the heart of man through repentance and conversion.

In Greek, “straight” is the same word as “immediately”, a word so often used in this Gospel. If we do not go straight paths, paths without turns or detours, we cannot act ‘immediately’. What John does is also a task for us. We, too, should preach that people should prepare the Lord’s way and straighten His paths without delay.

Mk 1:4-8 | Preaching of John the Baptist

4 John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 And all the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. 6 John was clothed with camel’s hair and [wore] a leather belt around his waist, and his diet was locusts and wild honey. 7 And he was preaching, and saying, “After me One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals. 8 I baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

In this section we see the wayfarer and the way he prepares the way. For this John has gone out of the company that he must condemn. The place where he is staying is not Jerusalem, but the wilderness because it corresponds to the condition of the heart of man. The people must leave the city and come to him.

John is here ‘outside the camp’, which is the religious system established by God, but where He has no longer a place. He baptizes unto a living Messiah because only by this the Jews can partake of the promised blessings that are connected with the coming of the Messiah. For this conversion is needed first, with baptism after this.

All those who have the right mind to receive the Messiah come to him from their surroundings and confess their sins. In order to belong to the

Messiah it is necessary to go outside the camp, to go out to Him (Heb 13:13). Both the place where John is – the wilderness (verse 4) – and his clothing and food, show that he has separated himself from the mass of the people (cf. 2Kgs 1:8). Locusts are clean animals (Lev 11:22) and honey is the food of the land (Num 13:27).

He does not speak to the crowd here, but gives testimony concerning Christ. The Person of Whom he is the messenger is far above him. In spite of the enormous influx we see in John a deep humility and awareness of unworthiness. This is always so when we walk in the light of the Divine presence.

He also recognizes that the baptism performed by the Person of Whom he is the messenger is far above his baptism. He announces the Lord Jesus as the One Who will baptize with the Holy Spirit, which we see happening on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 (Acts 2:1-4,33). One Who can pour forth the Holy Spirit in this way can be none other than God Himself. There is no mention here of baptism with fire, as there is in Matthew 3 and Luke 3 (Mt 3:11; Lk 3:16), because everything here is directly related to the Gospel work of the Lord in grace.

Mk 1:9-11 | Baptism of the Lord Jesus

9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him; 11 and a voice came out of the heavens: "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased."

The Lord comes from Nazareth in Galilee. Nazareth is a despised city (Jn 1:46). The land of Galilee is despised because of its intermingling with the Gentiles (Mt 4:13-15), where the people speak a dialect (Mt 26:73). This backward area is the area where He grew up. In that respect, too, He has no prestige. The way of God leads Him from Nazareth in Galilee to the Jordan, for there He is to be baptized by John. From there He will begin His ministry.

In baptism Christ takes the place of His people before God. He has nothing to do with sin. But by letting Himself be baptized He shows His desire to

join those of His people who, under the influence of the Word, are taking the first step in the right direction.

Coming up out of the water, He immediately sees the heavens opening, or being parted, and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. The word “immediately” appears about forty times in this Gospel. This word does not indicate haste, but indicates an action without hesitation, a decisive action.

God shows Him that He is parting the heavens. The parting of the heavens occurs only in this Gospel, which presents the Son as the perfect Servant. It shows the full joy of God over Him Who, in His baptism, unites Himself with His repentant people. The Lord Jesus sees the heavens opening, it is meant for Him. Receiving the Spirit is also personal for Him because He is worthy of it personally. The dove is the symbol of cleanness and peace. We receive the Spirit because He made us worthy because of His blood.

Then a voice comes out of the heavens that is also meant for Christ personally. The words are addressed to Him on earth. Earlier there was the voice, of John, in the wilderness to the people. Now the Father gives testimony concerning the Son, while the Spirit descends upon the Son. God shows His delight in His servant (Isa 42:1). This is the first time the Trinity is fully revealed.

Through this testimony of the Father from heaven concerning His Son, no one can misunderstand His baptism, as if He would be one of the many sinners who are baptized. This testimony precedes and supports His service. It is meant for bystanders, but addressed to the Lord Jesus personally. It is a personal encouragement before the beginning of His ministry.

Mk 1:12-13 | Tempted in the Wilderness

*12 Immediately the Spirit *impelled Him [to go] out into the wilderness. 13 And He was in the wilderness forty days being tempted by Satan; and He was with the wild beasts, and the angels were ministering to Him.*

After the Lord Jesus is irradiated by heavenly light, He now, impelled by the Spirit, enters into the presence of the prince of darkness. The first act of the Spirit is to lead Him to a field where He will be tested before He begins His public service. This also happens “immediately”, without delay.

He is also “impelled”, which indicates eagerness, determination to serve. This word indicates the great power of the Spirit that is available to Him as Man to defy the horror of the wilderness where satan tempts Him. It is His natural place to be with God, but love and obedience bring Him everywhere sin has brought us, to our deliverance.

When the first man appeared, he too was almost immediately tempted by the devil, and the first man failed. Now that the second Man appears, He must be tempted by the devil too. Mark speaks of “satan”, for it is about the opposition that Christ will encounter in His service from this enemy who spares no one and nothing. In totally different circumstances than Adam was, He remains standing. The first man was in paradise, the second Man is in a wilderness, in which the world has been changed by the sin of the first man and where satan is host.

He is “with the wild beasts”, animals that have become wild by the sin of man. They acknowledge in Him their Creator. He closed the mouth of lions when Daniel was with these beasts in the den (Dan 6:22). He is with them in majesty, while also being the humble Servant. We also see this fact in the angels who come after the temptations to serve Him. In Eden angels turned against the disobedient man (Gen 3:24), here they serve the obedient Man.

We hear no details about the temptations here, only the fact that He is tempted, the circumstances in which that happens, the result, and that the temptations last for forty days. The number forty represents a full time of trial. Satan uses all his wiles to lead the Lord away from the path of obedience.

We have the introduction to the Lord’s action in the preceding section (verses 1-13). It is a brief introduction, but full of the dignity of His Person. We find four testimonies:

1. The testimony of the Word of God in two quotations which show that He is *Yahweh* (verses 2-3);
2. the testimony of John: He is more than John (verses 7-8);
3. the testimony of His personal glory as the beloved Son, testified in
 - (a) the descending of the Spirit upon Him and

- b) what the Father says of Him (verses 10-11);
- 4. the testimony of angels in their serving Him (verse 13).

Mk 1:14-15 | Start of the Service

14 Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

John experiences the enmity of the world. He, who is Elijah who was to come (Mal 4:5), leaves the stage in a quite different way than was reserved for Elijah (2Kgs 2:1). This is the appropriate time for the Lord to begin His public service. The shining and burning lamp that John was (Jn 5:35) disappears with the coming of the Light, that is the Lord Jesus (Jn 1:5).

The first thing Christ does here is preach the gospel. In His service, the power of His word is always expressed. We notice that when His word sounds: "Follow Me" (verse 17). That word works that four disciples follow Him immediately. Then He teaches the people with authority (verse 22). He also speaks with authority and an unclean spirit comes out (verses 25,27).

He preaches that the kingdom of God is at hand. For He, the King of that kingdom, presents Himself. But we will see that the public power of the kingdom is postponed because He is rejected.

The reign of satan is visible in the world. Yet now, in the time in which we live, there is already an area where Christ is Lord and Master. This is the kingdom of God in its hidden form. Although the kingdom is not yet visible, it is present, namely, in the heart of those who accept Christ as the Lord of their life (Rom 14:17).

There is another important lesson in the announcement that John has been taken into custody with the immediate consequence that the Lord Jesus begins to preach. When a voice is silenced, God always raises a new voice to preach His gospel. Am I willing to be used when others are silenced? Am I prepared to go on, realizing that the same fate awaits me (possibly)?

The content of the Lord's preaching is no different than that of John. The time has come for the kingdom of God to be established because the King

is present. To enter the kingdom conversion and faith in the gospel are necessary. That its outward power cannot come, but will be delayed, is because the Preacher is rejected. But that is not yet the case here. The Lord begins by preaching the good news that God is introducing His kingdom, submitting everything to the authority of His Son. Those who repent will experience that God turns everything for the good of those who believe.

Mk 1:16-20 | The First Disciples

16 As He was going along by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen. 17 And Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men." 18 Immediately they left their nets and followed Him. 19 Going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were also in the boat mending the nets. 20 Immediately He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went away to follow Him.

The Lord wants followers and fellow workers in His service. He wants to take them with Him, that they may see how He works, and learn from Him. He wants to shape them so that they will proclaim the good news as His followers in the world. The four disciples who are called are diligent in their daily work. The Lord calls people in His service who also roll up their sleeves in society.

Peter and Andrew are fishing. Their profession is a striking picture of the work for which they are destined: catching fish from the sea of nations. On the day of Pentecost, Peter catches three thousand fish (Acts 2:41).

The Lord calls them to His service. Earlier He called them as sinners to give them eternal life (Jn 1:41-43). Now He wants them to become fellow workers in His service. First repentance, then calling them to follow Him and learn from Him, and thirdly, serving independently. It begins with "follow Me". That means, not being in front of Him, but being close to Him in a way that they can see and hear how He is doing His service. In this way they, and we, can learn to serve.

The great Servant of God calls them and they obey immediately as servants who are subservient to Him. When He calls, everything must be left

behind. This does not happen out of indifference to what they possess, but in the confidence that He will take care of what is left behind.

He calls two more brothers: James and John. They are busy mending the nets. This is a picture of restoring relationships among believers. This is beautifully rendered in 1 Corinthians 1 where the same Greek word that is translated here with “mending” is translated with “complete” (1Cor 1:10). This will later become their task, as the letters they wrote make clear. For this purpose they are now in training with the Lord. We see that servants have different tasks. No one can imitate or replace another. Each is needed in his place.

Also with these two brothers the call of the Lord is powerful. They leave their family relationships and their activities to follow Him. His calling is beyond earthly bonds, but without disregarding them to the slightest degree.

Mk 1:21-28 | An Unclean Spirit Cast Out

*21 They *went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and [began] to teach. 22 They were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as [one] having authority, and not as the scribes. 23 Just then there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, 24 saying, “What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!” 25 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be quiet, and come out of him!” 26 Throwing him into convulsions, the unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice and came out of him. 27 They were all amazed, so that they debated among themselves, saying, “What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.” 28 Immediately the news about Him spread everywhere into all the surrounding district of Galilee.*

In the section of verses 21-39 we see a day in the Lord’s life, from early Saturday morning to early Sunday morning. For Him it is a day full of activity, for through sin there can be no rest for Him (Isa 43:24; Jn 5:17).

In verse 17 it says that “He” walked. Here we read that “they”, that is He and His four disciples, enter Capernaum. The disciples receive their first teaching here. Capernaum is “His own city” (Mt 9:1), the city where He

dwells (Mt 4:13). This city therefore has a great responsibility to accept Him (Mt 11:23). Capernaum is the center of His ministry in Galilee. In the same way, other cities have a certain mark in connection with Him. *Bethlehem* is the place of His birth, *Nazareth* is the city where He grew up and *Bethany* is the village of His friends.

It is Sabbath. The Sabbath is the day of rest, but not for the Servant. On the Sabbath, the Lord and His disciples go into the synagogue. The synagogue is the place where the Word of God is spoken and explained. The Lord teaches there. His Word comes with power. He does not proclaim theories, but the living Word of God that touches hearts and consciences.

The scribes with all their knowledge of the Scriptures communicate knowledge and impose a yoke on the hearers. They do not live in and out of the Word, but merely want to highlight their knowledge. Their doctrine is leaven. The Lord does not proclaim an opinion, but teaches with authority. The effect is not that the hearers directly come to faith through it, but that they feel the weight of what He speaks. His Word always does something (Isa 55:11). That which He speaks, He does not precede by "thus says the LORD", for He is the LORD Himself.

The Word of God must be spoken with authority. He does so here as Servant. Speaking with authority is not contrary to humility of spirit, as long as there is no doubt of God's thoughts. The scribes only hold opinions. The Lord does not need to strengthen His teaching by quoting human sources of authority, as His opponents do (Mk 7:7-8).

He does not just bring words, but speaks words that are clothed with the authority of God. It is not only about *what* a servant says, but also *how* he says it. People should feel that it is not just interesting what is said, but that God is speaking here. Scholars speak about their theories; the Lord speaks with authority. He does not speak as Servant out of Himself, but out of God.

He comes with the authority of Someone Who knows the truth He preaches. It is the authority that is in reality God's, He Who can reveal the truth. He also speaks as Someone Who possesses this authority, and He gives the proof of it. The word that thus comes to man has power over demons.

Where He speaks, the power of the evil one cannot remain hidden. What is clear from God will always make the evil one active. In the Gospels it seems as if all cases of demon possession have gathered around the Lord. They will always have been there, but the presence of the Godly light now makes them reveal themselves. Through the presence of the Son of God, satan is cornered and unmasked. To some extent we can perceive this wherever the power of God's truth and His holiness are at work.

It happens in "their synagogue" because there the authority of man applies, that is the authority of scribes. Their synagogue is dominated by an unclean spirit, that is the atmosphere that prevails there. This is directly connected with the teachings of people. A doctrine of man isn't able to keep away an unclean spirit. The man has "an unclean spirit", or is "in an unclean spirit" that is to say in the power of an unclean spirit. This is the opposite of being 'in the Holy Spirit'. How is that with us? Are we in an unclean spirit, that is, is he in charge, or are we in the Holy Spirit, that is, is He in charge?

Demons acknowledge that there is no connection whatsoever between them and Christ. They also acknowledge that He has the power to destroy them and that this is also their ultimate destiny. People may deny His rights, but demons do not. However, He has not yet come to destroy them, but to destroy the works of the devil (1Jn 3:8). The demons confess Him as the Holy One of God. They have no control over Him because He lives in perfect separation or holy in the presence of God.

The Lord does not want a testimony of demons (cf. Acts 16:18). He does what He made Michael say (Jude 1:9) and rebukes the unclean spirit. In the same way He rebukes the winds and the sea and the fever (Mt 8:26; Lk 4:39). He commands the demons – there are several of them, as is evident from the words "we" and "us" – to come out of the possessed one. We don't read anywhere that He has touched a possessed person, which He does with physically ill people.

This is the first time in this Gospel that He shows His power. We see in it what is fundamental to the blessing on earth and that is that satan is cast out. We can compare this to the first sign of Moses to prove his Divine

calling as the deliverer of Israel: the taking up of the staff that had become a serpent (Exo 4:4).

The demons do not resist the word of the Lord and come out. They obey His commandment to remain silent and no longer speak. However, they do their best to make the man suffer as much as possible while coming out. When the devil is about to lose his prey, he rages most fiercely, emphasizing his true character. This shows once again that he is out to destroy. We also read about the casting out of demons in verse 34 and verse 39. The Lord is the "Someone stronger than he" (Lk 11:22) and plunders the devil's house (Mt 12:29).

Deliverance here goes hand in hand with convulsions and crying. To become free is a struggle and goes hand in hand with violence. This also applies to us if we want to make ourselves spiritually free to be used by the Lord. The sound doctrine of Scripture drives the uncleanness out of our lives and thoughts, and this can hurt while it frees us.

The people are all amazed. What they have now experienced is unique. They don't know how to deal with this. They talk to each other about it, but they don't come to the Lord. They also notice that He brings a doctrine that is completely new. They see a big difference between what they have heard so far from their scribes and what they now hear from the Lord Jesus. Their questions are based on the authority of His word and its decisive effect on unclean spirits. At the same time, it makes it clear how hardened man's conscience is. In fact, it merely remains with astonishment and questions.

The miracles of the Lord are not only a sign and proof of power, but also of goodness acting in Divine might. All His works are the fruit of love and witnesses of God's love on earth. Their acceptance means the establishment of the kingdom in the hearts of men.

Both His words and His works bear witness to the authority with which He teaches the people. With us it should also be the case that the words we speak are supported by our works. If this is not so, or even worse, if our works contradict our words, our ministry is weak or in vain.

The news of this miraculous performance quickly circulates throughout the whole environment. It is the talk of the day.

Mk 1:29-31 | Healing of Peter's Mother-In-Law

*29 And immediately after they came out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30 Now Simon's mother-in-law was lying sick with a fever; and immediately they *spoke to Jesus about her. 31 And He came to her and raised her up, taking her by the hand, and the fever left her, and she waited on them.*

The Lord Jesus, having taught in the synagogue, goes with Simon and Andrew to their house. Although His natural place is the bosom and home of the Father, He is not ashamed to stay with His poor disciples. He glorified God in public in the synagogue and now He does so in private. The four disciples keep the Sabbath, but can it be kept more appropriate than in the presence and company of the Son of God? It is beautiful to be in the meeting of the church with the Lord and it is also beautiful if He can come with us when we go home after the meeting.

Just as in the synagogue His power of deliverance was needed for a possessed person, so it is also needed in the house of Peter and Andrew. Fever isn't the same as being possessed by an unclean spirit. Nor is it a picture of opposition to the Lord as the demons express it. Fever is an unhealthy waste of strength. It is a picture of restlessness, of a nervousness caused by sin that makes a person unfit for service.

The family makes its need known to the Lord. They speak to Him "about her". They do so "immediately" and do not postpone it. He listens, He is accessible to everyone. This is the atmosphere of the house, where there is peace and confidentiality.

When the need has been brought to Him, He goes to work. Our prayer puts Him to work. He has personal contact with the suffering man. He did not do this with the possessed (verse 25), but He does it here and with the leper (verse 41), and also with the blind man (Jn 9:6), the dumb man (Mk 7:33), Malchus, of whom an ear has been cut off (Lk 22:51; Jn 18:10), the coffin with a dead man on it (Lk 7:14) and the disciples on the mountain of transfiguration (Mt 17:7). The hand of the Almighty is laid upon the weakness of man. He is a God Who is near and not far away. Not only do demons disappear, but sickness also does not stand where He enters. After amazement in the synagogue there is joy in the house.

As said, fever causes unrest. Fever is also a waste of energy. There is a lot of activity, but no result at all. The hand is powerless for the service. The Lord takes that hand and raises up the woman. He takes away the restlessness and makes her fit to serve again. After the disappearance of the fever a recovery period is not necessary, the healing is immediate and total. The woman can immediately resume her normal household duties and serve the Lord and His disciples.

Mk 1:32-34 | Many Healed

32 When evening came, after the sun had set, they [began] bringing to Him all who were ill and those who were demon-possessed. 33 And the whole city had gathered at the door. 34 And He healed many who were ill with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He was not permitting the demons to speak, because they knew who He was.

It is evening of a day that is typical of the life of the Lord. He is engaged in His service in public and in the houses (cf. Acts 20:20). He teaches and heals and is there for all who call upon Him. Above all, He is focused on doing the will of God. He serves where service is needed, in whatever form.

When evening has come and the Sabbath is over, the first day of the week begins. A new period begins. Also in that new period we see Him as the One Who serves. No more individual cases come, but masses of all those in need come to Him and He works. Those who did not dare to come on the Sabbath are coming now. He is holding, as it were, a great reception. But for Him Who is more than Solomon, there is no queen of Sheba among these people.

Not only the needy come to Him, but also all who bring these needy. They are at the right place, for they are at the door of the house where He is present in blessing. After His service in the synagogue and the house there is also service in the city, in public and for everyone. He is *Yahweh* and is among His people as the One "Who heals all your diseases" (Psa 103:3).

While He is so busy, He does not allow the demons to speak. He never accepts the testimony of demons on earth. One day He will accept their

testimony if, forced to do so, they will bow their knees and confess that He is Lord (Phil 2:10).

Mk 1:35-39 | Preaching Throughout All Galilee

*35 In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left [the house], and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there. 36 Simon and his companions searched for Him; 37 they found Him, and *said to Him, "Everyone is looking for You." 38 He *said to them, "Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby, so that I may preach there also; for that is what I came for." 39 And He went into their synagogues throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out the demons.*

After a day of hard labor for the benefit of others until late in the evening, He sought the fellowship with His Father in the early morning of the next day (Isa 50:4-5). Only here is found the secret of strength and perseverance in the service. This contrasts with refusing and rejecting the testimony of the unclean spirit and the demons in verse 25 and verse 34. His power does not make Him independent. Much of our powerlessness finds its cause in the lack of prayer in silence. Although He is the Son of God, as a dependent Servant He seeks His strength with God in seclusion.

It seems that Peter and the others think that this time is actually lost, loss of valuable time that is not being used. They know that there are many who seek Him and now He is not present. They are full of zeal for the Lord, but see only the outer need of people and not the inner need of fellowship with the Father which is enjoyed in seclusion. His disciples also see in Him a King and want Him to make Himself known to others as such.

When they have found Him, they tell Him that all seek Him. As if that were a reason to return. For us as servants, it is a great danger if all seek us. But the Lord does not seek the open recognition. He does not seek people's acclaim and applause. He must be where there is need, not honor. He only wants to do what He has been sent to do, and that is preaching. That is what He does. He speaks and acts with authority. Thus He proves that God is truly among them in goodness and grace. And wherever He speaks in the synagogues, He exposes the devil and casts out the demons.

The casting out of unclean spirits and demons is part of His teaching with authority (verse 22). It is simply the effect of what He says.

Mk 1:40-45 | A Leper Healed

*40 And a leper *came to Jesus, beseeching Him and falling on his knees before Him, and saying, "If You are willing, You can make me clean." 41 Moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, and *said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed." 42 Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed. 43 And He sternly warned him and immediately sent him away, 44 and He *said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." 45 But he went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the news around, to such an extent that Jesus could no longer publicly enter a city, but stayed out in unpopulated areas; and they were coming to Him from everywhere.*

Someone who has an unclean spirit can keep it hidden. This spirit can express itself by shouting and make itself known that way, but he cannot be seen. Now someone comes to the Lord who is a leper. Leprosy is also a picture of uncleanness. This uncleanness, however, cannot be kept hidden, but is outwardly and perceptible to everyone.

Leprosy represents the sin of one's own will that manifests itself. A leper is a picture of a sinner in whom man's own will has broken out. We see this in Miriam (Num 12:10), Gehazi (2Kgs 5:27) and Uzziah (2Chr 26:19). Only God can cure a leper (2Kgs 5:7). This disease has two consequences. The first consequence is that the leper is removed from the service of God. The second consequence is that he defiles everyone who comes into contact with him.

But a leper can come to Christ. This leper has faith in the power that is in the Lord. He believes that He *can* make him clean, but he is not sure that He is *willing* to do it. That means he has no sense of the love of Christ. His thoughts about himself keep the greatness of love present in Christ hidden from him.

The Lord's answer testifies of His power and His compassion. When the man has expressed his desire, the Lord does what would defile anyone

else: He touches the leper. He is not thereby defiled. He has come so close to the unclean that He can touch him. The only Clean One among men approaches sin, with the result that He takes away what is the sign or its manifestation. It is His joy to take away leprosy.

The result immediately follows the expression of His will. The man is "immediately" cleansed of his leprosy. This is how it is always when God speaks. Here God speaks to man in blessing. "I am willing" denotes His majesty and also His love and compassion with the leper. Here He says it for the cleansing of a sinner from his sins. In John 17 He says again "I desire" or "I will" (Jn 17:24). There He says it with an eye to the future of all who belong to Him. He wants them to be with Him in the Father's house.

Because He does not seek the honor of people, the man should not make a fuss about his healing. The Lord speaks sternly to him about this. As stern as He is about that, so mild is He in sending the man away into freedom. But the healed man still has to act according to the precept of the law. That's why he must go to the priest.

The priest, in whom we see the representative of the law, cannot cleanse. He can do nothing but observe. Leviticus 13-14 describes in detail how he must act. The priest will be obliged to acknowledge the healing and bear witness that God is present in Christ in power and grace. The cleansing of the leper proves that He is God.

The Lord still recognizes the law and the institution of God with respect to cleansing. He commands the man to bring the prescribed offering. That offering speaks of the work He Himself will accomplish on the cross. After the offering, the cleansed leper can live his life in the service of the Lord.

In spite of the prohibition the man is going to proclaim it and make it known everywhere. He is therefore disobedient because the Lord had forbidden it. For us, however, giving our testimony is part of being saved (Rom 10:9-10).

For the Lord Jesus, people's disobedience is only reason for withdrawal. There is hardly anything that interests and affects people more than a miraculous healing. The modern healing movements cause a lot of stir, despite the fact that they do not resemble the healings that Christ has per-

formed. A lot of healers don't shun the enthusiasm of the public either, but rather enjoy it.

Unlike these healers, the Lord seeks spiritual workings and not emotional affections. He is the dependent (praying), perfect (withdrawn), obedient (preaching) Servant. Here He exchanges the city for unpopulated areas, where no one comes, although He is always open to the supplication of anyone in need.

Mark 2

Mk 2:1-4 | A Paralytic Brought to the Lord

*1 When He had come back to Capernaum several days afterward, it was heard that He was at home. 2 And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room, not even near the door; and He was speaking the word to them. 3 And they *came, bringing to Him a paralytic, carried by four men. 4 Being unable to get to Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him; and when they had dug an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic was lying.*

The story of the paralytic links up with that of the leper in the previous chapter. Both states, that of leprosy and that of paralysis, portray man in his sinful state, making him unfit to serve. Leprosy represents the outbreak of sin, and in the paralysis we see powerlessness resulting from sin (cf. Rom 5:6,8). Both ailments make it impossible to come into God's presence. Yet both the leper and the paralytic come to the Lord and He causes them to be delivered from their situation and to be able to serve Him.

The Lord's service brings Him back to Capernaum. In His grace He comes to man more often than just once (cf. Job 33:14), but He does so, as it were, unnoticed. He has withdrawn into the house and still avoids the public. However, it is becoming known that He is in the house. His service is already so well known that many gather in the house. The house is filled to the door with people. No one can enter anymore. And Christ serves with the Word. He has the salvation of each and every one of them in mind. That's why He brings them God's Word.

Then a paralytic is brought to Him. This one was unable to get to the Lord himself, but he has friends who bring him to Him. They carry him, they carry him as a burden they wish to bring to Him. That is what we are allowed to do with others who are on our heart as a burden.

When the friends want to bring their paralyzed friend to the Lord, they are prevented from doing so. There is a crowd that is blocking their way. The crowds are often an obstacle to getting to Christ. Now He could have made

room for them to come to Him. But He doesn't do that because it has to be shown whether they have faith. If there is faith, it also finds a way.

God does not always take away obstacles, but gives a way to overcome them. But then there must be faith. Obstacles make it clear if there is faith. That's what we see in the men. They are not discouraged, but go up on the roof. They break it open right "above Him". Through the opening they let down the pallet on which the paralytic is lying.

The first thing the Lord sees is the faith of the friends. That brings Him to action. He sees a faith that overcomes all difficulties and perseveres. This perseverance of faith is nourished by the feeling of need and by the certainty that help and strength can be found in Him Who is above all difficulties.

Mk 2:5-12 | Forgiveness of Sins and Healing

*5 And Jesus seeing their faith *said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." 6 But some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, 7 "Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?" 8 Immediately Jesus, aware in His spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves, *said to them, "Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts? 9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven'; or to say, 'Get up, and pick up your pallet and walk'? 10 But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—He *said to the paralytic, 11 "I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home." 12 And he got up and immediately picked up the pallet and went out in the sight of everyone, so that they were all amazed and were glorifying God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this."*

The first words the Lord speaks to the paralytic are not 'get up and walk', but are words of forgiveness of sins. He speaks to him first as "son". This testifies of His love. The paralytic also believes, but his real problem is deeper than his body. It seems that the paralysis is caused by a certain sin. The Lord knows the real cause of all ailments and provides the remedy: forgiveness of sins. His words must have been balm for the soul of the paralytic. Forgiveness means that God no longer sees sins and even no

longer remembers them. For God, forgiveness is the door through which He gives all blessings to His 'son'.

The Lord's presence and actions reveal not only faith, but also unbelief. The scribes who are there react in their hearts. They cannot confer with one another in the crowd, but they all have the same thought. They hear something that does not fit into their theology because they do not acknowledge Him Who is the Son of God. They rightly judge that only God can forgive sins. But they err greatly by accusing Him of blasphemy because they do not see that God is among them in this serving Son of Man.

Every sin is always a sin against God and therefore forgiveness through Him is needed above all. Because of that forgiveness, people can also forgive sins to each other (Eph 4:32). Only faith sees God in the Lord Jesus. That He is God the Son is also shown by the fact that He knows the deliberations of their hearts. He looks into the heart of the paralytic and sees His sin. He sees faith among friends. He sees in the scribes what they think. He is the incarnate Word to Whom all things are open and laid bare (Psa 94:11; 139:2; Heb 4:12-13).

He speaks to them concerning the deliberations that they have in their hearts. He does not enter into discussion with them, but asks questions and performs an act that shows Who He is. He asks them to judge which is easier: forgive sins or heal? To them both are impossible, and to God both are possible. One of the evidences of the apostasy of the roman-catholic church is the audacity to claim the power to forgive sins and perform it in the practice of confessing sins to an ecclesiastical representative. Forgiveness can be expressed in words, but they are only presumptuous words without any power.

The Lord Jesus calls Himself "the Son of Man". That name speaks of His rejection now and of His glory over all creation in the future. He has power on earth to forgive sins. Forgiveness of sins happens on earth and not in heaven. It happens on the whole earth and is not limited to Israel.

He adds to His word of power of the forgiveness of sins, His word of power of healing. When He is on earth, forgiveness and healing belong together. He is *Yahweh* "Who pardons all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases" (Psa 103:3). Then He lets the man pick up his pallet, which

has carried him for so long, and go to his house. There he may show and tell what the Lord has done to him.

At the same time as he is instructed to get up, pick up his pallet and walk, the Lord gives the man the strength to do so, with the ability to use that strength. He therefore gets up and goes outside. At first he was lying on his pallet in outward peace, but inside he was restless. Now he is calm inside and outwardly full of activity. Now he can walk and serve with peace in his heart. This is how it should be with us.

The people who have seen all this are all amazed. Many of them had come to the house where He was because they had heard of Him. Now they have also seen what He is capable of. They glorify God for this unprecedented wonder. Any wonder that enables a person to serve is a reason to glorify God.

Mk 2:13-17 | Call of Levi

*13 And He went out again by the seashore; and all the people were coming to Him, and He was teaching them. 14 As He passed by, He saw Levi the [son] of Alphaeus sitting in the tax booth, and He *said to him, "Follow Me!" And he got up and followed Him. 15 And it *happened that He was reclining [at the table] in his house, and many tax collectors and sinners were dining with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many of them, and they were following Him. 16 When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they said to His disciples, "Why is He eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?" 17 And hearing [this], Jesus *said to them, "[It is] not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."*

The Lord is going out again, to the seashore. In the Gospel according to Matthew, the sea is a symbol for the nations as opposed to Israel. In the Gospel according to Mark, the sea especially points to the vast expanse of His service. He teaches in the houses and in public (cf. Acts 20:20). The area of His service is now public. By the sea, the whole crowd comes to Him and He teaches them again. His teaching is a blessing, a rain, a dew (Deu 32:2) to refresh the hearers. His words "are spirit and are life" (Jn 6:63),

in contrast to the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees who do not live by what they teach and tie up heavy burdens on men (Mt 23:3-4).

After having taught the crowd, the Lord moves on. He also has an eye for the individual. He sees Levi, that is Matthew, sitting in the tax booth. Here we do not see a man who comes to Him, like the leper, or a man who is brought to Him, like the paralytic, but a man to whom He goes. He knows Levi and knows from whom he is descended. He also knows what is in this man for Him. That is why He says to Levi to follow Him. He speaks only two words: "Follow Me." Here's the amazing attraction of the word, His Word. Two words are enough to make Levi leave everything and commit his whole future to Him.

After his calling, Levi immediately shows something of his Master's spirit. His service begins immediately, without training. He begins at home, where he prepares a meal. He begins to live according to what is written in Psalm 112 (Psa 112:9), without having been commissioned to do so. He shows hospitality, first of all to the Lord and His disciples, but also to his colleagues and other sinners, in the hope that they too will find Him Who has captured his heart. They are all people of whom we read that they follow Him.

The scribes and Pharisees are blind to His glory. For them He has no attraction whatsoever. They only criticize and oppose Him, for they do not follow Him. They see what the Lord is doing, without taking part themselves in the meal of joy which Levi organized because Christ has come into His life. It shows that they are completely insensitive to grace. They don't want to participate in it themselves, but they also begrudge grace to others. That is always the hallmark of a legal person.

Tax collectors and sinners are groups of people they despise, whereas these are the very people for whom the Lord has come. Between what concerns Him and what drives the religious leaders is an enormous distance, a deep gulf. They express their criticism about Him to His disciples. The Lord Jesus hears how these people have approached His disciples. The disciples do not have to answer. He does that for them.

His answer makes clear what spiritual state of health the leaders are in. They consider themselves healthy. That's why they don't need Him as the

Physician. The sinners and tax collectors He eats with know that they are sick, that they are sinners and need salvation. The leaders find themselves righteous. He did not come for them.

Mk 2:18-20 | Question About Fasting

*18 John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and they *came and *said to Him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?" 19 And Jesus said to them, "While the bridegroom is with them, the attendants of the bridegroom cannot fast, can they? So long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. 20 But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.*

Although the Lord has come and John has pointed Him out, John still has followers. Apparently they are so attached to the teachings of John that they will not let go of them in order to follow the Lord. Tradition has more influence on them than the grace that Christ shows. This also connects them to the disciples of the Pharisees. Outward appearances in different religious directions not only separate these religions, but sometimes unite them.

Both the disciples of John and those of the Pharisees therefore notice that the disciples of the Lord deal differently with fasting than they do. What the Lord's disciples do does not fit into their conceptions of fasting. They ask Him questions about it. That in itself is a good thing. He therefore patiently, but also clearly, explains the difference to the two groups of disciples.

He points to Himself as the Bridegroom. He has just had a meal with tax collectors and sinners. These meals are meals of joy to Him and His disciples. He calls His disciples 'attendants of the bridegroom'. As long as He is with them, it is a feast. His presence brings joy and freedom.

The phrase 'attendants of the bridegroom' has to do with sonship, because it literally means 'sons of the wedding hall'. Sons are there for the pleasure of the Father (Eph 1:5). They rejoice in Him Who is the Bridegroom and Who serves to acquire His wife. His wife is not spoken of, but the sons of

the wedding hall are. They already share in the joy of looking forward to the wedding because they are in the presence of the Bridegroom.

The Lord also points out the time when He will no longer be present. He will be rejected and killed. This will cause sorrow to His disciples (Jn 16:19-22) and bring about a great change. That change relates only to His Person Who will be taken away from them. His absence is the cause of great changes in serving God on earth. Outward religious acts lose their significance. Then there will be “worship in the Spirit of God” (Phil 3:3).

Mk 2:21-22 | New and Old Are Incompatible

21 “No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; otherwise the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear results. 22 No one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost and the skins [as well]; but [one puts] new wine into fresh wineskins.”

In the example of “a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment” the Lord shows that the *new* power of the gospel which He preaches is not compatible with the *old* Jewish forms. The gospel would destroy Judaism with which they wanted to connect. The disciples of John and the disciples of the Pharisees must choose. If they stay with the old, they have no part in the gospel and the joy and freedom that goes with it. If they want the new, they will have to let go of the old completely.

He adds another comparison to that of the unshrunk cloth and the old garment. The comparison of the patch of unshrunk cloth and the old garment is more about the outside, the appearance, of both systems. The comparison of the new wine into old wineskins or into fresh wineskins is about the inner strength of the new, the young, the freshness that has come with the coming of the Lord. The old system is full of precepts, the new one shows grace. The new Divine power of the grace seen in Him cannot flourish in the old forms of the Pharisees.

The old garment and the old wineskins represent the old Jewish garment. It is not a question of refurbishing the old, but of accepting something new. The attempt to combine the new appearance and the spirit of the kingdom of God with the old method of Judaism will only end in the destruction

of both. A combination does not mean the restoration of Judaism and it degrades Christendom to an earthly religion.

This is exactly what the history of professing Christianity has shown. Satan managed to mix the old Jewish institutions with Christian truths. In all its apparent glory this can be seen in the roman-catholic church. But also in many protestant churches and evangelical groups, more and more Old Testament rituals are being called back and introduced.

Mk 2:23-28 | Picking the Heads of Grain on the Sabbath

*23 And it happened that He was passing through the grainfields on the Sabbath, and His disciples began to make their way along while picking the heads [of grain]. 24 The Pharisees were saying to Him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" 25 And He *said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he was in need and he and his companions became hungry; 26 how he entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar [the] high priest, and ate the consecrated bread, which is not lawful for [anyone] to eat except the priests, and he also gave it to those who were with him?" 27 Jesus said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. 28 So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."*

This event in the grain fields is an illustration of the new that the Lord has come to bring. There is freedom to pick and eat from the ears on the Sabbath. He is there. The sons of the wedding hall are free to enjoy the blessings of the land on the Sabbath.

Once again the Pharisees make themselves heard because they see something that is not in accordance with their conceptions of the law. That is what they are after, they are searching for it. Tirelessly, they will point out anything that contradicts their conceptions which belong to the old garment and the old wineskins. They appeal to the Lord about the behavior of His disciples.

It is clear that there is no law that forbids eating on the Sabbath from the grain of the field; on the contrary (Lev 23:22). Their disapproval is based on a law they have made themselves. Legalism always makes the law more demanding than God has said. It adds human opinions to God's law, paying attention only to outer things and making a system out of it. This is a

danger to which man is constantly exposed. Those who are guilty of this show their complete ignorance of God, Who is out to show grace.

In His answer the Lord appeals to their knowledge of Scripture. The history to which He refers is from the time when David, God's anointed king, was still rejected and fleeing from Saul. At that time David suffered want, and so did those who were with him. This is exactly what the Pharisees now see before them in the true David with His disciples. They are also hungry.

The Pharisees have, of course, read this history many times, but they have never read it properly and therefore have not really understood it. They have never seen its true meaning. The true meaning stands for them in the Person of Christ, but they are blind to it because they behave like Saul.

Could it have been God's purpose to let His anointed king die of hunger by His precepts, together with those who were with him? God did not give His precepts for this. If people had kept them, this situation would never have happened. Now that His anointed king was being persecuted, sticking to His precepts had not the least value to Him.

The showbread that represents God's people in their unity before Him (Lev 24:5-9) had lost that value to Him, because the people had turned away from Him. This showbread no longer had any symbolic meaning to God. By rejecting His anointed king, God did not limit the eating of the showbread to the priests, but allowed it to be eaten by David and his men. David was called to a service by God, but was on the run. He was holy, that is to say, separated to God to serve Him, and so were his men, allowing them to eat of this holy bread (1Sam 21:1-6).

The Sabbath should be looked at in the same way. The Sabbath was not meant to be a means of aggravating the suffering of poor people. It was meant as a blessing. The Sabbath was not a day to reign over man, but for the welfare and rest of man, to direct his thoughts by means of that day to something higher than the work of his hands. The Pharisees had made the Sabbath a yoke, whereas God had purposed it as a blessing. Under the law there are precepts attached to the Sabbath celebration, but the Lord restores the Sabbath to its original, true meaning.

The Sabbath is based on two great Divine truths: creation and the law. Both events are of great importance to man and to Israel. But the Christian belongs to neither. He is not bound to the old creation, for he is a new creation, and he is not bound to the earthly Israel, but to the heavenly church. For the Christian, therefore, the first day of the week is the day of remembrance, for then Christ rose from the grave and opened the new world with a new state of affairs.

To the Pharisees, who have falsified the meaning of the Sabbath, He lets it be known that He is the "Lord also of the Sabbath" and not they. The Person of Christ is above all institutions. The name "Son of Man" shows the glory of His Person as the rejected, suffering Man. As such, and not only as God, He is exalted above the Sabbath: He is Lord of the Sabbath. This will become visible when the great Sabbath for creation comes when He accepts His reign, which is at the introduction of the millennial realm of peace. Then His people, all who belong to Him, will share in it.

The question is whether God can act in grace and bless in sovereignty among His people. Should He submit Himself to the authority of people who, while turning against His goodness, make false appeals to His institutions? Or can He do good according to His own power and love as the One Who is above all things? Will God allow Himself to be limited by man in the work of His goodness, which in truth is the new wine that the Lord Jesus brings to man?

Mark 3

Mk 3:1-6 | A Withered Hand Healed

*1 He entered again into a synagogue; and a man was there whose hand was withered. 2 They were watching Him [to see] if He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. 3 He *said to the man with the withered hand, "Get up and come forward!" 4 And He *said to them, "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to kill?" But they kept silent. 5 After looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, He *said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored. 6 The Pharisees went out and immediately [began] conspiring with the Herodians against Him, [as to] how they might destroy Him.*

The Lord enters the synagogue again (Mk 1:21). The synagogue is the place where the people of God come together and the law is studied. He goes in there to look for a man who needs Him and whom He wants to make fit to enjoy the blessings. It is Sabbath and that is the opportunity to minister in the synagogue with the Word. Among those present is someone with a withered hand. He cannot pick ears and rub them fine and eat from them (cf. Mk 2:23), he cannot enjoy the good gifts of God. But now the good Gift comes to him.

The opponents of the Lord are also present. They see both His goodness and the man who needs it. In their minds they combine them. They suppose the Sabbath will not hinder Him from healing the man. In their hearts, however, there is hatred for His goodness, while there is indifference to the needs of the man. Their only concern is that their precepts be kept.

It is striking that satan instinctively senses what the Lord will do. In the same way the world knows what a child of God will do or should do. For example, the world is surprised when it finds a Christian in an environment where he does not belong.

