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Radio Messages of Pastor Robert L. Donnelly –

WONDERFUL WORD

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WORDS OF JESUS – “*Seek First the Kingdom of God.*”

Matthew 6:33 – “*But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*”

The *Words of Jesus* for today's consideration, are among the best-known words that He left with us: A simple formula for happy, prosperous living – a recipe which, if followed for this New Year, will make certain the best possible use of time, and provide a motive for living that will make life a high adventure, and satisfying experience.

Here are the words, “*But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*” Everybody is seeking something, in fact life would be a very drab affair if there was nothing to look forward to, nothing to strive for, nothing to expect. And if we were to analyze the reason why people seek for the things they do, it would all work out to the same answer, personal satisfaction. The sad thing is that so many will never realize their ambition, and many more, if they do realize the fulfilment of their dream, will find it bitterly disappointing.

One of the wealthiest men who ever lived tried every form of pleasure by experiment – every known luxury. He had beautiful gardens, liveried servants, herds of cattle, Arabian horses, instruments of music with trained choirs. He personally owned ships that brought spices, perfumes, rare woods, beautiful birds from every part of the known world. And when there was nothing left to wish for, and nothing could be added to his possessions, he looked it all over and declared it was all empty show, and everything he owned, or tried could not bring into his life the satisfaction that he craved. You can read about this man in the Bible in the second chapter of Ecclesiastes.

Then we read of another man in Scripture who had great personal advantage, social influence, and proud parentage. He had a voice in politics, and was a leader in religion; but he threw it all away for what he called “*the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than all other treasures.*” (Philippians 3:8; Hebrews 11:26). That young man's name was Paul; a man who stands in history as one of the greatest characters of all time – and all because of the choice he made that day on the road to Damascus – to *put first things first*. Jesus said, “*Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*” There is always more “added” than what we seek.

The one who seeks first for the riches of this world, will have worry, fear, stomach ulcers, and self-seeking friends added to them. He who seeks pleasure first through dissipation, will have added disease, poverty insecurity, and eternal despair to that pleasure. Whoever seeks social pre-eminence first, or political fame, will find jealous neighbours, sleepless nights, and nerve-racking responsibilities added to that position. But Jesus said, “*Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*”

The things in question here are those common things that always please, and which alone are necessary for our short stay in this world – *food and shelter*.

But what does it mean to “*seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness*”? Well, it's just the opposite to “*seeking for the things of this world.*” The *Kingdom of God* is that realm where spiritual and eternal values take pre-eminence over material and temporal things. It means to seek the rule of Jesus Christ in daily living, instead of the rule of self – to give first place to things that carry the stamp of Divine approval; as one saint of God made it the habit of life, when awakening each morning, to say, “*Now LORD, what will we do today?*” This is just another way of praying “*Thy will be done on earth as it is done in Heaven.*”

The laws that govern the Kingdom of Heaven are not just a collection of “thou shalt” and “thou shalt not.” They are governing principles of righteousness that God would write not on tables of stone, but on the fleshy tables of the heart; so that, to do God's will becomes life's greatest desire, and the fulfilment of God's purpose, life's greatest pleasure. To seek for the *Kingdom of God* is to pray daily, “*May Your*

Kingdom come in ever increasing measure in this life of mine.” It means to seek for ways and means of extending that Kingdom so that others will be brought under its influence and see the reality of its power.

There are only two kingdoms in the spiritual realm – the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan; and we are either under the control of the one, or the other. To *seek the Kingdom of God* is to seek a way of life where the conscience is clear, the mind is at peace, and the heart is satisfied.

In short, the Kingdom of God is any place where Jesus Christ is LORD and King.

WORDS OF JESUS – *“The Kingdom of Heaven is Like . . .”*

For today’s consideration, I would like to go through the parable of the wheat and the tares with you – *Words of Jesus* found in Matthew 13:24-30. It’s one of seven parables that picture the Kingdom of Heaven in seven different aspects.