The Lord accepts the unspoken challenge and places the man in the front, so that everyone may witness this act of mercy. He publicizes the healing

in an open way, showing to all what grace is. It is, as it were, an invitation to all to share in it. The man also has to do something. He must take the place that the Lord designates for him: he must come forward. In this way he becomes the visible proof to all of the grace that Christ will grant him.

Before the Lord heals, He wants to address the consciences of His opponents with a question about the purpose of the Sabbath. How bad must a system be that makes it necessary to ask whether it is lawful to do good! His question is whether an act of mercy performed on the Sabbath becomes a violation of the law because that act is performed on the Sabbath. He has come to do good. There is a need for that here. That is why He does good. It would be a sin not to do it (Jam 4:17). His act of goodness means to the man that he will be able to live. The law kills, but the Lord has come to give life.

His opponents do not answer His question. They know what the right answer is, but do not want to give it. They hate Him and His goodness because He doesn't accept their home-made laws.

We clearly see how the old system, which is based on what man should be toward God, is being replaced by what God is to man. The old system comes from God, but it has been made by man into a system of hatred for the full revelation of God in Christ. Christ is not there to support the Pharisees in their thinking about the law, but to prove His own grace. God's laws were never meant to block His goodness.

The Lord responds to their silence with a penetrating look with which He looks all His adversaries around Him into the eyes. The expression that the Lord "looks around" is found five times in this Gospel (Mk 3:5,34; 5:32; 10:23; 11:11). The expression occurs a sixth time, but then it refers to the disciples (Mk 9:8). His gaze is a gaze of anger. At the same time there is grief in His heart. He is angry at their sin of mercilessness, for which they will receive His full wrath once. He is grieved because He sees the hardening of their hearts, that they do not want to repent. God hates sin and loves the sinner. Both these feelings are perfectly present in Him at the same time.

As He looks at His adversaries in this way, He addresses His words of healing to man. The man has to do something himself again. He must

stretch out his hand. He does so and his hand is restored. Obedience to what God says always results in blessing. The man could have said: "I can't, because my hand is withered." But obedience to what the Lord says will always be accompanied by strength that He Himself grants to do what He says.

The reaction of the zealots for the law is that they are plotting a murder. As if there was no command: "You shall not murder"! That is Phariseeism. They are planning to do evil and kill on the Sabbath, while He is planning to do good and save a life. What a stark contrast. What a grief to Him!

They also don't see it as a problem to connect with the ungodly Herodians, the people who for selfish reasons support Herod's wicked politics. They, who are enemies by nature, find each other in their hatred of Christ. We find this later also with Pilate and Herod (Lk 23:12). This deliberation of Pharisees and Herodians is the first deliberation against Christ to kill Him.

Mk 3:7-12 | Healings by the Sea

7 Jesus withdrew to the sea with His disciples; and a great multitude from Galilee followed; and [also] from Judea, 8 and from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and beyond the Jordan, and the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon, a great number of people heard of all that He was doing and came to Him. 9 And He told His disciples that a boat should stand ready for Him because of the crowd, so that they would not crowd Him; 10 for He had healed many, with the result that all those who had afflictions pressed around Him in order to touch Him. 11 Whenever the unclean spirits saw Him, they would fall down before Him and shout, "You are the Son of God!" 12 And He earnestly warned them not to tell who He was.

The opposition causes the Lord to retreat. This does not mean that the resistance will prevent the river of God's blessing from flowing. That is impossible. On the contrary, opposition is precisely an opportunity to push that flow in a different direction and making it greater, so that more people can get a share in it. The sea speaks of the Lord's great field of work. People come to Him from all sides because they have heard of His deeds of blessing. Thus God's blessing continues to flow to the eternal joy of the poor and needy who bow down before Christ.

In order not to be pushed aside by the crowd, He takes precautions. He, Almighty God, uses human means to do so. He could have made a path between men, just as He did when they wanted to throw Him down the cliff (Lk 4:29-30). Here, however, He is not dealing with opponents, but with people who need Him.

The power of the Lord to heal is present. Everyone who needs Him can reach and touch Him. He is always reachable for those who need Him. He heals not only the physically ill, but also people who are demon-possessed. The unclean spirits cannot remain silent in His presence. In the man in whom they dwell they throw themselves down before Him and confess His Name. 'Shout' means forced acknowledgment expressed in ecstasy. The redeemed confess His Name not shouting loudly, but voluntarily, deeply grateful, with understanding and spiritual insight.

Thus He is engaged in doing good to the people and delivers them, without seeking anything for Himself from them. He does not want the demons to confess His Name openly. He accepts no testimony of man as such and even less of demons. What is the value of an acknowledgment of Who He is if it has not been worked by the Spirit of God?

Mk 3:13-19 | Calling of the Twelve

*13 And He *went up on the mountain and *summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him. 14 And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He [could] send them out to preach, 15 and to have authority to cast out the demons. 16 And He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom He gave the name Peter), 17 and James, the [son] of Zebedee, and John the brother of James (to them He gave the name Boanerges, which means, "Sons of Thunder"); 18 and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot; 19 and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Him.*

All the wonders the Lord performs, He does with effort. In them He always gives of Himself. He needs it after a day or period of being busy for the benefit of people to separate Himself in order to be with His God. He does this also now, but at the same time He wants to involve others in His work. As the true Servant He wants to teach others to become servants in

imitation of Him. That is why He goes up on the mountain. He separates Himself from the people to be with God, and by sovereign election He summons those He wants. And they come.

By going up on the mountain, He shows us that the origin of His ministry is heaven and not men. On the mountain He calls the disciples to Himself, which also shows that the origin of their ministry is heaven and not men (Acts 13:1-4; Gal 1:1). And just as He Himself went forth to preach (Mk 1:38), so here He gives the same command to those He calls.

But it begins by saying “that they would be with Him”. Preaching to others must be done from His presence. He determines the moment of sending out. When the time of their preparation is finished, the twelve are sent out. After the command to preach they also get the power to cast out demons. Wonders are never isolated events. They are there to support the Word that has been spoken (Heb 2:3-4).

The Lord appoints them. He has that authority, for He is the Son of God (Mk 1:1). He also gives Simon another name and calls him Peter. This indicates His position of authority. Only persons who have authority over others have the power to give or change names (Gen 1:18; Dan 1:7). If He changes a name, it has a meaning. Peter means ‘stone’. Peter is mentioned first in every list of the twelve.

James and John also get another name. The name He gives them shows that He knows the character of these men. Apart from the fact that that name, “Sons of Thunder”, can refer to their passionate temperament, it can also mean that they will speak the Word with special power in the Name of God. God speaks in thunder to bring forth fruit in waste and desolate land (Job 38:25-27).

Of the other disciples we know little, of a few we know no more than their name. Andrew brings people to the Lord (Jn 1:41-42; 6:8-9; 12:21-22). Philip is tested by the Lord (Jn 6:5) and tells Him about people who seek Him (Jn 12:21-22). Bartholomew is the same as Nathanael (Jn 1:47). Matthew, or Levi the tax collector, is the author of the Gospel that bears his name. Thomas wants to die with the Lord and needs the tangible proof that He has risen (Jn 11:16; 20:24-29).

Apart from James, the brother of John (verse 17), we hear here of another James, namely James the son of Alphaeus. So he is someone other than the brother of the Lord (Gal 1:19) and also someone other than James the Less (Mk 15:40). Thaddaeus is also called Judas (Jn 14:22). Simon is given the addition of “the Cananaean” or “Zealot,” which refers to his earlier violent religious and political views.

The last one mentioned is Judas. He takes last place in every listing of the disciples, always with the reference to what he will do with the Lord.

Mk 3:20-27 | The Lord Jesus and Beelzebul

*20 And He *came home, and the crowd *gathered again, to such an extent that they could not even eat a meal. 21 When His own people heard [of this], they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, “He has lost His senses.” 22 The scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, “He is possessed by Beelzebul,” and “He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons.” 23 And He called them to Himself and began speaking to them in parables, “How can Satan cast out Satan? 24 If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 If a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. 26 If Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but he is finished! 27 But no one can enter the strong man’s house and plunder his property unless he first binds the strong man, and then he will plunder his house.*

We find the Lord in various places in this chapter. We see Him in the synagogue (verse 1), by the sea (verse 7), and on the mountain (verse 13). Now He is again in the house, where again a crowd gathers (Mk 2:1). There is no time to eat bread, so He lets the meal pass by. His service occupies Him completely. How am I concerned about the needs of others? Are my own daily natural needs more important than the spiritual needs of others?

His family hears His tireless work and is ashamed of Him. The fact that they “hear” about it means they have been told. They won’t have been told in the sense of admiring what He does, because when they hear about it, they want to force Him to stop His work. They think they should not only warn Him, but to take custody of Him because they think He has lost His mind. The family name is up for grabs by Him, they think.

His relatives here are the first to attack His service. They are not enemies, yet they have no idea of God's will and God's work. They look at everything with their intellect and think that He, Who lives totally dedicated to God, is out of His mind. The Lord does not respond to their action and their words, which He does later (verses 31-35).

This lack of understanding is to be expected by all those who want to be fully committed to the things of God in imitation of the Lord Jesus. Family and friends will not always be able to appreciate this, but will sometimes feel condemned.

After the admiration of the crowd in verse 20 and the incomprehension of His family in verse 21, the Lord also has to deal with the blasphemy of His enemies in verse 22. These enemies, scholars, have descended from Jerusalem. This indicates their way from the place of blessing and their descent and finally downfall.

They cannot deny the power with which He acts in mercy for the sake of man against satan. They acknowledge that He drives out demons. But if they were to acknowledge that power as something from God, then their religious weightiness was gone, and likewise their profession and their income. That is why they would rather attribute that power to another source, that of satan.

His enemies are not in His immediate vicinity when they speak of Him in this way, but a little further away from Him. That is why He calls them to Himself. Just as He called His disciples to Himself in verse 13, so here He calls His enemies to Himself. He speaks with Divine authority and they come. Thus, when He sits on the great white throne (Rev 20:11-12), all His enemies will appear before Him at His command.

Before He confronts the scribes with the terrible sin they have committed, He first asks them a logical question. That question should make clear to them the folly of their remarks about Him. He does not wait for their answer, but gives it Himself. Every child can understand that internal division in a kingdom destroys this kingdom. To make it even clearer, He adds the example of a house divided against itself. What applies to a kingdom also applies to a house. In both cases internal division means its fall.

What goes for a kingdom and a house also goes for satan. In the kingdom of satan and the house of satan there is no division. All powers of darkness work together to plunge man into disaster and thereby destroy God's work. The Lord Jesus does everything for the glory of God, and thereby destroys the works of the devil (1Jn 3:8b). He was in the devil's house for forty days and forty nights when He was in the wilderness, and bound him there (Mk 1:13). Now He is robbing the house of the strong by freeing people from His power (Mk 5:15). The scribes attribute this work to the devil himself. It is absurd. A more terrible sin is unthinkable.

Mk 3:28-30 | The Blasphemy Against the Spirit

28 "Truly I say to you, all sins shall be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they utter; 29 but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin" – 30 because they were saying, "He has an unclean spirit."

Of "the sons of men" – and not of angels – all sins and blasphemies of any kind can be forgiven. If only there is repentance of sins and conversion to God. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from every sin (1Jn 1:9). That is a great word of encouragement for anyone who thinks his sins are too great and too many.

But there is one sin that shall never be forgiven, and that is "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit". This is no exception to the previous general promise. Every sin and blasphemy is done against the triune God and therefore also against the Holy Spirit. Now here the phrase "whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit" is connected with the statement of the Lord Jesus, the Judge, that there is no forgiveness for this in eternity. The Lord says that someone who is guilty of this is guilty of eternal sin. That must therefore be a specific sin and that is what it is.

The Holy Spirit also makes clear what that specific sin is: "Because they were saying: "He has an unclean spirit."" The specificity of blaspheming against the Holy Spirit is this: attributing the deeds of the Lord Jesus to an unclean spirit. The Lord Jesus always did everything perfectly through the Spirit. All His works and all His words were unmistakably the works and words of God the Holy Spirit. Whoever sees this with his own eyes and in

spite of that attributes His works to the devil, does so consciously and with the purpose of making Him reprehensible in His service.

This sin could only be committed when the Lord Jesus was on earth. It is also impossible for a born-again person to commit this sin. Anyone in distress because he thinks he has committed that sin proves precisely by that fear that he has not committed that sin. He who blasphemes against the Spirit does not have a guilty conscience, but a completely hardened conscience. While the demons acknowledge Him as the Son of God (Mk 1:24) when He casts them out through the Holy Spirit, these people blaspheme the work the Spirit does through Him.

Mk 3:31-35 | The True Family of the Lord

*31 Then His mother and His brothers *arrived, and standing outside they sent [word] to Him and called Him. 32 A crowd was sitting around Him, and they *said to Him, "Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are outside looking for You." 33 Answering them, He *said, "Who are My mother and My brothers?" 34 Looking about at those who were sitting around Him, He *said, "Behold My mother and My brothers! 35 For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother."*

After the complete rejection by the religious leaders, the Lord is going to distinguish between the natural ties He has with Israel and a remnant with whom He connects Himself. The reason for this is the arrival of His mother and His brothers who want Him to come to them. Although His relatives are not hostile, they are "outside". They are not under His blessing influence; they are not with Him in the house. There is another company around Him.

While He is in the house with a crowd around Him, His relatives let Him know they are looking for Him. Because of their natural ties with Him, they think they have a certain right to Him. He has to be there for them first, and He has to leave the crowd for what it is.

The Lord answers with the question: "Who are My mother and My brothers?" With this question He does not set aside the natural family ties. He has set them as the Creator Himself and woe to the human being who doesn't acknowledge them. But natural family ties should not rule over

the connections between the members of the spiritual family, the family of God. At the same time we must handle this principle with caution. There have been believers who have neglected their natural ties for the sake of so-called spiritual activities. That, of course, is not what the Lord means to say.

He acknowledges those who listen to His words as His family. As He says so, He looks about at those who were sitting around Him, to have personal contact with each and every one of them, as it were. With this statement He also indicates the breach between Him and the people from whom He was born as Man and for whom He came. He sets the old relationships aside and now establishes new ones. The basis for the new relationships is to do the will of God. He executes that will perfectly. Only those who are connected with Him through His work on the cross also do God's will. By giving Himself for them, He has made them His brethren (Jn 20:17; Heb 2:11).

Mark 4

Introduction

In the previous chapter, the testimony of the Holy Spirit was rejected, as was the Son of Man personally. As a result, the Lord no longer acknowledges the old relationships. Instead, He forms new relationships (Mk 3:35). Subsequently, a description of His ministry follows in this chapter.

1. In the form of parables the course and results of His service are shown (verses 1-20).
2. We also see that the responsibility of the disciples in view of their participation in this work is discussed (verses 21-25).
3. We also see the rest of those who, as they work, trust in God (verses 26-29).
4. Finally, at the end of this chapter, we see the circumstances of the disciples during their ministry (verses 35-41). The storm in which they find themselves points to the storms that will come to test their faith, while the Lord seems to pay no attention to them.

Mk 4:1-9 | Parable of the Sower

1 He began to teach again by the sea. And such a very large crowd gathered to Him that He got into a boat in the sea and sat down; and the whole crowd was by the sea on the land. 2 And He was teaching them many things in parables, and was saying to them in His teaching, 3 "Listen [to this]! Behold, the sower went out to sow; 4 as he was sowing, some [seed] fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate it up. 5 Other [seed] fell on the rocky [ground] where it did not have much soil; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of soil. 6 And after the sun had risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. 7 Other [seed] fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. 8 Other [seeds] fell into the good soil, and as they grew up and increased, they yielded a crop and produced thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold." 9 And He was saying, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

This chapter shows again how the Lord continues His ordinary work of teaching. Many are attracted thereby. Because He is by the sea and there is a danger that the crowd will drive Him into it, He gets into a boat in the sea. As He sits down there, He speaks to the crowd standing on the land. By sitting down in a ship, He separates Himself from the people who, as we have seen in the previous section, have rejected Him in their religious leaders, where they attribute His work to the devil (Mk 3:22).

He starts again with His ordinary work, teaching, but He gives this teaching in a different form. In connection with the development that has just taken place in His relationship with the Jews, He will make use of parables. He explains the reason for this in verses 10-12.

With the call "listen!" (verse 3) He urges the whole crowd to listen carefully to what He is going to say. Although He speaks to the crowd, it is the condition of each individual person that matters. Each individual person is a kind of ground into which the seed falls. He presents to them a sower who goes out to sow. That sower is He Himself. He goes out, He has gone out from the Father (Jn 13:3). That He now presents Himself as the Sower means that it is no longer a matter of seeking fruit in His vineyard Israel – and He had come for that purpose – but that, by sowing, He is now going to produce that fruit Himself.

The seed that is sown falls on different types of soil. The first kind is beside the road, the hardened road. The seed that ends up there becomes a prey of birds, because the soil is so hard that it cannot take root. The second kind where part of the seed ends up, is rocky soil. There is a little bit of ground there, which makes it look as if this seed does produce something. But because of the rocky soil, the seed hasn't been able to get deep roots. So when the sun rises, it scorches. Another part ends up between the thorns. There is soil and it can take root, but it can't grow because of the thorns that choke it, so there won't be any fruit from this seed either.

The fourth type of soil is the good soil. The seeds that fall in it grow, increase, and yield fruit. The fruit is represented in different measures. There is seed that bears thirtyfold fruit, there is seed that bears sixtyfold fruit, and there is seed that bears a hundredfold fruit.

In Matthew 13 the order is the other way around (Mt 13:23). There it is about the history of the kingdom of heaven as it has been entrusted to the responsibility of man. Everything that is entrusted to man's responsibility begins well, but then decay makes its entrance and a process of weakening begins. Thus the church starts well on the day of Pentecost and the first days thereafter, but more and more worldly influences cause that first strength and freshness to gradually diminish.

Here in the Gospel according to Mark it is about the work of the perfect Servant. Then the result increases further and further to the perfect measure.

What the Lord says to the multitude at the beginning, "listens", or "hear", He says at the end of the parable to the few who are eager for Divine instruction. We must first listen, or hear, in order to bring forth fruit.

Mk 4:10-12 | Why Parables?

10 As soon as He was alone, His followers, along with the twelve, [began] asking Him [about] the parables. 11 And He was saying to them, "To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but those who are outside get everything in parables, 12 so that WHILE SEEING, THEY MAY SEE AND NOT PERCEIVE, AND WHILE HEARING, THEY MAY HEAR AND NOT UNDERSTAND, OTHERWISE THEY MIGHT RETURN AND BE FORGIVEN."

Those who are genuinely interested in the things of God ask the Lord about the meaning of the parables. In His answer He underlines the distinction between the unbelieving Jews and His disciples. The latter represent the faithful remnant. Parables manifest who truly belong to Him and who do not. Those who belong to Him are taught by Him about the mystery of the kingdom of God. To them He tells that the kingdom of God is not initially established in outward glory, but in a hidden way.

This hidden form of the kingdom is the result of His people rejecting Him. His rejection by the people means postponement of the kingdom in power and majesty on earth. Instead, it is established in the hearts of those who acknowledge Him as their personal Lord (Rom 14:17).

The mystery of the kingdom of God means that Christ tells His servants to consider what they will encounter in their service in that kingdom. The area is vast, but we must count on the fruit being small, and work constantly to bring forth a hundredfold fruit. Ecumenism – and we see this also in fast-growing evangelical denominations – is focused on large fruit which is, however, only a number. Those who are focused on large numbers are blind to the true character of the service.

To those who are ‘outside’ the parables mean judgment. They do not want to bow down to Him because He does not meet their expectations as Messiah. They acknowledge only as Messiah one who delivers them from the yoke of the Romans, ignoring that this yoke of foreign domination is the result of their forsaking of God (cf. Neh 9:35-36).

The parables prevent them from repenting and receiving forgiveness. Indeed, the repentance they would show if He did not speak in parables would not be real repentance. And the forgiveness they would think they have would be an imaginary forgiveness.

Mk 4:13-20 | Explaining the Parable of the Sower

*13 And He *said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables? 14 The sower sows the word. 15 These are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them. 16 In a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky [places], who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; 17 and they have no [firm] root in themselves, but are [only] temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away. 18 And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, 19 but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. 20 And those are the ones on whom seed was sown on the good soil; and they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.”*

The Lord makes it clear that if they understand the parable of the sower, they will understand all parables. For this parable lays the foundation for all other parables.

He does not say that He Himself is the sower, but emphasizes what the sower does. This fits the character of this Gospel in which He is presented as the true Servant. A servant is about what he does, not who he is. The work of the Servant is to sow the Word, these are the words of God. Only the Word gives fruit. Fruit is not obtained through civilization, education, upbringing, or examples, however useful these things may be. The sower sows only the Word and nothing else. The effect of the sown Word does not lie in the Word, but in the condition of the soil. The soil in which the seed falls represents the spiritual state of the human being who hears the Word.

Mark speaks of the seed as “the Word”. Matthew speaks of the seed as “the Word of the kingdom” (Mt 13:19), which indicates the content of the Word. Luke speaks of the seed as “the Word of God” (Lk 8:11), which indicates the source, the origin of the Word.

Those who are beside the road are those who have hardened hearts. When they hear the Word, it does nothing to them. They are so under the influence of Satan that he immediately takes away the sown Word. In this group we see the scribes. With them the soil is so hard that nothing of the seed can grow. Demonic powers take it away. But the application is also for us. For example, we can say: ‘I don’t understand anything’ and then we proceed to the order of the day, without making any effort to understand what we have read. Satan wants us to react like this.

The next group of people consists of those who “immediately receive it with joy”. Joy, however, is never the first result of the sown Word. The first thing the Word does is to discover man to himself, through which he sees that he is a lost sinner who deserves hell. When God speaks to someone, He speaks to that person’s conscience, awakening a sense of sin and guilt (Acts 2:37). When people joyfully accept the Word immediately, there is no root. People can become emotional from what they see or hear without their conscience being reached (Acts 23:27-28). As soon as pressure is put

on them because of their confession, they will be exposed. God uses oppression or persecution to test the authenticity of faith.

In this second group and also in the next group, we can see the Lord's relatives. They are not enemies of Him and the Word. There is a soil in which the seed falls and shoots. Yet there is no fruit. This happens when the Word is only accepted by feeling. They become happy and get a warm feeling, but the conscience remains unaffected. When they are away from the sphere of the Word, they have forgotten everything again. The sown Word has not convinced the heart of sin and judgment. That would bring repentance. The application to us is that there is a danger that anything but our conscience will be appealed to, so that we will not be brought to a life of dedication to Christ.

The third category of people who hear the Word are compared to those who are sown between the thorns. These people live in conditions that influence them so much that the Word heard is overgrown by them. The circumstances in which they live can consist of worries, wealth, and desires.

Poverty and wealth are two extremes. Both have the great danger of seizing us so much that we forget the Word (Pro 30:8-9). He who is poor must be wary that the worries do not occupy him in such a way that the Word cannot do its work. He who is rich must be wary that he is not carried away by the deceitfulness of riches by which he becomes disconnected from God and the Word cannot affect him.

For all people, desires for all kinds of other things can come in, that is, into the heart. The things we have are a danger, and the things we don't have are if we want them. What the eye sees awakens the desire to want it. If someone can only think about that, he shuts himself off from the workings of the Word, and it becomes unfruitful. This too has its application to the believers.

Even on the good soil there is a difference in result. What is fatal for the unbeliever can seriously harm the fruit of the believer. Fruit can be described as follows: the received blessing is returned to God – what we do by worshiping Him for that blessing He has given – and life is lived in His

presence and to His glory. In this way God receives fruit from the life of His own.

As said, in the Gospel according to Matthew we see the reverse order because it is about what man does with what is entrusted to him and then we see that decay occurs in it. Here it is about the service, and in this we see an increase, because the Lord's service is aimed at us producing more fruit.

Mk 4:21-25 | Under a Basket or Under a Bed

21 And He was saying to them, "A lamp is not brought to be put under a basket, is it, or under a bed? Is it not [brought] to be put on the lampstand? 22 For nothing is hidden, except to be revealed; nor has [anything] been secret, but that it would come to light. 23 If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear." 24 And He was saying to them, "Take care what you listen to. By your standard of measure it will be measured to you; and more will be given you besides. 25 For whoever has, to him [more] shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him."

After the Lord Jesus has compared the Word to seed sown to bear fruit, He now compares the Word to a lamp (Phil 2:15; Psa 119:105). Where there is fruit, there is also testimony. The fruit must become a light. The implanted Word not only results in salvation of people and fruit among believers, but also leads to testimony.

He speaks "to them", they are the ones who ask for the explanation (verse 10). They are now also held responsible for giving testimony. The light received must be dispersed. The spreading of light has nothing to do with the possession or exercise of a gift, but with the new life that Christ is and becomes visible.

Just as the seed remains without fruit or produces but little fruit due to certain causes, the light of testimony can also be dimmed due to certain causes. A first cause is the basket. This is a picture of commerce or activity. Activities of all kinds can occupy a person in such a way that there is no room for a testimony to the Lord.

Another cause is the bed that can become a large bed like that of Og king of Bashan (Deu 3:11). This is a picture of laziness and ease. Also because of

this, Christians do not bear witness to the Lord Jesus. They prefer an easy life rather than the effort to go out and tell others of Him.

The light belongs on the lampstand, so that it is spread unhindered. To be a light is more difficult than speaking to a large group. It is about showing the Lord Jesus as the light in all things of life every day, all day long.

The Lord warns that it will become public how our testimony has been. There will come a time when everything that covered the light and prevented it from spreading will come to light. Everything that could not bear the light will be revealed, even the most hidden motives of the heart (1Cor 4:5).

The purpose of this warning is that we will be faithful in giving our testimony. The Lord is also saying that the hidden faithful remnant of the Jews will someday be manifested in the future. The little fruit will be seen everywhere. The fact that what He said in secret and is written down here by Mark is also a fulfillment of that word.

This word about the light, like His word about the seed (verse 9), is of personal importance to every listener. In order to both bear fruit and radiate light, we must listen. The call "if a person has ears to hear, let him hear" is therefore an urgent appeal to each of the disciples individually.

In listening, the disciples must heed what they hear, for God will act with them according to their faithfulness in the stewardship of the Word entrusted to them. We must heed what we hear, for it is our task to distribute what we ourselves have received. That is why it is important to listen and keep our ear to the ground. Do we get up in the morning with the desire to listen to the Lord (Isa 50:4)?

Our spiritual poverty comes to light when we have nothing to share. With the standard of measure with which we measure others, we ourselves will be measured. Only they possess something who distribute it in grace, and they will receive more abundantly (Pro 11:25). Those who as a matter of fact possess nothing will also lose the pretense of what they possess.

For example, the Jews possessed the oracles or words of God (Rom 3:2), but they did not really possess them because they did not recognize Him about Whom it is all about. Therefore they – the unbelieving Jews – will

lose everything that God's Word contains for them and on which they boast. The same goes for the Christians who are Christians by name only, who confess Christ only with their mouths, but have no new life.

Mk 4:26-29 | Parable of the Seed Growing by Itself

26 And He was saying, "The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil; 27 and he goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts and grows—how, he himself does not know. 28 The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head. 29 But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

The Lord tells a parable about the kingdom of God. He compares that kingdom to a man casting seed upon the soil. That man is He Himself. He sows to bring the kingdom of God into being. The coming into being of that kingdom is His work. This and the next parable speak about the two sides of the Christian testimony on earth. In the first parable – that one is found only in this Gospel – we see the Lord Jesus as a man who has sown and seemingly does not further concern himself with the seed.

Just as the seed rises without any action on the part of the sower, so Christ will let the gospel spread itself in the world without intervening in any noticeable way. The defining characteristic of the kingdom is that the King is not present. To the servant, it means simply sowing and leaving the growth to the Lord. We do not have to care what the seed does, we only have to sow.

We know that God gives the growth (1Cor 3:6). The servant cannot make any contribution to that. He sows and can do nothing else. The progress of the gospel does not depend on the activity and efficiency of the workers, but on the power of the seed itself. It is the Word of God that works (1Thes 2:13). On the process of growth we have no influence. But what is done in faithfulness to God, He blesses in secret. This 'growth law' illustrates growing in grace and in understanding spiritual realities. We do not become matured Christians all of a sudden; it takes a process.

When God's work in the hidden is completed, the harvest can take place. Then we see the great Servant become active again. Just as He is personally

involved in sowing, so is He involved in mowing, even though He is seemingly not involved during growth.

Mk 4:30-32 | Parable of the Mustard Seed

30 And He said, "How shall we picture the kingdom of God, or by what parable shall we present it? 31 [It is] like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the soil, though it is smaller than all the seeds that are upon the soil, 32 yet when it is sown, it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and forms large branches; so that THE BIRDS OF THE AIR can NEST UNDER ITS SHADE."

The Lord tells another parable of the kingdom of God. He introduces it with the question to picture or present it. He knows, but He wants to make His hearers aware of the parable He is about to tell.

This parable of the mustard seed we know from Matthew 13 (Mt 13:31-32). There the Lord compares the kingdom of heaven to a mustard seed. What He calls there the kingdom of heaven, He calls here the kingdom of God. Both are compared to a mustard seed. So it is the same kingdom, but each is seen from a different point of view. In one case it is about the reign of heaven, in the other case it is about the reign of God. What is the same is that the kingdom is not established in public glory, but is established in a hidden form because of the rejection of the King. In fact, it is established in the hearts of people who confess to have accepted the rejected Lord as King.

The beginning of the kingdom is small. It began with a handful of disciples in an upper room in Jerusalem, where only one hundred and twenty people were gathered (Acts 1:15). The kingdom has not remained small, but has expanded. This did not happen, however, only by adding those who were truly born again. It has become a great power because masses of people have come who saw advantages in acknowledging that Lord, but without really bowing down and submitting to Him. We see this in professing Christianity that strives for power and influence and wants to be accepted in the world.

The birds here are a picture of demonic powers. They find shelter in the professing, apostate church at the end of its history, which is professing

Christianity under the leadership of the roman-catholic church, Babylon the great (Rev 18:2). The faithful servant sees all this, but he waits patiently until “the crop” is there and “the harvest” has come (verse 29).

Mk 4:33-34 | Using Parables

33 With many such parables He was speaking the word to them, so far as they were able to hear it; 34 and He did not speak to them without a parable; but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples.

The Lord has spoken more parables, but Mark does not recount them for us. The parables used are attuned to the hearers. The Lord uses language they can understand. He knows what they are capable of hearing, and He takes that into account. This is also an important clue for us. When we tell others something about the Lord, we have to consider what they can comprehend.

Through the use of parables, the true disciples become public. Those who really want to learn from Him understand that He wants to teach them with the parables, and they ask Him for the meaning. These are “His own disciples”. They are taught separately by Him about the explanation. That doesn’t mean the crowd is being kept ignorant. He tells parables they can understand, but for the deeper meaning they depend on the Lord’s explanation.

Mk 4:35-41 | The Storm at Sea

*35 On that day, when evening came, He *said to them, “Let us go over to the other side.” 36 Leaving the crowd, they *took Him along with them in the boat, just as He was; and other boats were with Him. 37 And there *arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. 38 Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they *woke Him and *said to Him, “Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?” 39 And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Hush, be still.” And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm. 40 And He said to them, “Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?” 41 They became very much afraid and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?”*

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, Mark gives us an overview of the Lord's service and of our service. He is the true Servant and prepares us as servants to follow in His footsteps. He has shown the results of the Divine service in the parable of the sower. The fruit is comparatively small. What brings fruit must become more fruit, and then the fruit must become light. What He has taught in secret must be passed on publicly to others. Then He also tells in two parables the two sides of the service that are important for today's dispensation. It is about the inner and the outer side of growth. God works the growth, but outwardly it becomes a tree.

In the last event of this chapter, the storm at sea, we also see that the Lord is asleep, as in the first parable (verse 27). He sleeps aboard the boat in the storm. In the storm we see the outward circumstances directed against "the One Who serves" and His servants.

The Lord has been busy all day, until the evening (cf. Psa 104:23). When evening falls, He commands His disciples to go over to the other side. He says: "Let us go over." He goes with them. He's with them, though He sleeps. So it seems sometimes when we serve Him. We know He's with us, but sometimes it seems like He's asleep. As long as there are no storms, we don't notice, but when storms come, who we are will be revealed and we will see Who He is.

When He goes aboard, He leaves the crowd behind. The disciples take Him, "just as He was", into the boat. This addition, which only Mark gives us, shows us how important it is to allow the Lord into our life "just as He is" and not to create another image of Him. It doesn't suit us to tell Him how He should be and that we don't allow Him into our life until He answers our ideas about Him.

We have to ask ourselves how we take Him with us in our individual and also in our church boat of life. Paul speaks in 2 Corinthians 11 about the danger of tolerating someone who preaches another Jesus than he has preached (2Cor 11:4). If we do that, we do not take Him with us just as He is. In order to know whether we take the Lord Jesus "just as He was", we will have to open the Bible. If we keep what we read about Him in our heart, it will result in us living our lives according to His will. Then He

will take the first place in everything and will be followed and served by us with love and thankfulness.

In addition to the boat on which He is aboard, there are other boats with Him. It is reminiscent of those believers who do all kinds of things in His Name. They are not with the disciples (Mk 9:38-39), but the Lord uses them because they are acting in His Name. All those other boats are also at sea and in the storm, but they are with Him. Although He is not with them on board, they also share in the blessing of quieting the storm.

The disciples in the storm are a picture of servants in trials. This event is also a picture of the history of faithful servants through the ages. After showing the development of the sown Word in the previous parables, the Holy Spirit now shows how things will go with the disciples in the time when the Word is sown. They will be in great difficulty. The enemy will create a storm against them.

The storm into which the disciples will go is no ordinary storm. They were used to something. Surely, the fishermen among them were familiar with the water. But here even the most experienced sailors lose all trust in their own skill and, what is worse, their trust in their sleeping Master.

The Lord sleeps in perfect rest, while everything around Him is in turmoil. He is completely opposite of the man in the next chapter. That man is in a place of absolute rest, the tombs, but nowhere is it so restless as in his heart (Mk 5:1-7).

Here we have the only reference in the Gospels to the Lord's sleep. He sleeps the sleep of complete trust in His God (Psa 4:8). From His rest they could have learned to be calm as well. However, we do not see that. We see that they awaken Him and then blame Him for not caring that they perish.

Mark 5

Introduction

In this chapter we see in the first section the service of the Lord in the presence of satan. In the second section we see how He serves in the midst of situations that show man's utter powerlessness and misery. There we see His service in cases of incurable illness and even death, and how people who acknowledge their hopeless condition do not call upon Him in vain. We see not only His victorious power, but also the extent of the deliverance. This too is all education for servants. They may know that He is with them in the storm. They may also know that His power is beyond the power of satan, sickness and death.

These powers can also play a role in the lives of believers. If that is the case, they are impediments to serving the Lord:

The first, the power of satan (verses 1-20), becomes public when the unbridled power of ancient nature is given the opportunity to assert itself.

The second, the flow of blood (verses 25-34), is the uncleanness that comes out of us, defiling ourselves and those around us.

The third, death (verses 35-43), is a condition in which believers sleep in such a way that to them must be called: "Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead" (Eph 5:14). These believers are in a state of sleep, which makes them indistinguishable from the dead.

Mk 5:1-5 | The Gerasene Demonic

1 They came to the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gerasenes. 2 When He got out of the boat, immediately a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met Him, 3 and he had his dwelling among the tombs. And no one was able to bind him anymore, even with a chain; 4 because he had often been bound with shackles and chains, and the chains had been torn apart by him and the shackles broken in pieces, and no one was strong enough to subdue him. 5 Constantly, night and day, he was screaming among the tombs and in the mountains, and gashing himself with stones.

The Lord comes with His disciples safely across the sea. The elements of nature have not been able to stop Him and those who are with Him. Now they come into the land of the Gerasenes to serve there as well.

As soon as the Lord sets foot ashore, a man from an environment that speaks of death comes to meet Him. While this man is outwardly surrounded by death, he has within him an unclean spirit that wants to bring him to death. A man could not be more wretched. The Holy Spirit gives a detailed description of the condition of the man. This is to warn us of the power of satan, of the untamed nature that is controlled by him.

All the laws that men have made are made to tame the old nature. But it can never be tamed. Not even the law of God can. We can't do it at ourselves either (Rom 7:14-15). But the Lord Jesus can make His fiercest opponent His most devoted follower.

The man is not accidentally among the tombs, but has "his dwelling" there. He is at home there. The dead are his companions. In all his personal misery, he is also an untamable danger to others. He is not maintainable in society and therefore expelled. In this man all the power of satan becomes public. No one is able to control him, let alone set him free. He spends night and day restlessly in the tombs, while satan incites him to madness and self-chastisement.

Mk 5:6-14 | A Demon Possessed Set Free

*6 Seeing Jesus from a distance, he ran up and bowed down before Him; 7 and shouting with a loud voice, he *said, "What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God, do not torment me!" 8 For He had been saying to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" 9 And He was asking him, "What is your name?" And he *said to Him, "My name is Legion; for we are many." 10 And he [began] to implore Him earnestly not to send them out of the country. 11 Now there was a large herd of swine feeding nearby on the mountain. 12 [The demons] implored Him, saying, "Send us into the swine so that we may enter them." 13 Jesus gave them permission. And coming out, the unclean spirits entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, about two thousand [of them]; and they were drowned in the sea. 14 Their herdsmen ran away and*

reported it in the city and in the country. And [the people] came to see what it was that had happened.

Then the great Deliverer appears on the scene. Without it appearing that the man has seen the Lord Jesus before, he recognizes Him from afar and runs to Him. The man does not know Him, but the demons who dwell in him know Him. They acknowledge Him as their Superior and honor Him through the man.

The man is identified with the unclean spirit. He doesn't say 'do not torment us', but "do not torment me". Thus in the believer the Holy Spirit identifies Himself with the believer in the most intimate way. Here too the demons acknowledge through the mouth of the man that there is no connection whatsoever between them and the Lord Jesus (Mk 1:24). They can rightly say "what business do we have with each other?" when it comes to any connection with Him. In another way they indeed do have to do with Him. For He is their Judge and will condemn them and cast them into hell. They speak to Him as "Jesus" – demons never speak to Him as "Lord"! – while they acknowledge Him as "Son of the Most High God".

To these statements the unclean spirit comes after Christ's command to leave the man. The Lord Jesus explicitly calls him "unclean spirit". The man will have become very filthy spiritually with all kinds of ideas, so that he will not be able to think soundly. It is therefore a great grace of Christ that He comes to the man without him calling for help. The man could not do that. This is how Christ came to us when we were in the power of the devil.

The Lord wants the unclean spirit to fully speak out and expose himself. There must be nothing left behind in this man. Now it becomes clear that there are many demons in him: a legion. A Roman legion consisted of 6,000 men. Once the devil has entered someone's life, he will take possession of that person more and more by letting as many demons as possible dwell in him.

After the Lord has asked for his name, the unclean spirit urgently implores Him not to send him and his fellow demons outside of the country. In doing so, they acknowledge His power. There appears to be a large herd of swine feeding nearby on the mountain. The possession of swine indicates

disobedience on the side of God's people, for they are unclean beasts. He who owns a herd of them does not heed God's precepts. The demons implore Him to send them into the swine. They want to exchange the man in the tombs for a new home in the swine.

The Lord allows the demons to go into the swine. Unclean spirits go into unclean beasts. By the demons going into the swine it is clearly shown that the dwelling of demons in humans is as certain and real as it is terrible. Their urge for destruction also becomes clear here. If the demons are capable of killing two thousand swine, how terrible the man must have been. How fortunate that the Lord Jesus appears in his life and sets him free!

The swine keepers haven't been able to protect the herd from this outbreak. Powerless and anxious, they will have watched the behavior and demise of the swine. Instead of bowing down to the power of Christ, they flee to the city to tell there, and also in the fields, what happened. The people who hear it want to see it for themselves. They come to see what has happened.

Mk 5:15-20 | Set Free and Sent Out

*15 They *came to Jesus and *observed the man who had been demon-possessed sitting down, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had had the "legion"; and they became frightened. 16 Those who had seen it described to them how it had happened to the demon-possessed man, and [all] about the swine. 17 And they began to implore Him to leave their region. 18 As He was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed was imploring Him that he might accompany Him. 19 And He did not let him, but He *said to him, "Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and [how] He had mercy on you." 20 And he went away and began to proclaim in Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed.*

When we read of the people of that region that "they came to Jesus," it seems a wonderful deed. Unfortunately, they did not come to honor Him. When they come to Him, they see the man they have so often wanted to shackle and subdue, sitting with Him in complete peace. He is no longer naked and frightening, but clothed and in his right mind. He has changed both outwardly and inwardly. He is as it were clothed with "the garments

of salvation" (Isa 61:10) and he knows the Son of God with his understanding (1Jn 5:20). This is the man who has had the legion of demons.

Instead of praising the grace of the Lord for this deliverance, the people of that area become afraid. They fear Him Who is able to destroy the captivity of the devil (1Jn 3:8). They fear Christ and His grace more than the devil and his works!

When they have seen that, they are going to testify again about what they have seen. Again they will tell their story about this wonderful deliverance. They also tell about the swine. The effect of the story of the witnesses is not that people acknowledge Christ as Savior. He is for them someone who has destroyed their livelihood. Such a person they are better off without. Alas, they consider the demons and the swine to be more pleasant company than the Son of God. This is a new work of satan in the hearts of men. The Lord is goes away. He does not force Himself on anyone.

The healed man does not only feel at ease with the Lord Jesus (verse 18), but all his love goes out to Him. He longs to follow Him wherever He goes. However understandable and good the man's desire may be, the Lord does not allow him to accompany Him. That is because He has another commission for him. He wants the man to go to his family to testify of his deliverance, allowing him to function normally again.

The Lord Jesus also wants the man to tell of the beneficence that He has shown His mercy on him. He does not only perform acts of power, but also shows His mercy. He performs acts of power from a heart full of compassion. He wants that where men know us well, we should testify of what He has done to us.

The man obeys immediately. It takes no effort for him to fulfill the commission. It is wonderful to read that he preaches "all that Jesus had done to him", even though the Lord had told him to report what "the Lord" had done to him. For the man, 'the Lord', that is '*Yahweh*', is the Same as 'Jesus'. So it is. It may be easier for us to speak about God than about the humiliated Jesus, but God is concerned with the glory of the Lord Jesus and that should be our concern as well.

Mk 5:21-24 | An Official of the Synagogue Comes to the Lord

*21 When Jesus had crossed over again in the boat to the other side, a large crowd gathered around Him; and so He stayed by the seashore. 22 One of the synagogue officials named Jairus *came up, and on seeing Him, *fell at His feet 23 and *implored Him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death; [please] come and lay Your hands on her, so that she will get well and live." 24 And He went off with him; and a large crowd was following Him and pressing in on Him.*

The Lord Jesus goes aboard and crosses over again to the other side. There a large crowd gathers around Him. Out of the crowd comes a man who is looking for Him. When he discovers Him, he falls down at His feet. The man lying there at the Lord's feet is not one of the common people. He is an official of the synagogue. Mark says his name is Jairus.

Jairus has a prominent religious function, but he does not belong to the group of leaders who hate the Lord. He is, just like Nicodemus (Jn 3:1-2), an exception. He is in great distress. If there is still salvation, he knows, it is only with Christ. He makes an urgent appeal to Him for his little daughter. His words show his faith in the power of the Lord.

In spite of the good surroundings, the synagogue, in which the girl grew up, she died. There are many young people who grow up in a Christian family under the Word of God, but who still have no life from God. At first they went with their parents to church, but as they grew older the interest in the things of the Lord disappeared. What a blessing it is then to have a father like this girl.

Without saying a word the Lord Jesus goes with him. He is followed and surrounded by a large crowd that gives him little freedom of movement. He doesn't get a wide passage from the crowd that seems to feel that something special is going to happen again. Because of their pressure, they prevent a quick trip to the girl who is in such a bad condition.

Mk 5:25-29 | A Woman Healed of the Flow of Her Blood

25 A woman who had had a hemorrhage for twelve years, 26 and had endured much at the hands of many physicians, and had spent all that she had and was not helped at all, but rather had grown worse — 27 after hearing about Jesus,

she came up in the crowd behind [Him] and touched His cloak. 28 For she thought, "If I just touch His garments, I will get well." 29 Immediately the flow of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction.

The slowing down which the Lord experienced on the way to Jairus' daughter even becomes a delay. He is stopped by a woman in great distress who, in her misery, knows no one else who can offer a solution but He. For twelve years she has had a flow of blood. She is unclean as long as the little girl is old. She feels life slowly flowing away from her. By herself, like the little girl, she is incapable of changing her condition.

In the little girl we can see a picture of Israel that is temporarily set aside. Although the Lord has come for Israel as a whole, His attention goes first to the few in the people who call upon Him. We see this in the woman who comes to Him.

The woman has already tried everything to find healing. It has cost her everything, but without result. No, all the attempts to stop the ailment have only made it worse. This is how it is with someone who lives without God and sees that this life does not satisfy. He tries everything to make his life livable. He spends all his money on it. But the emptiness remains and only gets bigger after every attempt. Only when the Lord Jesus comes into his life is it possible to live the true life.

Just like Jairus, there is nothing left for the woman but to go to Christ. But unlike Jairus, she does not dare to come openly to Him. She therefore approaches Him as inconspicuously as possible from behind and touches His cloak.

The woman has so much faith in Him that she believes that even a touch of His garments will heal her from her affliction. This speaks of a faith that sees in Him the unique Man. Why should His garments have more strength than other people's garments? Because *He* wears them. His garments speak of His outer revelation. As a Man He has always done only the will of God. No other man has ever done that.

His garments speak of the perfection of His life, a life that has never known or done anything of sin (2Cor 5:21; 1Pet 2:22). There is no sin in Him (1Jn 3:5), no sinful nature. For He is "that holy Child" Who was born (Lk 1:35).

That makes Him the unique Man also now in heaven and that He will remain forever.

The touch of faith is not without results. The woman receives according to her faith. As soon as she has touched Him, she notices that the flowing of blood has stopped.

Mk 5:30-34 | The Woman Sent Away in Peace

30 Immediately Jesus, perceiving in Himself that the power [proceeding] from Him had gone forth, turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched My garments?" 31 And His disciples said to Him, "You see the crowd pressing in on You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?'" 32 And He looked around to see the woman who had done this. 33 But the woman fearing and trembling, aware of what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth. 34 And He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your affliction."

This deed of healing is not a deed that costs the Lord nothing. As with any healing, in healing this affliction He feels the pain of the disease (Mt 8:17). He notices that power has gone forth from Him. Of course, He also knows who has touched Him. However, He asks for it because He wants the woman to make herself known. Otherwise she would live on with a stolen blessing, as it were.

The disciples still understand little of their Master. They think they have to point out to Him a self-evident matter. In their eyes it is not logical to ask such a question. However, they do not understand that He knows every person who touches Him, whether accidentally or consciously. He also knows that among all these people only this woman has touched Him because she has faith in Him.

He knows all those people who profess to be connected with Him and are recorded in church records as members of this or that denomination. He also knows all those people who preach about Him. They are all people who have some connection with Him. He knows among all those people also those who truly have faith in Him.

The Lord does not respond to the well-intentioned but very misplaced comments of His disciples. All His attention goes to the woman "who had

done this”, who has accomplished this act of faith. He searches especially for her. His interest is always in those who seek Him in their need. He not only wants to heal them, but also to give them His peace.

Because the woman has, as it were, stolen the blessing, she must come forward. The Lord wants her to receive His blessing as a free, complete gift in a personal and open encounter with Him. With fear and trembling, she tells “Him the whole truth”. The Lord Jesus confirms His blessing by assuring her of being made well, peace and healing. He thereby puts His seal, as it were, on her faith.

He is the Son of God Who has life in Himself (Jn 5:26). Faith therein reveals its power by touching Him. Outwardly He is in the midst of Israel, but only faith enjoys the blessing because it has a sense of its own need and of His glory. Where man’s need is brought into connection with His glory, the consequence is that the need disappears and His glory becomes radiantly visible.

Mk 5:35-43 | The Daughter of Jairus Healed

35 While He was still speaking, they *came from the [house of] the synagogue official, saying, “Your daughter has died; why trouble the Teacher anymore?” 36 But Jesus, overhearing what was being spoken, *said to the synagogue official, “Do not be afraid [any longer], only believe.” 37 And He allowed no one to accompany Him, except Peter and James and John the brother of James. 38 They *came to the house of the synagogue official; and He *saw a commotion, and [people] loudly weeping and wailing. 39 And entering in, He *said to them, “Why make a commotion and weep? The child has not died, but is asleep.” 40 They [began] laughing at Him. But putting them all out, He *took along the child’s father and mother and His own companions, and *entered [the room] where the child was. 41 Taking the child by the hand, He *said to her, “Talitha kum!” (which translated means, “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”). 42 Immediately the girl got up and [began] to walk, for she was twelve years old. And immediately they were completely astounded. 43 And He gave them strict orders that no one should know about this, and He said that [something] should be given her to eat.

The interruption with the woman who had a flowing of blood is also called 'a wonder in a wonder'. After all, it is a wonder the Lord performs, while for another need an appeal has been made to Him and He is on His way. After the wonder of the woman's healing, there is the little daughter of Jairus to whom He is on His way. During the delay, the little daughter has died. Now the case seems completely hopeless.

The messengers think it is no longer necessary to bother Him. There's nothing to be done about it now. Satan always comes with these kinds of messages. He wants to feed unbelief with a feeling of hopelessness. But every delay gives Him the opportunity to show His glory (cf. Jn 11:4-6,14-15). We never bother Him with our need that is unsolvable for us. On the contrary, He is eager to provide for such need. It is a work He loves to do.

He does not listen to the messengers' comments. He deliberately does not listen to them. Such remarks testify of unbelief. Instead, He has a word of encouragement for the official of the synagogue: "Do not be afraid, only believe." This word has been a great encouragement to countless believers throughout the ages.

When He hears the need, there is first an encouragement. We also see this in the other two cases of resurrection that He has performed. There, too, He has spoken a word of comfort to the bereaved (Lk 7:13; Jn 11:23). This shows that the revelation of His power is always accompanied by a revelation of His love and affection.

The Lord goes along to the house of Jairus, but does not allow anyone to follow Him except three of His disciples. They are permitted to be there when He raises the girl. They become witnesses to this wonder because He deems it necessary for them in view of their further service to Him. Thus He has special events for each of His own in preparation for or encouragement in the service for Him that others have no part in. This is not because those others are less important, but because He has other preparations or encouragement for them that are special to them.

When He and His disciples come into the house of the official of the synagogue, He observes how people express themselves in feelings of mourning. He sees the commotion and hears the loud weeping and wailing. This is what is left for man when death has come in. Death puts an end to all

illusions and strikes a painful hole in the life of the immediate surroundings.

The Lord enters the scene of mourning and rebukes those who make commotion and weep. In His presence such expressions can disappear. May we not then be sad and weep at the death of a loved one? Yes, the Lord Jesus Himself also wept at the tomb of His beloved friend Lazarus (Jn 11:35). But these are people who look upon death blindly, without regard for Him. They think there is nothing more to be done while He is present. For Him, death is a sleep from which He can awaken someone.

When they hear His words, their grief immediately turns to mockery. He drives them all out. People with such a mentality cannot be present at the wonder of the girl's raising from the dead. He allows only the father and mother and His three disciples to enter with Him into the room where the girl lies.

Without further preparation, He takes the hand of the child and speaks words of life. His word is power. Just as He created heaven and earth through His word (Gen 1:1; Heb 11:3), so here He speaks with authority His word through which life returns. Also with the raising from the dead of the young man from Naïn and the raising from the dead of Lazarus, the command to come out of the dead sounds. This command will also be heard when He comes to take the believers to Himself (1Thes 4:16).

The words "talitha kum" are the untranslated Aramaic words that the Lord speaks literally on this occasion. The whole New Testament is inspired by the Holy Spirit in the Greek language. That is why it is special that He has Mark render the Aramaic words here, incidentally with the translation included.

Even more striking is that we hear three more times an Aramaic quotation from the Lord that is also only mentioned by Mark: "Ephphatha!" (Mk 7:34), "Abba!" (Mk 14:36) and "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani" (Mk 15:34), each time with the translation. These are phrases that must have made a special impression on the writer. Mark did not belong to the circle of the twelve apostles, but there are strong indications that he recorded his Gospel from the mouth of Peter. From the end of Peter's first letter it appears

that there was a close connection between Mark and Peter. Peter calls him “my son Mark” (1Pet 5:13).

The result does not let up. The power of death gives way and lets her go whom he had made his prey. In the presence of the living God, death cannot endure. The girl, who is as old as the time that the woman had the flow of blood suffered from her affliction (verse 25), stands up and walks. She is able to walk and live to the glory of God.

The Lord does not want this wonder to be widely recorded. He does not seek honor for Himself and does not want to attract attention through His wonders. But He is full of care for the girl and wants her to be fed. That is how He arranges the aftercare that He lets others do.

Someone who has been given new life must then receive good spiritual food in order to be able to live to the glory of God and serve Him. There is also a result with the two other resurrections:

1. The young man from Nain begins to speak (Lk 7:15), indicating witnessing to the Lord Jesus.
2. Lazarus begins a walk in newness of life marked by worship (Jn 11:44; 12:2).

Mark 6

Mk 6:1-6 | Rejection in Nazareth

*1 Jesus went out from there and *came into His hometown; and His disciples *followed Him. 2 When the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue; and the many listeners were astonished, saying, "Where did this man [get] these things, and what is [this] wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands? 3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?" And they took offense at Him. 4 Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his [own] relatives and in his [own] household." 5 And He could do no miracle there except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. 6 And He wondered at their unbelief. And He was going around the villages teaching.*

The Lord Jesus departs from the house of Jairus and goes to Nazareth, the city where He grew up, and where they have had Him in their midst for so long. There the disciples will receive new teachings for servants, and therefore He takes them with Him and they follow Him. This new teaching begins with Him being rejected. Every servant must take this into account.

On the Sabbath He goes in the synagogue, the usual place where teachings from the Scriptures are given. In the synagogue the law is studied and taught, but it only happens in an outward form. The heart is not involved. Religion means for the masses of visitors to the synagogue only tradition with forms. It's about what the fathers say. The fathers may have said many good things, but in practice it takes up a larger place than Scripture.

The Lord comes to the synagogue for the third time. In Mark 1 we saw a man with an unclean spirit (Mk 1:23) and in Mark 3 a man with a withered hand (Mk 3:1). They were both unable to serve because of their condition. We see in these two cases together that religion without "truth in the innermost being" (Psa 51:6) makes incapable of serving.

This time it is about His Word. He is teaching here in the synagogue. His teaching amazes the many who hear Him. They wonder in amazement

where He has got all His knowledge from, how He is so wise and where He has got the mighty deeds He performs with His hands. They experience something special; they know how to name it. However, it's just a question of amazement, without really wanting to know the secret. That is no different today.

They know exactly who his family members are. And precisely because He comes from such a humble family, there is nothing through which He can be special to them. If He behaves in a special way, it must be because He imagines Himself to be something. That is why they take offence at Him, that is to say, they turn against Him and thereby shut themselves off from the blessing of His presence.

It makes clear how much the Lord has been on earth as an inconspicuous Man. He has worked as a simple carpenter. That was not according to the thoughts of people who believe that holy men do not work. He did not do powerful deeds as a little Boy, as the apocryphal books attribute to Him. Remarkably, they call Him "the Son of Mary" and not Joseph, as children are usually called.

We see here that even the despised inhabitants of Nazareth take offence to the humblest Lord of all, Who is also the humblest Servant of all. Even the smallest persons of humanity are not free of the same spirit of the world that blinds the most intelligent spirit. That the true Heir to the throne of David would be a "carpenter" was and is too insignificant for flesh and blood to accept.

They know him as "the carpenter". This means that the Lord has learned and done this work of Joseph. This reveals much about the period of time which Scripture is virtually silent, the period of His life on earth until His thirtieth year when He began to travel the land. The Creator of heaven and earth spent a considerable part of His daily life in this world in this humble but so very beautiful handiwork.

The Lord knows that this is how they think of Him. His conclusion is what is always true for all those who want to do God's work: someone who brings God's Word into the immediate vicinity and closest family ties is not appreciated there. A prophet brings God's Word to the heart and con-

science of people. This is often more readily accepted from a stranger than from someone they think they know well.

Because of their unbelief, the blessing hand of God is held back from them. He cannot do great works there. He is always willing to serve, but is limited in the exercise of His love where the doors are not opened to undergo its influence. There is no breeding ground for God's work. Only where there is a need, His tireless love works, yes, there it must work.

He heals the few sick who come. That's all. It's not that He tried to do mighty deeds here and it didn't work out. No, He couldn't do miracles because of their unbelief. That's different from the preachers today who try miracles and when they fail attribute that to a lack of faith in those who want to experience the miracle.

In Matthew 8, the Lord marvels about the faith of a heathen who had only heard of Him (Mt 8:10). Here He marvels about the unbelief of His fellow citizens who have experienced Him for so long. Yet He does not stop serving. There are other villages where He has to do His work. He leaves Nazareth to teach in the surrounding villages. The unbelief closes the manifestation of love only for itself. Love seeks other ways. Christ continues His work elsewhere.

Mk 6:7-13 | Sending Out the Twelve

*7 And He *summoned the twelve and began to send them out in pairs, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits; 8 and He instructed them that they should take nothing for [their] journey, except a mere staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belt— 9 but [to] wear sandals; and [He added], “Do not put on two tunics.” 10 And He said to them, “Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave town. 11 Any place that does not receive you or listen to you, as you go out from there, shake the dust off the soles of your feet for a testimony against them.” 12 They went out and preached that [men] should repent. 13 And they were casting out many demons and were anointing with oil many sick people and healing them.*

In His love for the miserable among His people the Lord is going to extend His service by sending out the twelve. He first calls them to Himself. From His presence He begins to send them out two by two. They do not leave on

their own initiative. Only when He orders them to go somewhere, they can go. He also provides them with the necessary power over the opposition they will meet. They are sent two by two, that they may testify of Him (cf. 2Cor 13:1). He also gives them authority over the unclean spirits. He is the Servant, but He is also God, for the giving of that authority can only be done by Someone Who is God.

They need take nothing but a staff to lean on in their walk. The starting point is this: trust in the mighty protection of Him Who has sent them and that they will lack nothing. He is the sovereign Lord. All things are available to Him.

Wearing sandals means that they will have to walk a lot. In order to do work for the Lord, effort must be made. Spiritually, it means that for this work it is necessary for the feet to be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace (Eph 6:15). That is to say, in order to do a work for the Lord, we ourselves must have the peace of the gospel in our hearts and show it in our walk so that we can pass it on wherever He sends us.

They also do not need to take extra precautions against the cold. It is not necessary to have two tunics. Unnecessary luxury is only a hindrance in the work. Service to the Lord is not a holiday trip.

He gives clear orders for the stay. They should not enter somewhere, stay there for a while, and then look for another place to lodge. Such behavior would not speak of inner peace, but of unrest. They can enter a house and they have to stay there until they go to the next town. They do not have to worry about housing. Where the Lord has prepared a heart to receive them, there they can stay.

If it turns out that somewhere they are not welcome and there is no ear that listens to their preaching, they should not stay there any longer. They must shake even the dust of that city from their feet, so that they will not take anything, not even the dust, from it. That will be a testimony against that city because they reject the gospel that is brought to them.

The disciples do what the Lord says. Their first work is to call people to repent. In their preaching they also use the authority they have been given to cast out demons. They also anoint many sick people with oil, possibly as a medicine, but perhaps even more so as a symbolic act that expresses

the value of the sick person as a person. Where anointing happens in the New Testament, we see that it happens to honor someone (Lk 7:38; Jn 12:3), while not anointing is seen as dishonor (Lk 7:46). In the Old Testament, priests, kings, and sometimes prophets are anointed.

The fact that the disciples do this to the sick may mean that those who may be desperate for life are particularly encouraged by this act that they are important to God. They would know in the persons who anoint them that God is after all looking after them. The subsequent healing provides proof of this.

Mk 6:14-16 | Herod Gets Restless

14 And King Herod heard [of it], for His name had become well known; and [people] were saying, "John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and that is why these miraculous powers are at work in Him." 15 But others were saying, "He is Elijah." And others were saying, "[He is] a prophet, like one of the prophets [of old]." 16 But when Herod heard [of it], he kept saying, "John, whom I beheaded, has risen!"

History is interrupted here to present Herod's response to the works of the disciples in the Name of the Lord. In this way it is made clear in what kind of world the servants who have just been sent by the Lord Jesus are doing their service. It is a world in which evil powers are in control.

Herod is an instrument in the hand of satan. He is also under the power of his own carnal lusts. We see in him what the world is made of. He also has a conscience. The Name of the Lord is a blessing for some, while he is a threat to others. The latter is the case with Herod.

When he hears the Name that has become revealed from the works of the disciples, all kinds of suggestions come up. There are those who connect the powers that Christ does with a John the baptist raised from the dead. Others believe Elijah has come and is at work. Still others have the explanation that it is just another prophet, as there have been so many. All suggestions are based on the imagination of the spirit of people who have heard something, but have never examined Scripture themselves.

To Herod, however, it is certain that John himself is at work. To him, it cannot be otherwise than that John the baptist, whom he has beheaded, has

risen. Although an executioner beheaded John (verse 27), Herod knows that he actually did it himself, because he is the commissioner. He may have silenced John, but not his conscience, because that speaks.

Mk 6:17-20 | The Testimony of John

17 For Herod himself had sent and had John arrested and bound in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, because he had married her. 18 For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." 19 Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death and could not [do so]; 20 for Herod was afraid of John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. And when he heard him, he was very perplexed; but he used to enjoy listening to him.

It had begun when Herod had had John taken captive and put him in prison. He had done this for the sake of Herodias. Herodias was the wife of his brother Philip, but Herod had taken her and married her. His new marriage did not change the fact that she was "the wife of his brother Philip". She was and remained so. John had spoken to Herod about his wrongful marriage and told him clearly that this was wrong.

That didn't please Herodias. John had become someone who had to disappear from her life because of his condemnation of her marriage. But she did not have the authority to do so.

God had arranged for John to have access to Herod's court. We see here an example that the Word reaches the conscience even where we least would have expected it. We also see here that an unconverted person can listen with reverence when the Word of God is brought. We also see that conscience remains active even when a person does not repent.

Herod had respect for what John said, also because John lived up to what he said. Herod knew him as a righteous and holy man. Out of a sense of reverence he protected John, without doing anything with what John said, although he was addressed and even liked to hear John. But the man was too much of a prisoner of his morally unrighteous and wicked life and of the distinguished position he held. It costs him too much to give that up.

Mk 6:21-29 | John Beheaded

21 A strategic day came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his lords and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee; 22 and when the daughter of Herodias herself came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests; and the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you want and I will give it to you." 23 And he swore to her, "Whatever you ask of me, I will give it to you; up to half of my kingdom." 24 And she went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask for?" And she said, "The head of John the Baptist." 25 Immediately she came in a hurry to the king and asked, saying, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." 26 And although the king was very sorry, [yet] because of his oaths and because of his dinner guests, he was unwilling to refuse her. 27 Immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded [him] to bring [back] his head. And he went and had him beheaded in the prison, 28 and brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother. 29 When his disciples heard [about this], they came and took away his body and laid it in a tomb.

The moment comes when Herod is faced with a final choice. There comes a "strategic day", that is, a strategic day for the devil. Under the permission of God, the devil controls the circumstances in such a way that in Herod is seen what happens, if the conscience is not listened to when it comes in the light of God. Then a man even puts to death the person he acknowledges as a prophet.

We realize only to a very small extent the power of that impure and cunning adversary, the devil. It is exactly the opposite of what the Lord is doing in grace in the midst of His disciples. He is not the greatest in their midst, but the Least and the Servant.

On the occasion of his birthday, Herod gives a banquet. To add luster to the banquet, he invites all kinds of dignitaries for a meal. Such a banquet also includes something that stimulates lust. The daughter of Herodias meets this requirement in an excellent way. The food is very satisfying, the performance of the dancer is even more satisfying if possible. The cooks don't get to hear what the girl gets to hear for their performance.

In his boundless pride, Herod says things that are reserved for God alone. Herod does not act in a whim, but is completely captured by his passions.

Therefore, he swears that he will give the girl what she asks for, even if it is half his kingdom. That's what Ahasuerus also once said to a girl, Esther. How different was her answer. Instead of the kingdom, she asked for the life of her people (Est 7:2-3), while this girl, instead of the kingdom, asks for the death of a faithful witness of God.

At first, the child does not know what to answer to Herod's offer and asks her mother. Her mother has been searching for and thinking about a possibility to kill John for so long, that she doesn't have to think for a second. Her daughter has to ask the head of John the baptist. The girl turns out to be of the same kind as her mother. Immediately and in haste she goes back inside and says that she immediately wants the head of John the baptist.

In a frenzy of sinfulness, during a brass party, Herod becomes entangled in his own carnal lusts to fulfill the wish of someone as bad as himself or, if possible, even worse. He is trapped by his own word, which he, for fear of losing face with all his high guests, does not revoke. This is the end of the conscience of a natural man who does not come to appear in God's light with confession of guilt. Herod commands something that he perhaps could not possibly have imagined he would ever do.

But he is trapped by his own lusts and cannot go back, that is, he does not want to go back. A dance and the prevention of loss of face are worth more to him than the life of the prophet of God. That's the ruler of Israel. He commands and John is beheaded.

The head of the prophet is given to the girl on a platter and she gives it to her mother. Incredibly cruel is the scene that gives the girl and her mother the greatest satisfaction. What deeply depraved creatures these two women are. To such atrocities any man can come who stands apart from God and rebels against Him when His thoughts are revealed to him.

The disciples of John pay their master the last respects and lay his body in a tomb. There it will be until the resurrection, for the burial of the believer is not the end, but points over the tomb to something new of which the resurrection from the dead is the beginning.

Mk 6:30-33 | With the Lord

30 The apostles *gathered together with Jesus; and they reported to Him all that they had done and taught. 31 And He *said to them, "Come away by

yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while.” (For there were many [people] coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.) 32 They went away in the boat to a secluded place by themselves. 33 [The people] saw them going, and many recognized [them] and ran there together on foot from all the cities, and got there ahead of them.

The Lord has sent out His twelve disciples in verse 7. Here they come back to Him without having received a special command. They are called “apostles”. Apostle means “sent one”. They come back to the humble Servant to tell Him all that they have done and taught. In their report they begin with their deeds. Then they tell Him what teaching they have given.

It is good that they come back to their Master to report. It is an example for us to report back to Him when we have been allowed to do something for the Lord. Let us also learn from the example of the disciples that with us it should not be so much about what we have done as about what we have passed on from Him in teaching. This can be verbal, but also through our example. Each week we should be able to say what we have learned from the Lord in God’s school, for as long as we live, we are in school. When Paul and Barnabas report, they tell all that God has done with them (Acts 14:27; 15:4).

The Lord is full of attention for them. He also knows that they need some rest after their service. The many who come and go enjoy the blessings of the service of the apostles. Yet they have no real interest in the Lord because they do not stay. Such experiences can be particularly discouraging. It requires a great deal of effort, while the result seems so small. There will always be an abundance of work that can occupy them (and us) to such an extent that there isn’t even time to eat.

The Lord has not turned His servants into robots that can go on and on forever. He takes them to be with Him, for true rest can only be found in His company. He finds it necessary for His servants to occasionally separate themselves from the work in order to be alone with Him. A suitable environment must also be found for this. That suitable environment is not the city with all its noise and amusement, but a secluded place, where nothing can excite the senses and one can allow oneself to be taught by the Lord in complete rest and undisturbed. Finally, He says that they may rest

“a while”. It is not the intention to withdraw completely from the work, but to regain with Him the necessary strength for the next service.

The apostles follow His advice. They leave the field of work by boat and the many who come and go, to a secluded place by themselves. But the rest is limited to the rest in the boat. The people see the Lord leaving with His disciples. They also see where they are going. The Lord does not let the boat take a different course, for He never shames expectations. The people who want to come to Him hurry so much that they are at the place where the boat comes ashore even earlier than the boat.

Mk 6:34-38 | You Give Them to Eat!

*34 When Jesus went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things. 35 When it was already quite late, His disciples came to Him and said, “This place is desolate and it is already quite late; 36 send them away so that they may go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.” 37 But He answered them, “You give them [something] to eat!” And they *said to Him, “Shall we go and spend two hundred denarii on bread and give them [something] to eat?” 38 And He *said to them, “How many loaves do you have? Go look!” And when they found out, they *said, “Five, and two fish.”*

When the Lord goes out of the boat and sees the large crowd, He cannot help but be moved with compassion over them. He sees a great flock without a shepherd. Their religious leaders are not shepherds, but mercenaries, thieves, and robbers. They do not care for the flock at all, but want to profit from it (Jn 10:8,12; Eze 34:2). The Lord, on the other hand, is the good Shepherd (Jn 10:11).

From His compassion He begins to teach the large crowd many things. People in need especially need sound education for their spirit, even more than healthy food for their body, although the Lord does not forget that need.

The disciples are people of time and practice. They think they need to remind their Lord that the place is desolate and that it is already late. What they lack is the compassion He has. Their advice is to send the crowd

away, because then the people could buy something edible. Surely that advice speaks of caring for the people, doesn't it?

That may seem so, but they do not share in the compassion that the Lord has for the crowd. What is more, they lack faith in a Lord Who can also provide for bodily needs. Could He send the crowd away after He has revived their spirits, without also reviving them physically? They do not yet resemble Him, but He will continue to teach them. That's why He is going to use them. He is going to do a wonder without the crowd asking for it. He answers the need with "give" (cf. 2Kgs 4:42-44). He is always the mild Giver. In this giving He involves His disciples. He teaches them to give with compassion. In this way He prepares them for service. Not only power is needed to speak the Word with power of attorney, love is also needed.

His commission leads the disciples to count their money supply. That is the only thing of which they can think. They believe that they must satisfy the Lord's demands out of and with their own means. But He never asks anything without providing us with what we need. The response of the disciples shows how little faith they have in the resources present in Him.

Faith is most evident in knowing how to make use of what is in Christ to meet the needs that arise at any given time. Faith judges that the greater the difficulty, the more appropriate the opportunity for Christ to reveal Himself.

When they have told Him how much they have, He does not fill the gap, so that there would be enough to buy food. He could have done the same. But He asks what food they have, for He wants His disciples to give them to eat. They have to 'go' and 'look'. They need to see how many loaves of bread they have. When they have found out, they bring Him the results. They can even report that there are also two fish. He's going to use those.

The Lord likes to make use of things that we would despise in our human wisdom. The question is not what this means to so many people who have to eat of it, but what it means to Him. Similarly, Moses also learned that the Lord can use what he has (Exo 4:2-3; cf. 1Kgs 17:10-16; 2Kgs 4:2-6). Bread and fish are food and as such speak of the Lord Jesus. The application is that it is about what we have learned from Him. Sometimes this is by cast-

ing out the net and catching the fish in it, such as listening to an address. That is simply collecting. It takes a whole process to prepare bread. It also takes a lot of work to learn from Him.

Mk 6:39-44 | The Five Thousand Fed

39 And He commanded them all to sit down by groups on the green grass. 40 They sat down in groups of hundreds and of fifties. 41 And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, He blessed [the food] and broke the loaves and He kept giving [them] to the disciples to set before them; and He divided up the two fish among them all. 42 They all ate and were satisfied, 43 and they picked up twelve full baskets of the broken pieces, and also of the fish. 44 There were five thousand men who ate the loaves.

The Lord commands – He is the Lord! – the disciples that they should divide the crowd into groups. There must be some order. Those groups must sit down on the green grass. That speaks of peace, freshness and abundance. It is reminiscent of Psalm 23 where the shepherd makes the sheep lie down in green pastures (Psa 23:2).

The size of these groups is sometimes taken as an indication of the size of a local church. When a church in a certain place becomes larger than a hundred people, it becomes difficult to have a good contact with all of them. The danger is then great that there is no equal care for all and that some are overlooked.

When the Lord has taken the loaves and the fish, He looks up to heaven. All His actions are connected with heaven, the dwelling place of His Father. That determines His words and His wonders. Here He connects the little with the fullness of heaven. Then He blesses, that is, He expresses a thanksgiving to God. He does not bless the loaves. He breaks the loaves and the fish which are multiplied in His blessing hands to a quantity sufficient for all.

He uses the disciples as intermediaries. In this way He turns their evil – the proposal to send the crowd away – for good. His purpose is to show them that His love takes pleasure in working through human channels. Only what speaks of Him and what comes from Him can become food. If we

are constantly dependent on Him, we can be a blessing to others. Then we know that He can use the little we have to serve others.

The crowd has not just something, a little, to eat, but enough. They can eat to satiation. There are even twelve baskets full of pieces left. By this wonder, He is again proving that He is the Messiah (Psa 132:15).

Abundance never leads to waste with the Lord. Nothing of what He has given as a blessing is wasted. The crowd may have enough, but He also has a blessing for others who have nothing. Abundance serves for the want of others (cf. 2Cor 8:14). It is not by chance that there remain twelve baskets full. The number twelve has a symbolic meaning. It indicates the blessing the Lord has for the whole people of God at the end of time.

Of those few loaves of bread and those few fish, a crowd of five thousand men alone ate. The wonder is undeniable. He is Emmanuel, God with us (Mt 1:23), God Who visits His people for blessing. He brings the house of His Father, where there is bread in abundance (Lk 15:17), to the needy man.

Mk 6:45-52 | The Lord Jesus Walks on the Sea

*45 Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go ahead of [Him] to the other side to Bethsaida, while He Himself was sending the crowd away. 46 After bidding them farewell, He left for the mountain to pray. 47 When it was evening, the boat was in the middle of the sea, and He was alone on the land. 48 Seeing them straining at the oars, for the wind was against them, at about the fourth watch of the night He *came to them, walking on the sea; and He intended to pass by them. 49 But when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed that it was a ghost, and cried out; 50 for they all saw Him and were terrified. But immediately He spoke with them and *said to them, "Take courage; it is I, do not be afraid." 51 Then He got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped; and they were utterly astonished, 52 for they had not gained any insight from the [incident of] the loaves, but their heart was hardened.*

After the wonder of the feeding, the Lord made His disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side. The fact that He has to make His disciples go, indicates that they did not wish to leave without Him. In

doing so He makes them experience what it is like to be sent away from Him, something they themselves had asked Him to do with the crowd (verses 35-36).

The time has come for the Lord to send the crowd away. He has taught them from the Word, and saturated them with bread. He has proved Himself to be the Messiah, but they have not accepted Him. That is why He will – in picture – set the people aside for a time. But also with His disciples He has seemingly no connection. He leaves them alone. This is a picture of the present time, the time when He is not on earth. Israel has been rejected for a time, while He Himself during that time takes His place in the high places to pray for His own.

While He is absent, evening falls. The boat is in the middle of the sea, and He is on the land. There is distance between the disciples in the boat and Him. So we find ourselves in the night of the world. The disciples do not see Him, but He sees them. He also sees that they are in difficult circumstances. He sees their frantic attempts to get through that situation. After He has prayed, He comes to them at the darkest hour of the night. It is the fourth watch, when the night is almost over, between three and six o'clock.

The Lord walks on the sea against which the disciples fight to the death. Thus is He above our circumstances. He does not have to fight them, for He controls them completely, they are under His authority. To Him, these difficulties do not exist. He allows them into the lives of His own, that they may learn to trust in Him. He does not deliver His disciples directly from their distress. He wants to pass them by, as if He did not notice their need. He will not pass them by, but by pretending to do so, He wants to teach them something.

When the disciples see Him walking on the sea, they think He is a ghost. They cry out in fear. Believers who are severely tested can sometimes lose sight of the Lord altogether and come to the conclusion that they are dealing with the devil. When we see that here with the disciples, we don't have to blame such believers. He doesn't blame His disciples either.

If it was a ghost, which they thought it was, then they were dealing with the power of the evil one. They had received the power over the evil one

from Him (verse 7). But they can only use that power in constant dependence on Him and that is what they lack here.

They do see Him, but instead of being encouraged they are frightened, because they don't recognize Him. Then He opens His mouth with words of encouragement, assurance and comfort. He does not initially speak 'to' them, but 'with' them. He is so close to them that there is no longer distance between Him and them. He encourages them with the words: "Take courage." He assures them that it is He. He comforts them in their fear by telling them not to be afraid.

They see Him, but instead of being encouraged, they are frightened because they don't recognize Him. Then He opens His mouth with words of encouragement, security, and comfort. At first he does not speak 'to' them, but 'with' them. He is so close to them that there is no more distance between Him and them. He encourages them with the words: "Take courage." He assures them it's him. He comforts them in their fear by telling them not to be afraid.

Then He gets into the boat with them. The result is peace. So it is in the life of the tried and tested believer. When the Lord enters his heart, the wind stops and with Him there also comes rest. That rest arouses great amazement.

The reason for their unbelief and unfamiliarity with Christ is their hardened heart. The neglect of a work or a wonder of His has a hardening effect on the heart. This is not only true for unbelievers, for whom it is fatal for eternity (Heb 3:7-15). It also applies to believers to whom it is not fatal for the sake of eternity, but to whom it does have a limiting effect on the life of faith on earth. That is why every teaching needs new teaching. Really getting to know and trust the Lord always goes on, because our heart is so often hardened.

Mk 6:53-56 | Healings in Gennesaret

53 When they had crossed over they came to land at Gennesaret, and moored to the shore. 54 When they got out of the boat, immediately [the people] recognized Him, 55 and ran about that whole country and began to carry here and there on their pallets those who were sick, to the place they heard He was. 56

Wherever He entered villages, or cities, or countryside, they were laying the sick in the market places, and imploring Him that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak; and as many as touched it were being cured.

The Lord said that the disciples had to cross over to the other side (verse 45). That is why they arrive there. They left without Him, they arrive with Him. Moreover, they have gained a great experience, both of their own powerlessness and of His omnipotence and consolation. They come to Gennesaret and moor to go ashore. The Lord is known in that region. When He has left the boat, the people immediately recognize Him. This will be partly because of the testimony of the man who was freed by Him from a legion of demons (Mk 5:20).

His presence sets many people in motion who have to deal with suffering in their immediate environment. These aid workers look where there is need and bring the suffering people to Him on their pallets. If we want to bring people in distress to the Lord, we must first put them on a pallet or a resting bed and then bring them to Him. Such people should not be subjected to an additional burden in order to get to Him, for that could be an obstacle. On the contrary, it is important that they are brought to Him in a quiet manner. The aid workers do not ask Him to come to them, but they search for Him.

Wherever there are people who need the Lord, He works in grace. He has come for all. It doesn't matter if they live in a big city, in a small village, or even somewhere remote in the field. He comes everywhere so that He can be reached by everyone. Earlier, a single woman touched His garment and was healed (Mk 5:28). Now many come with the request to touch Him, if only the fringe of His cloak. This means that they want to bow down before Him. This attitude always results in blessing. All who touch Him are therefore saved.

Our responsibility is to bring people to the Lord. It is the responsibility of people in need to touch Him in faith. The means, the pallets or beds of rest we use, radiate the peace that these people can find with Him for their hearts and consciences (Mt 11:28-29). This section gives a brief outline of what will happen when Christ returns to earth.

Mark 7

Mk 7:1-5 | The Traditions of the Elder

*1 The Pharisees and some of the scribes gathered around Him when they had come from Jerusalem, 2 and had seen that some of His disciples were eating their bread with impure hands, that is, unwashed. 3 (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands, [thus] observing the traditions of the elders; 4 and [when they come] from the market place, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves; and there are many other things which they have received in order to observe, such as the washing of cups and pitchers and copper pots.) 5 The Pharisees and the scribes *asked Him, "Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with impure hands?"*

In this chapter we see how the Lord acts against the religious leaders and passes His judgment on them. In their self-confidence and pride, they dare to sue His disciples, and with them Him. The work of grace arouses the opposition of the religious man because he is filled with his own importance. The disciples are taught how to see persons who are religious only in appearance. The Lord wants to show them the true character of these people.

When people gather around Him, there is always a reason and a result. They come to Him because they need Him in their need, or they come to Him to sue Him. The result is always that He reveals His glory, either in grace or in judgment.

The Pharisees and scribes who come here to Him possess the highest authority as far as the earth is concerned. They come from the holy city of Jerusalem, the city of the ancient religion. Both their position as religious leaders and the place where they come from, the religious center of Jerusalem, gives them prestige. They are, as it were, adorned with the law of God and with the authority that provides them with it.

These people perceive that some of the Lord's disciples eat bread in a way that does not conform to their prescription. This has nothing to do with

inner spiritual life or man's relationship to God. They only judge others according to the outer form, a form that they themselves have laid down. There is no room for grace in what people fix in forms. On top of that – and perhaps even more so is the lesson – by adhering to tradition, the true impurity of the heart is concealed and remains hidden.

God has arranged all public and personal obligations in family, society, religion, and politics, but they have made many more commandments. As a result, God's commandments are no longer carried out, for they place the people under the authority of the tradition of the elders, which are their own traditions.

Traditions have it in them to make man important. If traditions become habitual acts without being tested against Scripture, traditions can turn against Scripture. As soon as we do something, just because our fathers have always done so, there is a danger that Scripture will be replaced by tradition. We need to know what we are doing and why we are doing it, with Scripture as the basis, not tradition. The Lord Jesus strongly opposes the replacement of Scripture by tradition.

Public life takes place in the marketplace. The Pharisees and the Jews take part in it, but think they are defiled by it. They must first cleanse themselves of this impurity by thoroughly washing their hands. They believe that by such an outward cleansing they clean themselves of their sinful commercial transactions on the markets.

Perhaps on the couches (Darby Translation) they bought on the market sick people had been laid to rest (Mk 6:56)! So the couches have to be cleansed before they can lie on them themselves. They also wash cups and pitchers because they might have been touched by strangers. They care about the cleansing of them, but not about the cleansing of their heart.

They judge that what the disciples are doing is contrary to their traditions and therefore wrong. Surely they will have derived their traditions from the Word of God. In it there is talk of washings, for example of the sacrifices and at the performance of the priestly service. Then it seems a reasonable conclusion to impose this commandment on the whole people and that for the life of every day. But it is an addition to what God has said! It is the very nature of man, if God has not said something explicitly, to make

a law himself and to impose it on others. Tradition comes from man, not from God.

Mk 7:6-13 | Setting Aside the Commandment of God

?" 6 And He said to them, "Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written:

*'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS,
BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME.*

*7 'BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME,
TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.'*

8 Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men." 9 He was also saying to them, "You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition. 10 For Moses said, 'HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER'; and, 'HE WHO SPEAKS EVIL OF FATHER OR MOTHER, IS TO BE PUT TO DEATH'; 11 but you say, 'If a man says to [his] father or [his] mother, whatever I have that would help you is Corban (that is to say, given [to God]),' 12 you no longer permit him to do anything for [his] father or [his] mother; 13 [thus] invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that."