The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The servants said to him, ‘Do you want us then to go and gather them up?’ But he said, ‘No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.”’

“The Kingdom of Heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field.” We are told in verse 38, that the good seed are the children of the Kingdom. They are those who received the seed which is the Word of God, and they themselves become the “seed” which the Great Husbandman, in His infinite wisdom, scatters throughout the world.

Notice, that they were planted in His field. For as the Psalmist says, *“The earth is the LORD’s, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein.”* (Psalm 24:1).

“But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way.” So we are introduced again to the fact of an active, intelligent, and thoroughly malicious enemy – whose principal field of operation is wherever God sows His wheat. Notice again, that the good seed was sown in the daytime, while the tares are sown at night. God does all His work right out in the open, where everyone can see what’s going on. Nothing underhanded or deceitful about the work of the Gospel. “Come and see” is the invitation extended to every inquirer after the way of truth. But it is the nature of the prince of darkness to do all his works undercover. He never comes right out in the open; he never declares his intentions and designs; he never introduces himself as an enemy of all righteousness, the opposer of all that is true and pure and good. He always masquerades as one whose whole desire is to “liberate” the human race from superstition and religious bondage. But in the end he completely enslaves the mind, soul, and body to evil passions and perversions that plunge the soul into eternal night.

Well, this enemy sowed the tares, and they are described as children of the wicked one growing right alongside the children of the Kingdom. The same soil that produces wheat, produces weeds. The environment is good, the climate is good, there is sunshine and rain. In other words, every opportunity is provided for growth.

So many of the blessings of Heaven fall equally upon the just and the unjust – the righteous and the wicked. But while the wheat grows and ripens to feed a perishing world, the weeds grow and ripen for destruction. They absorb all the good and yield nothing of value to the Creator. This parable forever cancels the argument that all men need is a good environment in order to be good wheat. Or that Christians are dependent on a good environment in order to be Christian. The problem is not one of environment at all. It’s entirely one of nature. People often wonder why, in a community where there are so many churches, there should be so much wickedness. But it’s just as great a wonder, why, in a land where there is so much wickedness, there should be so many Christians.

The next stage of this parable tells of the servants coming to the owner of the field, and asking if they should not go out and pull up the tares. But He said, *“No, let them alone; let them grow – both wheat and tares together.”* Some interpret this to mean that in the Church, the wicked and the righteous should be allowed the same privileges and recognition. But this parable has nothing to say about the Church. Jesus Himself said, *“The field is the world.”* The reason given to the servants for not pulling up the tares, was that in so doing, they might uproot some wheat. Let them both grow together until harvest. Each generation ripens for harvest; every person is ripening for harvest; and it’s solemnizing to think that side by side there are people drawing daily nearer to the day of reaping. To the casual bystander they all look alike, but one will be gathered into paradise, and the other into hades.

These are the *Words of Jesus*, regarding the future destiny of the wheat and the tares. I wouldn't want to tamper with them, but I would repeat them. *"Let them both grow together until the harvest."* Only the great Husbandman in Heaven know when this harvest will begin. But of this we can be very sure: there will be a reaping.

Evidently, Jesus didn't anticipate that all men would eventually be saved; nor did He suppose that in time the whole world would become Christian. In fact, this parable, with others, clearly teaches that only a part will be saved. But that part makes the whole effort worthwhile.

But what about the tares? Is there anything that can be done to change weeds to wheat? Can the Ethiopian change his skin? or the leopard, his spots? Can that which is by nature sinful, become by nature righteous? Can a child of the wicked one become a child of God? If the answer is *"yes,"* then there is help for the worst of us; but if the answer is *"no,"* there is no hope for the best of us. For, according to the Bible, we all are by nature the children of wrath; but it is also written that if any man be in Christ he is a new creature – old things have passed away, behold, all things are become new.

Our time has gone again. But remember, you are ripening for harvest. And God knows whether you belong to the wheat or the tares.

And He offers every inducement to let Him change you, to save you, to regenerate you by the very Spirit of Jesus Christ.