In His answer, the Lord is not going to discuss the origin of the tradition, nor to prove its uselessness. He directly demonstrates the influence of tradition on obedience to God. For this He quotes the Word of God through Isaiah. He calls them hypocrites because of the insincerity of their striving. The Pharisees and the scribes are concerned with people's honor and the feeling of self-satisfaction. Outwardly, they strive for perfection, while their hearts are far from God and cold.

If people's teachings become the basis for worshiping God, that worship will remain empty and fruitless. It is completely useless to Him, no matter how much man himself enjoys and is content with it. He who gives up what comes from God falls into the hands of men. Keeping people's tradition instead of obeying God's commandment brings about a dramatic reversal in the relationship between people. Tradition not only causes disobedience to what God has said, an ignoring of His Word, but also sets aside God's Word. Traditions reveal itself as enemies of God's commandment.

The Lord Jesus illustrates His words with the commandment that God gave to His people through Moses regarding the respect He demands for their father and mother. He presents this commandment to them in a positive sense, honoring them, and in a negative sense, speaking evil of them. It is a clear commandment and not open to two interpretations.

The leaders had invented something that allowed them to circumvent God's commandment to honor the parents. If the parents were poor, the children had a duty to take care of them. But because of this, money was lost in the eyes of these depraved people that they could take. In their wickedness, they had designed a program to secure possession for religious purposes, while at the same time appeasing people's conscience toward God. The Israelite, who had to help his needy father or mother with his money, simply had to pronounce the word 'corban' over that money.

The word 'corban' determined that they had given their money and goods to God. God is higher than father or mother. So their money and goods fell to the religious leaders and the parents remained without help from the children. With hypocritical piety the money was consecrated to God and withheld from the parents, while it disappeared into the pockets of the Pharisees and the scribes. What diabolical manipulation lies in their invention of pronouncing the word 'corban' over money or goods with which people should help their parents.

Here we see tradition opposed to Scripture. The Lord here treats the tradition of saying 'corban', not merely as something wrong toward the parents, but as a rebellious act against an explicit commandment of God, depriving it of its power. And this is just one example. The Lord could have added so many more. He does not do so, for if this example does not convince, none of the other demonstrable cases will do so, nor will all the cases taken together convince them. Their hearts are too hardened for this.

Mk 7:14-23 | Education About Defilement

14 After He called the crowd to Him again, He [began] saying to them, "Listen to Me, all of you, and understand: 15 there is nothing outside the man which can defile him if it goes into him; but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man. 16 <If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."> 17

*When he had left the crowd [and] entered the house, His disciples questioned Him about the parable. 18 And He *said to them, "Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him, 19 because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?" ([Thus He] declared all foods clean.) 20 And He was saying, "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. 21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, 22 deeds of coveting [and] wickedness, [as well as] deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride [and] foolishness. 23 All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."*

The Lord wants to warn the crowd of the depraved teaching of the Pharisees and scribes. He calls them to Him again. With power of attorney, He says: "Listen to Me, all of you." When He speaks, man must listen. Wise is the one who listens attentively and wants to understand the meaning of what He says. This teaching is extremely important. It is about the difference between the Word of God and the teachings of men. This difference must be brought out clearly with all its might, as a clear warning against the pitfall of tradition.

Everything a man eats comes from God and cannot defile him. Man may enjoy it – with the exception of blood and what is strangled (Acts 15:20,29). Man without God uses it in the wrong way. He does not think of God and therefore does not thank Him for that food (cf. 1Tim 4:3). When he eats, he thinks only of his own needs. This selfishness and covetousness is what comes out of man and that defiles him.

The Lord concludes His speech with a call to each of His listeners personally to take His words to heart.

After He has taught the crowd, He comes into the house. The house represents the familiar atmosphere of His dealings with His disciples. There He teaches them further. The disciples ask Him what they have seen as a parable. Because He has spoken in clear words, without using pictures, He reproaches them because of their lack of understanding. Surely they should understand that man cannot be defiled if he eats what God has given. It comes to him from outside.

“Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food” (1Cor 6:13). This is how God instituted it in the creation of man. He has also regulated the digestion in the body, whereby all excess can leave the body in the toilet. With this statement the Lord Jesus declares in a general sense that all food is clean. His concern is to make it clear that evil is not in food, but in man.

This is a harsh word, both for man who thinks he is doing everything with good intentions and for the hypocrite who can think of nothing but outer cleanness. The cause is in the deceitful heart of man. He does not know his own heart, but the Lord knows it completely (Jer 17:9-10). Here speaks the One Who knows the heart.

He knows that all evil begins with “evil thoughts”. This makes man fully responsible for all subsequent acts, of which the Lord first mentions “fornication”. All these evil deeds cause enormous damage to others and also to man himself who does them. Above all, they are sins against God Who wants man to serve Him with all his heart. But it turns out that in man’s evil heart there is nothing for Him. The things the Lord mentions contain both mind and deeds, for those evil deeds have their origin in the heart.

He calls all the things He has called “evil things”. There is nothing good in these things, nothing that connects with God, nothing that comes from Him. Because of these evil things, man becomes unclean. This means that a man without God is unclean and that the believer who does one of these evil things becomes unclean because of it. Only confession of it makes man clean, for he may know that the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin (1Jn 1:7).

Mk 7:24-30 | The Syrophenician Woman

*24 Jesus got up and went away from there to the region of Tyre. And when He had entered a house, He wanted no one to know [of it]; yet He could not escape notice. 25 But after hearing of Him, a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately came and fell at His feet. 26 Now the woman was a Gentile, of the Syrophenician race. And she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter. 27 And He was saying to her, “Let the children be satisfied first, for it is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.” 28 But she answered and *said to Him, “Yes, Lord, [but] even the*

dogs under the table feed on the children's crumbs." 29 And He said to her, "Because of this answer go; the demon has gone out of your daughter." 30 And going back to her home, she found the child lying on the bed, the demon having left.

In the previous section the Lord Jesus, with the Divine perfect understanding that is His own, shows the heart of man. God wants to show His own heart in return. He does this in Christ to those who feel a need for Him and come to Him in faith, acknowledging His perfect goodness and resting in it.

To show His own heart the Lord goes to regions outside the territory of Israel. As a true Servant He does not want to be known, but for those who seek the grace of God, He cannot remain hidden. He cannot deny His nature of love for those who need Him in their need. By them He is also found.

A woman comes to Him who, as a real mother, seeks healing for her demon-possessed child. She hears of Him and does not hesitate for a moment to go to Him. She falls at His feet. There is a complete surrender to Him of the need she carries with her. As an extra peculiarity, Markus mentions that the woman belongs to a Gentile people. She is not a member of God's chosen people. She is free of tradition and hypocrisy and does not have a hardened heart, but a heart that longs for grace.

She makes her request to the Lord from her humble attitude. Then He gives her an answer that every righteous Jew must have sounded like music to their ears. There is no one who needs to ask for an explanation of the parable used by the Lord. The picture is too clear. The children are God's people and the dogs are the Gentiles.

This would have been a crushing answer for the woman if the feeling of her need and of the goodness of God hadn't gone beyond that and driven out every other thought. When the Lord speaks these words, He has something completely different in mind than flattering the superior feelings of the proud Jew. His words are a challenge to the faith of the woman. He does not add that the children do not want the bread. He has distributed it but the children reject Him as the true bread.

The faith of the woman is expressed in a sublime way. With the words “yes, Lord” she acknowledges the sovereignty of God. She is indeed only a dog of the nations. At the same time, she sees that the goodness of God is so great that there is even bread left for the dogs, even if only crumbs. She makes no claim to any rights. The poor woman relies only on grace.

Her faith, with a God-given insight, lays its hand on the grace that goes beyond the promises made to Israel. She does not belong to God’s people, but that does not diminish God’s goodness and grace. She penetrates the heart of the God of love as He is revealed in Christ, and she enjoys the fruit of it.

The word the woman has spoken comes from a heart that believes. The outward word reflects the mind of her heart. Here, any hypocrisy is absent. The Lord rewards her confession with the healing of her daughter. The woman does not ask Him to go with her. She does not doubt His word and goes home. When she comes home, she sees that her faith has been answered. She has been given according to her faith.

Mk 7:31-37 | A Deaf and Difficult Speaking Man Healed

*31 Again He went out from the region of Tyre, and came through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, within the region of Decapolis. 32 They *brought to Him one who was deaf and spoke with difficulty, and they *implored Him to lay His hand on him. 33 Jesus took him aside from the crowd, by himself, and put His fingers into his ears, and after spitting, He touched his tongue [with the saliva]; 34 and looking up to heaven with a deep sigh, He *said to him, “Ephphatha!” that is, “Be opened!” 35 And his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was removed, and he [began] speaking plainly. 36 And He gave them orders not to tell anyone; but the more He ordered them, the more widely they continued to proclaim it. 37 They were utterly astonished, saying, “He has done all things well; He makes even the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.”*

The Lord goes further north from Tyre and passes through Sidon, and then goes south again to the Sea of Galilee. Before that, He passes through the area of Decapolis, the area where the demon-possessed who was delivered by Him testified of Him (Mk 5:20).

When He comes there, a deaf man is brought to Him. Bringing people in need to the Lord is a work any believer can do. The man has no ears to hear, he cannot receive the fruit of the Word of God. As a result, he cannot communicate his need to Him and praise Him even less. This is the situation of God's people, who are deaf to the voice of the good Shepherd and incapable of praising God.

The Lord performs a total of seven acts to heal the man. In proportion He performs many more acts than He speaks words. This is characteristic of the Servant.

1. He separates him from the crowd. Every need a man has can only be taken away by Him when He is alone with someone.
2. He puts His fingers in the ears of the deaf man. He points to the ailment as it were, but it is with fingers of healing power and not with a raised finger. The finger of God is a finger that makes God's power visible and can be recognized both by believers and unbelievers (Exo 8:19; 31:18; Psa 8:3; Dan 5:5-28; Lk 11:20-22).
3. He spits. Saliva is a symbol of His inner strength that comes out through His mouth. He will have spit on His hand and wet His finger with it.
4. With the finger with saliva on it He touches the tongue of the man, as to put His inner strength from His mouth into the mouth of the man.
5. He brings the need He is working on into connection with heaven. It emphasizes His actions in dependence on His Father (Mk 6:41).
6. He sighs, which speaks of the burden He experiences in His mind as He heals the man.
7. He speaks the redeeming word. It is a truly redemptive word, for it is an opening and loosening word.

After all these acts the deafness of the man and what has prevented him from speaking properly are removed. Now he is able to speak properly. To speak well means to speak well of someone. The first good words he speaks will be about Christ. Good words can only be spoken if the ear is opened. Christ makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak. Thus He will do as the Messiah does with the remnant of Israel in the future (Isa 35:5-6).

As the perfect Servant, He has no choice but to say that this wonder must not be passed on. The true Servant seeks no honor from men, no honor for Himself. But the wonder has made such an impression that no one can remain silent about it. It is an understandable reaction, yet disobedience to the Lord.

People come to recognize that He has done all things well. There is only perfection in His actions. He is truly the perfect Servant Whose work is perfect.

Mark 8

Mk 8:1-3 | Compassion for the People

*1 In those days, when there was again a large crowd and they had nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples and *said to them, 2 "I feel compassion for the people because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat. 3 If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way; and some of them have come from a great distance."*

It is not the disciples who come to the Lord to express their concern for the multitude, but the Lord takes the initiative here (cf. Mk 6:35). He acts here on the basis of His own loving thoughts. After the previous feeding, He here in grace provides additional proof of the fact that He is the Messiah Who satisfies His people with bread (Psa 132:15).

The first feeding (Mk 6:34-44) is about the service of the disciples. There are five thousand men, five loaves of bread and twelve small baskets, numbers of which the first two point to responsibility. Here it is about God's sovereign power. We see this in the numbers "seven" (verse 8) and "four thousand" (verse 9). In the first case it is mainly about Israel, which we see in the number twelve. Here it is about the earth, about all people, which we see in the number four. After the bread for Israel (Mk 6:41-44) and the bread for the dogs, the unclean Gentiles (Mk 7:28), we see in this story that there is bread for the world (cf. Jn 6:33).

We also have here a testimony of the perfect grace of God, indicated in the number seven, which symbolizes perfection. We also see in this second feeding that those who follow Him will have no lack.

In spite of His rejection, the Lord continues to show grace, for His mercy is Godly. He knows exactly how long the crowd has been with Him and that they have nothing to eat. He counts the days. What He says of the crowd also applies to Him. He's also without food all this time, but He is thinking of the crowd.

It seems a strange thing that we can be with the Lord for so long and still have nothing to eat. He creates such opportunities in order to show His

compassion in this, which we would otherwise not be able to see. The three days also speak of His resurrection. God can only act in grace with the world on the basis of the death and resurrection of His Son.

The Lord knows even more about them. He knows their limited powers and also where they come from and where they have to go. That is why He wants to take care of them.

Mk 8:4-9 | Feeding of the Four Thousand

*4 And His disciples answered Him, "Where will anyone be able [to find enough] bread here in [this] desolate place to satisfy these people?" 5 And He was asking them, "How many loaves do you have?" And they said, "Seven." 6 And He *directed the people to sit down on the ground; and taking the seven loaves, He gave thanks and broke them, and started giving them to His disciples to serve to them, and they served them to the people. 7 They also had a few small fish; and after He had blessed them, He ordered these to be served as well. 8 And they ate and were satisfied; and they picked up seven large baskets full of what was left over of the broken pieces. 9 About four thousand were [there]; and He sent them away.*

The disciples seem to have forgotten the previous experience. This is how it often happens to us. We know how many times the Lord has saved us from difficult situations, and yet we fear we will perish in the next. The disciples have not yet learned to measure the situation according to His power rather than according to their own power. They speak to Him about the situation in a way that presupposes that He would not know that there are no sources in a desolate place. They will experience that He makes a handful of corn an abundant harvest (cf. *Psa 72:16*).

The Lord asks them about their supply of loaves. They know how much they have with them. He also asks us how much we have. We can answer that we know something about Him as the bread of life, but we cannot use it to meet the needs of others. To Him, however, it is always enough if we give it to Him. We can also apply this to our money and our abilities. If we give it to Him, He can turn it into something we can serve others with.

Before He gives food, He commands the crowd to sit on the ground. Food He gives must be eaten at rest. Sitting like this, the eyes of all will also have

been looking to Him (Psa 145:13-16). Often He has been a Guest of others, sometimes welcome, sometimes unwelcome, but here He is the Host. So He takes the seven loaves and gives thanks for them. He brings them into connection with the fullness of heaven. He then breaks the loaves, multiplying them, and giving them to His disciples.

The disciples may present them to the crowd as a richly filled table. There is no lack. There is not only bread, there is also fish. After the Lord has spoken the blessing, the disciples may also serve them to the crowd. The result is that all are fed. They can eat until they are satisfied. In fact, there is so much that seven large baskets full of pieces remain.

The main purpose of repeating this wonder is to represent the tireless intervention of God's perfect power in love. We see that in using the number seven twice. Normally a ruler allows himself to be served by his subjects, who provide him with what he needs. Here is a Ruler Who gives food to His subjects. The number four thousand indicates the universality of this wonder. Four is the number of the earth (four winds, four seasons). God's grace is there for everyone.

After the Lord has provided the multitude with sufficient food by this wonder, He sends them away. They will not have succumbed along the way. They will also have had enough food for talking about and thinking about Who is this wonderful Person Who has given them so much teaching and food.

Mk 8:10-13 | The Request for a Sign

*10 And immediately He entered the boat with His disciples and came to the district of Dalmanutha. 11 The Pharisees came out and began to argue with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, to test Him. 12 Sighing deeply in His spirit, He *said, "Why does this generation seek for a sign? Truly I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation." 13 Leaving them, He again embarked and went away to the other side.*

Immediately after the feeding, the Lord enters the boat. His disciples are with Him. So they come into the next area of His service. There, however, is no crowd in need waiting for Him, but declared opponents are ready to argue with Him and test Him.

His opponents are the company of the Pharisees. They come to Him and dispute His authority because they see in Him a threat to their own authority. That is why they are blind to the wonders He has performed. The fact that they ask Him for a sign shows that they have not seriously thought about the remarkable wonders He has already done. Nor do they have a heart for them. After all, His whole service and Person are a sign from heaven!

The Lord has sighed before because of a bodily need (Mk 7:34). Here He sighs deeply because of even greater spiritual distress and blindness. These spiritual distress and blindness are a much greater defect than a physical defect. He sighs deeply because He knows the disastrous outcome of their unbelief (cf. Eze 9:4). In His spirit He feels the consequences of sin (Jn 11:33; 13:21).

The Lord does not enter into discussion either. You cannot make anything clear to a blind person who has already seen so much and has not noticed anything. He asks them why “this generation”, i.e. people like this, wants a sign. What use is a sign to the blind who cannot see it? That’s why they don’t get what they ask for. Giving them a sign would be like throwing pearls before swine (Mt 7:6).

The crowd wanted to stay with Him, but the Lord sent them away (verse 9). He does not send His opponents away, but turns His back on them. They do not have to count on Him to grant their wish. He again embarks and leaves, away from these Pharisees with their hardened and blind hearts. On the other side awaits a new work: the healing of a blind person (verses 22-26). At the same time His service continues on board, teaching His disciples about leaven (verses 14-21).

Mk 8:14-15 | The Leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod

14 And they had forgotten to take bread, and did not have more than one loaf in the boat with them. 15 And He was giving orders to them, saying, “Watch out! Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.”

The crowd of more than four thousand had no bread, and Christ satisfied them by using the seven loaves of the disciples. Now the disciples appear to have nothing with them except one loaf. That is not much for thirteen

people. The question is, have they learned what He can do with it? After all, they have Him with them?

The Lord knows they're worried about that. They're hungry, but they won't be satisfied by that one loaf. In the spiritual application we can say that distributing spiritual food does not always mean that one's own spiritual hunger is also satisfied. Then it is necessary to take your own food as well. But sometimes there is so little time to 'eat' yourself, that spiritual life becomes weaker. The Lord knows this.

The lack of bread and their concern about it gives Him the opportunity to teach them a lesson other than that He can provide for all needs. This lesson is also related to bread, for it is about leaven. The Lord speaks about "the leaven of the Pharisees". By this He means adhering to outer religious forms, of whatever kind, by which God and His Christ are set aside. The leaven of the Pharisees is hypocrisy (Lk 12:1); it is the pious appearance to the outside world, while the heart is cold and empty.

There is also "the leaven of Herod". By this is meant the worldliness, the covetousness of things that give a good name in this time or maintaining conformity to the world.

So it's all about legalism and conformity to the world. They are two extremes that are similar at the same time. They are both evil. Legalism is a form of conformity to the world. It is important to learn the lesson of the spiritual dangers that threaten a servant's life and make his service useless and even harmful to others.

That the disciples need this lesson is evidenced by their reaction. They have forgotten that they have the one bread plus the Lord with them. That is why they seek the solution among themselves and not with Him. They connect His teaching with their own needs and do not understand the warning. They see these people as respectable and therefore are not prepared to the radical condemnation that He is expressing.

Only in Christ we can be freed from these stumbling blocks and tricks. Are we content with the one loaf, or do we think we should add some of the leaven of the Pharisees or of Herod? We can apply this to the life of the church. There is a danger that we are not content with the one bread, that is Christ. Then we believe that by legalism or forms of the world we

can protect or enrich our faith in Him. If that happens, we have not paid attention and have not watched out for the leaven of the Pharisees and that of Herod.

Mk 8:16-21 | Teaching About the Leaven

*16 They [began] to discuss with one another [the fact] that they had no bread. 17 And Jesus, aware of this, *said to them, "Why do you discuss [the fact] that you have no bread? Do you not yet see or understand? Do you have a hardened heart? 18 HAVING EYES, DO YOU NOT SEE? AND HAVING EARS, DO YOU NOT HEAR? And do you not remember, 19 when I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces you picked up?" They *said to Him, "Twelve." 20 "When [I broke] the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of broken pieces did you pick up?" And they *said to Him, "Seven." 21 And He was saying to them, "Do you not yet understand?"*

The Lord observes how they discuss His warning. He asks them three questions. The first question makes it clear that He does not mean by His warning the lack of loaves, but exposes their lack of trust in Him. In the second question He reproaches them for their lack of understanding and awareness of the spiritual dangers that threaten them and for which He has warned them. They did not consider things in the light of Who He is and therefore came to the wrong conclusion. In the third question He points out the cause of their lack of understanding. That cause is their hardened heart. They haven't yet learned to trust Him completely because they still have a high regard for religious and worldly status.

They do have eyes, but they don't look well because they don't look the way He does. They are not completely blind, but they cannot see clearly either. The Pharisees and Herod are completely blind, but the disciples cannot see well either because they also have something of the Pharisees' and Herod's leaven. They do not use their spiritual ability to judge the deeds of the Lord they have seen. In the same way they misjudge His words. They do have ears, but still listen too much to people who are religiously esteemed. To awaken them and reach their hearts, the Lord reminds them of the first wondrous feeding. He asks what was left. They remember. A vivid and

accurate reminder of what the Lord has done or said is an important factor in spiritual life. This “reminding” is used by Peter in his second letter (2Pet 1:12-13,15; 3:1). Therefore, the Supper is a meal of remembrance (1Cor 11:24-25). See also Psalms 38 and 70, which are ‘memorial’ psalms (Psa 38:1; 70:1).

To teach them the lesson well, He also reminds them of the second wondrous feeding. Here, too, He asks the question of what was left. They also remember that. Then He asks the question if they don’t understand it yet. There is no answer to this last question. They have understood. The Lord does not give answers, He only asks questions.

Mk 8:22-26 | A Blind Man Healed

*22 And they *came to Bethsaida. And they *brought a blind man to Jesus and *implored Him to touch him. 23 Taking the blind man by the hand, He brought him out of the village; and after spitting on his eyes and laying His hands on him, He asked him, “Do you see anything?” 24 And he looked up and said, “I see men, for I see [them] like trees, walking around.” 25 Then again He laid His hands on his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and [began] to see everything clearly. 26 And He sent him to his home, saying, “Do not even enter the village.”*

The Lord comes to Bethsaida with His disciples. There are people there again who care for others and bring someone to Him (cf. Mk 7:32). They implore Him to touch the blind man because they know that His touch means healing. There is faith in the goodness and power of the Savior. In the way He heals the blind man, there is teaching for the disciples who also had a problem with their eyes (verse 18).

As He has previously done with the deaf man (Mk 7:33), He also takes the blind man out of the crowd. He does not seek the admiration of people. He wants to do His service in silence, without drawing attention to Himself. That is really service. One word would have been enough, but He, the Son of God, is a Servant and is fully committed to the cause as Someone Who is closely involved in it.

His inner strength, which we see in the symbol of saliva, comes on the eyes of the blind man. Then He lays His hands on him. Then, perfectly know-

ing the condition of the blind person, He informs him if he sees anything. The man's answer seems to indicate that the healing has only partially succeeded. But there is no question here of a half succeeded and half failed wonder of the Lord. Here it is a wonder that He performs in phases. In John 9 the healing takes place without phases (Jn 9:7). He works according to His plan, to teach us something too.

Here we learn that in the spiritual development of someone who comes to faith, people can initially occupy a large place. This is also the case with the disciples: man, especially the Pharisee and his pious appearance, still occupies too great a place. Legalistic people make a big impression on some people. If we do not have a clear sight of the Lord, legalistic people impress us greatly. We bow down to their authority. We can also be impressed by the prestige and tribute of the world. In all such cases a second touch is necessary before we see all things clearly.

Here too the love of the Lord does not get tired of their unbelieving slowness of understanding. He acts according to the power of His own purpose and makes it clear to us. Everything that impresses us makes it impossible for us to see clearly. That is because He, the one loaf, is not enough for us. For someone who has never been able to see, two things are needed. One is the ability to see and the other is the ability to use the acquired eyesight.

In this blind man we see the condition of the disciples. Before the Lord, so to speak, lays His hands on them for the second time they don't see everything clear because of Jewish customs. They are limited in seeing His glory. The laying on of His hands for the second time we see in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit has come, the disciples see everything clearly. The Lord's hands always complete the work He has begun (Phil 1:6).

He sends the healed blind away with a command. He must go to his home, but not to the village. His family may know what He has done to him, but no spectacle should be made of it for the wider surroundings. Thus He has a command for everyone who has been delivered by Him from his sins.

Mk 8:27-30 | The Confession of Peter

27 Jesus went out, along with His disciples, to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way He questioned His disciples, saying to them, "Who do people

*say that I am?" 28 They told Him, saying, "John the Baptist; and others [say] Elijah; but others, one of the prophets." 29 And He [continued] by questioning them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter *answered and *said to Him, "You are the Christ." 30 And He warned them to tell no one about Him.*

The Lord, as always, takes the initiative to go elsewhere, and His disciples follow Him. It has been calculated that in the years of His walk He traveled about four thousand kilometers. The disciples were allowed to walk with Him all that way. Along the way they have received much teaching from Him. Likewise when they are on their way to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. On the way He has a question for them. He wants to know what they have heard people saying about Him.

The disciples are aware of the prevailing opinions. They only mention the flattering opinions. They also know the statements of the Pharisees who call Him a Samaritan and a slanderer or also a glutton and wine drinker and that He has a demon. But they don't mention those things. They love the Lord too much for that. What we do see, however, is that whatever opinions one has about Him, they show the lack of understanding for Who He really is. It is not just seeing people as trees, but utter blindness.

We may know what others think about Christ, but above all it is important who He is for us personally (cf. Song 5:9). Can we see, or are we also (partially) blind? That is why the question comes to all disciples. The Lord addresses the question to them in a way that rules out any misunderstanding. The answer comes through Peter. His confession is that of faith in Him as the Christ, the Anointed, the Messiah.

For Peter He is the Anointed for Israel, but God understands 'Anointed' more than just the Messiah for Israel. To God, He is the Chosen One with Whom He has connected eternal counsels.

The time is past to convince Israel of the rights of the Lord Jesus as the Messiah. Therefore, He warns His disciples not to present Him as the Messiah to the people anymore. He announces what will happen for the fulfillment of the purposes of God in grace with Him as the Son of Man after Israel has rejected Him.

Mk 8:31 | First Announcement of Suffering

31 And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

Instead of joining the confession of Peter, the Lord is going to teach them something completely different. Peter means by his confession that he sees in Him the Messiah of Israel, the people who will be made head of the nations, and that He will reign. That will certainly be so, but Peter is forgetting something. That is why the Lord tells plainly what will happen to Him. He speaks about His death for the first time. His rejection will be complete. But He also speaks of His rising again.

In this context, He calls Himself “the Son of Man”. This means that He is truly Man, Someone of the human race. He Who is the eternal God has become Man. By this He connects Himself with all mankind and not only with Israel. He also became the Son of Man so that He could die and then bring in a great harvest in His resurrection (Jn 12:24).

Mk 8:32-33 | The Interests of Men

*32 And He was stating the matter plainly. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. 33 But turning around and seeing His disciples, He rebuked Peter and *said, “Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.”*

The Lord has, without using veiled terms, shared from His heart with His friends what will happen to Him. Peter disagrees with this and begins to rebuke Him. How can He think and say such things? Aren’t they here to prevent it? Peter reacts this way because a rejected Messiah doesn’t fit into his thinking. He has just given a wonderful testimony of Him. Yet he did not understand its true meaning, and so we see in him that the most beautiful testimony does not guard against such a slip. Peter sees himself as a great tree that he can put himself so above the Lord to rebuke Him.

The Lord turns His back on Peter. He recognizes this utterance as an utterance of satan and rebukes Peter who has allowed himself to be used as a mouthpiece of satan. As He rebukes Peter, He looks at the disciples, for they must all understand that without the cross there can be no blessing.

Satan will always try to keep the Lord from the way of obedience, which is the way of the cross. He wants to offer Him glory without suffering for it. But God's way is through suffering to glory. First the suffering must come from the side of men and for the sake of sin from the side of God, then glory can come. First everything that has dishonored God must be removed, then there can be reigning according to God's thoughts. This is an important practical truth.

Peter acknowledges through the teaching of God that the Lord Jesus is the Christ, but he cannot bear the thought of rejection, humiliation and death. He even dares to rebuke the Lord. To this comes the believer who does not realize that God's glory is precisely enclosed in the cross. The worst and most dangerous instruments of satan are often believers who fear the defamation and enmity of the world.

Satan has already presented to Christ the glory without the cross. Christ then scornfully rejected that proposal (Mt 4:8-10). Here lies the trap we all so easily fall into, namely the desire to spare one's own self and prefer an easy path rather than the way of the cross. By nature, we prefer to escape shame, rejection and trial. We prefer a quiet path, respected by people.

Peter does not understand that there is no other way to redeem people. He lacks insight for this. Our way of life and our reactions to suffering show that we too often do not understand that God's way to glory is only through the cross.

Mk 8:34-38 | Conditions to Follow the Lord

34 And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. 35 For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. 36 For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? 37 For what will a man give in exchange for his soul? 38 For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

The way to glory for the disciple is no different than that of his Master: it is by the way of the cross. This word the Lord speaks not only to His

disciples, but also to the crowd. It applies not only to those who already follow Him, but also to everyone who wants to follow Him. He tells the crowd what the consequences are of following Him.

It begins with the denial of oneself, of the pursuit of one's own interests, the establishment of one's own kingdom, an area where life meets one's own goals. It is the renunciation of one's own importance. Then the cross must also be taken up. The cross means submission to defamation and rejection by the world. This implies following the rejected Jesus. The cross, for example, is not a disease from which we can suffer. We do not take up a disease, but it happens to us. Taking up the cross is a voluntary thing. We can do it, or we can leave it.

To follow Christ we have to do two things. One is to deny ourselves. In the judgment of the world, this is negative, because the world is out to uphold itself and to prove itself. The other is to take up the cross. This is also negative according to the judgment of the world because the world only wants to enjoy beautiful things. Suffering has no place in it. If we want to remain with the Lord forever, we must follow Him. And if we want to follow Him, we must experience what He experienced on our way after Him.

In following Christ, things are quite different from what they are in the world. There is nothing more important to a human being than his life. Whoever does everything in his power to preserve it and therefore dedicates himself to a long stay on earth, will lose his life. Such a person has not thought about God and the right He has to the life of every creature. He who looks at his life in connection with Christ and the proclamation of the gospel, has understood what is at stake. Such a person does not arrange His life to be long and pleasant on earth, but follows a Savior rejected by the world because He preached the gospel. He who lives that life fulfills God's purpose in life. The reward is sharing in the glory into which Christ has already entered.

The question "for what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?" is important to all who wish to enjoy the worldly things as much as possible. Even if one were to win the whole world, what would it profit him for eternity if he had to spend it in loneliness, pain and dark-

ness? Pharisees and Herodians have won the world, but they lose their souls.

The soul of a human being can't be compared to anything. Yet countless people exchange their souls for a little earthly or worldly pleasure. They sell their souls to the devil for a little tinsel. The world is the system that feeds self-love and the flesh, in which all kinds of pleasure are used to have fun without God.

Everything is determined by our attitude toward the Son of Man. This is the Name of His rejection, but also of His future glory. He who, through a feeling of fear or shame, does not come to accept the Lord Jesus and His words and testify of Him in an adulterous and sinful generation, will not share in His glory. Such a person does not want to take on himself the displeasure of his adulterous and sinful surroundings. That gives him a temporary recognition of his surroundings, but an eternal rejection by Christ.

Mark 9

Mk 9:1-8 | The Transfiguration

*1 And Jesus was saying to them, "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power." 2 Six days later, Jesus *took with Him Peter and James and John, and *brought them up on a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them; 3 and His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them. 4 Elijah appeared to them along with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus. 5 Peter *said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." 6 For he did not know what to answer; for they became terrified. 7 Then a cloud formed, overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!" 8 All at once they looked around and saw no one with them anymore, except Jesus alone.*

After the Lord Jesus spoke in the previous verse of "the glory of His Father", He now speaks of the coming of that glory. He speaks of it when He speaks of the coming of the kingdom of God with power. Then His majesty will be seen and acknowledged all over the earth. Some of His disciples will not have to wait until after their death when they will participate in it in the resurrection. They may already taste some of it in the next scene. To encourage them, for a moment, they are lifted over suffering and the cross (Mk 8:31-38) into glory. Peter speaks about it in his second letter as a scene that speaks of the power and majesty of the Lord Jesus (2Pet 1:16).

This is an encouragement for servants, because they get to see the reward that awaits them after having served. The emphasis is on the coming of the kingdom with power. Power is what servants need. That power is found in the dependence on God. If we forget that we are dependent on God, we become powerless.

Mark speaks of "six days later" because he describes Christ as the true Servant. The number 'six' speaks of the period of man's works that precedes

rest. Thus, God worked six days before He rested from His works on the seventh day (Gen 1:31; 2:1-2).

The Lord “took” three disciples on a high mountain. He is the Lord. In order to participate in the glory of the kingdom, He must take us there and we must be alone with Him. At the same time, today the revelation of that glory is still a heavenly matter. That is why He takes His disciples with Him on a “high mountain”, away from the earthly. He takes precisely these three disciples with Him because of the service they will later perform to confirm and strengthen their faith. They will be pillars of the kingdom (Gal 2:9).

The Lord is transformed before their eyes. They see Him Who had no “form or majesty” (Isa 53:2) in outer glory, as He will have in the realm of peace. In the Gospel according to Matthew He shines like the sun (Mt 17:2). That fits in the Gospel that describes Him as the King. But here we have the Servant in perfect purity. His garments, which become “radiant and exceedingly white”, speak of His outward manifestation, of His service and the testimony He gives in the world. The description of the whiteness of His garments is more extensive in this Gospel and therefore more emphatic because Mark describes Him as the perfect Servant. With Him there is no stain to be found by anyone who, like a launderer, has the sharpest eye for cleanness. It is a cleanness that the most competent earthly cleanser cannot work. It is the cleanness of heaven.

People could spit on the Lord Jesus during His days in the flesh and smear His garments with the blood they had brought forth from the scourges. If He reigns, that will be impossible, but the immaculate white will be the hallmark of His reign, a hallmark that no ruler has had before Him. It is the reign of heaven. The transfiguration is a prophecy. Christ will be the radiant center of the glory of the kingdom of peace, as He is here. The saints will then be with Him under heavenly circumstances, like Moses and Elijah.

In this glory, Elijah and Moses do not appear to the Lord Jesus, but to the three disciples. For the Lord they are always present. Together, Elijah and Moses are a picture of all believers who will reign with Christ. In Elijah we see a picture of believers who will go to heaven without dying (2Kgs

2:1,11) and then reign with Christ. In Moses we see a picture of the dead and buried believers (Deu 34:5-6) who will rise up and go to heaven to reign with Christ. Moses is also the lawgiver and Elijah the law restorer. Both have placed the people on the foundation of the law as the only right foundation for God.

They “were talking” with Him, that is to say, they spoke with Him in complete confidentiality. Mark mentions Elijah first, for he has revealed spiritual power, a power that will also be revealed in the future (Rev 11:5). It is also he who will restore the connection between fathers and children (Mal 4:5-6), a picture of which we see in the following history (verses 14-29). Elijah is the special encouragement here for the servant who needs this power for his service in the present time.

Peter is impressed by what he sees. He wants to hold on to this scene. That is why he proposes to make three tents for the three persons for whom he has great admiration. He makes the mistake of thinking that this scene can be permanent and can be held in tents. With the sight of the glory that is revealed to him, he forgets that the cross has yet to come, for without the cross this glory can never become reality. Peter also makes the mistake of thinking that the Lord Jesus is the First among the greatest people.

He and also the others don't know what they see and how to deal with it. Besides admiration there is also fear. Against the immaculate cleanliness of heaven stands the sinfulness of man.

Peter may – impressed by what he sees – put the Lord on a par with the great men of the Old Testament, but heaven does not share this impression. On the contrary, heaven declares the exaltation of Christ above these great men. This explanation is made both by a visible sign, a cloud, and by an audible voice. The cloud that overshadows them represents the holy abode of God, which was also above the tabernacle. Peter and the other disciples are not allowed to make tents, but they may experience something much greater. They may enter the abode of God Himself.

The voice that sounds is the voice of the Father Who declares that the Lord Jesus is His beloved Son. He alone must be listened to. Everything that Moses and Elijah have said is the truth, is God's Word. Through them we learn God's thoughts. But they give testimony concerning Him and not

together with Him. Everything they have said relates to Him and not to themselves. Moses and Elijah only express His voice. Christendom is: Hear Him. He who does not listen to Him will perish.

After this impressive testimony they see no one with them anymore than Jesus alone. In the light of the Gospel according to Mark, nothing else is important in the service we may do for Him but to see Him as the true Servant. "With them" is said only in this Gospel. He, whom we have just seen in strength, is with His own, with us.

Mk 9:9-13 | Elijah Must Come First

9 As they were coming down from the mountain, He gave them orders not to relate to anyone what they had seen, until the Son of Man rose from the dead. 10 They seized upon that statement, discussing with one another what rising from the dead meant. 11 They asked Him, saying, "[Why is it] that the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" 12 And He said to them, "Elijah does first come and restore all things. And [yet] how is it written of the Son of Man that He will suffer many things and be treated with contempt? 13 But I say to you that Elijah has indeed come, and they did to him whatever they wished, just as it is written of him."

The stay on the mountain has come to an end. The time comes for the disciples to descend from the mountain again with the Lord. This is often the case in the life of the believer. After special moments of fellowship with Christ, the feeling of being elevated from the earth and forgetting everything for a moment, comes the moment when daily life demands attention again.

The Lord tells His disciples that they may only give the testimony of what they have seen when He has risen from the dead. They also only understood after His resurrection, when they have received the Holy Spirit (Jn 16:12-15; 2Pet 1:16-18). Now they hold on to the word He said about His death and resurrection because they do not understand it. That is a good thing. So we must hold all the words of the Lord Jesus, even the words we do not understand. They speak to each other about it. That too is an example for us. It is good to speak to each other about what Christ said.

They do not ask Him for an answer about what He said about “rising from the dead”. Their preoccupation with what He has said brings them to the question of the coming of Elijah, which they have heard the scribes speak of. They know that the coming of Christ in power, of which they have just had a foretaste on the mountain, will be preceded by the coming of Elijah. They know the Lord Jesus and have accepted Him as the Messiah. They have also just seen Elijah and they know Malachi’s prophecy about him. At the same time, their question makes it clear that they do not include the rejection and death of Christ in their thinking about His coming in power. In His reply, He connects that to it.

He tells the disciples that the scribes are right that Elijah comes first and restores everything. They know this from Malachi 4 (Mal 4:5-6). It doesn’t mean Elijah will come in person, but someone with the typical characteristics of his service. Malachi speaks about the relationship between fathers and children. As has been mentioned, we see an example of this in the following history. But the Lord Jesus says that there is more written that also has to be fulfilled. This concerns His suffering and rejection, His being “treated with contempt”. Surely they should know that too? The scribes do not want to talk about it, nor do the disciples want to hear about it, but He makes it clear that there is no other way.

He adds that Elijah has even come, that is, someone in the spirit and power of Elijah. This is John the baptist (Mt 11:13-14; Lk 1:17). But the religious leaders did not listen to John. When he was captured, they did not do their best to release him. They did not mourn his death. They and the people will also reject Him of Whom John was the forerunner. This means Elijah must come another time. We will see that happen at the second coming of the Lord Jesus. In one of the two witnesses mentioned in Revelation 11, we recognize someone acting in the spirit and power of Elijah (Rev 11:5; cf. 2Kgs 1:10).

Mk 9:14-20 | The Powerlessness of the Disciples

14 When they came [back] to the disciples, they saw a large crowd around them, and [some] scribes arguing with them. 15 Immediately, when the entire crowd saw Him, they were amazed and [began] running up to greet Him. 16 And He asked them, “What are you discussing with them?” 17 And one of the crowd

*answered Him, "Teacher, I brought You my son, possessed with a spirit which makes him mute; 18 and whenever it seizes him, it slams him [to the ground] and he foams [at the mouth], and grinds his teeth and stiffens out. I told Your disciples to cast it out, and they could not [do it]." 19 And He *answered them and *said, "O unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him to Me!" 20 They brought the boy to Him. When he saw Him, immediately the spirit threw him into a convulsion, and falling to the ground, he [began] rolling around and foaming [at the mouth].*

At the foot of the mountain the Lord and His three disciples are again in direct contact with the power of satan, who reveals himself in the reality of earthly circumstances. At the foot of the mountain they see the disciples left behind surrounded by a large crowd. There are also scribes present who are discussing with the disciples.

When the entire crowd sees Him, His appearance impresses them. It is possible that the shine of the glory on the mountain can still be seen on Him. They turn away from the arguing company and walk toward Him and greet Him. They feel that He is Lord of the situation.

The Lord asks about the content of the discussion. The answer comes from the crowd, from someone who brought his son to Him because this son has a mute spirit. In his need the man has come to Him, that He might heal him (cf. Mal 4:5-6). This man and his son are the clear proof of how much the coming of Elijah is necessary to restore a disturbed father-son relationship, so that it may resemble the relationship of the Son to His Father, as shown in the previous scene on the mountain. There is complete fellowship between that Father and that Son, and here it is just as completely lacking.

The relationship between father and son is one of the most beautiful earthly relationships. All earthly relations are torn apart by the power of satan. Only the Lord Jesus can restore them. For this He wants to use people like Elijah, servants who can speak God's Word in power.

The father describes to the Lord the seriousness of the boy's situation. Now he had come to His disciples and had told them to cast out the mute spirit. In verse 17 the man said that he had brought his son to the Lord and now he says that he had told the disciples to cast out the spirit. For the man the disciples, as followers and pupils of Him, were able to do the same as He

did. However, they were incapable, even though He had given them that power earlier (Mk 6:7) and they had already cast out many demons. They cannot do it here, for they lack faith. If there is no faith, there is no power.

The Lord blames them for not having healed the boy. He even calls them an “unbelieving generation” because in this case they have the same characteristics as the whole generation of Israel. Then He asks two questions to which He does not expect an answer. They are as it were sighs of His heart concerning their unbelief. We know the answer to both questions: He stayed with them until His ascension, and He endured them until the year 70, the year in which the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the temple.

But He does not leave the begging father without an answer to his supplication. He commands him to bring his son to Him. That is always the great consolation for anyone who walks around with a need. The Lord says: “Bring him to Me.” We may do that when we pray. His order to bring the boy to Him is carried out. The demon knows, when he sees Him, that he will be cast out immediately. That is why the evil spirit does its utmost to harm the boy as much as possible before he will have to leave him.

Mk 9:21-24 | The Father

21 And He asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood. 22 It has often thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!” 23 And Jesus said to him, “If You can?’ All things are possible to him who believes.” 24 Immediately the boy’s father cried out and said, “I do believe; help my unbelief.”

Before the Lord takes action, He asks the father how long this has been happening to the boy. He wants the father to find out when his son’s behavior started. We must seek out the origin of a need, discover its root.

The father knows that his son has been plagued by a demon since childhood. Only now does he come to the Lord with it. All this time, he will have tried to persuade his son to behave in a controlled way, but to no avail. Parents who can no longer control their children can go to the Lord. However, it is important to find out whether the cause of their unruly behavior may lie in the way they dealt with their children in their youth.

They will have to ask themselves what they have allowed into the house, possibly without having minded it themselves, but what has made their children a prey of evil.

The father says what the boy went through and what he went through with him. Throwing him into the fire of trial and into the water of need will also happen with the remnant, and Christ will deliver them out of it (Isa 43:2). The father is at his wit's end and begs the Lord if He can do anything for the boy. He makes an insistent appeal to His mercy to help him and his son.

The Lord Jesus responds to the father's words "if You can do anything". With this assumption, the father falls short of the possibilities the Lord has at His disposal. The father is not fully convinced that the Lord is capable of casting out the spirit. That is why He says, in a way that implies indignation: "What, "if You can?"" He means: "Of course I can, you don't have to doubt that." The problem lies with the father. If only he can believe He can do it, it is possible He heals his son. The Lord says, as it were: "The "if" is not on My side, but on your side. It's not about whether I can do it, it's about whether you can believe." Changes in our family and in the local church as a family of God depend on our faith.

Then the father speaks the words already spoken by countless believers as an expression of desire to believe and the difficulty they have in doing so. Many believers have faced great difficulties. They have brought those great problems to the Lord believing that He is powerful to solve those problems. At the same time, in the background there was still doubt about the extent of their faith, whether they have enough faith. Then that word may also be spoken in confidence, asking to help them to believe.

Mk 9:25-27 | The Boy Healed

25 When Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You deaf and mute spirit, I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again." 26 After crying out and throwing him into terrible convulsions, it came out; and [the boy] became so much like a corpse that most [of them] said, "He is dead!" 27 But Jesus took him by the hand and raised him; and he got up.

No matter how weak the faith, it is never left without an answer. When the Lord sees the crowd coming, He knows it is time to act. He does not seek the admiration of the crowd with the deliverance of the bound boy. In a powerful and also definitive way He delivers him from the unclean spirit. While inflicting the final torments, the spirit obeys the Lord's command and leaves the boy. We see how badly the demon has harmed the boy when he becomes like a dead man. The bystanders think he died. Then the Lord seems the Loser. But He is the Victor. He proves that a moment later. The spirit can no longer hold his prey. The Lord seizes the boy with His mighty hand and raises him. By His power he gets up. Christ delivers and gives strength to rise and go. He gives the son back to his father, as it were, from the dead. In this way He also awakens our spiritually dead children to life.

Mk 9:28-29 | The Cause of the Failure

28 When He came into [the] house, His disciples [began] questioning Him privately, "Why could we not drive it out?" 29 And He said to them, "This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer."

When the Lord has gone into the house, where the crowd cannot follow Him, and He and His disciples are again among themselves, they ask why they could not drive out the evil spirit. It is always good to ask the Lord why we cannot do certain things. Again and again we find in this Gospel that the house is the place where the Lord makes confidential announcements to His disciples, or where they ask Him questions. In the house, the crowd does not listen.

In prayer we acknowledge our utter powerlessness and our complete dependence on God. The world has pleasant and good things we may use. Fasting is the conscious temporary renunciation of such things that are not wrong in themselves, so that heart and time are completely devoted to a particular cause for the Lord. Spiritual power disappears completely when life is taken up by earthly things. The kingdom of God displaces the kingdom of satan only through faith, prayer and fasting.

Mk 9:30-32 | Second Announcement of Suffering

30 From there they went out and [began] to go through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know [about it]. 31 For He was teaching His disciples and telling them, "The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later." 32 But they did not understand [this] statement, and they were afraid to ask Him.

After this event they begin to go through Galilee. And as we have seen before, the Lord does not want to draw attention to Himself in His work. Therefore His coming should not be announced. The coming of a servant is not a matter of fuss.

Instead of drawing attention to Himself, the Lord is teaching His disciples a second time about what will happen to Him. He knows that His people will not accept Him as the Messiah, but on the contrary will kill Him after they have delivered Him into the hands of men. He also speaks about His rising, which will take place three days later.

The expectations of the disciples are still focused on a reigning Messiah. That is why the meaning of His words passes them by. They prefer not to think about it either. They are afraid to ask their Master about it because they feel that His words are serious. If they were to ask Him, they might be shocked at their expectations. They become afraid, there is distance between them and Him. This is also due to their lack of faith, prayer and fasting, for the earthly glory is at the forefront of their minds. In the following verses we see that this keeps them busy.

Mk 9:33-37 | Who Is the Greatest?

*33 They came to Capernaum; and when He was in the house, He [began] to question them, "What were you discussing on the way?" 34 But they kept silent, for on the way they had discussed with one another which [of them was] the greatest. 35 Sitting down, He called the twelve and *said to them, "If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." 36 Taking a child, He set him before them, and taking him in His arms, He said to them, 37 "Whoever receives one child like this in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me does not receive Me, but Him who sent Me."*

When the Lord and His disciples have come to Capernaum, they go back into the house. Now it is His turn to ask a question (cf. verse 28). He asks His disciples about the subject of their conversation while they were on the way. He also asks us about the subjects of our conversations. They can be quite different, but do they have Him as their content or are they about our own importance?

The disciples are silent because their conscience speaks. Along the way, haughty thoughts had filled their hearts as they thought of Him. This is the cause of their lack of understanding of what He said about His suffering and death. If we let ourselves be guided by the flesh and its lusts, even when we think of Him and what we all do for Him and what our reward will be, the whole extent of God's thoughts remains hidden from us.

The disciples sought their own glory in the kingdom. Therefore, the cross, the true way to glory, is incomprehensible to them. By thinking only of their own importance it is no wonder that there is little power in the presence of satan (verse 28) and little understanding in the presence of the Lord (verse 32).

The Lord does not need their answer. Their silence says enough. It is the reason for Him to teach His disciples about the ranking in His kingdom. He sits down to teach in rest and calls His disciples to Himself. Is each one of them so eager to be the greatest? Then He will teach them how each can become one. He holds out to them that the only way to true greatness is that one is the last and the servant of all. He has taken that place. We may be willing to be a servant, but are we willing to be the servant of all and take the last place of all? He is in a perfect way, and we can only learn it from Him. Therefore we must be humble.

The Lord makes His teaching vivid by taking a child and setting him before them. There stands a small child before large men. To Him, this child has great significance. Such a child He takes in His arms. His heart goes out to him. He brings it to His heart. While He has pointed out the child and now stands with it in His arms, He teaches His disciples the corresponding lesson. Children do not have the thought of taking the first place among the believers.

That He takes the child in His arms means that He surrounds it with His love. That is the hallmark of the true Servant: He gives others the feeling that they are coming into His arms, that is, in the sphere of love, of the Lord Jesus. We also see the servant in the unpretentious child who is accepted by others because of his open-mindedness. The servant lives in the awareness that he is in the arms and at the heart of the Lord Jesus and will radiate this.

It is about receiving such children, insignificant to the world, in His Name. The Name of Christ is the touchstone. Children may have no value to the world that is driven by performance and selfish ambition, but to the disciple, these unappreciated children, following Christ, should be the very objects of his service.

Whoever sees what place a child, who is not of significance, has to the heart of Christ, and receives such a child for that reason, in reality receives Christ. It goes even further, for he who receives Christ receives His Sender, God the Father. So great is the blessing of being the servant of all.

Mk 9:38-41 | Who Is Not Against Us ...

38 John said to Him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we tried to prevent him because he was not following us." 39 But Jesus said, "Do not hinder him, for there is no one who will perform a miracle in My name, and be able soon afterward to speak evil of Me. 40 For he who is not against us is for us. 41 For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because of your name as [followers] of Christ, truly I say to you, he will not lose his reward.

The words of John show how difficult the lesson of the previous verses is learned. After the search for one's own interest, presented in the previous verses, we see here the search for the group's interest. John believes that the group to which he belongs is superior to someone who has not joined the group to which he belongs and which follows the Lord. Outside that group, according to John, can be no blessing. In order to truly do a service for Him, John believes, the man who casts out demons must join them.

John even speaks of the fact that they prevented the service of the man because "he was not following us". He makes "us", that is the group to

which he belongs, the measure of the service. He must have forgotten that the man does what the disciples were unable to do because of their unbelief (verse 18). Such a spirit of sectarianism also prevailed among the group of believers in Corinth who had made Christ the “head of the party” (1Cor 1:12-13).

The question is not whether someone joins the disciples, but whether something happens in the Name of the Lord. If the Lord chooses someone, that is decisive. How does John come to such an assessment when he and the other disciples were recently unable to do so? The cause is a lack of self-knowledge and the posturing to belong to the right group. Some may not go with ‘us’ on the church path because they find so little of what they find with the Lord Jesus in service, humility, love, faith, prayer and fasting. We should humble ourselves about this. We should rejoice about every service that is done for Him and thank Him for it.

The Lord reprimands John. Whatever moved the man, the Lord emphasizes His Name in His answer. Because the man is acting in His Name, he is for Christ and not against Him. The Lord connects Himself to what the man does. This man does not seek his own honor, but that of Christ. He does not abuse the Name of the Lord to make a name for himself and to defame the Name of the Lord, but uses it to honor Him in the deliverance of people from the power of satan.

This principle of “he who is not against us is for us” is important in judging all that is done for the Lord Jesus. He connects His disciples in His service with Himself. And when it comes to a service for Him, it is not a testimony against Him nor against His disciples, but the disciples and He are dealing with someone who is cooperating toward the same goal. When it comes to service, the Servant acknowledges every service done for Him.

When He says, “he who is not with Me is against Me” (Mt 12:30), it relates to His rejection. He who chooses not to share with Him in His rejection actually chooses against Him. Neutrality is impossible.

The Lord makes it clear that even the smallest service performed by anyone to one of His disciples, precisely because he is of Christ, will be rewarded by Him. A cup of water may not be much for the giver, but for those who are truly thirsty, it is a great refreshment. The Lord unites Himself so much

with His disciples, that He experiences this refreshment done to one of His own as done to Himself.

His disciples are the little ones, the dependents. Christ, too, has made Himself nothing (Phil 2:6-7) and has been here as the dependent Man. He who acknowledges this and therefore follows Him is great to Him. He has others, who perhaps do not “go with us” the way, who give a refreshment to those who have gone out for Him in His service. They will receive their reward from Him.

The giving of a cup of water does not seem much compared to the casting out of demons. The Lord holds up this example to His disciples because they did not consider the man who cast out the demons to be one of them. In their eyes, that man could not be good because he had not joined their group. The Lord now says that they must appreciate and accept everything they receive from others, even though they do not belong to ‘their group’, if that is done “because of your name as [followers] of Christ”.

For example, a group may be so sectarian that only literature written by someone from the group may be read. One shuts oneself off from the readings of other believers. The Lord says here that believers may receive everything from other believers who have the desire to serve each one who is of Christ, precisely because that other one is of Christ. The Lord knows how to appreciate this and will reward it.

Mk 9:42-48 | Seduction to Sin

42 *“Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble, it would be better for him if, with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he had been cast into the sea. 43 If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life crippled, than, having your two hands, to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire, 44 <where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED.> 45 If your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame, than, having your two feet, to be cast into hell, 46 <where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED.> 47 If your eye causes you to stumble, throw it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be*

cast into hell, 48 where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED.

In this section the Lord speaks of the opposite of what He has just said. We are to our brothers and sisters a refreshment or a stumbling block. Think of the young people in a church who look at the behavior of the elders. If they leave the church because of that, it's a serious matter. Instead of wanting to resemble a small child (verses 36-37) and thus magnify the Lord Jesus, there are people who want to tempt these little ones to forget their smallness and seek their own importance. Someone who wants to cause disciples of the Lord to think great of themselves, thus dishonoring Him, awaits a terrible judgment.

In the following verses He works this out for His disciples. He gives an impressive description of eternal destruction. No evangelist does this in such a poignant way as Mark.

The warning for people who want to make others stumble in their life of faith now goes, through the use of the word "your", in the direction of the disciple. Every disciple must see to it that he or she does not fall. I must be aware that my hand can be a cause for a fall. By doing something that is not done by order of the Lord, the fall is a fact.

Everything that does not happen in dependence on Him is sin. Therefore, the inclination to do a certain wrong deed must be condemned immediately, no matter what it costs. It is better for me not to do the coveted thing and think that I am missing something on earth because of it, but through it I am going into life, than to do something that will cause me to spend eternity in the unquenchable fire with remorse.

The Greek word for hell, *gehenna*, appears twelve times in the New Testament. Literally translated, it is 'the valley of Hinnom'. This valley was originally consecrated to the idolatry of Moloch (2Kgs 16:3; 2Chr 28:3), in which children were sacrificed. After the exile, the Jews were so disgusted with this place that they turned it into a dumpsite for all Jerusalem's garbage. In this place, just outside the city, the fire burned constantly and maggots did their incessant work. That place was known as Gehenna.

This word becomes on the Lord's lips the terrible and at the same time appropriate picture of the abode of the lost. Hell will truly be the great gar-

bage heap of eternity, where all that is incorrigibly evil will be separated from good and forever under the judgment of God. This terrible fact comes from the mouth of Him Who loves sinful people and weeps over them.

This section is not about the possibility that a believer might still perish. A believer cannot possibly perish (Jn 10:28-29). It is about those who have a Christian confession and the responsibility that such a confession entails. The true Christian, the believer, would rather cut off his hand than do something that is sin. The false Christian, the unbeliever, will be seduced into doing acts that will lead him into the eternal fire. The Lord speaks to the whole company of confessors of His Name. The warning comes to all. Paul has taken this warning seriously and applied it to himself (1Cor 9:27).

It is about things that are traps in our lives, it is about wrong things we do, or wrong places we are or are going, or wrong things we see. They are things that we can prevent by self-judgment. If we believe that we have strength in ourselves to stay free from them, we will certainly fall.

What applies to the hand also applies to the foot. Not only do we have to watch out for a wrong deed because of the terrible consequences it can have, we also have to watch out that we don't put our foot on a path of sin. Here, too, we must judge ourselves if we tend to take a path of which we know that the Lord does not lead us down that path. It is about entering into life, where every loss is fully compensated and made good.

Finally, the Lord speaks of a third part of the body, the eye. Through the eye, sin has come into the world. Covetousness begins with seeing. This leads to a wrong path (foot) and to a wrong deed (hand). The eye is the most dangerous part of the body. It leads the most quickly to sin. That is why we have to be careful what we see, what we focus our eye on. Any tendency to look at something that leads us to sin must be radically condemned. It is about entering the kingdom of God or being thrown into hell.

The Lord leaves no doubt that the judgment of hell is eternal. Eternal pain will be exacerbated by the eternal remorse for the deliberately wrong choice that has been made. A temporary enjoyment of sin has been chosen, and with it eternal life has been forfeited.

Mk 9:49-50 | Fire and Salt

49 "For everyone will be salted with fire. 50 Salt is good; but if the salt becomes unsalty, with what will you make it salty [again]? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another."

Fire is the symbol of God's testing, examining righteousness that kills all evil germs. Everyone has to deal with it. The believers will have to deal with it in the sense of 1 Corinthians 3 (1Cor 3:13), where the salt will keep all that is good. The wicked have to deal with it in a way that they remain in this judgment (Jn 3:36b) and are not annihilated by it. There is no such thing as the annihilation of the soul, as if someone would cease to exist.

The "salting with fire" applies to believers and unbelievers. The unbelievers are salted before the great white throne, that is to say, judged with a righteous, irrevocable and eternal judgment. In the case of believers, it is already happening on earth and will soon be happening in full before the judgment seat of Christ. To believers, salt is the power of sanctifying grace that binds the heart to God and preserves the inner for evil. If we have salt in ourselves, that is to say, if we live in self-judgment, it will not be difficult to be at peace with one another.

If Christians, those who are of Christ, do not testify to this, there is no hope for their testimony. For where, then, can something be found that gives this testimony back to them or awakens it in them? For Christendom is the only place on earth where this salt of self-judgment can be found. If it has disappeared there, it is nowhere to be found.

The sense of the obligation toward God to be separated from evil, this judgment of all the evil of the heart, must be found in each person. It is not a question of judging others, but of oneself. It is a question of putting oneself before God, by which one becomes 'salty' and has it in oneself. In relation to others one must continue to seek peace.

Christians must remain separated from evil and remain close to God inwardly. They must walk with God, in peace with one another. This principle judges and governs the whole Christian life in a few words. Spiritual discernment and the preservation of goodness must be within ourselves and that will lead to peace with others.

Mark 10

Introduction

In this chapter, verses 1-31 deal with marriage, children and possessions. These are things that God in His goodness has given to man in creation. It is important to see all three as a good gift from God and to deal with them in this way. Unfortunately, we see that by sinful people all three have been removed from their true places and are being abused. Through the Lord's teaching here, all three of them get back their rightful place. The natural relationships, as God created them in the beginning, are shown by Him in their original purpose.

It is about the distinction between the natural and the carnal, between the earthly and the worldly. The natural, earthly is that which God has given in creation. The carnal, worldly is that which has come into the world through sin. In these things we see what the flesh has made of what God has given as good in nature. Marriage is an institution God gave even before sin came into the world. We also see this with children, although they were only born after the Fall. Also possession, the management of things, was given by God to man even before the Fall.

Mk 10:1-2 | A Question About Divorce

*1 Getting up, He *went from there to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan; crowds *gathered around Him again, and, according to His custom, He once more [began] to teach them. 2 [Some] Pharisees came up to Jesus, testing Him, and [began] to question Him whether it was lawful for a man to divorce a wife.*

The Lord leaves Capernaum and goes to another region to do His work. Wherever He comes, crowds gather around Him. So also here. And again He does His usual work: teaching about God and His kingdom. This teaching takes place in Judea and in the district at the other side of the Jordan. This last area is outside the actual promised land. The promised land speaks of heavenly blessings and the other side of the Jordan, the land on the east side of the Jordan, speaks of earthly blessings.

As He does the work of God, Pharisees come to Him who do the work of satan. They oppose Him in His service. They do not listen to Him, but instead of leaving Him, they also come to Him. Their questions have the intention of making Him in some way say something that would allow them to sue Him with the people. Now they have a question about marriage.

The Pharisees, who are extremely strict in their doctrine, have always taken marriage in general very lightly. There are two views as a result of teaching in two schools. Hillel's school teaches that a woman can be sent away for the slightest thing her husband does not like; Shammai's school is much less loose in this. These two currents are always at odds with each other. By their question they try to pull the Lord in either direction.

Mk 10:3-9 | Divorce and Remarriage

*3 And He answered and said to them, "What did Moses command you?"
4 They said, "Moses permitted [a man] TO WRITE A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND SEND [her] AWAY." 5 But Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. 6 But from the beginning of creation, [God] MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE. 7 FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER, 8 AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH; so they are no longer two, but one flesh. 9 What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."*

The Pharisees forget that they are up against the only wise God. The Lord does not let Himself be tempted to make a choice. Any choice would be wrong. Instead, He catches those who pretend to be wise in their own craftiness (1Cor 3:19). He answers their question with a counter-question with which they, with all their knowledge of the law, will have no difficulty.

They know perfectly well what Moses said about situations in which a man would want to send his wife away. But their answer already shows their wrong way of reading Scripture. The Lord has asked what Moses has commanded, but they speak of lawfulness. In doing so, they suggest that a certificate of divorce is not necessary, but merely recommended.

The Lord then sets the cause of the commandment that Moses gave before their attention. The commandment has to do with the hardness of their hearts. He speaks of the commandment as being given to them, "you", here and now and not just to a people long ago. The commandment given a long time ago comes from God and has lost nothing of its power. So it is with the cause. The cause is not only the hard heart of the people at the time, for they have just as hard a heart. The Lord speaks of "your heart".

Moses does not allow anyone to send his wife away. But if anyone does, he must give her a certificate of divorce stating the reason for her rejection. Furthermore, if she has become another man's wife who also dislikes her, he may not take her back. It is all meant as a protection for the woman, so that the man who intends to send her away will think twice before he does it (Deu 24:1-4).

It is therefore a foolish question to suppose that someone can send his wife away and that it is only a question of what reason. The Lord brings marriage back to its origins. Moses never said that anyone should send his wife away. And what was given under the law as a restrictive provision is excluded under grace.

The commandment had become necessary because man had deviated from God's original plan of marriage. As with all things, it is of the utmost importance to go back to the origin of marriage. This word is unabated today. God created man in a masculine and feminine form, no more and no different. This is the starting point and basis of marriage. Its denial (in unmarried cohabitation) and its change (in same-sex marriage) is a contempt for God's institution. It is a great dishonor to God.

The Lord quotes what is written in Scripture (Gen 2:24). Therein is the path along which marriage is established. This path cannot be denied unpunished and this order cannot be changed unpunished. A man leaves his father and mother to form a new unity with his wife that is expressed in the becoming 'one flesh'.

By "so they are no longer two, but one flesh," the Lord emphasizes that a man and a wife in marriage are no longer independent persons living side by side, each with his or her own interests, but that a marriage makes them a complete unity. Marriage leads to a complete entanglement of interests.

One can do nothing without affecting the other. In marriage nothing is private anymore, but everything is shared with the other, without any secret. The Lord's answer is that no one should ever send his wife away. The unity between man and wife is established because of the unifying bond of marriage. God is the Originator of marriage. He has placed this inseparable bond of marriage around a man and a wife. That is why it is sin and foolishness if someone wants to divorce his wife or her husband.

Mk 10:10-12 | Divorcing His Wife

*10 In the house the disciples [began] questioning Him about this again. 11 And He *said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her; 12 and if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery."*

The issue raised by the Pharisees, and what the Lord has said about it, continues to occupy the disciples. When they are in the confinement of the house again, so among themselves, they ask the Lord about it again.

In His further instruction to the disciples, the Lord no longer speaks about marriage and especially about divorce, but about how God purposed it. He confirms the unbreakable bond of marriage, without exception. Divorce is always wrong.

A Christian should never initiate divorce. He who is married is so as long as the spouse lives, even if the other divorces. Only through the death of the spouse will the remaining person be free to marry again (Rom 7:2; 1Cor 7:39). He who, despite this institution of God, divorces his wife and thinks he can enter into a new marriage relationship, commits adultery against his lawful wife.

What applies to the husband applies equally seriously to the wife. The Lord does not mention any exceptions or extenuating circumstance.

Mk 10:13-16 | The Lord Blesses Children

13 And they were bringing children to Him so that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked them. 14 But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant and said to them, "Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them; for the

kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 15 Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it [at all].” 16 And He took them in His arms and [began] blessing them, laying His hands on them.

Now, after marriage as an institution of God, attention is turned to children. Children are a blessing, a gift from God (Gen 33:5) and belong to marriage. They are always in God’s interest and therefore also in the interest of the Lord Jesus. Those who bring their children to Him seek His blessing for them. There is nothing better parents can do. The disciples think differently. They find children annoying and inconvenient in the performance of their service. They have not quite learned the previous lesson (Mk 9:36-37) and they have forgotten how much the Lord binds children to Himself.

When the Lord notices what His disciples are doing, He gets indignant and rebukes them. He absolutely does not want this. Children enjoy His greatest interest and love. He wants to have them with Him. These are precisely the persons who belong to the kingdom of God. It is theirs, it belongs to them, and not: it is for them as if they will enter it later when they have converted.

The Lord applies to every person what the child is. Only by becoming like a child can one enter the kingdom. The kingdom of God is not about the strongest and the biggest, but about the smallest, weakest and humblest, the simplest confidence. These are His own features and He likes to see them in His own. His own can learn that from children.

After this teaching, the Lord does more than He has been asked. He has been asked to touch the children, but He takes them in His arms and blesses them. He is abundant in beneficence for all those who want to take the place of a child.

Mk 10:17-22 | To Inherit Eternal Life

17 As He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and asked Him, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” 18 And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone. 19 You know the commandments, ‘DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, Do not defraud, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.’”

20 And he said to Him, "Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up." 21 Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." 22 But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property.

When the Lord leaves the house, someone comes to Him quickly. He has gone up the way and is therefore accessible to those who need Him. The rich young man – that he is, we know from other Gospels – seems to have been waiting for Him to come out. He falls on his knees before Him as a tribute.

Yet his words show that he does not realize before Whom he is kneeling. He sees in Christ only a "good Teacher" Who can tell him how to inherit eternal life. He sees in Him a perfect Someone, but no more than that. He thinks he can learn from Christ to become perfect as well. That is why he asks his question.

His question implies that he thinks he is capable of doing good, but that he doesn't know what it is and how to do it. In doing so, he relies on his own human strength. He has seen the Lord Jesus do good. That is why he turns to Him with sincerity in order to learn from Him the way that leads to eternal life.

There is an honest desire in him to learn a new lesson and take a new step in doing good things. We see a natural person who is doing his best to do good and has the intention to do even better. However, he is fundamentally on the wrong track because his question assumes that man, as he is, is good and can do good.

The Lord's answer shows that He is not impressed by the young man's approach and tribute. He asks why he calls Him good. The young man could only say that if he also saw God in Him, for only God is good. The Lord says, as it were: 'If I am not God, I am not good.' The young man does not approach him as God. He sees only one particularly good person in Him. But then you are completely wrong about His Person and you cannot learn from Him how you can inherit eternal life.

However, if the young man wants to inherit eternal life by doing good, then the Lord has a standard. That standard is the old way, that of the law.

It states how a man can earn life. After all, the law says that the man who does God's statutes and judgments will live (Lev 18:5). As an example the Lord mentions some commandments. He consciously only mentions the commandments that govern the relationship between people, not those that govern the relationship with God.

Of the commandments He mentions, the man can say that he has kept them conscientiously. There is no pride or arrogance in his statement. He has sincerely kept those commandments. Similarly, Saul, like this young man, was blameless according to the law (Phil 3:6). But once Saul has seen Who Christ is, he gives up everything. Once he has seen Christ in glory, he no longer wants any righteousness of his own, for that would be a human, carnal righteousness. He possessed the righteousness of God through faith. Then the righteousness for which he had made such an effort no longer has any value.

The young man is not a hypocrite. The Lord looks at him and sees his sincerity. Then we read of the Lord's love for an unregenerate man. It is a love because of the natural attractions a natural man can have. The young man had really kept these commandments, not as a Pharisee, to impress others, but in the conviction that this was the way to life.

Nevertheless, he had not yet found in them the satisfaction he was looking for in his heart. This is because he was looking for eternal life in the wrong way. He believed that the Lord would point out to him a work of the law that would bring him the desired eternal life as merit. With all his efforts and what he has already acquired, the young man is on the way to hell. There is a way that appears to be straight, but leads to death (Pro 14:12). That way is the young man's way.

The Lord shows him the right way and that is a work of faith. If he really wants to be like Christ, then he must do what He has done. He is now testing the young man's heart and not just his outward behavior that is blameless. By pointing out to him what he lacks, He exposes the young man's attachment to his earthly possessions. If he were to abandon them, give them to the poor, he would receive from Him treasure in heaven. The Lord invites him to follow Him until he receives this treasure.

What He asks the young man to do, He Himself has done to a much greater extent. He was rich and became poor for our sake, so that we might become rich through His poverty (2Cor 8:9). Here it appears that the young man lacks faith. He cannot give up the visible earth for the invisible heaven. The simple but powerful word of the Lord reveals the coveting of his heart. He prefers his money to God revealed in love and grace.

Mk 10:23-27 | With God Everything Is Possible

*23 And Jesus, looking around, *said to His disciples, "How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!" 24 The disciples were amazed at His words. But Jesus *answered again and *said to them, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." 26 They were even more astonished and said to Him, "Then who can be saved?" 27 Looking at them, Jesus *said, "With people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God."*

When the young man has left, the Lord looks around because He has a lesson for all those around Him. They all saw how the young man came to Him. They all heard what the young man asked and what the Lord answered. They have also seen how the young man's countenance fell on what the Lord said and then turned his back on Him. By looking around, the Lord wants to make it clear to all that they should take His words well into account when He says that it is hard for wealthy people to enter the kingdom of God.

With His words He has in mind people who trust in their wealth and not all people who are wealthy. Nevertheless, He speaks primarily in the most powerful words about the mere possession of wealth, i.e. generally about those who are wealthy. With this He denounces the danger of possession.

He knows that earthly blessings also play an important role for His disciples. This is apparent from their amazement at His words. The disciples also reveal something of the young man's spirit. They are used to seeing riches as a sign of Divine favor. The Lord makes it clear that it is all about having wealth and trusting in wealth. It is very difficult to have wealth

and not rely on it. Involuntarily we all cling to wealth and earthly things. Christ offers us the cross and heaven.

When the Lord sees their amazed faces, He emphasizes the difficulty that wealthy people have in entering the kingdom of God. By addressing them as “children”, He makes it clear to them that He wants to protect them from this danger by committing them to Himself.

Viewed from the rich it is really totally impossible to enter the kingdom of God. The illustration of a camel going through the eye of the needle makes it clear that there is not the slightest chance that a wealthy person will enter the kingdom of God. The amazement of the disciples is increased by this example. Their conclusion is simple. If it is so impossible for people visibly under the blessing of God to enter the kingdom of God, then it is impossible for anyone to be saved.

It is indeed not about something that is very unlikely, but about something that really is completely impossible for people. Salvation is not unlikely, but impossible with people. As far as it depends on man, it is impossible to be saved because of his condition. But if man has no hope of salvation or can offer it, God can show of what He is capable. And He has done so in Christ.

Mk 10:28-31 | Those Who Have Left Everything

28 Peter began to say to Him, “Behold, we have left everything and followed You.” 29 Jesus said, “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel’s sake, 30 but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life. 31 But many [who are] first will be last, and the last, first.”

Peter again is the mouthpiece of the disciples. He has a remark in keeping with what the Lord said to the young man (verse 21). He says what he and his fellow disciples have all left. In the undertone the question sounds, what does that bring them?

The Lord does not blame Peter for his remark as if he feels better than the young man. He goes into it by saying that the only motive to leave

everything must be He Himself and that in the message that is brought He must be central. Only then is it good to leave possessions and family.

Whoever follows Him from the right motive and has given up everything, gets much more in return. What we have left is only one hundredth of what we get. And not only in the future, but also now. Many can testify that, by accepting the Lord and living for Him, they have lost much of their material possessions and natural family ties, but have regained much more spiritual possessions and a spiritual family in return. This is already the case today and will only become more so in the future when eternal life is enjoyed in the realm of peace.

Incidentally, the Lord also promises persecution in this day and age – that is the time of the disciples and also our time. Accepting and following Him does not produce earthly prosperity and peaceful scenes, but lack and enmity. We follow a rejected Lord. We share in His fate, both now and in the future.

The end of the race counts, not the beginning. It may seem that some people have everything, like the rich young man. They seem to be the first to enter the kingdom. However, they will have no part in it if they do not repent and give up everything for the Lord's sake.

Others seem to be the losers, the last. They seem to have everything against them. They also have the world and satan against them. So it was with the Lord Jesus and so it is with those who follow Him. But they will be the first to enter the kingdom. There the reward will be given by Him to each one personally for the faithfulness shown. The Lord warns with these words that, as far as personal reward is concerned, we should not judge by appearances.

Mk 10:32-34 | Third Announcement of Suffering

32 They were on the road going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking on ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who followed were fearful. And again He took the twelve aside and began to tell them what was going to happen to Him, 33 [saying], "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and will hand Him over to the Gentiles. 34 They will

mock Him and spit on Him, and scourge Him and kill [Him], and three days later He will rise again."

They continue their way to Jerusalem, the Lord Jesus in front. He is in charge, He sets the way, and He Himself is going that way first. The disciples are amazed and afraid. They feel the feelings of hatred of the religious leaders toward them. This was different with Paul. He longed to be conformed to the death of the Lord Jesus (Phil 3:10). That is what grace does. The disciples don't know it yet and the flesh never understands it. They are still too attached to this earthly life.

Again He takes His disciples to Himself. He is always busy to form them for true service and therefore He explains why His way leads to Jerusalem and what will happen to Him there. They will be witnesses to what will happen to the true Servant and therefore what fate awaits servants.

The Lord says where they are going together, "we". Then He gives a sevenfold revelation of man's wickedness toward Him, the Son of Man. It is a Man Who takes upon Himself the cause of men, that He may one day rule over all men and all creation. When they are in Jerusalem, He will be delivered – by Judas, one of the twelve – to the religious leaders. They will condemn Him to death and hand Him over to the nations. Those leaders are the people who should have preceded His people in the service of God and prepared them for the reception of Him Who is their King.

There will be no humiliation, defamation, disgrace and torment spared Him before He is finally killed. That seems to be the end. But He will rise triumphantly for a new beginning.

Mk 10:35-40 | A Place in the Kingdom

*35 James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, *came up to Jesus, saying, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You." 36 And He said to them, "What do you want Me to do for you?" 37 They said to Him, "Grant that we may sit, one on Your right and one on [Your] left, in Your glory." 38 But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" 39 They said to Him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you shall drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I*

am baptized. 40 But to sit on My right or on [My] left, this is not Mine to give; but it is for those for whom it has been prepared."

After the Lord's frank words about what will happen to Him, the brothers James and John come to Him with a request. We may always come to Him with our wishes. He invites them to say what they want Him to do for them. He already knows what they want to ask. In the same way He knows what we need or want before we make our wishes known to Him. However, he wants us to come forward with them, to speak out about them. That does not mean that we always get what we ask for, nor does it mean that we always ask for the right things or even that we do it in the right way. The Lord wants us to gain insight into our questions and motives, and therefore invites us to speak out.

The brothers ask if they may have a place next to Him when He is in His glory, when He has established His kingdom. It is a kind of reservation of the best place next to Him. They think they are ahead of the others with this. They believe in His glory, which they appreciate. However, they are blind to the fact that He must first suffer and die and that this will also be their part in following Him. They do not think about His suffering, of which He has just spoken. It seems as if they have not heard that. All they can think about is His reign and their own place in His kingdom. They don't think about the place of the Lord and how He will get it. They're too preoccupied with themselves for that.

The Lord answers them that they do not know what they are asking for. Sharing in His glory is preceded by sharing in His suffering (Lk 24:26; Rom 8:17) and they don't understand that. That is why He asks them if they can drink His cup. That means if they can endure the suffering He will endure. The cup indicates more the inner suffering, the suffering of the soul, because of all injustice and defamation. He also asks if they can be baptized with the baptism with which He is baptized. This also means suffering, even to the point of death. Baptism connects us in the picture with the rejected Christ and points more to the outer suffering, the bodily suffering. The cup and the baptism as presented by the Lord here are about putting ourselves on the side of the rejected Christ with all its consequences.

In addition to their ambitious desire for the best places in the kingdom, they also appear to have an excess of self-confidence. Ambition and self-confidence belong together. It should come as no surprise to us that these two disciples also flee when the Lord is captured. Yet He does not blame them for saying they can do it. He even says they will. They will die for Him. That is why He makes the carnal desire of the two of them an opportunity to teach His disciples. If they want to be with Him, it is necessary that they go the same path as He. Then they will experience something of bitter suffering, both inwardly and outwardly.

But whatever suffering they will experience in imitation of the Lord Jesus, all that suffering, of course, has nothing to do with His unique suffering for the sake of sin to work reconciliation with God for others. He has experienced this suffering alone and no one can imitate Him in this. They will be able to share in the suffering that people will cause to Him. They won't be able to share in the suffering that God will cause Him because He alone will endure it and because of the sins of all who believe in Him.

As for their request, He does not decide as the Servant. The division of tasks in His kingdom is prepared by His Father. The Father gives everyone his place in the kingdom according to His wisdom.

Mk 10:41-45 | Come to Serve

*41 Hearing [this], the ten began to feel indignant with James and John. 42 Calling them to Himself, Jesus *said to them, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. 43 But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; 44 and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. 45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."*

When the other ten disciples hear this, they blame the brothers for asking. Their reaction shows that the brothers have in fact done what they too would have liked to do. They too wish for themselves the best places in the kingdom of the Lord Jesus. Often the pride that dwells in our own hearts is made public by a stirred reaction to someone else's pride.

The Lord patiently calls all His disciples to Himself to teach them again, this time in response to their quarrels. This quarrel makes it clear that they all need the same teaching as the two brothers. Each time, the behavior or words of His disciples is an occasion for Him to teach them something about their work as servants.

He points to the nations of the world how they do things. There are, on the one hand, rulers and distinguished people with authority and, on the other, people over whom is ruled and who are under authority. It should not be the same among servants as it is among the nations. There should be no spirit of dominion over others. They are all slaves of one Master and fellow slaves of each other.

If someone really wants to be great, this is possible by being a servant of servants. If someone really wants to be the first, this is possible by being the slave of all slaves. It means to be the very least of everyone and to be like the Lord Jesus Who showed that.

What He presents to His disciples, He Himself, as the Son of Man, has fulfilled perfectly and gloriously. The Son of Man, He Who will reign over all things, did not let Himself be served as Prince, although He had the right to do so, but served. His service, the dedication of His time and strength, concerned not only temporal bodily suffering, but much more than that. His service led Him to give His life in death, in which He paid the ransom for many to an eternal salvation. The ransom for many is not for all people, but for all His own. What a service and what a Servant! What a privilege to serve Him and each other.

Mk 10:46-52 | Healing a Blind Man

*46 Then they *came to Jericho. And as He was leaving Jericho with His disciples and a large crowd, a blind beggar [named] Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the road. 47 When he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" 48 Many were sternly telling him to be quiet, but he kept crying out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" 49 And Jesus stopped and said, "Call him [here]." So they *called the blind man, saying to him, "Take courage, stand up! He is calling for you." 50 Throwing aside his cloak, he jumped up and came to Jesus.*

51 And answering him, Jesus said, "What do you want Me to do for you?" And the blind man said to Him, "Rabboni, [I want] to regain my sight!" 52 And Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and [began] following Him on the road.

His service leads Him to Jerusalem. In each of the first three Gospels, His last journey to Jerusalem begins with this delay in Jericho to heal a blind man. On the way to Jerusalem they come to Jericho, the city of the curse. The Lord is surrounded by His disciples and a large crowd. Yet Mark turns our attention to that one blind beggar, sitting there by the road. This man is the Lord's concern.

This blind Bartimaeus sees nothing with his physical eyes, but his spiritual eyes see all the more. He has heard about the Lord Jesus. Now he hears that He is near him. He does hear about Him as "Jesus the Nazarene". To the crowd He is just a man from Nazareth. But Bartimaeus sees more in Him. He calls to Him, that He may have mercy on him. He calls upon Him as the "Son of David".

We hear this name for the first time in this Gospel. By calling this name, Bartimaeus shows that he believes in Him as the Fulfiller of all the promises made concerning His kingship over Israel. Here is a heart that searches for God and such a heart sees everything (Pro 28:5b). He knows he is blind, he acknowledges his condition and desires to see. He who has insight into his own condition begins to see.

There are always people who want to silence the voice of someone who asks the Lord for help. There are even many here. This makes it clear that there is no faith among the crowd. For Bartimaeus the opposition is a reason to shout even louder. If we act in faith, we will always meet reproaches. But resistance does the opposite of what it is intended to do. It always works to express the authenticity of faith.

The Lord always stops for those in need. He tells them to call the blind. This happens while they also encourage Bartimaeus. These people know the Lord and testify of Him when they bring others to Him. In the same way, we too may bring someone to Him.

Bartimaeus throws aside his cloak because it is a hindrance to get to the Lord quickly. The cloak is a picture of one's own righteousness that is a

hindrance to go to Christ. This own righteousness has always been the hindrance for the people (Isa 64:6).

Faith runs parallel with the will of the Lord. Just as He previously asked James and John what they wanted Him to do (verse 35), He now asks Bartimaeus. But with him He sees faith and answers it. If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us (1Jn 5:14). The result is there immediately. With this He proves that He is the Messiah (Isa 35:5). The first person Bartimaeus sees is the Lord.

The Lord says to him that he may go, but Bartimaeus stays with Him and follows Him “on the way”, that is the way to the cross. The Lord has never claimed anyone He has healed, as if the blessing He has granted would create a right for His own benefit. We see this with the possessed (Mk 5:19), the daughter of Jairus (Mk 5:43), the young man at Naïn (Lk 7:15), and the countless others healed by Him. The twelve He did call have not been healed by Him.