WORDS OF JESUS – “*Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled...*”

One of the best known and best loved of all New Testament Scriptures is the 14th chapter of John. It's read at funerals and in sick rooms. It's memorized by children, and parts of it are often quoted by the aged. The first verse especially has become an almost universal panacea for every time of trial or tribulation. “*Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so I would have told you.*” And so on, through this wonderful chapter that contains the last words of the LORD Jesus before Gethsemane. Words of comfort, of assurance, with the promise of the very Peace of God to keep our hearts and minds.

Or *DOES* Jesus mean *US*, when He says, “*Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid*”? (John 14:1, 27). Do *WE* have any right to take these words and promises and claim them as ours? Are *WE* included in this divine prescription for peace of mind? And if so, then why the unrest, the constant friction, the broken hearts, and broken homes that are all around us?

Those are questions that concern everyone, and I would like to answer some of them today. The first question, “Have we any right to claim this first verse of John chapter 14 as ours?” can be answered by asking another question: To whom was Jesus speaking? We agree, of course, that he was speaking to His disciples – the very same men to whom He spoke in the previous chapter, saying, “*If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.*” (13:8). And then earlier still, “*Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.*” (12:24). So then, there is a background of instruction that has to be taken into consideration, before we come to chapter 14.

We have no right just to start reading choice portions of Scripture, and ignore the great truths that led up to these wonderful promises. Putting it plainly, we have no right to claim the disciples' promises, unless we have followed in the disciples' footsteps, the path of obedience. You will notice that Judas left the company *before* Jesus said, “*Let not your hearts be troubled.*” His last words to Judas were, “*What you do, do quickly*” (13:27), and he went out immediately – and it was night. For Judas, there were no words of comfort, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment. He had had every opportunity to be cured of his covetousness, of his avarice, of his meanness; but instead, he saw in Christ an opportunity of making more money, and satisfying his miserly soul with thirty pieces of silver.

I have heard these words, “*Let not your hearts be troubled*” read at funerals, when it would have been more fitting to have heard, “*Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*” (Luke 13:3). The very same Jesus, who said “*Let not your hearts be troubled*” also said, “*Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven*” (Matthew 7:21).

“*Let not your hearts be troubled*” was spoken to men who had given up their all to follow Jesus. There was a growing sentiment against this young Galilean, Jesus; and before another day had passed, all their cherished hopes for the establishment of Israel's Messiah on the throne of David would be dashed to the ground.

The greatest disappointment of their lives was about to break on them, and they desperately needed the words of the 14th chapter of John. But now the question for us is – are those words still of value? Can we, too, claim the comfort they offer? and rest assured of a place where many mansions be?

And the answer must be, and is, as plain as the question. The promise *IS* yours – if you identify yourself as a servant and a disciple of Jesus Christ. If you experience the cleansing of John 13, and you will know the comfort of John 14.

In fact, there are 13 chapters about the various experiences these disciples had, before they heard the words, “*Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in Me.*” The only way of knowing the blessing of the promise is by obedience to the precept.

And now, why all the broken hearts, broken lives, broken homes all around us, when the 14th chapter of John is still in the Bible? There is only one answer – men and women want the fruit, without planting the seed – they want harvest of good, without a surrender to the will of God – they want peace, but not through the Prince of Peace.

Or, to put it plainly again, before we leave the air, they want the 14th chapter of John *without* the 3rd

chapter that tells of the *New Birth*; without the 4th chapter, that tells of the *Water of Life*, without the 6th chapter that tells of the *Bread of Life*, without the 9th chapter that tells of the *Light of Life*, without the 10th chapter that tells of *following the Good Shepherd*, without the 11th chapter that tells of *Resurrection Life*, without the 12th chapter that tells of the *Surrendered Life*, and without the 13th chapter that tells of the *Cleansed Life*.

Yes, the 14th chapter of John *IS* for us *ALL*, if we come to it the way the disciples did.