Mark 11

Mk 11:1-6 | The Lord Needs a Colt

*1 As they *approached Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, He *sent two of His disciples, 2 and *said to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find a colt tied [there], on which no one yet has ever sat; untie it and bring it [here]. 3 If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' you say, 'The Lord has need of it'; and immediately he will send it back here." 4 They went away and found a colt tied at the door, outside in the street; and they *untied it. 5 Some of the bystanders were saying to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" 6 They spoke to them just as Jesus had told [them], and they gave them permission.*

It is Sunday, the first day of the last week of the Lord's life on earth before the cross. At the end of this week will happen what He spoke to His disciples about three times: His deliverance, rejection, suffering and death. In one breath He also spoke about His resurrection. It will take place on the first day of the next, the new, week.

Before He surrenders Himself into the hands of men for this abuse, God makes sure that a wonderful testimony of Him is given. This happens as they approach Jerusalem and are near Bethphage and Bethany near the Mount of Olives. Both villages are connected to the Mount of Olives, the high mountain that is connected to some of the great events of His life.

The names of the villages give us in their meaning the characteristics of the faithful remnant. Bethphage means 'house of immature figs' and Bethany means 'house of misery'. These characteristics contrast with the apostate Jerusalem. From the vicinity of these two villages, the Lord sends two of His disciples with a commission. He is always the Commander, Who knows what has to be done.

The disciples are given a precisely described command concerning the place and what they will find and what they will have to do there. We see here that Christ as God has perfect knowledge of the event, as He has of everything that is going to happen. To Him the future is present, and He

is omnipresent in every place with perfect knowledge of circumstances. At the same time we see in this Gospel a Servant Who fulfills His commission with conviction and in obedience. We can say that His Father, His heavenly Commissioner, has told Him what He must do and He is doing it.

He needs a colt on which no man has ever sat. He will be the first to ride it. It is the picture of the new He brings that no other human being has ever shown: a spirit of complete obedience to death. Nor can He use anything that has already been in the service of sinful man, for that means shows the traces of sin. The colt is ready for Him. It is tied up for Him. The disciples must untie it and bring it with them. We are by nature colts that had to be untied and then are meant to carry the Lord Jesus around.

The Lord knows that there is someone who will ask why they are doing this. He also gives the disciples the answer in their mouths. They must answer that "the Lord" has need of it. "The Lord" can refer to both the Lord Jesus and *Yahweh*. Faith knows it is one and the same Person. As soon as they give this answer, the owner will not only let the colt go, but will 'send' it. In this we see the reigning hand of God. He controls the feelings of the owner, just as He controls the feelings of the crowds.

It has sometimes been said that the Lord needs nothing or no one for His work. Therefore, it is all the more remarkable that the only time it is mentioned that He needs something, it concerns a colt. If He wants to use us for His work, as He used this colt, the equation is clear that we don't need to imagine anything regarding the work we are allowed to do for Him. What matters is that He can use us for His glorification, as the colt carried Him, through which people applauded Him. The colt was not given any honor. It only did what it was born to do.

The disciples go obediently on their way. And just as the Lord told them, they find the colt. It's easy to take it with them, they don't have to catch it. It's ready for service. They just have to untie it from the old environment to serve in a new service. In this way we are all chosen by God to serve the Lord and He takes us from where we are at the moment He wants to use us. We have a good example of this in Saul, later Paul.

There are several people who see what is happening. Normally this would cause a stir because a colt was stolen. But it's as if people only want to

know what the disciples are doing. God has worked in their hearts the conviction that this is not theft, but the taking of an order. The only thing they need to know is that these are the right people coming to pick up the colt.

The disciples speak as the Lord has told them. That works resignation to the company that asks questions. We see that there are more than one – and not just the owner – who are satisfied with the answer and no longer make any objections.

Mk 11:7-11 | The Lord Is Hailed

*7 They *brought the colt to Jesus and put their coats on it; and He sat on it. 8 And many spread their coats in the road, and others [spread] leafy branches which they had cut from the fields. 9 Those who went in front and those who followed were shouting:*

“Hosanna!

BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD;

10 Blessed [is] the coming kingdom of our father David;

Hosanna in the highest!”

11 Jesus entered Jerusalem [and came] into the temple; and after looking around at everything, He left for Bethany with the twelve, since it was already late.

The colt is brought to the Lord. Now God’s Spirit seizes the disciples and also the crowds. The disciples throw their coats on the colt. Everything that gave them dignity, they give to Him to sit on. They make it available to Him so that He may be carried around by it.

Many follow the example of the disciples and spread their coats on the road as a tribute, so that He may go over it. Also leafy branches are spread on the road as a picture of victory. In the procession that follows, one crowd goes out in front of Him, while another crowd follows Him. He is in the midst of two crowds, as once the tabernacle was advanced by six tribes and was followed by six tribes (Num 2:17).

Under the working of God’s Spirit, the people call out to Him “Hosanna”. Hosanna means ‘Save, please’ or ‘Give salvation, please’. They utter words that can only be addressed to the Messiah (Psa 118:26). They acknowledge

Him as the One Who comes in the Name of *Yahweh* to establish the kingdom as the righteous Son of David.

In riding the colt, He fulfills the prophecy of Zechariah (Zec 9:9). As the peace-loving King, He comes to His people in humility. The colt is the appropriate picture for this (cf. 1Kgs 1:33). A horse gives the picture of battle and war (Rev 19:11).

No matter how little the crowds understand what they are calling, what they are calling is entirely appropriate. They also connect the coming kingdom with the highest heavens. Salvation is the salvation that is with God in the highest heavens and must come from Him.

The Lord does not respond to the manifestations of tribute of the people. He does not reject it, for it is God's testimony concerning Him. He does not accept it either, for it is not a testimony that comes from the heart of a converted people. He enters the temple, where the true service to God should take place. But He finds no fruit there, as the following history makes clear. There is nothing for Him and nothing for God, everything is empty.

With great dignity He, as the Judge of all things, takes knowledge of all that is done in the temple. The temple is the religious center of the people. There He can best gauge the spiritual state. Just as He looks at everything in the churches with eyes like a flame of fire (Rev 1:12-15), He looks at everything in the temple. When He has looked around – this is only written in this Gospel – He leaves the temple without saying anything. He, *Yahweh*, God, has visited His temple.

Because it is already late and He does not want to spend the night in Jerusalem that rejected Him, He goes to Bethany. He knows He is welcome there.

Mk 11:12-14 | A Fig Tree Cursed

12 On the next day, when they had left Bethany, He became hungry. 13 Seeing at a distance a fig tree in leaf, He went [to see] if perhaps He would find anything on it; and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. 14 He said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again!" And His disciples were listening.

“The next day” is Monday. The Lord goes out of Bethany, apparently without breakfast, for He is hungry. That He is hungry means He didn’t get anything to eat from His people. This goes beyond physical hunger. He sought fruit from His people, of which the fig tree, which He sees in the distance, is a picture. He sees the many leaves which indicates that there is a lot of life in the tree and also that there must be a lot of fruit on the tree. But appearances deceive.

When He has reached the tree, it appears that it has only leaves and no fruit. That there is no fruit on the tree, while there are many leaves, is an unnatural phenomenon. He could expect fruit on the tree. That it was “not the time of the figs” means that it was not the time of the fig harvest. Therefore there should have been fruits, not the ripe fruits, but the precocious figs. However, there were only leaves.

If the tree didn’t have leaves, He wouldn’t have cursed the tree. But the leaves gave the impression that there would be precisely those precocious figs. The soul of the Lord went out to that fruit (Mic 7:1). This tree is a symbol of Israel that did not bear fruit for God, although for the people there seemed to be an abundance of proofs of life. So it is with the crowds that had hailed Him. It seemed much, but there was nothing in the heart for Him. It is also a lesson for us.

The Lord curses the fig tree. He does this not because there are no fruits, but because the tree gave the appearance of bearing fruit through its leaves. The tree gave false hope of fruit. The curse is final. That tree will never bear any fruit. With regard to the people of Israel of which the tree is a picture, it is so. The Israel according to the flesh will never bear fruit for God. Only a remnant conceived by God Himself, which will then be the true Israel, will bear fruit for Him.

Mk 11:15-18 | Cleansing the Temple

*15 Then they *came to Jerusalem. And He entered the temple and began to drive out those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves; 16 and He would not permit anyone to carry merchandise through the temple. 17 And He [began] to teach and say to them, “Is it not written, ‘MY HOUSE*

SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL THE NATIONS? But you have made it a ROBBERS' DEN." 18 The chief priests and the scribes heard [this], and [began] seeking how to destroy Him; for they were afraid of Him, for the whole crowd was astonished at His teaching.

They come again to Jerusalem. There the Lord enters the temple again. Mark describes what things are like practically in God's house. Now the Lord Jesus is acting harshly against all those who sell and buy in the temple. He also cleansed the temple once at the beginning of His service (Jn 2:14-16). Here He does it a second time, at the end of His service. The fact that this second time is necessary, means that the first time has not produced a lasting result. After He then left, the merchants returned their stuff to the temple and continued their sinful business.

When the Lord has cleansed the temple, He continues to see to it that things that are forbidden do not happen in God's house. With authority He acts against people who trample on the holiness of God's house, people who enter the temple as an ordinary place. He does not allow anyone to carry an object through the temple. They may be people who came from the marketplace and just walked through the temple with their merchandise because it was the shortest way home.

Not only does He cleanse and forbid, He explains and justifies His actions by pointing out what is "written". He puts it in questioning form, but in a way that makes it clear that they all should have known. He points out God's purpose with His house. It should be a house of prayer (Isa 56:7b).

Prayer is the opposite of buying. Praying is asking. God gives His house to enable man to come to Him in prayer. It is also a house of prayer not only for Israel, but for all the peoples. It indicates the scope of God's desire that goes out to all nations and His desire that all nations come to Him. When Paul writes about our behavior in the church as God's house (1Tim 3:15), his very first exhortation is that prayer should be prayed in it (1Tim 2:1-6).

Instead of turning God's house into a house where God is worshiped with reverence, man has made it an area of business and profit. It has become "a robber's den" because of unfair profit and because of robbing God of His honor. In professing Christianity, Christians are robbed of salvation, of the Christ of the Scriptures, while they think it is all for sale. A purchase

price, for example, is the performance of good works. By believing that salvation is thereby obtained, the value of Christ's work is dramatically underestimated.

The religious leaders who seek profit want to kill the Lord, but they do not dare because they are afraid of getting the whole crowd against them. His teaching impresses the crowd. Although His teaching does not bring about a radical change in the people, the people feel that here is Someone speaking with an undeniable authority.

Mk 11:19-26 | The Lesson of the Withered Fig Tree

*19 When evening came, they would go out of the city. 20 As they were passing by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots [up]. 21 Being reminded, Peter *said to Him, "Rabbi, look, the fig tree which You cursed has withered." 22 And Jesus *answered saying to them, "Have faith in God. 23 Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be [granted] him. 24 Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be [granted] you. 25 Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions. 26 <But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions.">*

Again the Lord goes out of the city in the evening because He does not want to spend the night there. The next day is Tuesday. When they are on their way to Jerusalem again, they pass by the fig tree cursed by Him. The disciples notice that the tree is completely withered. It reminds Peter of what the Lord said. He points to the withered fig tree and quotes what He said to the fig tree.

For the Lord, what has happened is self-evident, but the disciples can learn from it. He points out to them faith in God. That's what they must have, that's what it's all about. It is not about faith in itself, but about faith in *God*, about complete trust in Him. The great secret is to focus all our thoughts on Him, to judge things together with Him, and to act only for and from Him. Whoever has faith in God, in a God Who acts in accordance with

what may be expected of Him, gets what he believes. It is not about a great faith in God, but about faith in a great God.

The Lord speaks about “this” mountain, that is a certain mountain. It is the mountain that represents the immutability of the entire Jewish system, which will never change in its opposition to God and its rejection of Christ. But God has thrown this mountain into the sea, the sea of nations, in response to the faith of His own. Faith sees the apostasy of the people and, like Elijah, appeals to what God has said when the people go astray. Elijah prayed to withhold the blessing of the rain (Jam 5:17; 1Kgs 8:35). Faith does this because it is the only way God can bring the people to repentance (Rom 11:11-15).

There is also the application that faith in this God eliminates the greatest mountain of trouble a weak disciple might encounter in his service to the Lord. Only this faith must be practiced without doubt (Jam 1:5-6). Nor should it be the working of a strong self-will, but the awareness of the presence and intervention of God.

Faith speaks with an authority to which God binds His power. Faith does not claim, but knows for certain that something is according to the will of God. Based on the knowledge of God’s will, faith speaks the Word with authority, so that it is not surprising that happens what has been spoken with authority in faith.

The word “therefore” (verse 24) refers back to what the Lord has just said about faith in God. He confirms and strengthens the power of faith. He encourages them to pray and ask in the faith that they will receive what they ask for. God loves nothing more than to answer this confidence by giving what is asked for. That is how He is.

The Lord’s remark about forgiveness (verse 25) is still part of praying and asking in faith. Here He points out that in order to get what is asked for, it is necessary to have the right mind. If we ask anything of God while there is resentment in our heart against a brother or sister, we will get nothing. God cannot answer when we have something against someone and do not want to forgive him. When praying, a mind of forgiveness is important. That mind is the mind of God, Who also wants to forgive us if we have done something against Him. Asking questions in faith requires acting

toward others in the awareness of the grace shown to us by our Father. Then answer will take place.

Mk 11:27-33 | Question About the Authority of the Lord

*27 They *came again to Jerusalem. And as He was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders *came to Him, 28 and [began] saying to Him, "By what authority are You doing these things, or who gave You this authority to do these things?" 29 And Jesus said to them, "I will ask you one question, and you answer Me, and [then] I will tell you by what authority I do these things. 30 Was the baptism of John from heaven, or from men? Answer Me." 31 They [began] reasoning among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say, 'Then why did you not believe him?' 32 But shall we say, 'From men?'"—they were afraid of the people, for everyone considered John to have been a real prophet. 33 Answering Jesus, they *said, "We do not know." And Jesus *said to them, "Nor will I tell you by what authority I do these things."*

While the disciples are being taught by the Lord to pray in faith, they come again to Jerusalem. In Jerusalem He goes again into the temple, His house, the house of His Father, and walks around there. There the religious leaders and rulers of the people come to Him. Because He has come to His temple in humility, they do not realize that they are approaching Him Whose glory fills the temple. He takes the central place in it, it is only about Him.

He gives teachings, temple teachings, in the last days of His life on earth before the cross. He does so in response to questions from His adversaries. The first question concerns His authority. This question is of great significance, also when it comes to what is His house today. To understand something of God's thoughts about His house, the church, the temple of the living God, we will first have to acknowledge His authority. Furthermore, the question makes it clear that they do not intend to acknowledge His authority.

The leaders dare to ask Him about His authority. How many times have they noticed that He does everything by virtue of the authority that is His own as the heavenly Lord Who came to His people as Messiah. Their questioning of His authority is as foolish as asking the sun on what authority

it shines. Their question proves that there is room in the temple for everything and everyone except for Him to Whom alone the temple belongs. And if there is anyone who has given Him that authority, it is His Father in heaven. He acts only by order of and in agreement with Him.

The Lord does not answer the question. That makes no sense. There is nothing to make clear to people who do not want to see except their nonsense. That is why He responds with a counter-question and commands them to answer Him. If they answer His question, He will answer them on what authority He does everything.

His question relates to His predecessor, John the baptist. John referred to Him as the One Who came after him, but Who was also before him. John testified that he himself was not the Messiah (Jn 1:20), but that the Messiah was among them, and that therefore he baptized with water (Jn 1:26). If their question was sincere, they had to admit that John's baptism was from heaven and related to Him Who had come from heaven. Thus the Lord directs His words to their conscience. If He has asked His question, He commands them to answer His question again.

His question reveals both their incompetence and their insincerity. They know that they must answer "from heaven," but in their wickedness they discuss what He would rightly answer. They don't want to hear that, however, because if they still reject Him, they expose themselves in their unbelief, which would cause them to lose prestige among the people.

They do not want to give the alternative answer 'from men' either. If they would give that answer, the crowd would protest. That answer would mean that they would deny the service of John, and the crowd was so impressed by that service. Then too, they would lose the favor of the people. And they don't want to because they seek the honor of men.

The most sensible answer seems to say they don't know. Their answer shows how hollow and empty man's wisdom is in the presence of God and His wisdom. By their answer they declare their complete ignorance of the things of God. With hypocrites the Lord does not want to get involved. He gives them no answer to their question.

If we don't start by acknowledging what is in heaven, His authority, we don't have to think that we are learning something of the Lord's teaching.

Only those who acknowledge Him in His rights over His house will gain insight into His thoughts about His house.

Mark 12

Introduction

In this chapter the Lord shows all classes of Jews the condition they are in. All groups who wish to judge Him are themselves judged by Him.

Mk 12:1-8 | The Unjust Vine-Growers

1 And He began to speak to them in parables: "A man PLANTED A VINEYARD AND PUT A WALL AROUND IT, AND DUG A VAT UNDER THE WINE PRESS AND BUILT A TOWER, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey. 2 At the [harvest] time he sent a slave to the vine-growers, in order to receive [some] of the produce of the vineyard from the vine-growers. 3 They took him, and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. 4 Again he sent them another slave, and they wounded him in the head, and treated him shamefully. 5 And he sent another, and that one they killed; and [so with] many others, beating some and killing others. 6 He had one more [to send], a beloved son; he sent him last [of all] to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' 7 But those vine-growers said to one another, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours!' 8 They took him, and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard.

The Lord again uses the form of a parable to teach. It is part of the temple teaching with which He began in Mark 11:27. Through this parable He wants to teach the people what their spiritual state is, how they are spiritually. This parable is comprehended by His adversary, but not acknowledged (verse 12).

In the parable He shows that God, from His side, has done everything to enable His people to give Him what belongs to Him. The vineyard represents Israel (Isa 5:1-2). In order to receive the full fruit of it, that is, the joy for His heart, He had made all kinds of provisions. It is not only about obedience, but also about fellowship, a common joy (1Jn 1:4).

He had separated them from the rest of the sinful people by giving them the law as a wall (Eph 2:14-15). He also made all suitable preparations for

the full results of their labor. He dug a vat under the wine press in which we can see a picture of the temple as the place where they could come with their fruits. He protected them completely. Therefore He gave them a king who had a function as a watchtower. After all these preparations He left. During His absence they were responsible for the vineyard.

After all His preparatory work, God sent His slaves who pointed out to the people what God expected of them. Their service was aimed at ensuring that the people would respond to God's expectations, that is, that His people would bring Him the fruit of the land. But when God reminded the people in its history of what was due to them, their evil state came to light. They did not want to serve God, and abused those who came to them in the Name of God, without giving them what they asked for in the Name of God.

In His great grace God did not send His judgment on the people because they had abused His slave, but He sent a new messenger. But the people mistreated him even more severely. The evil state of their hearts manifested itself even more clearly. They not only mistreated the slave, but also treated him shamefully. If a man does not repent, he will sin more and more. His sinful deeds become more and more evil as he resists the gospel.

And yet God sent not His judgment, but yet another slave. He was even killed by them. Yet God continued in His grace to send His slaves, some of whom they mistreated and some of whom they killed. The condition of their evil hearts has become perfectly clear.

Though the incorrigible state of their evil hearts has become clear, God wants to take one last test. For that final trial, He sends none other than His Son. He is the only, the unique and the beloved Son. He says that they will spare Him. Sending His Son is not an act against His better judgment. As the eternal God, He knew what they would do to His Son, just as He knew of the slaves He sent. We see here, however, that God expects a response that responds to His manifestation of grace. Therefore, His expectation is perfectly justified. If they will do to His Son what they did to the slaves, no improvement is to be expected. Then He will have to break with these people. His Son will be the last great Witness to His expectations.

What was not expected happens anyway with wicked deliberation. When the Son comes, they recognize in Him the Heir. Instead of showing respect for Him, they discuss that by killing Him, they themselves will become owners of the inheritance. Now their deepest depravity comes to light. It is man's selfishness that rejects God in His rights to take possession of everything that belongs to Him.

When the Son comes, they take Him, kill Him, and cast Him out. What a terrible act! It is remarkable that it first says that they kill Him and then throw Him out. In the other Gospels it is said the other way around. In this Gospel, where He takes the humble place of Servant, His service is so despised that the leaders of the people see His corpse, as it were, as dung thrown into the field, as it once happened with the corpse of Jezebel (2Kgs 9:37). He is treated like a Jezebel!

He is murdered and except for a few faithful, the people no longer look to Him. There are no words to describe the gruesomeness of it. Contempt for a dead person is the worst contempt a Jew can show. As far as the responsibility of the people is concerned, a decent burial is out of the question. Thus, the Son of Man is considered nothing.

This is what man comes to in his hardening toward all God's proofs of grace. With this it has been proved that everything that God has given to man for good, culminating in His own Son, has been depraved and rejected by man. Nothing good can be expected of him anymore. Any hope of restoration is over.

Mk 12:9-12 | This Came About From the LORD

9 What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vine-growers, and will give the vineyard to others. 10 Have you not even read this Scripture:

*'THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED,
THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER [stone];*

*11 THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD,
AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES?'*

12 And they were seeking to seize Him, and [yet] they feared the people, for they understood that He spoke the parable against them. And [so] they left Him and went away.

The Lord asks what they think the owner of the vineyard will do. He Himself gives the answer. In it He says that God will come and destroy the vine-growers. That will happen through the Romans who will destroy Jerusalem and the temple in the year 70. Then He will give the vineyard to others – and thus no longer rent it out (verse 1). He has done this through the formation of the church.

Those “others” are also, in a direct sense, those who are the remnant, those of the people who do give God the joy He seeks. What God did not find among the leaders and the masses, He Himself will work in a remnant, believers to whom James and Peter write their letters. Also in the mass of professing Christianity there is a remnant that gives God the fruit He seeks, because professing Christianity as a whole does not give it to Him either.

The Lord completes His teaching, which He has given through the parable, by quoting a Scripture which they know well, but have never read well. The quotation is spoken by the remnant. It is the confession of their rejection of the Lord Jesus. This true meaning is unknown to these deprived, hardened people.

He, the Son, is the stone rejected by them, the builders, who are the religious leaders. The Lord here passes from the picture of the vineyard to the picture of a building (cf. 1Cor 3:9). He is a stone despised by the builders, but He has become a chief corner stone, the stone on which the whole building rests. He became that in the resurrection.

The church is the house of God (1Tim 3:15) and the church rests on Him (Mt 16:18). Through the church God is brought the joy He seeks. Peter writes to the remnant about the house as a priestly house where spiritual sacrifices are made to God (1Pet 2:5). The whole new creation also rests upon Him, just as He carries the old creation through the word of His power (Heb 1:3).

Only the Lord, *Yahweh*, could bring about this change from rejected stone to an indispensable, chosen corner stone. What is rejected by men is chosen by God. This is marvelous in the eyes of all who believe in Him. Faith marvels at everything He does. It is cause for glorifying Him. They see His

greatness in everything He does. He is the Servant Who created everything. To see this is a great wonder.

The words of the Lord touch the consciences of the religious leaders. They have well understood that He means them by the parable. Instead of repenting, they rebel. They want to seize Him, but don't do it because they're afraid of the crowd. That's their side. God's side is that it's not the time for that yet.

Mk 12:13-17 | Question About a Poll-Tax to Caesar

*13 Then they *sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Him in order to trap Him in a statement. 14 They *came and *said to Him, "Teacher, we know that You are truthful and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay a poll-tax to Caesar, or not? 15 Shall we pay or shall we not pay?" But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, "Why are you testing Me? Bring Me a denarius to look at." 16 They brought [one]. And He *said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" And they said to Him, "Caesar's." 17 And Jesus said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they were amazed at Him.*

It is becoming more and more serious for the Pharisees to eliminate the Lord. In order to find a reason to do so, they associate themselves even with the Herodians they otherwise hated. They find each other in their hatred of Christ. Together they ask a question about paying taxes, but from a totally different background. The Pharisees resist the emperor's yoke because it stands in the way of the fulfillment of God's promises, while they are blind to the fact that their own sins hinder this fulfillment. The Herodians, on the other hand, cooperate with the occupiers because of the benefits it brings.

How foolish it is to try to trap Him Who is the truth on a statement. It shows the utter blindness to Who Christ is and the proud pride of man. The result is that they themselves are eliminated. We also see this in the following sections, where other groups of people come to Him with the plan to judge Him. The result is that they themselves are judged.

They begin to flatter the Lord. What they say of Him is true, but their intentions behind it are false. The fact that He "defers to no one" means that

He does nothing for the appreciation of people. Now they have a question to which they would like an answer from Him. They mean this question as a trick question. In their opinion, He can only give two answers: yes or no. In both cases they have caught Him.

If He will say that they have to pay, the Pharisees will discredit Him among the people. After all, He cannot be the Messiah, for He surrenders Israel to the rulers just like that. If He will say that they must not pay, the Herodians can denounce Him to the rulers as a troublemaker resisting the authority of Caesar. They forget, however, that they are opposed to the wisdom of God, and do not even in the slightest think that they themselves will be put in the light.

The Lord first reveals their hypocrisy, which He knows, by asking why they are asking Him. Then He responds to their question. To do so, He commands them first to bring Him a denarius to look at, and to let them also look at it. By the way, this is a proof of the Lord's poverty. He does not take a denarius out of His own pocket. Apparently the purse carried by Judas is empty.

They bring Him a denarius. The denarius was a means of payment among the people. By using it, they proved they had long since accepted domination. He shows them the denarius and shows them the likeness and the inscription. Then He asks who it is about on this piece of money. There is only one answer they can give, the correct answer: the likeness of Caesar and his inscription are on this coin. If they had their hearts in the right place, they would have been ashamed of the fact that the money in circulation in their land is Roman money. He makes them feel that their own guilt and sin have brought them under the authority of Rome and kept them so far.

They fall into the pit they dug for the Other. His answer is to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. They do neither. They're not honest subjects to Caesar and even less loyal to God. If they were to follow the Lord's counsel, they would acknowledge that they are subject to Caesar through their own fault, because of their own sins, and are therefore obliged to pay him taxes. They would also

realize that God never ceases to be God and that they are therefore obliged to give Him what is due to Him.

For us, giving to God what is due to Him means giving ourselves to God (Rom 12:1), because there is also a likeness and inscription on us that is God's likeness and inscription. The Lord Jesus has a right on us. The believers are a letter of Christ, read by all people (2Cor 3:2). This is the positive teaching of the temple. It is about giving the sacrifice of ourselves to God.

As far as the enemies are concerned, it is also about facing Him Who is God, but not knowing Him. Because they do not know the Lord Jesus, they do not know God and because they do not honor Him, they do not give God what is due to Him (Jn 5:23). Their only reaction is that they are amazed at Him. They are perplexed and remain silent.

Mk 12:18-27 | Question About the Resurrection

18 [Some] Sadducees (who say that there is no resurrection) *came to Jesus, and [began] questioning Him, saying, 19 "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that IF A MAN'S BROTHER DIES and leaves behind a wife AND LEAVES NO CHILD, HIS BROTHER SHOULD MARRY THE WIFE AND RAISE UP CHILDREN TO HIS BROTHER. 20 There were seven brothers; and the first took a wife, and died leaving no children. 21 The second one married her, and died leaving behind no children; and the third likewise; 22 and [so] all seven left no children. Last of all the woman died also. 23 In the resurrection, when they rise again, which one's wife will she be? For all seven had married her." 24 Jesus said to them, "Is this not the reason you are mistaken, that you do not understand the Scriptures or the power of God? 25 For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. 26 But regarding the fact that the dead rise again, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the [passage] about [the burning] bush, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB'? 27 He is not the God of the dead, but of the living; you are greatly mistaken."

Satan has more arrows to his bow. The Pharisees may have been defeated, but there is another group of opponents who willingly let themselves be

used in an attempt to capture the Lord in His words. The Sadducees form a liberal group. They say there is no resurrection because, in their opinion, it has never been proven and cannot be proved. Their reasoning is that what you cannot reason with your mind and what cannot be scientifically verified is not true.

In this group we see that all the apparent strength of unbelief consists in raising difficulties, in suggesting imaginary cases that are not at all relevant. Such people reason from people's things to God's things and then cannot but come to foolishness and error.

They take as a starting point for their sedition a prescription of Moses that is included in the law. That seems a good basis for discussion, but they forget that they are dealing with the Lawmaker Himself. The example they set for Him is plausible at first, it is something that is possible in practice. It can happen that someone's brother dies without leaving a child and that his wife is left alone. Now that man had seven brothers, the Sadducees say. That, too, could be possible.

On the basis of the so-called duty of a husband's brother, the first brother had to marry her to conceive offspring for his deceased brother. Moses included this in the law (Deu 25:5). It even existed before the law existed (Gen 38:8) and so it goes in this story. The first brother marries her, but he too does not conceive offspring and dies. The second brother marries her, and dies leaving behind no children. All the brothers finally had married her, but died without any offspring. The story of the Sadducees ends with the woman dying.

This foolish example was quoted by them in order to be able to ask the Lord the nonsensical question which one's wife she will be in the resurrection. With this they want to ridicule the resurrection. As if the problem would not have arisen if she had married two brothers, they want to push the example so far in their audacity that He will have no answer at all.

The Lord does not go into the example at all, but tells them plainly that they are mistaken. He also tells them the cause of their error, which is that they do not understand the Scriptures and do not understand the power of God. In spite of all their presumption to be wise, educated, scientifically-minded people, they demonstrate their ignorance of the Scriptures.

Those who do not know the Scriptures always err and have no idea what the power of God is capable of.

The Lord tells them what it is like in the resurrection. The answer is that the wife in the resurrection will be nobody's, for there is no such thing as a continuation or resumption of earthly ties in the resurrection. In the resurrection the believers are no longer made of dust, but heavenly, like the angels, and have a purely spiritual existence. Angels have no gender, for that is part of a physical, earthly existence. Angels are therefore not increasing in number. The characteristics of angels apply to the spiritual family relationships in heaven. There is perfectly divine love, not limited to a single person, but to all the children of God.

In addition, if they read properly, they would know from the book of Exodus that the dead are raised. The Lord quotes from the books of Moses because these books are the most important among this liberal, rational party. God is the God of each of the patriarchs personally: He is "the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob". That is why His Name stands before each of them individually. He has promised the land to them personally, not only to their descendants. They will have to rise to possess the land promised to them personally. It is impossible that the promise He has made to them will not be fulfilled by Him.

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob have long since died when God says this to Moses. Yet God does not say: 'I was the God of ...', but: 'I am the God of ...'. At the time of Moses they were not dead to Him, but alive, for God is not connected with the dead, but with the living. He is the God of the living. The Lord underlines once again how greatly they are mistaken.

Mk 12:28-34 | The Great Commandment

28 One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, "What commandment is the foremost of all?" 29 Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; 30 AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.' 31 The second is this, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOUR-

SELF.' There is no other commandment greater than these." 32 The scribe said to Him, "Right, Teacher; You have truly stated that HE IS ONE, AND THERE IS NO ONE ELSE BESIDES HIM; 33 AND TO LOVE HIM WITH ALL THE HEART AND WITH ALL THE UNDERSTANDING AND WITH ALL THE STRENGTH, AND TO LOVE ONE'S NEIGHBOR AS HIMSELF, is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." 34 When Jesus saw that he had answered intelligently, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." After that, no one would venture to ask Him any more questions.

The scribe who now speaks has a good judgment of the Lord Jesus. He has stood by and listened. He also acknowledges that the Lord has answered well. It seems that he is honest and should not be counted among the hypocrites. He comes with a question answered by the Lord. The Lord judges that the man speaks intelligently and tells him that he is not far from the kingdom of God (verse 34).

The Lord does not answer by simply quoting the first commandment of the Ten Commandments. He interprets "foremost" as the highest, the most important commandment. That is why He answers with the confession He Himself wrote down in Deuteronomy 6 (Deu 6:4-5). *Yahweh*, the LORD, the God of the covenant, is a one and only LORD. He is "our" God, He is the common God of His people. He is the triune God and at the same time perfectly "one", He knows no different faces or appearances. He is perfectly consistent in all His actions. He is absolutely sovereign and cannot be compared to anyone.

The God Who is so perfectly "one" and excludes every other object, is entitled to the unlimited love and undivided dedication of His people, and of every human being. That is the first commandment. With this the Lord indicates what it is to give God what is due to Him (verse 17) and that is to give ourselves completely to Him and serve Him with all that we are and have (Rom 12:1). Man is obligated to serve God

1. with all his heart, that is the inner being,
2. with all his soul, that is with all his feelings,
3. with all his mind, that is with all his deliberations and
4. with all his strength, that is with all his physical powers.

Whoever does so will keep all ten commandments.

The second commandment is about love for one's neighbor. Here it does not say "with all your heart" etcetera but "as yourself". The two commandments form one whole. Therefore the Lord does not say: "There are no commandments other greater than these", but: "There is no other commandment greater than these". It is impossible to love God and hate your neighbor, and it is equally impossible to love your brother without loving God (1Jn 4:20). If the love of God characterizes our lives, it cannot but be that God's love is in us.

Under the law, this is impossible. Israel has failed in this and anyone who tries to do so by keeping the law fails just as much. "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son [to be] the propitiation for our sins" (1Jn 4:10). Therefore grace goes far beyond the law. Grace leads to total self-denial. The grace of God that makes a Christian conformed to the revelation of God in Christ leads one to even lay down his life for his brother (1Jn 3:16).

This teaching of love is also part of the Lord's temple teaching. It shows that the house of God is a house of love where we love God and each other.

This answer of the Lord is also acknowledged by the scribe as good, without any false assumption or expression of resentment. He agrees with what He has said. This is the beginning of the way to God. The scribe acknowledges in his conscience that loving God and one's neighbor is much more than everything so much emphasized and valued by the Jews: external forms and ceremonies of the law.

The reaction of the Lord shows that the scribe acknowledges what is in the law, but not what is in Christ. That is why he is close to the kingdom, but still stands completely outside it, for only grace brings one into it.

With this the disputes have come to an end. Truth has triumphed in all respects, and man has been judged by truth and silenced in all respects.

Mk 12:35-37 | Question About the Son of David

35 And Jesus [began] to say, as He taught in the temple, "How [is it that] the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? 36 David himself said in the Holy Spirit,

*“THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD,
“SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND,
UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET.”*

37 David himself calls Him ‘Lord’; so in what sense is He his son?” And the large crowd enjoyed listening to Him.

Now the Lord has a question. This question is an answer. It seems that He is answering an unspoken question that lives in those who surround Him. We do not know what the question is, but the question concerns the mystery of His Person. The answer to that question is the answer to many questions people may have about Him. The Lord’s question is not based on things of daily life, such as paying taxes (verses 13-17) or on the improbabilities for the mind (verses 18-27) or shrewd reasoning about conflicting obligations (verses 28-34), but directly on the Scriptures. His question focuses on the mystery of His Person, the only connection between man and God.

The Lord begins His question with a quotation from the scribes who say that the Christ is a Son of David. They rightly say so. That He is. But He is more. This is apparent from what He says next, when He quotes what David said in Psalm 110 (Psa 110:1). He says that David spoke in the Holy Spirit. So this was something that David could not have thought of himself, because it is about the position of Christ in heaven. That position will be given to Christ by the Lord, *Yahweh*, because His people reject Him.

This is a great difficulty for the scribes. They believe in a Messiah on earth. But a Messiah in heaven? They never thought of that. Only the faithful remnant of Israel knows Him that way. They know the Scriptures and the power of God and they believe in the resurrection. This is the answer to the question about the resurrection.

The connection between the fact that the Lord is both the Lord and the Son of David is that He is both God and Man. Moreover, He has been exalted by God to that place at God’s right hand (Acts 2:34-36). This is contained in the quote from Psalm 110 (Psa 110:1). His question means that they must acknowledge that Israel has rejected his Messiah and that God, when He has been rejected, places Him at His right hand in heaven. This is also the key to understanding the present position of Israel and leaves room for the

calling of the church. In short, it is about the acts of God with His Son after His rejection.

Mk 12:38-40 | Beware of the Scribes

38 In His teaching He was saying: "Beware of the scribes who like to walk around in long robes, and [like] respectful greetings in the market places, 39 and chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets, 40 who devour widows' houses, and for appearance's sake offer long prayers; these will receive greater condemnation."

The Lord continues to reveal the wickedness of the religious leaders and takes the place of Judge. These wicked people have the say in the temple. They are proud and arrogant. Not only is their doctrine completely flawed, but there is much that is morally low and bad in their actions. They love the honor of men, especially in religious terms. Walking in long robes is expressing themselves, so that they stand out among the people. They love the greetings in the market places, because they express what they are looking for: that special and above all open recognition.

To take the chief seats in the synagogue means that they claim honor from a social point of view (Jam 2:2-3). Taking the places of honor at banquets shows that they are full of their own importance. And that is not all. They take advantage of people's worries to bring them under their influence. This goes hand in hand with great religious display, for they offer long prayers for appearance's sake.

Thus many religious leaders behave in what today boasts of being the temple, the dwelling place of God, that is the whole of professing Christianity. These are the elements of the great Babylon that enslaves its followers or subjects to profit from it, monetarily and spiritually. The judgment of such people will be heavier than any other.

Mark does not give that detailed description of the depravity of these leaders and then pass judgment on it as Matthew does in Matthew 23. Here the Lord warns as Prophet. Here the Lord as Prophet shows the true character of the piety of the scribes and warns His disciples against them.

The Lord has just brought them all into the light as they had come to catch Him on a word. They have not repented through their defeat, but will

direct all their hatred toward the disciples as well. The disciples should not be blinded by the beautiful appearance of the haters of the Lord. Even less should they become jealous to get the honor of people that way.

Mk 12:41-44 | The Sacrifice of the Widow

41 And He sat down opposite the treasury, and [began] observing how the people were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large sums. 42 A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent. 43 Calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, "Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury; 44 for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on."

After His walk through the temple (Mk 11:27), the Lord now sits down to show us to whom His sympathy goes. He observes "how," that is in what way and from what motive, people put money into the treasury. He knows exactly how much we give and why we give just that amount and why no more or no less. He also observes how we make our goods and bodies available to Him. He sits as a Judge, without, however, exercising that power. That is yet to come. He also sits as a Teacher for His disciples to show them what He sees, so that they learn to observe as He observes.

The widow forms a huge contrast with the company He has just spoken about. She is a beautiful picture of the faithful remnant who entrusts itself entirely to Him. This is still connected with the old system that also makes a great impression on the disciples, because she gives her contribution to it, but her heart is with God. The Lord also wants to know from us what is in our heart for the house of God. He wants to know if His house – that is us as believers (Heb 3:6a) – is worth everything to us.

If she hadn't put the two small copper coins in the treasury, it would have gone unnoticed. Her contribution was far too small for that. For those who had to count the amount, those little coins might have been difficult to count, but it is noticed and appreciated and noted by God. Now we know it too, because God wants us to see what it means to trust Him and to give what is in accordance with His thoughts.

She could have thrown in only one of the two small copper coins. That would have been a disproportionate amount of money for her as well. Where does the law dictate to give fifty percent? No, she gives hundred percent for a temple that will be destroyed within a few years. Maybe her small copper coins were even used to pay Judas for his betrayal. But she gave the money to God and that's all that matters.

Giving is about the motive, not what people do with that gift. The Lord knows how to separate the intent of the sincere soul from the system that surrounds it. Mary also gave everything. One gave everything for the house of God, the other gave everything for Him. It's both appreciated by Him. They gave as He gave Who also gave everything He had.

The Lord wants to teach His disciples about this and calls them to Himself. He openly expresses His appreciation for the woman. He also openly expresses His appreciation to all those who have put something into the treasury. Whatever the others have put into the treasury, He calls a gesture, they all have "put in out of their surplus" into the treasury. The amount they have put into it does not matter to Him. According to His judgment, what the woman has put in is worth more than what all have put in together.

In the face of the appearance of piety of the scribes, He makes clear what in the eyes of God really gives value to the sacrifices that are brought to the temple. The scribes received appreciation from the people because they were looking for it. This poor widow received appreciation from the Lord, even though she did not count on it at all.

He, God, does not look at the sum of the contribution, but at what we have left for ourselves. In the case of the widow, that is nothing! Those who gave of their surplus kept most of it for themselves. The much we have left for ourselves proves how little we give.

The Lord appreciates giving in the widow's way, because it is not only the expression of giving abundantly, but also of complete trust in God.

Mark 13

Mk 13:1-2 | The Tearing Down of the Temple Foretold

*1 As He was going out of the temple, one of His disciples *said to Him, "Teacher, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!" 2 And Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another which will not be torn down."*

In this chapter the Lord Jesus speaks His sermon about the last things. In accordance with the character of this Gospel, He speaks about these things to His disciples in their character as servants. This chapter therefore contains teaching for servants in times of great tribulation. The Lord warns His disciples how they can escape the judgment that comes on the beloved people because of their sins. When the time comes of which He speaks here it will be the proof of the truth of His words and also an encouragement to their hearts.

The reason for this sermon on what will happen at the end of time is the remark made by one of His disciples to Him about the temple. When He leaves the temple again, He turns His back on it as it were. He leaves the whole system to itself. However, one of His disciples turns around, sees the greatness of the temple, and praises it. He sees the temple as God's house and the center of their service.

This gives the Lord the opportunity to share with them God's thoughts about His ways with His people and His judgment of its spiritual state. In the same way, beautiful churches and objects of admiration can be beautiful to look at today, but God will judge it all. We see this in the fall of Babylon, the great city (Rev 18:21).

The Lord partly repeats as a question the remark of His disciple. He does this in order to involve them in what He is going to say about the temple. Then He says straight away that nothing of all those impressive buildings, so beautiful to the eye, will be left intact. That is a shock for the disciples. They still believe that the temple is the proof of God's presence among His people and thus the recognition of the people by God. They still see

things from their religious beliefs that their Master is going to establish His kingdom. But only a few decades later the judgment on these buildings will come.

Mk 13:3-4 | Questions About the Future

3 As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew were questioning Him privately, 4 "Tell us, when will these things be, and what [will be] the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?"

The Lord occupies a significant place: on the Mount of Olives and opposite the temple. Twice two brothers ask Him for an explanation. From the Mount of Olives they have a good view of the temple. The Lord sits again. There is peace with Him and from that peace He gives His disciples answers to their questions and leads them further into God's plans for the future. To know God's thoughts, we must be in an exalted place like Him. From there we can see the reality, for there He teaches prophecy.

The Mount of Olives lies to the east of Jerusalem. Between the Mount of Olives and the city runs the brook Kidron. From the Mount of Olives came the colt that brought Him to Jerusalem in a triumphal march under the cheers of the crowd (Mk 11:9-10). Near the Mount of Olives is Gethsemane. From the Mount of Olives He will go to heaven and He will return there from heaven (Acts 1:11; Zec 14:4).

The four disciples ask two things. They ask "when" and a "sign". Their question for the sign proves that they are still behaving as real Jews and thinking as real Jews. The teaching that follows is therefore primarily meant for them as Jews. However, the Lord presents it in such a way that it also applies to us and especially to us as servants to follow Him in it.

Mk 13:5-8 | The Beginning of Birth Pangs

5 And Jesus began to say to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. 6 Many will come in My name, saying, 'I am [He]!' and will mislead many. 7 When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be frightened; [those things] must take place; but [that is] not yet the end. 8 For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various

places; there will [also] be famines. These things are [merely] the beginning of birth pangs.

The Lord “began” to say something to them. What He says is a beginning of His teaching and not a completed whole. It is teaching that they have to work out in their lives and in which He continues to teach them more and more. The introductory words of His teaching are a warning. They indicate that His concern is not to satisfy their curiosity, but that He wants to apply His words to their hearts and consciences. All His directions and warnings are given in this Gospel for with regard to their service.

He first of all points out that the time when these things will happen will be a time of great misleading. Many will pretend to be the Messiah. Every one of those false messiahs will claim to be him. And many will be caught up in it. These false messiahs will owe their success to the unbelief of the masses who prefer to believe the lie rather than acknowledge the truth and repent. It is also a tremendously misleading time today when people have renounced the Christian faith because it has been taken away from them by religious leaders. A gap has been created into which the demons are eager to jump to fill it with their deceptive teachings.

Apart from the danger of misleading, there is also danger by circumstances. There will be wars. A war is an eruption of violence between population groups, in which violence and death make life unbearable. A war is often of a long-term nature with long-term consequences. The rumors of wars are enough to frighten people. The Lord says that they should not be frightened of it, because it is part of the end time, but it does not mean the end. Wars are also common today and frighten people, but Christians do not need to be.

Apart from misleading people and wars, there will also be natural disasters and smaller hotbeds of conflict between people. All these causes of discontent and misery are the announcement of even worse things. In most of the world there is famine and the shortage of food is getting worse. These are all direct consequences of sin. And it’s only the beginning of birth pangs.

Mk 13:9-13 | The Servant Is Persecuted

9 “But be on your guard; for they will deliver you to [the] courts, and you will be flogged in [the] synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings

for My sake, as a testimony to them. 10 The gospel must first be preached to all the nations. 11 When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but [it is] the Holy Spirit. 12 Brother will betray brother to death, and a father [his] child; and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. 13 You will be hated by all because of My name, but the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.

These verses we find only here and not in the prophetic discourse written by Matthew in Matthew 24-25 and Luke in Luke 21. Not only the circumstances are characteristic of that time, but also what will happen to themselves. The hatred of the people will focus on them as followers or servants of Christ. They will be at the mercy of courts of religious systems to be interrogated. The methods of interrogation are cruel, and interrogations will even take place in synagogues, which are buildings where teaching is given from God's law.

In addition, worldly authorities will call them to account for Who Christ is. It will be an opportunity to make these authorities aware of His Name through which the gospel will also come to these places. Thus Paul testified before the Jewish counsel, as well as before Festus, Agrippa and even the emperor. Also the gospel has sounded and still sounds in penal camps to which faithful witnesses were banished and are still being banished. In all this it was and is important to preserve the character of truth and humility.

Thus the gospel will find its way, for before the end comes, it must first be preached to all nations. God wants His joyous message to be brought to the very ends of the earth even in the darkest times, or perhaps precisely then. God never judges without first giving a complete testimony of the way to salvation of that judgment. It is our task to do so while we see what is going on in the world.

The Lord has great encouragement for His disciples. If they are led away to be interrogated, they need not worry about what they will speak. He will make sure that they will speak the right thing at the right time. He will work that through the Holy Spirit Who will put the words in their mouth.

This is also important for any situation of threat and need that we, as servants, may encounter in order to be aware of it. The Holy Spirit wants to

fill us to fulfill our task to testify (Acts 1:8; 4:31). We do not need to plan tactics or establish an organization to know how to resist the enemy.

If we rely on our own insight and skills, our defeat is certain. If we trust in the Lord, He will give us victory, even if it would cost us our life. We will experience this wonder of speaking through the Holy Spirit every time we speak up for the Lord Jesus when He brings us into situations where He asks us to do so.

Each service for Christ will also reveal the hatred of the human heart. That hatred will be so great that there will be no safety even in family relationships. Authority will disappear and family ties will be torn apart. Where otherwise one brother helps the other brother, now one brother will hand the other over to death. While a child naturally finds protection and safety with his father, there is nothing left of that at that time, and a father will surrender his child when he notices that this child is a disciple of Christ.

The fact that all natural relationships are chilled is also evident in the rebellion of children against their parents and the putting to death of them. Children should honor their parents and not rise up against them. They are without natural love (2Tim 3:1-4). This is the result of the selfishness that prevails in families with the result that lovelessness increases hand over hand. This is how parents raise their children for death because there is no natural love anymore. Children die due to emotional neglect caused by the parents' desire to assert themselves. The foundations of society are undermined. It's all insidious, but very certain.

Hate will be general because hatred of the Lord Jesus is general (Jn 15:18-21). It is important not to let it stop us, but to endure to the end. The end is first and foremost the end of the great tribulation which the Lord will speak of hereafter. Endurance is the perfect fruit of obedience (Jam 1:4). He who endures is saved.

This does not mean that it depends on our own effort whether we are saved. Salvation cannot be earned, and he who is saved by grace cannot be lost. What matters here is that endurance is the proof that someone knows Christ, has chosen Him, and therefore serves Him consistently. And once there is a failure, there is also confession and restoration.

Mk 13:14-20 | The Abomination of Desolation

14 "But when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. 15 The one who is on the housetop must not go down, or go in to get anything out of his house; 16 and the one who is in the field must not turn back to get his coat. 17 But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 18 But pray that it may not happen in the winter. 19 For those days will be a [time of] tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never will. 20 Unless the Lord had shortened [those] days, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom He chose, He shortened the days.

The abomination of desolation is the idol working desolation (Dan 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). The Lord here refers to the image of the beast that represents the ruler of the restored Roman Empire. This image will be put into the temple by the antichrist and everyone will have to worship it (2Thes 2:4; Rev 13:12-15). This is the beginning of the great tribulation that will last three and a half years. Setting up this idol in the temple is the sign for the faithful Jews to flee. The great tribulation will reveal the faithful. It is they who will be warned, a warning they have received by reading in the Word.

The Lord states that it is vitally important to read His Word with insight, not for form. In this way we can escape the great misleading. He says it and we must pay attention to it. That is how it is with every misleading that comes to the servant. The only way not to be misled is to read God's Word and take it to heart.

The persecution that will erupt will be so sudden that not a moment should be lost by taking anything out of the house quickly because it might be useful. Wherever anyone is, it is a matter of fleeing as quickly as possible, even leaving behind the coat that is supposed to protect them from the cold of the night. Life is more than protection from the cold.

The Lord also takes the vulnerable into account. This time will be particularly hard for the pregnant and those who are nursing babies. They will be weakened and will have to flee quickly. He even takes the weather conditions into account. He tells them to pray that these things will not

happen in winter because of the extra need it will cause. They may pray, for God's ear is open to their need, and He will save them by helping them through it. It doesn't say here what the Gospel according to Matthew says, that they should also pray that their flight will not happen on a Sabbath (Mt 24:20). This shows that the experiences of servants are paramount here and not, as in Matthew, the Jewish aspect.

The Lord predicts the unprecedented tribulation of those days. There has never been such a tribulation on earth and there never will be again. How great that tribulation must be! It is the time Jeremiah calls "the time of Jacob's distress" (Jer 30:7; Dan 12:1; Mt 24:21; Rev 3:10). It is an unparalleled time of tribulation.

However, the Lord has set a limit to that tribulation. He has fixed its duration. He has determined the measure, the boundary of the revelation of the lawless one, for the sake of His elect. The tribulation will be limited to three and a half years. Many will perish, but they will miss nothing of the realm of peace. They will participate in (the second phase of) the first resurrection (Rev 20:4). There will also be a remnant kept alive by Him.

Mk 13:21-23 | Warning of Misleaders

21 And then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ'; or, 'Behold, [He is] there'; do not believe [him]; 22 for false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order to lead astray, if possible, the elect. 23 But take heed; behold, I have told you everything in advance.

How tempting it is to accept a false Christ at that time of greatest need in order to be saved from need. But the Lord warns not to believe him. It is not only about the rage of Satan – he is the "roaring lion" (1Pet 5:8), but also about his wiles – he is also the "angel of light" (2Cor 11:14). All those who have not accepted the love of the truth will become prey to such misleaders (2Thes 2:9). And there will be many in those days.

In addition to the false Christs, there will also be false prophets who, with beautiful speeches and brilliant puns, point out the false Christs as the true Christ. They will not only say that this is the Christ, but also perform misleading signs and wonders to support their claim. It will all seem so

real that there is a tremendous misleading power in accepting that person as the true Christ.

The Lord warns emphatically that they will not be deceived. Forewarned is forearmed. He said it beforehand. This is His love for His own. He doesn't leave us ignorant of what's about to happen. So we can have opened eyes to the deceptions that will come and be on guard for them.

If as seeing disciples we let ourselves be deceived after all, it is due to forgetting or ignoring the Word of God in which everything has been said to us beforehand. The Word is our only safe guide to remain faithful and endure to the end. The Lord speaks as the Prophet of God announced by Moses (Deu 18:18).

Mk 13:24-27 | The Coming of the Son of Man

24 "But in those days, after that tribulation, THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, 25 AND THE STARS WILL BE FALLING from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. 26 Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN CLOUDS with great power and glory. 27 And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven.

The end of the tribulation comes with impressive natural phenomena. It may be that what the Lord says here will be fulfilled literally. It may also be that He is referring to a total revolution and overthrow of reigning powers, of which the sun and moon are a picture. In that case the stars represent lower ruling powers than the sun and the moon. The universe is in turmoil. In the heavens, too, the spiritual evil powers that have reigned there for so long will be shaken.

When the chaos is complete, the Son of Man will come to bring order. Then He will appear, not like the first time as a helpless Baby, but with great power and glory. He will put an end to all oppression of His own. Every resistance He strikes down. He judges all iniquity.

He will use His angels to take His chosen ones from everywhere to bring them to the land that is His and where the enemy has been so raging.

This is the remnant of the ten tribes that have been scattered. None of His chosen ones will be left behind.

Mk 13:28-31 | Parable of the Fig Tree

28 "Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. 29 Even so, you too, when you see these things happening, recognize that He is near, [right] at the door. 30 Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. 31 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

The Lord takes the fig tree as an example. The fig tree is a picture of Israel. Just as the branch of the fig tree will become tender again after the winter, and leaves will appear on the tree, so will the people of Israel. The people will get life again through the Spirit (Eze 37:1-14). Summer time points to the time of the glorious reign of Christ. We can already see the branch tendering and the leaves putting forth.

Through what is happening with Israel, we know what time it is on the prophetic clock. We see how Israel has been a nation again since 1948. The branch has become tender and leaves put forth, but there is no fruit yet. That fruit can only come when the Spirit in Israel, i.e. in a remnant, has first worked humility (Zec 12:10) as a harbinger of new life. There is a visible nation of Israel, but no dependence on God yet. That will only come when the church has been taken up and the Spirit works among the people, that is, He makes a remnant alive. The leaves point forward to that time. Summer has not yet come, but it is near.

The Lord clearly states that all the things He has prophesied will happen irrevocably. They will suffer the consequences that they have called upon themselves by their rejection of the Messiah. This generation is still there, it has not yet passed away. It is not the time to eradicate this generation, not even now. The Lord will deal with this generation at His coming.

He states that the certainty of the fulfillment of His words is greater than the continued existence of heaven and earth. The existence of heaven and earth will come to an end, but His words will not. When His words have

been fulfilled, they have not passed away, but the fulfillment shows the value of His words forever.

Mk 13:32-37 | Day and Hour Unknown

32 But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father [alone]. 33 "Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the [appointed] time will come. 34 [It is] like a man away on a journey, [who] upon leaving his house and putting his slaves in charge, [assigning] to each one his task, also commanded the doorkeeper to stay on the alert. 35 Therefore, be on the alert—for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening, at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning— 36 in case he should come suddenly and find you asleep. 37 What I say to you I say to all, 'Be on the alert!'"

The Lord Jesus says as the true Servant and Prophet serving God on earth that the exact time of His coming is unknown. As the eternal God He knows everything; as a Servant He submits Himself to God and does not know everything. This is incomprehensible to us, just as we cannot understand that He could increase "in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Lk 2:52). If we could understand it, we would also understand what it is that He is both true God and true Man. However, this is impossible for us, for then we would be God's equal. His ignorance of day or hour shows how truly Human He is.

The fact that the hour is coming, right at the door, does not mean that the moment of His coming can also be calculated. The accompanying phenomena of the Son of Man's coming indicate that He is coming soon, but His coming itself will happen at the speed of lightning.

Once again He tells them to take heed, to watch out. They have to be awake, that is to say consciously awake, not finding rest in a world in which He also cannot find rest. It is not a fearful view, but a trusting and hopeful view. That is why He adds that they have to pray. To pray means to trust that God is not out of control.

While they watch and pray like that, the Lord also gives a command. There is work to be done for every servant. He presents Himself as a man who leaves his house, that is the house of Israel, and goes abroad, that is, He

goes back to heaven while giving commands to those who stay behind. On His return to heaven He has put His slaves in charge and to each of them his task. This is consistent with this Gospel where the Lord Jesus is the Servant and teaches His disciples how to serve.

After His leaving, His own service on earth is over. He lets it continue by His slaves. Here there is no question of giving talents to trade with them (Mt 25:15), but here everyone has his task as a slave. It is about service in the house – for us it is the house of God, the church – in which every servant has his task. Each of us can act with authority in the area given by the Lord, because He has given authority to His slaves for that purpose.

The doorkeeper is told separately that he must be on the alert. He must see to it that no evil enters the house in the form of evil persons or wrong doctrine. However, the Lord emphasizes the importance and necessity of being on the alert not only in view of the evil that might enter the house, but also in view of the coming of Himself as the Lord of the house. As has already been mentioned, in this house we can see a picture both of the house of Israel and of the church.

How will He find us? Asleep? Even as Christians we can fall asleep and lose sight of His coming. Falling asleep means that we look like the unbelievers who are dead (Eph 5:14).

The Lord concludes His sermon by giving, for the fourth time in this short section (verses 32-37), the command to be on the alert. Over the heads of the disciples, He says it “to all”, without exception, that is, expressly to us as well. The heart must be ready to receive Him. If we stop looking forward to His coming, we will begin to focus on the things of the earth. We will then have taken the first step on the path of decay. That is why it is vitally important to be on the alert and to look forward to Him.

Mark 14

Mk 14:1-2 | Jesus Must Be Killed

1 Now the Passover and Unleavened Bread were two days away; and the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to seize Him by stealth and kill [Him]; 2 for they were saying, "Not during the festival, otherwise there might be a riot of the people."

The Passover is the foundation of all other feasts. It is the remembrance of the redemption from Egypt and the deliverance of the judgment of the first-born (Psa 78:51; 136:10). The Feast of Unleavened Bread is closely related to this. It follows it, is the result of it. It represents the sanctification of the whole life of the redeemed.

The Passover speaks of the Lord Jesus as the sacrifice through which we are delivered from the power of the world (Egypt) and the judgment of God (the death of the firstborn). The Lord Jesus is presented in this Gospel as the sin offering (in Matthew: trespass offering; in Luke: peace offering; in John: burnt offering). Whoever is delivered by Him should lead – and will want to lead – a life dedicated to Him. This is what the Feast of Unleavened Bread speaks of. That feast lasts seven days. It is a picture of the whole life of the believer, in which sin – of which the leaven is a picture –, may have no place.

The feasts instituted by the Lord Jesus Himself – He is, after all, *Yahweh* – become an opportunity for the chief priests and scribes to seize and kill Him Who instituted these feasts. The worst enemies are always those who have been most in touch with the light. These religious leaders, who had to teach these feasts to the people in a God worthy manner, deliberate how they will kill Him Whom these feasts speak of!

But: Man proposes, but God disposes (Pro 16:1). We also see this here. They say: Not during the festival. God says: During the festival. And what do people's deliberations mean when God has long since decided that it will be during the festival? It will happen on that day and on that feast, the feast that is in fact the foreshadowing of the death of Christ. God's

sovereignty is evidenced by the fact that He uses man's evil will to carry out His plans.

Their submission not to do so during the festival is motivated by fear of a riot among the people. They know that the people admire Christ for His works and His goodness.

Mk 14:3 | Anointing by Mary

3 While He was in Bethany at the home of Simon the leper, and reclining [at the table], there came a woman with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume of pure nard; [and] she broke the vial and poured it over His head.

Opposite the cold hatred of the religious leaders against the Lord radiates here the warmth of a woman's affection for Him. Opposite the many haters stands this one person. She admires Him not only for His works and goodness, but also for the work He is going to do. It is Mary. Her name is not mentioned here because it's not about who does it; it's about what she does.

What she does happens in the home of Simon with the addition "the leper". This he is no longer, otherwise he couldn't dwell there, but it's a reminder of what he was. The memory of what we were makes us thankful for Who the Lord is and what He has done. The Lord loves to be with thankful people. This is also the atmosphere in which the anointing can take place as a sign of worship.

The woman breaks the vial. It does not need to be used for anything else after this act. By breaking it, the contents can flow over His head unhindered. The vial shouldn't get the attention, but the nard. Our life is like that vial. The more our life is broken for Him, the more He gets from our life the honor that is due to Him. Admiration should not be for a human being, but only for Him.

Mk 14:4-9 | Reactions to the Anointing

4 But some were indignantly [remarking] to one another, "Why has this perfume been wasted? 5 For this perfume might have been sold for over three hundred denarii, and [the money] given to the poor." And they were scolding her. 6 But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you bother her? She has done a

good deed to Me. 7 For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you wish you can do good to them; but you do not always have Me. 8 She has done what she could; she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial. 9 Truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her."

The reaction of some of His disciples is disappointing. Here it appears that not only Judas blames the woman. Judas reacts out of greed for money. That doesn't have to be the case with the other disciples. With them it may be more the insensitivity to what occupies the Lord. They understand nothing of Mary's deed. They think what she is doing is just a waste of money that in their opinion could have been spent so much better. In this way they show that He is not precious in their eyes. What is done to Him is never a waste. He deserves the best we have.

Supposedly, they also have a noble motive with which they believe they can substantiate their indignation about her deed. It would have been better given to the poor. We can apply that to today. A lot of time and money is spent on all kinds of social work, but if the Lord Jesus is not given the honor, the work is for the glorification of man himself.

We hear no defense from the woman. The Lord stands up for her. He asks His disciples why they are bothering her. What's the real reason? They should think about that. He says of the woman that she did a good deed to Him. She has come to do so because she has chosen the good part: sitting at His feet (Lk 10:39,42). Nor has she done anything *for* Him, but *to* Him. Doing good to the poor is also a good work, but only if it is done at His command and in fellowship with Him. The poor will always be there, but He will go away from them, back to heaven.

The Lord gives her the compliment that only He can give. When He says that she has done what she could, it is with the perfect knowledge of all her efforts to come to this deed. That includes not only saving for this fortune, but also performing the deed. The incomprehension that this gives her makes her act even more impressive. What is misinterpreted by Judas, and the other disciples, is clothed by the Lord's testimony with the light of Divine understanding. What a world of difference of judgment! Misunderstood by men, recognized by the Lord, that is the part of those

who, through true love for Him, accomplish deeds which mean a waste of energy and resources for carnal Christians.

The woman, perhaps the only one, has sensed that the Lord will die. He has told the disciples several times, but they have never understood its reality and it has not marked their actions. This woman is unique to Him. He has not found such sympathy with anyone else. She has anointed Him beforehand for the burial. Others will also want to anoint Him when He is buried. Although that is also a good deed, they will come too late for it to be done.

The act of Mary will always be inextricably linked to the gospel that is preached. In other words, the salvation of sinners must result in God being worshiped. The Father seeks worshipers (Jn 4:23). Christ's work is to ensure that the Father will also find these worshipers, as Mary was. What deeds do we do which are worthy to be proclaimed to the world in connection with the Lord Jesus and have the effect that the Father is worshiped?

Mk 14:10-11 | The Betrayal of Judas

10 Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went off to the chief priests in order to betray Him to them. 11 They were glad when they heard [this], and promised to give him money. And he [began] seeking how to betray Him at an opportune time.

What Judas is about to do contrasts sharply with what Mary has done. She has done a good work; he is going to do an evil work. Judas is called "one of the twelve". It is particularly painful that someone from the circle of the disciples is going to do this extremely bad deed.

The chief priests consider Judas as a gift from heaven, while he comes in connection with hell. The hypocrites don't care either, as long as they can get rid of this Jesus. That someone comes out of His company is very pleasing to them. They rejoice about it with a devilish joy. No one can give them more reliable information about Jesus than someone who has been with Him for years.

They want to tie the traitor to themselves with some money and make him their accomplice. Money is exactly why Judas wants to commit his betrayal. Greed has him in its grip (1Tim 6:10). The agreement is made and

Judas goes looking for an opportunity to betray the Lord. He will get that opportunity at the convenient time, which is the time determined by God.

Mk 14:12-16 | Preparation of the Passover

*12 On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover [lamb] was being sacrificed, His disciples *said to Him, "Where do You want us to go and prepare for You to eat the Passover?" 13 And He *sent two of His disciples and *said to them, "Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him; 14 and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher says, "Where is My guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?"'" 15 And he himself will show you a large upper room furnished [and] ready; prepare for us there." 16 The disciples went out and came to the city, and found [it] just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover.*

While Judas is busy looking for an opportunity to betray the Lord, the other disciples want to commit themselves to Him that He can eat the Passover. It has now become Thursday, the fifth day of the week that will be the most memorable of all the weeks that have ever been on earth. The Lord knows that during this Passover, He will be slain as the Lamb in order to work a better salvation than that from Egypt.

As visitors to Jerusalem for the celebration of the Passover, He and His disciples have no home of their own. With the hustle and bustle it will also be difficult to find a vacant building. Their question shows that their hearts go out to this celebration. Above all, they understand that it is His desire. They want to make preparations for the Passover so that He can eat it.

What seems to be a practical difficulty is not a difficulty for the Lord. He knows where He can go. He sends out two of His disciples and gives them directions to come to the place where He wants to celebrate the Passover with His disciples. He does not give an address, but some characteristics. This means that they must be careful to see if they can perceive the attributes He has given.

They have to look for someone to meet them – they don't have to pass anyone – who is carrying a pitcher of water. Normally women carry the pitchers, but this is a man. If they see that man, they must follow him. The

water in the pitcher is most likely the water with which the Lord will wash the feet of the disciples (Jn 13:5). The place of the Lord is a clean place, where cleansing takes place.

Here we have a beautiful picture of how Christ brings believers to the place where He meets with them. It is not about an address, but about the heart of the seeker. The man carrying the pitcher of water represents a believer who is guided by God's Word, of which the water is a picture (Eph 5:26). The Lord Jesus wants to bring believers seeking the place of gathering around Him into contact with believers who place their lives under the authority of God's Word. Such believers can from that Word teach others about the gathering of believers and show them what, according to Scripture, are the spiritual characteristics of that place of gathering. We prepare it for Him when we are there in accordance with what befits Him.

The disciples should follow the man to the house where he enters. Then they may ask the owner of that house in the Master's name for His "guest room". They may also say what He needs that guest room for. "Guest room" is the same word as "inn". Both words are wonderful names for what the church is supposed to be. We are guests with Him, the Master, and He has brought us, who once were in the power of satan, into the inn of the church (cf. Lk 10:33-35). As a church we are allowed to have this 'inn function' for others as well.

It is "My" guest room, the guest room of the Lord Jesus, because the church is His. The word 'inn' is the same as in Luke 2, in which there was no room for Him at His birth (Lk 2:7). In the world where there is no place for Him, He Himself has an inn for His own, where He receives them with Himself.

The disciples will discover that there is not only a large upper room furnished and ready, but also a prepared heart with the lord of that house (cf. Mk 11:3). The upper room has the following characteristics:

1. It is a "large" upper room, there is room for many.
2. It is a "furnished" upper room, everything is present, nothing needs to be added.
3. It is a "ready" upper room, the room is ready to use, nothing needs to be organized to make it all run smoothly.
4. It's an "upper room", it's a space elevated above the bustle of the world.

In such a place, believers may come together to honor the slain Lamb for the work He has done.

As always, it also happens now as the Lord has said. Only those who obediently do what He says will experience this. All those who know this do not boast of it, but acknowledge that it is a great grace that they were allowed to obey and act according to His Word.

Mk 14:17-21 | Celebrating the Passover

*17 When it was evening He *came with the twelve. 18 As they were reclining [at the table] and eating, Jesus said, "Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me—one who is eating with Me." 19 They began to be grieved and to say to Him one by one, "Surely not I?" 20 And He said to them, "[It is] one of the twelve, one who dips with Me in the bowl. 21 For the Son of Man [is to] go just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! [It would have been] good for that man if he had not been born."*

It is evening, the evening before the last night of the Lord Jesus' life before His death. He is perfectly aware of all that will come on Him. He does not flee, but "came" with the twelve. Every step of Him is a conscious step toward His death.

Then they recline and eat the Passover. While they are at rest and eating the Passover, they will have thought of the exodus from Egypt and the wondrous deliverance that God has worked. Suddenly their thoughts are startled by a remark of the Lord Jesus. He does not want them to be occupied now with a memory, with the past, but with the present, with the fulfillment of what the Passover refers to.

He introduces His remark with "truly", emphasizing the certainty of what He is about to say. Then He speaks of His being betrayed by one of them. He does so without mentioning a name. He wants everyone to test themselves (1Cor 11:28) and wonder if he is able to do so. It is also to ask oneself: Why am I here: Out of love or out of habit?

His remark disturbs the festive character of the meal. The disciples are saddened and ask Him one by one: "Surely not I?" There is no spokesperson here to ask on behalf of the other disciples who it is. Each one comes

personally with his question to the Lord about a possible involvement in this betrayal.

That gives the question that each of the eleven disciples asks, something that is beautiful and striking. None of them, except Judas, thinks about betraying Him. His word, however, is true. Their hearts recognize this, and there is a great mistrust in each one of them in the presence of Christ's words. There is no proud self-confidence in them that they will not do it, but their hearts bow down to these serious and terrible words. They have more confidence in the Lord's words than in themselves. This is a beautiful testimony of their sincerity.

The Lord does not mention a name, but makes it clear by an act who will do it. This act of affection, an expression of friendship, should strike the heart of Judas, if it were not yet completely hardened.

The Lord says that He will go to the cross, a way that is in accordance with what is written about Him. However, that does not take away the responsibility of the human being who will deliver Him to that way. He declares that it would have been good for this man that he had not been born.

What He says has to do with the responsibility of Judas. Judas is fully responsible for what he does. He too has had enough chances to repent, but he didn't want to. The closer a person is to God's blessings outwardly, the further away he becomes from them spiritually if he doesn't take them in his heart.

Mk 14:22-26 | Institution of the Supper

22 While they were eating, He took [some] bread, and after a blessing He broke [it], and gave [it] to them, and said, "Take [it]; this is My body." 23 And when He had taken a cup [and] given thanks, He gave [it] to them, and they all drank from it. 24 And He said to them, "This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. 25 Truly I say to you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." 26 After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

While they were eating the Passover the Lord institutes the Supper. So the Supper is different from the Passover. At the same time it is very closely related to it. Like the Passover, the Supper speaks of Himself. But there is

a difference. The Passover is the memory of an event. It is not a memory of the lamb, but of the passing of judgment. The Supper, on the other hand, is first and foremost the memory of a Person.

The Lord does not take a piece of the Paschal lamb, but of the bread. He takes something new and institutes something new. In the bread He introduces Himself. The broken bread represents Him in His surrender on the cross. Paul later, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, adds another new thought to the bread. The one bread represents the whole church (1Cor 10:17). The church is also called the body of Christ (Col 1:18).

The Lord Jesus gives His disciples the broken bread. It is His meal and He is the Host. Judas is no longer there. The Supper is only for children of God and not for unbelievers. With a short and therefore meaningful "take" He invites them to take from the bread. He explained what they were allowed to take: they were allowed to take His body. It is that body in which He has served God perfectly as the true Servant and Prophet. Everything He is and has done is made available to us in the 'take'. He was able to do this because He surrendered His body to death, for He gives the bread as broken bread.

The doctrine of the roman-catholic church that the bread changes into the real body of Christ is a pernicious error. When the Lord here says to His disciples "this is My body", He Himself is still physically present. He means to say that this bread represents His body, that it is a symbol of it. We can compare it to a picture that someone shows to someone else and says: "This is my wife." No one's going to think of seeing his wife in that piece of paper. It's about the picture. Thus the bread at that moment is the picture of the body of Christ, while it is and remains ordinary bread.

The cup is also part of the Supper. The Lord takes it, gives thanks for it, and gives it to His disciples. They all drink from it. The cup goes around. It symbolizes the fellowship they have with one another. The drinking cup was not part of the Passover either. It's not spoken of in Exodus.

The Lord says what the cup represents. The wine in it represents His blood. He says of the blood: "My blood of the covenant." Thus He points to the result of His work. The disciples know the blood, but as something that protected against judgment in Egypt (Exo 12:13). But here the blood

is the foundation of the new covenant. Because of His shed blood, many will participate in the new covenant that God will make with His people.

On the basis of the old covenant, Israel has forfeited all promises and awaits only the judgment. The old covenant has also been ratified with blood, but that is the blood of judgment (Exo 24:8). Through the blood of Christ, God can make a new covenant with His people. While the people have failed to fulfill all of God's demands, Christ has fulfilled them completely. The new covenant asks nothing of man. He has done everything necessary for the new covenant. All who repent to God and believe in the Lord Jesus will receive the blessings of that new covenant. For Israel these are the earthly blessings promised in the Old Testament and for the church these are the spiritual heavenly blessings.

He Himself will no longer drink from the fruit of the vine. This means that the blood represented by the wine, the fruit of the vine, speaks not only of the forgiveness of sins, but also of the joy resulting from the shedding of His blood. The wine speaks of the joy of those who belong to Him. This joy contrasts with the fear that characterized the Passover night. Paul therefore speaks of the cup of blessing (1Cor 10:16). That our sins are forgiven is a cause of joy.

In connection with the new covenant, it also speaks of the blessings of the kingdom of peace on earth. The kingdom of peace in which the new covenant will be fulfilled is not yet there. Because of His death there is no more earthly joy for Him. Therefore He not any longer drinks of the fruit of the vine. But the time will come when the kingdom of God will be established on earth. Then He will drink of the fruit of the vine in a new way. Then He will enjoy to satisfaction the great joy of the glorious results of His work concerning Israel (Isa 53:11). For us, that joy is there already now in the kingdom of God (Rom 14:17).

Despite the suffering that awaits Him, the Lord sings the praises of God with His disciples at the end of the meal. That must have been Psalms 113-118. Then they go out to the Mount of Olives. There, in Gethsemane, He will fight the toughest spiritual battle ever in view of the work He has just set out for the hearts of His disciples in the Supper.

Mk 14:27-31 | Denial by Peter Foretold

*27 And Jesus *said to them, "You will all fall away, because it is written, 'I WILL STRIKE DOWN THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP SHALL BE SCATTERED.' 28 But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee." 29 But Peter said to Him, "[Even] though all may fall away, yet I will not." 30 And Jesus *said to him, "Truly I say to you, that this very night, before a rooster crows twice, you yourself will deny Me three times." 31 But [Peter] kept saying insistently, "[Even] if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" And they all were saying the same thing also.*

The Lord warns His disciples of what will happen to them. He speaks of how the cross will test them. The striking down of the Shepherd here is not the judgment of God that will afflict Him. By the judgment of God that has come upon Him, the sheep have not been scattered, but rather gathered together and formed into one flock (Jn 10:16). Here is the other aspect of the cross: His complete rejection as Messiah. When the disciples see this, they will fall away and flee. That will happen even before their Master is actually struck down.

The Lord also points out His resurrection and the place of humble service that He will then take together with His disciples. He will go ahead of them to Galilee, the area where He has performed the greater part of His service. That is where He has begun, and there He will instruct His disciples as to the service they will begin when He is no longer with them.

Peter does not agree with Him and promises to remain completely faithful to Him, no matter what happens. Even if everyone were to fall away, at least he would not. He is sincere in his statement, but his statement stems from self-confidence and a complete lack of self-knowledge. He thinks he will never deny the Lord. Others might, but he certainly wouldn't. He does not know himself and thinks he is better than others. Sincerity is not enough to keep someone from falling. A man's heart is so bad, and man himself so weak, that only the awareness of Divine grace can keep him from it.

The Lord tells Peter unequivocally that he will deny Him even three times. And that denial will not be long in coming. He does not predict anything that Peter might simply have forgotten as the years go by. How sad it must

have been for Him to notice this self-confidence in the best of His disciples. How little Peter had learned from Him about himself. Have I already learned more?

Peter sticks to his statement and adds to it. He contradicts the Lord. Then the fall is inevitable. We can only be kept if we let ourselves be warned by the word of the Lord and not stubbornly hold on to our conception of our own loyalty to Him. By the way, Peter is not the only one who says of himself that he will never deny the Lord. The other disciples also say that they will not. It speaks on the one hand of their adherence to Him and on the other hand of not knowing the weakness of the flesh.

Mk 14:32-42 | Gethsemane

*32 They *came to a place named Gethsemane; and He *said to His disciples, "Sit here until I have prayed." 33 And He *took with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be very distressed and troubled. 34 And He *said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch." 35 And He went a little beyond [them], and fell to the ground and [began] to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by. 36 And He was saying, "Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will." 37 And He *came and *found them sleeping, and *said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? 38 Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." 39 Again He went away and prayed, saying the same words. 40 And again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him. 41 And He *came the third time, and *said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough; the hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. 42 Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!"*

The Lord is nearing the end of His trial, a trial that only reveals His glory and perfection, and at the same time glorifies His Father. He is approaching the battle and suffering with a full knowledge of its contents, and not with the lightness of Peter who throws himself into it because he is unfamiliar with its meaning. The Lord grants His disciples rest as He prepares Himself for the fiercest battle of prayer ever fought.

He takes Peter, James and John with Him because these three disciples will later do a special work. In order to prepare them for this, He wants to introduce them deeper into the work He is going to do. They have seen how He made the daughter of Jairus alive from the dead and they have also seen His glory on the mountain. Now they will see the foundation on which He was able to raise a dead one and show His glory. It was only possible because He Himself would die. Our service depends on the awareness we have of the work He accomplished on the cross and what that meant to Him. We will never be able to gauge the full depth of it, but we will increasingly admire Him.

The Lord communicates His feelings to His disciples. Then He must go the last part alone. The disciples must stay where they are because they cannot follow Him to the end. What they can do is keep watch, stay awake until He returns from His severe prayer struggle. When a deep trial awaits, the effect of prayer is that the trial is felt even more intensely. The Lord is facing a suffering that of all people will affect only Him: being forsaken of God because of being made sin.

He places Himself in the presence of His God and Father, where everything is weighed up and where the will of the One Who imposed this task on Him is clearly affirmed in His fellowship with Him. Precisely the intimate fellowship with His God will be broken in the hours of darkness on the cross by God Who will let loose the whole heat of His wrath over sin. This agony of soul was not found among people, as we see with Stephen (Acts 7:55,59). Here we see what the death of the Lord Jesus meant: bearing our sins in His body on the cross (1Pet 2:24a).

The Lord prays that that cup may be removed from Him. He is not insensitive to what that cup means. On the contrary, it proves His perfection. The awareness of being made sin fills His soul with abhorrence. At the same time, He surrenders Himself in this as the perfect Servant to the will of His Father. He wants nothing more than to do His will; there is no opposite will with Him.

He prays in full confidence that anything is possible for the Father. He speaks to Him as "Abba! Father!" This indicates the Son's most intimate relationship with the Father. There is no distance here, no abandonment by

God. 'Abba' is the expression of complete trust. The Lord has introduced us into that relationship. We may also say "Abba, Father" (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:5-6). It is the childlike trust with which a son comes to his father. He asks: "Only if My wish is in agreement with Yours, remove this cup, otherwise not."

When the Lord goes back to the three disciples, He finds all three of them sleeping, even though all three of them had said they would never abandon Him. He speaks only to Peter. He speaks to him with his old name "Simon". Peter has just sworn his complete loyalty to Him and now he is sleeping, while the Lord has asked him to keep watch. Faithfulness to the Lord is seen in the first place in keeping watch with Him. To keep watch is to have a watchful eye on events so that we are brought to prayer. When we are sleeping, we are eliminated and the enemy can do his work. Peter's inability to keep watch for one hour heralds his fall.

The Lord advises Peter to keep watching and praying, or else he will come into temptation. He knows the good intentions of Peter and His other disciples, but He also knows that the flesh is weak. All good intentions do not preserve from a fall. That only is done by keeping watch and praying. We never find that the Lord's own suffering prevents Him from thinking of others. He thinks of His mother and John on the cross, and of the murderer who was crucified with Him.

But His battle is not yet finished. He will battle again by praying what He has prayed before. This shows His perfection. It means that He takes on the task He has to accomplish completely out of God's hand and puts it into God's hand.

Despite His warning words, the disciples have fallen asleep again. It also takes so long. The Lord's prayer battle lasts another hour. That is too long for weary people to keep watch and stay awake. We can only do that if we're completely seized by a certain matter. The disciples should have been aware of what awaited Him. He sought this sympathy and comfort, but did not find it (Psa 69:20b). He finds them sleeping again, they have lost the battle against sleep. How difficult it is to really sympathize with someone who is in need. They feel ashamed that they have been sleeping again.

For the third time the Lord prays for an hour. His three times one hour of prayer corresponds to the three hours He will be made sin on the cross. In prayer He has lived through all that work in His soul in the presence of God in order to actually enter and endure those three hours without God.

Because His battle is over, they don't have to keep watch with Him any longer. They can now remain at rest spiritually. He announces that now what He has said three times before will happen. In perfect rest which is the result of His surrender in prayer, He commands His disciples to rise. The time of keeping watch and praying is over. What remains is to undergo all the actions that evil people will do to Him, and His work on the cross where God will deal with Him. Peter will fail because he has slept. The Lord has been waking and praying and can confidently go on in dependence on His God and will remain standing.

Mk 14:43-49 | The Capture

*43 Immediately while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, *came up accompanied by a crowd with swords and clubs, [who were] from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. 44 Now he who was betraying Him had given them a signal, saying, "Whomever I kiss, He is the one; seize Him and lead Him away under guard." 45 After coming, Judas immediately went to Him, saying, "Rabbi!" and kissed Him. 46 They laid hands on Him and seized Him. 47 But one of those who stood by drew his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear. 48 And Jesus said to them, "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me, as [you would] against a robber? 49 Every day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize Me; but [this has taken place] to fulfill the Scriptures."*

The Lord is ready. Therefore His enemies can come to take Him captive. God's time has come, and therefore the power of the enemy can manifest itself. They are not aware that they are going to fulfill God's plan in God's time. That is not up to them either. They are entirely responsible for this crime, which can't be compared to any other, and will be judged for it.

Judas is coming. He is still referred to as "one of the twelve" to indicate that he has lived so closely with the Lord Jesus. He leads a crowd, armed with swords and clubs. It is an armed crowd, because it is a dangerous

“criminal” who could fiercely resist with His little army of disciples. They come from the religious center, from where the good words of God should have flowed, and from where God’s people should be governed according to the law. It is precisely they who are insisting that the Name they represent be wiped from the face of the earth. The contradictions cannot be greater!

When it comes to his deed, the name of Judas is not mentioned, but is said “he who was betraying Him”, thus emphasizing his terrible deed. This treacherous act is linked to what is the proof of love: a kiss. He will appoint the Lord by kissing Him. It means that the Lord is not directly distinguishable from His disciples. It is also dark. They shouldn’t arrest the wrong person.

What a tragic ignorance about Him by suggesting that they should lead Him away “under guard”. Has Judas learned nothing from His power? No, he didn’t. Unbelief cannot be persuaded by the power of the Lord.

When Judas reaches Him, he goes straight to Him. He falls around His neck, greets Him with “Rabbi” and kisses Him, i.e. kisses Him intimately or many times. He has never called the Lord Jesus ‘Lord’. He greets Him with the proof of the most profound love, while there is only falsehood and greed in his heart. The ‘Judas kiss’ will become proverbial as the act of a traitor who commits treason by abusing intimacy. It does not surprise the Lord, but it hurts His soul to the depths (Psa 41:9).

Mark does not mention the Lord’s addressing of Judas. He immediately describes that the Lord is captured. He does not defend Himself, but allows evil people to seize Him.

Peter who slept during his Master’s serious prayer awakens to strike, while his Master surrenders Himself like a lamb to be led to the slaughterhouse. Once again, he disagrees with his Master’s path and comes to an act that is wrong and irreparable for him. There can be no good fight for the Lord without prayer. Just as he previously, out of love for his Master, took too great a word for himself, he is now, also out of love for his Master, performing an overconfident act. As if his Master needed his defense. Nor does Mark mention the healing of the ear that Peter cut off. It is not mentioned because this Gospel is not about the power of the Lord, but about

His submission as a Servant. Mark also doesn't mention the fact that the Lord speaks to Peter about his deed.

The Lord speaks to the crowd. In full dignity He responds to the crime that is done to Him. He speaks to their conscience. In Gethsemane, in the presence of God, He went through everything in the spirit, and was therefore in the presence of people in perfect peace and tranquility. Is He a robber that they came upon Him so armed to take Him captive? What has He ever robbed? He Who only gave to and never took from others.

He points out that He was with them "every day". This is a beautiful expression that indicates that He had come so close to them. And not occasionally in a sudden appearance, but He was among them daily, He was One of them. They heard Him speak in the temple. His teaching has always been a blessing, He never used inflammatory language. He spoke the words of God to them, and He did so with authority.

That they did not catch Him then is because it was not yet the time of the fulfillment of the Scriptures. That time has now come and that is why they are given the opportunity now. He wishes to give testimony to the Scriptures in all things. If the Scriptures announce His death, He must die. As Man on earth, He takes them as a rule and motive for everything He says and does.

Mk 14:50-52 | All Flee

*50 And they all left Him and fled. 51 A young man was following Him, wearing [nothing but] a linen sheet over [his] naked [body]; and they *seized him. 52 But he pulled free of the linen sheet and escaped naked.*

When the disciples see that the Lord lets Himself be bound and does not use His power to deliver Himself, they all flee, as He foretold (verse 27). He goes the way completely alone. We are all at a great distance, as once the people stood at a great distance when the ark entered the Jordan (Jos 3:3-4).

There is still a young man who wants to follow Him. But the way the Lord goes can only be gone by those who are called to it. One's own will will always fail. He must go this way alone. He has asked in Gethsemane to

pray and keep watch with Him. It did not happen there. Now it doesn't have to and can't be done.

The further a person dares, without the power of the Holy Spirit, to go on the path where the power of the world and death are, the greater the shame with which a person escapes. If God at least allows the possibility to escape. The young man flees undressed. The "linen" from which the garment is made is also seen in the piece of "linen" in which Joseph of Arimathea wraps the Lord Jesus (Mk 15:46). It is a shroud. The young man had to leave it behind.

Mk 14:53-54 | To the High Priest

*53 They led Jesus away to the high priest; and all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes *gathered together. 54 Peter had followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest; and he was sitting with the officers and warming himself at the fire.*

With devilish joy the religious leadership gathers under the presidency of the high priest. The Lord Jesus is led away to him. This is the moment they looked forward to with intense longing. They have their great adversary in their power, they believe.

The Lord here undergoes the first interrogation of the four to which He is subjected in this one night. After this interrogation He comes before Pilate (Mk 15:2-5), then before Herod (Lk 23:6-12) and finally again before Pilate (Mk 15:6-15).

Peter ventures to follow the Lord even further on the way He must go than the young man who also wanted to, but who was seized and fled in defamation. Peter will have an even more ignominious fall than the young man. In verse 47 Peter has fought the enemies of the Lord, now he identifies himself with them. He warms himself with them at the fire, while the Lord exposes Himself to the hatred of cold hearts in the cold of the night.

Mk 14:55-59 | Interrogation by the Council

55 Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, and they were not finding any. 56 For many were giving false testimony against Him, but their testimony was not

consistent. 57 Some stood up and [began] to give false testimony against Him, saying, 58 "We heard Him say, 'I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.'" 59 Not even in this respect was their testimony consistent.

The trial that follows is not an investigation of His actions, but an attempt to cover murder with a semblance of righteousness. In their hatred they want only one thing: They must and will have something that they consider a valid reason to kill Him.

They deliberately look for witnesses who can bring something against Him, no matter how false the accusation may be. Any witness who testifies against Him can only give a false testimony. Each time it turns out that the witnesses contradict each other. There are no two witnesses who bring the same slander against Him. They fall short, not in their wickedness, but in the certainty of what they testify.

Then there are some who seem to give the prosecutors the necessary motive for their murder. The content of their testimony has to do with something the Lord said at the beginning of His performance (Jn 2:19). But if the prosecutors ask about it, that testimony, too, is not consistent.

It strongly seems that the leaders of the people have attached great value to the appearance of justice. Otherwise they would have persuaded two witnesses to say the same thing. But apparently they did not want to go that far, probably in view of possible questions that could be asked afterward. They cunningly covered themselves up for this in advance.

At this point the judges should have released Him. However, the verdict was already final, only a ground for His conviction still had to and would be found. They will get it, and it will be the testimony of the truth. The Lord will be condemned on the basis of His own confession of the truth.

Mk 14:60-61 | Interrogation by the High Priest

60 The high priest stood up [and came] forward and questioned Jesus, saying, "Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?" 61 But He kept silent and did not answer. Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed [One]?"

The high priest stands up from his chair. He stands up and comes forward, he is part of the troop of prosecutors and is not an independent judge. All honesty is lacking in this sham trial against the Son of God. The high priest now takes charge of the interrogation himself. He is surprised that the Lord does not answer to all the witnesses who have spoken.

But the Lord does not defend Himself against false accusations. He does not respond to what the high priest says. He is both the Suffering One and the Ruling One. He determines what happens and what He says. Then the high priest says something to which He responds. This is not a false accusation, but a question about His Person, whether He is the Messiah, the Son of God. Well, the Messiah *is* the Son of God.

Mk 14:62-65 | Condemnation

*62 And Jesus said, "I am; and you shall see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN." 63 Tearing his clothes, the high priest *said, "What further need do we have of witnesses? 64 You have heard the blasphemy; how does it seem to you?" And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death. 65 Some began to spit at Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him with their fists, and to say to Him, "Prophecy!" And the officers received Him with slaps [in the face].*

To the high priest's question as to whether He is the Christ, the Son of the Blessed, the Lord gives an affirmative answer. Yes, He is. But in His answer He goes far beyond the high priest's question. He adds His glory as the Son of Man. The high priest's question has to do with Psalm 2, the Lord's answer with Psalm 8. He is the Son of God after Psalm 2 (Psa 2:7), but He is also the Son of Man Who will reign over the universe according to Psalm 8 (Psa 8:4-7). He is the Son of David and He is also the Lord of David.

Now He is as the Rejected One among them and they can do with Him whatever they want. But there will come a time when they will see Him as the Son of Man sitting at God's right hand and He will come back with the clouds of heaven. That is, after His rejection He will take up a new position, as mentioned in Psalm 110 (Psa 110:1), and then come as the Son of Man according to Daniel 7 (Dan 7:13-14).

The religious leaders know only too well that in doing so He is saying He is the Messiah. And this testimony concerning the truth of His own Person becomes the basis of His condemnation. What He has now said is for the high priest the requested evidence for His condemnation. He tears his clothes, entirely against the law (Lev 21:10), as proof of his indignation at that presumption, while his heart cheers. All witnesses can go, for they are no longer needed.

The supreme blindness of man, and of religious man in particular, is evidenced by the fact that he accuses Him, Who is the Lord of glory, of blasphemy when He speaks the truth and condemns Him to death for it (1Cor 2:7-8). The Lord is not condemned on the basis of a false testimony of man. His own confession, His faithfulness in speaking the truth before the whole council, is the cause of His condemnation.

His judges and prosecutors celebrate because they have succeeded in finding a reason for His condemnation. The Lord is not spared mockery and humiliation (cf. Job 30:10). After the mighty testimony of verse 62, this is now His share. Where has it ever been shown that during a trial both judges and prosecutors after a verdict both spit and beat the condemned person (Mic 5:1c)?

The Lord allows everything to happen to Him without defending Himself one time or averting blows. His opponents amuse themselves with Him. They want Him to entertain them by once more showing His qualities as a prophet. They blindfold Him, beat Him with their fists, and then ask Him to tell them who beat Him. It is all written down in God's book (Psa 56:8c). Man will have to account for every mocking word and every mocking act to Him Whom they now abuse so much.

Mk 14:66-72 | Denial by Peter

*66 As Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest *came, 67 and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and *said, "You also were with Jesus the Nazarene." 68 But he denied [it], saying, "I neither know nor understand what you are talking about." And he went out onto the porch. 69 The servant-girl saw him, and began once more to say to the bystanders, "This is [one] of them!" 70 But again he denied it. And after a little*

while the bystanders were again saying to Peter, "Surely you are [one] of them, for you are a Galilean too." 71 But he began to curse and swear, "I do not know this man you are talking about!" 72 Immediately a rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had made the remark to him, "Before a rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times." And he began to weep.

While the Lord is mocked and despised, something happens in the court that affects Him more deeply than all the defamation of the Council. Peter is in a place where he should not be and in a company where he does not belong. This puts him in a position where satan can tempt him and where he cannot stand in the evil day. The evil day is the day when satan is especially aimed at the believer and a believer can only stand if he is wearing the whole armor of God (Eph 6:13). Satan has abundant servants in that environment. The servant he uses first is one of the high priest's maidservant girls.

She sees Peter warming himself. She observes him and recognizes him as someone who was also with that Jesus. She calls Him "the Nazarene". In her voice, the contempt that befits the pronouncement of this name could be heard. The word of a servant-girl was enough to lead Peter to deny his Lord. So powerless is he who has expressly said to give his life for Him (verse 31) to be able to face death.

Peter denies that there is any relationship between him and the Lord. He is not aware of anything. He does not understand what she is saying. He keeps himself even more ignorant than all the enemies. He denies belonging to the Lord as the Despised One. By his denial Peter adds an even harder blow to the Lord than the blows that had already hit Him.

Peter's denial is mentioned by all four evangelists because the lesson that we should distrust ourselves is so important. The sinner must be broken, but so must the believer! The fall of Peter takes place in stages:

1. First he boasts in his own strength (verse 31);
2. then he is sleeping when he should have been keeping watch and praying (verse 37);
3. then he draws the sword when he should have bowed (verse 47);
4. he follows the Lord at a distance (verse 54);

5. he sits with the enemies to warm himself by their fire (verse 54);

6. finally there is a triple denial (verses 68,70,71).

After his first denial the rooster crows, but it does not bring Peter to his senses. He continues on his way. His fall must become complete because the Lord cannot teach him the lesson of self-denial in any other way.

As the enemies of the Lord discuss events with each other, the servant-girl makes others aware of Peter. Peter's statement that he does not belong to the Lord did not convince her. She now speaks of him being one of them, that he belongs to the company of disciples which followed the Lord. Peter denies it again. He does not belong to Him nor does he belong to His followers. He denies any relationship.

Then others say that he does belong, because, according to them he is also a Galilean. That is what they hear in his dialect. Peter now feels so cornered that he speaks of his Savior in the strongest terms as "this man", and swears that he does not know Him. What a contrast with his earlier confession: You are the Christ (Mk 8:29).

Then the rooster crows a second time. This awakens the conscience of Peter. He remembers the word the Lord said. This brings him to repentance and tears begin to flow. The work of repentance and conversion began through the remark or the word that the Lord had said to him. The Word of God is always the means by which a man comes to confession and repentance and by which he is cleansed (Eph 5:26).

Mark 15

Mk 15:1-5 | Delivered to Pilate

*1 Early in the morning the chief priests with the elders and scribes and the whole Council, immediately held a consultation; and binding Jesus, they led Him away and delivered Him to Pilate. 2 Pilate questioned Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" And He *answered him, "[It is as] you say." 3 The chief priests [began] to accuse Him harshly. 4 Then Pilate questioned Him again, saying, "Do You not answer? See how many charges they bring against You!" 5 But Jesus made no further answer; so Pilate was amazed.*

The trial, verdict, and abuse of the Accused took place in the night. When the night is over and the first daylight begins to show, and the interrogators have mocked the Lord Jesus enough, the prosecutors and judges deliberate. They themselves do not have the right of execution. They must go with Him to Pilate for the official trial. They need Pilate's permission to kill Him. His death will then take place in a Roman manner, that is, by crucifixion.

For transport to Pilate, they bind the Lord Jesus. What foolishness to think they can bind the Almighty God. But the Almighty God lets Himself be bound in Christ. What a foolishness to bind Him Who has spread so much blessing, saying: 'You may not bless again.' With this, man establishes his own judgment. He who gave Samson the strength to get rid of his ropes (Jdg 16:12), willingly allows himself to be bound, led away and delivered to Pilate.

When He stands before Pilate, Pilate interrogates Him. The high priest had asked Him if He was the Christ. That question was important to him as a religious leader. The chief priests know they can't come to Pilate with that. That's why they accuse Him before Pilate of proclaiming Himself King and thus a threat to the emperor. This is clear from Pilate's question.

For him as ruler the question is important whether Jesus is "the King of the Jews". He asks that question. Like the high priest, the Lord also answers this question because it is a question about His Person. He answers only

when it concerns the truth; He does not answer when it concerns the injustice done to Him. His answer is not 'it is me', but a more vague "[it is as] you say" by which He binds His answer to Pilate's conscience. Mark does not describe the statements of the Jews before Pilate. He focuses his gaze entirely on the devoted Servant Who performs His service with complete dedication.

The chief priests do their utmost to shovel as much dirt on Him as possible, so that Pilate must condemn Him. How deeply man has sunk when he tries to gather as much incriminating material as possible against Him Who God has revealed in the flesh and Who has come to save people from eternal judgment. They let themselves be led by nothing but hatred.

Pilate is a totally indifferent man who thinks only of himself and his position. He also knows the reasons for the Jews to have Christ condemned, while he also knows and has even pronounced that Christ is innocent. Yet he has finally condemned Him.

He sees a Prisoner in front of him like he has never had before. Here stands a Man before him Who does not respond to any accusation and does not do anything to defend Himself. He knows the savage scenes and insults between prosecutors and defendants that have taken place before him. This Prisoner is a great exception. The Jews want to present Him as a riot-maker, while He is the perfect Quiet One.

"He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth" (Isa 53:7). Pilate marvels at this attitude. Such surrender is totally incomprehensible to the unbeliever and unfortunately for many believers as well. For believers, the Lord Jesus is an example that they should follow (1Pet 2:21-23).

Mk 15:6-15 | Jesus or Barabbas

6 Now at [the] feast he used to release for them [any] one prisoner whom they requested. 7 The man named Barabbas had been imprisoned with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the insurrection. 8 The crowd went up and began asking him [to do] as he had been accustomed to do for them. 9 Pilate answered them, saying, "Do you want me to release for you the King

of the Jews?" 10 For he was aware that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy. 11 But the chief priests stirred up the crowd [to ask] him to release Barabbas for them instead. 12 Answering again, Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?" 13 They shouted back, "Crucify Him!" 14 But Pilate said to them, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify Him!" 15 Wishing to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas for them, and after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified.

Pilate seeks a compromise. He wants to please the Jews and yet not condemn an innocent one. By seeking this compromise, he proves his injustice and condemns himself, for he should have released the Innocent without bargaining.

Pilate does, in his opinion, have an acceptable candidate to place next to Jesus. It is Barabbas. Mark describes this man in more detail than the other evangelists. Barabbas means 'son of the father'. So is the Lord Jesus. But what a world of difference. Barabbas has the devil as his father. This has been proven by his actions.

He is an insurrectionist, like his 'father', and a murderer, like that same 'father' was from the beginning (Jn 8:44). At the same time, he is a representative of the people who also rebel against God and are about to kill the Son of God in that insurrection. By placing Barabbas next to Jesus, Pilate lets the people choose between a murderer, someone who takes the life of another, and Someone Who will give His own life and give life to others.

The crowd insists that he will do to them, as he used to do. That gave amusement and discussion. They like it. In this Gospel, the initiative for this comes from the Jews.

Pilate tries to influence the choice of the people by proposing to them to release Christ Whom he calls "the King of the Jews". God controls things so that the Jews must choose between the murderer and the One Who gives life, between the riot maker and the perfect Servant of God. Today the choice is between the same people and every day the same choice is made massively for Barabbas.

Pilate is aware of the envy of the chief priests of the Lord Jesus. He knows that they hate Him because He does not submit to their authority and

because He has great influence on the people. Envy is one of the worst and most common sins among believers. It is the origin of all sins. It is the first sin in creation, both among the angels – the devil – and among men – Adam and Eve.

The chief priests do their pernicious work and stir up the crowds to ask for the release of Barabbas. In this Gospel it is especially the priests in whom hatred and enmity against Christ are found. We see how fickle the popular favor is when there is no faith in Christ. Masses of people took advantage of Him when He was among them while blessing them. Now that it seems His blessing role has been played out and they can no longer benefit from Him, they are open to the suggestions of the chief priests. So they call for the release of Barabbas. They choose death instead of life. That is the state of man.

Pilate tries again and now with another question. If they choose Barabbas, what do they want him to do to their King? With all his diplomacy, Pilate is working more and more to help the enemies of the Lord. He thinks he's clever, but he's just an instrument of satan. He seeks only his own interests, while trying to keep all parties happy. He is a weak and corrupt man, someone who loves the people's favor more than the law. A judge who asks the people what should happen to a prisoner for fear of rebellion and, as a result, quarrels with his superiors, is a corrupt and characterless judge.

With his question Pilate puts the decision in the hands of the crowd. In doing so, he loses his grip on the people and on the exercise of justice. With his question he puts the demand in their mouths to crucify Him. That is what they want and nothing else!

Pilate makes a last attempt to bring the people to reason. He asks them what evil He would have done. He wants a reason to condemn Him. But the crowd is frantic. They want to see blood, His blood. Every attempt to release Jesus is answered with an even more determined cry for His death.

Man's anger and depravity are revealed in all their terrible facets in what is happening here. In expressions of hatred and corruption, the Lord Jesus is spared nothing. This whole spectacle is about Him. The behavior of each person involved is determined by Who He is. He sheds light on every person (Jn 1:9).

Then Pilate gives in to the will of the people and releases Barabbas for them. The man convicted of murder is allowed to go free. Thus even at this event – the trial against Him – the Lord delivers another at the expense of Himself. Never has He saved Himself, always delivered, blessed, and saved others at the expense of Himself.

All of Pilate's expressions and every act testify to the inertia of this man who is the representative of the authority of Rome. Here he is concerned only with and for himself and does not concern himself with truth and justice according to God's standards. Pilate hands over the Lord because it suits him best. He even scourges Him. Even if it is literally done by soldiers, he is responsible, because he gives the order.

Mk 15:16-20 | Mocked

*16 The soldiers took Him away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium), and they *called together the whole [Roman] cohort. 17 They *dressed Him up in purple, and after twisting a crown of thorns, they put it on Him; 18 and they began to acclaim Him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" 19 They kept beating His head with a reed, and spitting on Him, and kneeling and bowing before Him. 20 After they had mocked Him, they took the purple robe off Him and put His [own] garments on Him. And they *led Him out to crucify Him.*

Pilate gives his soldiers a free hand to do whatever they please with the Lord. This helps to take their minds off things. The whole cohort is summoned, all are gathered to have fun with Him.

They mock Him by dressing Him up as a king. They also crown Him, but with a crown of thorns. They make them with their own hands. Without them realizing it, placing this crown of thorns on His head suggests that He is the cause of the curse that came into and over creation through sin. After the Fall, the earth produced thorns and thistles (Gen 3:18).

What a wonderful game! The soldiers are having a great time. And the Lord Jesus allows it, as does His God. The soldiers immerse themselves in their game and mockingly greet Him as "the King of the Jews". What a shock it will be for them to stand before this King when He sits on His throne.

He has endured every torment that could be inflicted on Him. After the scourging, which He has felt intensely and in which His back has become a bloody mass (Psa 129:3), they beat the thorns of the crown deep into His head with a reed. The reed with which they beat is not a reed, but a real stick. Again He is spit on, the sign of the deepest contempt. They kneel down in so-called tribute to Him. Every defamation He could experience has been done to Him. For Him, no contempt is too crude. Yet there comes no sighing to God or any word of curse on them over His lips. He endures everything in His soul with His God. This is the way He must go, and which He goes without complaining.

When they are calmed down, they take off His mocking garment and put His own clothes back on. Then they lead Him out to crucify Him. Now comes the way to the cross, the way the Lord leads for all who want to follow Him. He has spoken about this to His disciples. The world has nothing else for us either if we want to follow the Lord. Every day He asks us to take up the cross voluntarily and to follow Him in His rejection (Lk 9:23).

Mk 15:21-28 | The Crucifixion

*21 They *pressed into service a passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene (the father of Alexander and Rufus), to bear His cross. 22 Then they *brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull. 23 They tried to give Him wine mixed with myrrh; but He did not take it. 24 And they *crucified Him, and *divided up His garments among themselves, casting lots for them [to decide] what each man should take. 25 It was the third hour when they crucified Him. 26 The inscription of the charge against Him read, "THE KING OF THE JEWS." 27 They *crucified two robbers with Him, one on His right and one on His left. 28 <And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And He was numbered with transgressors.">*

The Lord Jesus is so weakened by all the abuses that bearing the cross is a tremendous burden to Him. He Who bears the universe by the word of His power (Heb 1:3) is so truly Man that His powers are exhausted because of the suffering that has been endured. Yet He does not attribute this suffering to those who do this to Him, but to His God (Psa 102:23).

The soldiers think that He may succumb to the burden before they have crucified Him. That is why they press into service a passer-by – for them coincidental – to bear His cross in His stead. It is symbolic that Simon was “coming from the country”. His task was done, he was finished. By taking up the cross of the Lord Jesus he is identified with the contempt that is the part of the Lord. Of Simon it is mentioned that he is the father of Alexander and Rufus. Rufus is later called by Paul “a choice man in the Lord” (Rom 16:13). God blesses what the father does in his children.

The soldiers take their Prisoner to the place of execution. Golgotha is a hill just outside Jerusalem, outside the camp (Heb 13:13). Because of the shape of the hill that looks like a skull from a distance, this place is probably called so. It is also a symbolic name for the many executed.

The crucifixion is the most gruesome martyrdom imaginable. To this end, convicts were given a mixture of wine and myrrh to drink that had the effect of anesthetizing them. That remedy is also given to the Lord, but He refuses to take it (Psa 69:21). He wants to undergo the suffering in full awareness.

Then the Lord is crucified. Mark and the other evangelists describe this act in austere terms. However, the suffering is terrible. The Lord is nailed to the cross, nails go through His hands that have always done only good. After they had bound His hands, they are now dug through. In this way man ‘appreciates’ Him Who has revealed God to them in grace and blessing.

His clothes, which speak of His whole revelation among them, is the only thing that can be divided. He has no other possessions. He leaves no fortune. Only His clothes are worth anything. They cast lots for them to decide what each man should take. Who would later walk in a garment in which the Lord Jesus has walked?

The time of the crucifixion is clearly indicated. The Lord hung on the cross for six hours. All six hours He was the burnt offering, i.e. an offering completely dedicated to God and in which God is completely pleased (Lev 1:1-17). There are two time periods of three hours each. The first three-hour period is from the third hour to the sixth hour, according to our timekeeping from 9 a.m. to noon in the morning. In those three hours He was the burnt offering, but not yet the sin and guilt offering.

Mark also mentions the inscription above the cross. That inscription indicates the accusation and the reason for His death on the cross. He hangs there because He said He is the King of the Jews. To increase His defamation and make His humiliation complete He is crucified in the middle of two robbers, as if He were the greatest robber. According to the Scriptures, He is numbered with the transgressors (Isa 53:12). In the same way they had come to take Him prisoner. As if against a robber, they had come out against Him (Mk 14:48).

Mk 15:29-32 | Mocked on the Cross

29 Those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads, and saying, "Ha! You who [are going to] destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, 30 save Yourself, and come down from the cross!" 31 In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes, were mocking [Him] among themselves and saying, "He saved others; He cannot save Himself. 32 Let [this] Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe!" Those who were crucified with Him were also insulting Him.

The passers-by blaspheme the Lord, while at the same time telling the truth. When people are passers-by and do not pause at the cross to understand its reality, they become slanderers (Lam 1:12). They slander Him because out of themselves – and not instigated now by the chief priests – they call the Lord a liar. For them, the statements He has made are untrue. By quoting those statements, they unconsciously make His glory and perfection known. At the same time, they help to make that statement come true. They are demolishing the temple of His body, which He will rebuild after a few days.

The challenge of saving Himself and coming down from the cross proves their blindness to God's plan. If Christ had saved Himself, there would have been no salvation for anyone. If He had come down from the cross, every man would have to bear God's judgment himself. The power of His love for His God and also for the church and for each individual believer kept Him on the cross.

The mockery of the chief priests among themselves with the scribes is unintentionally also a contribution to His glory. They speak a deep truth.

Never did He save Himself, always thinking only of others. He has indeed saved others, and He could not save Himself because bonds of love kept Him on the cross.

They have seen so much of the Lord Jesus and persist in their unbelief despite that. Their unbelief has proved so persistent that even if He were to come down from the cross, they would not believe. To believe requires a humble and broken spirit.

Even those who have been crucified with Him, are also insulting Him. The humiliation of the Lord and man's hatred are so great that man finds time even in his own agony to make the suffering of the Son of God even greater. And why is that? He hadn't hurt them, had he? Man's hatred of Him becomes manifest in all its facets. Everything is against Him. But the worst is yet to come.

Mk 15:33-37 | The Death of the Lord Jesus

33 When the sixth hour came, darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour. 34 At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "ELOI, ELOI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?" which is translated, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?" 35 When some of the bystanders heard it, they [began] saying, "Behold, He is calling for Elijah." 36 Someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink, saying, "Let us see whether Elijah will come to take Him down." 37 And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed His last.

Then the sixth hour comes. It is the middle of the day. When the sun is at its highest point in the heavens, all of a sudden total darkness comes over the whole land. So far, all the Lord's sufferings have been perceived by everyone. The suffering for sin that now follows takes place in darkness, without a human eye being able to perceive it. This darkness lasts for three hours.

In these three hours of darkness, the Son of God is burdened with the sins of all who believe in Him, and He is made sin by God and God judges Him. He does not spare Him. The judgment that God executes on His own beloved Son is withdrawn from human eyes. The reckoning takes place

between God and His Son alone. In these hours, the Lord Jesus is not only the burnt offering but also the sin and trespass offering (Leviticus 4-5).

When the three hours of darkness are over, we hear the Lord's complaint that His God has forsaken Him. This is His greatest suffering. In those hours God, Who was always with Him, is against Him. The sword of God's righteousness is awakened against the Man Who has always been His Associate (Zec 13:7).

During the first three hours, the Lord suffered from the side of man. In the second three hours He suffered from the side of God. The result of the first three hours is that man increased his guilt toward God and brought it to a climax. God's response to this is His judgment on man. The result of the second three hours is the atonement that God can offer to even the greatest slanderer.

The Lord's complaint is the question to God – Whom He calls "My God" – why He has forsaken Him. He knew, but He expressed this complaint so that we might understand how great His suffering was because of being forsaken by God. He had gone through everything with His God, while all had left Him, but now He had also been left alone by God.

This loneliness is the loneliness that every man will know forever who dies in unbelief, but without that question of why. Every person who is in hell will know why. At the same time, his loneliness will be experienced by him in a completely different way. He, Whose deepest joy it was to be in God's presence and always has been, has uniquely experienced the lack. No unbeliever who perish will ever experience it that way. He is the One and Only in this.

When the three hours of darkness have passed, the mockery continues. The explanation of His words as if He were calling for Elijah is proof of this. It may also be that someone makes this remark who does not understand the language and hears Elijah, while the Lord says Eloi.

The Lord is thirsty. Someone gives Him a drink so that He may live a little longer and His call for Elijah may be heard. Thus man mocks Him. But His life and His death are not in the hands of men. He dies at the time God has determined. Fully in accordance with this, at that moment the Lord voluntarily commits His spirit into the hands of the Father.

He does not die of exhaustion, but lays down His life Himself (Jn 10:17-18). What else does He have to do in a world in which He lived only to fulfill the will of God? Everything is finished, and He must necessarily die because He has been rejected by the world. As a result, there is no more room in this world for His mercy toward it.

He breathes His last, obedient to the end, to begin a life in another world – either for His soul separated from the body, or in glory – where evil can never enter and where the new man will be perfectly happy in the presence of God.

Mk 15:38 | The Veil Tears

| *38 And the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.*

Now that death is nullified, and the only just foundation is laid for life and salvation, the Jewish system is condemned with it. The verdict is carried out on that which was its characteristic and central feature: the veil. This veil indicated that God was inside and man was outside.

The great wonder is that through the death of Christ, at the same time God comes out to man, man can approach God. The direct result of His death is free access to God. It is an act of God: He tears the veil in two from top to bottom. The access to God is free. Man can enter into the presence of God through the blood of Christ (Heb 10:19).

Mk 15:39-41 | The Centurion and the Women

| *39 When the centurion, who was standing right in front of Him, saw the way He breathed His last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" 40 There were also [some] women looking on from a distance, among whom [were] Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses, and Salome. 41 When He was in Galilee, they used to follow Him and minister to Him; and [there were] many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem.*

His people rejected Him and gladly observed His death. There is also a Roman centurion who has observed His death, but who thereby comes to the confession that He was the Son of God. This heathen confesses as truth what the chief priests took as a reason for His condemnation and death (Mk 14:61-64).

Of the disciples, no one is to be found near the cross, but there are women. These women show greater dedication and follow the Lord Jesus further than the disciples who fled. Certainly, they are at a distance from Him, but they have not lost sight of Him. Death did not separate the hearts of these weak women from the Lord because they loved Him.

Women are found in great numbers in the company of the Lord Jesus. They show a greater sympathy than men. They are also generally more likely to repent than men because they have a greater sense of the misery and sorrow that sin has brought into the world. As a result, in their weakness they seek help and support from the true Boaz (Rth 2:1). Boaz means “in Him is strength”. Men are less sensitive to misery and sorrow and therefore less inclined to seek help from Another.

Mk 15:42-47 | The Burial

42 When evening had already come, because it was the preparation day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, 43 Joseph of Arimathea came, a prominent member of the Council, who himself was waiting for the kingdom of God; and he gathered up courage and went in before Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus. 44 Pilate wondered if He was dead by this time, and summoning the centurion, he questioned him as to whether He was already dead. 45 And ascertaining this from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph. 46 Joseph bought a linen cloth, took Him down, wrapped Him in the linen cloth and laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. 47 Mary Magdalene and Mary the [mother] of Joses were looking on [to see] where He was laid.

This day is coming to an end, a day which will be eternally remembered because a work has been done on it, the consequences of which will be seen for all eternity. It is also a special day for the Jews because it is the day before the Sabbath on which, in this case, the preparation for the Passover also takes place. To faith, the great preparation for the true Passover has been accomplished, for the Lamb of the Passover has died (1Cor 5:7). Unbelief continues to follow religious customs that God abhors.

The death of the Lord Jesus is the reason for a hidden disciple to come forward. Joseph takes the courage to go to Pilate to ask “for the body of

Jesus". He is a prominent member of the Council with whom Pilate may have consulted more often on administrative matters. The humble Servant is served in His death by a prominent member of the Council. Inwardly Joseph was a disciple of the Lord and looked forward to His reign. Now he openly identifies himself with a rejected and deceased King.

Pilate wonders that the Lord has already died. Normally the crucifixion is a slow death where sometimes death only occurs after days of the most terrible suffering. With the Lord Jesus it only took a few hours. He had nothing more to do. There was therefore no point in living any longer. He was the only One Who could lay down His life at the moment that had come for it.

Pilate wants certainty about the death of this particular Condemned. When he has the centurion's confirmation of Jesus' death, he granted His body to Joseph. Joseph may have it. While no member of the Lord's family comes forward to take care of Him when He has died, God has someone to take care of His Son.

The tabernacle of the Son of God that He has just left does not remain without this tribute that belongs to Him from the side of men. God takes care of it. Joseph wraps Him in a piece of linen. The Lord is buried in cloths. He was also wrapped in cloths when He was born (Lk 2:7). The clean linen suits the clean Servant, as well as a clean grave, which has never been in touch with death.

Also in these acts the women are spectators. They remain with their Lord, being attached as they are to Him. Where He is, they want to be. This is the company present at His burial. The Lord died in the greatest poverty and loneliness. Now that He is buried, there is no crowd of people present.

Mark 16

Mk 16:1-8 | The Resurrection

*1 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the [mother] of James, and Salome, bought spices, so that they might come and anoint Him. 2 Very early on the first day of the week, they *came to the tomb when the sun had risen. 3 They were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" 4 Looking up, they *saw that the stone had been rolled away, although it was extremely large. 5 Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed. 6 And he *said to them, "Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen; He is not here; behold, [here is] the place where they laid Him. 7 But go, tell His disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He told you.'" 8 They went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.*

Though the Lord has said that He will rise on the third day, the women come with spices to anoint Him. They buy them as soon as the Sabbath is over. Although they want to do something that didn't have to happen, the women show a mind that suits people who love the Lord. He is everything to them. But Mary of Bethany is not there. She anointed Him and did so before His burial (Mk 14:8). She took in all His words (Lk 10:39) and believed that He would rise. He had also spoken about this (Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:34).

It is very early on the first day of the week. That indicates the new beginning. The day of the resurrection is Sunday. As the women reach the place where death reigns, the sun rises. Death is conquered, the sun appears. Fear can disappear, a new period begins. The women do not yet see anything of the new that has come with the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. They face a great difficulty. They cannot roll away the stone that closes the tomb. How are they to anoint His body now? They can't think about the resurrection for a moment.

When they get to the tomb, they see that the great stone has been rolled away. Their problem isn't there. The stone has not been rolled away to let the Lord out, but to let them in. They go into the tomb and see a young man sitting there. The young man is an angel. He possesses everlasting youth because he does not belong to earth, but to heaven. His appearance impresses.

Mark notices that he is sitting at the right side and that he is clothed in a white robe. The whole appearance fits the great event of Christ's resurrection. Death has been conquered, something new has arisen. The resurrection laid the foundation of a new creation. "Young man" speaks of the everlasting freshness and power of the new. That he is "on the right" speaks of the eternal righteousness of the new. It is Christ's place with God (verse 19). That he is clothed in a white robe speaks of the everlasting result of the new: everyone who participates in it is clean and pure before God (Rev 7:9). The young man from Mark 14 (Mk 14:51) contrasts with this young man. That young man wanted to follow in his own power, the power of the flesh. Then there can only be failure.

The angel reassures the women. He knows that they are looking for Him Who they know as the despised Jesus from the despised Nazareth. With these words he expresses his appreciation for them. It is the appreciation of heaven because they have committed themselves to that Person. He also reassures them about their beloved Lord. The angel can tell them that He is risen. He is no longer in the tomb. They can convince themselves. They just have to look at the place where they laid Him. That place is empty.

The angel sends them away from the tomb with a message from the Lord for His disciples. He tells them to tell the disciples where to find Him. He also tells them to tell Peter specifically. This will give him the assurance that the Lord loves him and wants him to be there as well.

The angel does nothing but remind them of something the Lord said earlier about His resurrection and the place where they can see Him (Mk 14:28). The Lord always comes first. If we follow Him, we will see Him. What He said then was the reason for Peter's statement that he would never deny Him (Mk 14:28-29). The message of the women will be a great encouragement to Peter.

In all their love for the Lord, they cannot cope with the encounter with heaven. They are not ready to hear heavenly things. It frightens and astonishes them and they flee. They dare not talk to anyone about it. Later on they will learn the richness of it. The Lord knows their sincerity and will answer their love.

Mk 16:9-11 | Appearance to Mary Magdalene

9 <Now after He had risen early on the first day of the week, He first appeared to Mary Magdalene, from whom He had cast out seven demons. 10 She went and reported to those who had been with Him, while they were mourning and weeping. 11 When they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they refused to believe it.

After the angel's testimony of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, He Himself now appears as the Risen One. Mary Magdalene is the first to whom He appears. She first fled with the others, but returned to the tomb. She has a special love for the Lord because He delivered her from the power of satan who had taken full possession of her. Now she is completely seized by Him. He reveals Himself to her and thus takes away all her doubt (Jn 20:11-17).

She goes to the disciples "who had been with Him," but sometimes had listened so badly, to tell them that she had seen the Lord. She finds the disciples in great sadness. That says something of their love for Him and it also says something of their hopelessness.

The disciples are not only desperate, they are also unbelieving. When they hear Mary's testimony that the Lord lives and that she has seen Him herself, they don't believe her. Mary is an eyewitness, she does not pass on anything she has heard, but she has seen Him herself. The disciples have lost the words He spoke about His resurrection because they did not understand those words. If we forget His Word, we cannot be comforted.

Mk 16:12-14 | Various Appearances

12 After that, He appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking along on their way to the country. 13 They went away and reported it to the others, but they did not believe them either. 14 Afterward He appeared to

the eleven themselves as they were reclining [at the table]; and He reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He had risen.

The Lord continues to reveal Himself and thereby multiply the proofs of His resurrection. This time He shows Himself in a different form to two of His disciples. They are also saddened by what has happened (Lk 24:17). They hoped that the kingdom would be established. Now that He has died, it will not happen. They have no choice but to pick up the thread of daily life again.

When they have recognized Him, they are going to tell the other disciples about that great encounter. Like Mary Magdalene's report, their elated report has no resonance. Neither of these two can convince the grieving disciples of the fact that the Lord has risen. The disciples persist in their unbelief.

Then comes the moment when He reveals Himself to the eleven. At this first meeting after His resurrection, He must begin to reproach them for not believing the witnesses of His resurrection. He cannot let that pass unnoticed. They should be ashamed of their unbelief and confess it. This opens the way for them to be sent out. Right after this reproach, He sends them out. That's a wonderful way to make these men fit to preach to others. Yet it had to happen like this.

God's way of making us fit to preach to others is that He first makes us nothing in our own eyes and lets us discover who we are. The awareness of our own unbelief in the past is used by God when He sends us out to call others to believe. We can understand their unbelief and we feel sorry for them because we ourselves have been unbelievers. This makes us put our trust in God.

Mk 16:15-18 | The Missionary Command

15 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. 16 He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. 17 These signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new

tongues; 18 they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly [poison], it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

The command given by the Lord is very general, without any limitation. It is no longer the gospel of the kingdom only for Israel. The command to go means making a purposeful journey for which we must rise from our personal comforts. The task is to proclaim the gospel as a herald, to speak it, and not just to show it as a "silent witness" through the way of life.

They must preach the gospel so that people may come to faith. Those who come to faith must be baptized. Those who believe and are baptized no longer have a share in the judgment that comes over the world. That does not mean that someone who believes but has not been baptized is not saved. Faith and baptism belong together in the way of faith a converted person goes through the world. It has to do with his stay on earth. This is also evident from the end of the verse. It does not say: He who has not believed and has not been baptized will be condemned. The judgment only comes on someone who has not believed. Baptism is an outward matter, an outward confession, which shows what has happened to someone inwardly. Faith and baptism belong together (Rom 10:9-10).

The Lord attaches certain signs to the preaching. If these signs are there, they are not done by the preachers, but by those who believe! Nor are there any conditions attached to them, for example a special 'spirit baptism'. Nor does it say that it is to be prayed for, nor does it say that it will happen everywhere, by everyone, and at all times. If it did, it would mean that there are not many believers today, because by far the majority of believers do not perform these signs. Even in Corinth, where there were several of these gifts, not all gifts were exercised by all believers. There it is also stated, for example, what the speaking with new tongues or the gift of speaking in languages is given for and how to use it.

The first sign done by those who believe is to be seen in their power over evil spirits. The second sign, the tongues or languages, means that the offer of grace crosses the borders of Israel and addresses the whole world. The proof that these signs have happened can be found in the book of Acts (Acts 2:4; 8:7; 9:32-34; 28:1-6). Only of drinking something deadly we find no example in Acts.

However, it is remarkable that these signs in Acts are only done by the apostles (Acts 5:12). Nowhere in Acts do we read that the believers in Jerusalem, Samaria, Philippi, Corinth, Ephesus, Thessalonica and so on were marked by the signs Mark mentions here. Why do not those signs follow them? Because these signs are not given to all believers to do.

That doesn't mean that God doesn't or can't do these wonders anymore. But that is something other than declaring them to be of general validity, as something which, even now, would be the part of all believers.

Mk 16:19-20 | The Ascension

19 So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. 20 And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed.>

After the Lord had given His command to preach, He has fully accomplished His service. He handed His task over to His disciples. As proof of the approval and appreciation of His work by God, He is received up into heaven. He is received up into heaven, which means that this happens to Him. God does that. At the same time He is also aware of His own dignity. This is evidenced by the fact that it is not God Who places Him in the place of honor at His right hand, but that He Himself sits down there.

In verse 19, the second last verse of this Gospel, the Lord Jesus is called "Lord" for the first time and in verse 20, the last verse, for the second time. The disciples follow the Lord's command.

At the same time He also remains in heaven, in the place of honor, the perfect Servant. He co-operates with His servants on earth, that is, He does the actual work by blessing the preaching and confirming it by giving visible evidence that it is indeed His Word that is being preached (Acts 14:3; Heb 2:3-4).

Nowhere in Scripture are signs a goal in themselves, but always have the purpose of supporting the preached Word (Heb 2:3-4). This additional evidence was necessary because the Word of God was not yet complete. We now have the complete Word of God. Proofs beyond that are no longer necessary, although God can give them in His grace where it pleases Him.

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