WORDS OF JESUS – “*I Go To Prepare A Place For You.*”

The *Words of Jesus* for today's consideration, are found in John 14:2-3 – “*In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*” As I mentioned last Sunday, these words were spoken to the eleven disciples just before the crucifixion, and they are written for our instruction and encouragement.

The first thing we see in this statement is that the events which are to follow swiftly, in the next few hours, were all foreseen by the Christ of God, and His plans were all made to take advantage of anything the enemy could do. Jesus foresaw the Cross, and spoke of it as a “*lifting up*” – as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness. Death to Christ was just a means to an end, and not the end. It was not only the way *out*, it was the way *up* – not something to be feared, but faced and turned from tragedy into triumph. But it's what happens *afterward* that we are interested in today.

It isn't the “dying” that matters so much, it's what happens *after* the “dying” is finished. After a funeral service a few years ago, I went to the home of the deceased, and in conversation with the members of the family, one of the young men said that, as far as he could see, there was nothing to fear about death – it was the *afterward* that he was concerned about.

Jesus is the first of all the children of Adam who could announce *beforehand*, what He was going to do *after* death; and His ministry then (after death) was to follow the same pattern as before.

His *life before* the Cross was *lived for others*, His *death* was to be *for others*, and afterwards He would go right on *working in the interests of those who had believed in Him* in life and in death. Jesus said, “I am going away, and the purpose of My going is to prepare a place for you.”

You will notice that all the earthly ministry of Christ had that fervent “forward” look. Everything He did and said was with eternity in view. Even when He washed the disciples' feet, He said, “*What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this.*” (John 13:7). His ministry on earth was a preparatory ministry. Since there is a future to humanity that outlives the grave, there must be a suitable preparation for that future; and because Jesus knew better than anyone else, what that future would be, He was abundantly qualified both to *speak of the future* and to *prepare us for it*.

But in our lesson today, He speaks of “preparing a place.” And I do like that word “*place*.” There is something definite and comforting about it. Some would have us believe that heaven is not so much a “place” as a “state of being,” where disembodied spirits float on clouds of ether, having neither reality as to being or location. All such supposition is neither desirable nor Scriptural. There *IS* a reality to the Person and Teachings of Christ that are much too practical for anything less than a *real place* where *real people* will have their *everlasting home*. Jesus said, “*I go to prepare a place for you.*”

You will remember – the story of creation, in the first two chapters of the Bible, informs us that man was the last act of God on the 6th day. Everything was in readiness to receive, from the hand of the Creator, this one whom He had made in His own image; all of which teaches us that the world was made for man, and not man for the world. And now, the very same Person (the LORD Jesus Christ) who brought the world into being, and placed man therein, said, in effect, “*This place, where you now live, is all spoiled and corrupted. I am going to prepare another place for you.*”

Years later, the Apostle Peter said, “*Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells*” (2 Peter 3:13). Many long years have gone by since He made this promise, and went away; some maintain that nothing has been heard from, or of, Him since; but that's not true, because 60 years afterward, Apostle John was given a little insight and preview into what was going on in that “*place*” which was being prepared for these disciples of Jesus. Human language breaks down, trying to describe it, there's nothing in this world that adequately compares with that place called “*Paradise*.”

It is written, “*Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.*” (1 Corinthians 2:9). We might wonder, at times, why He should be so long in getting it ready; but the Apostle Peter tells us it's because He is “*longsuffering*” to

us-ward, “*not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*” (2 Peter 3:9).

The place that He is preparing for those who love Him is so wonderful, that it would be an everlasting tragedy for the doors to be closed, if there was any hope of even one more person entering in. Remember the parable of that one lost sheep, when all the activity of Heaven was directed toward the finding of it – nothing else mattered until that one was brought back to the fold.

This broadcast goes out with the prayer that someone who has not yet accepted Christ – not yet made their plans to enter that place He is preparing for us, might be convinced today – that nothing in this world could ever be as important as to *prepare for eternity*, and – that *now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation*.

WORDS OF JESUS – “*I Am the Way*”

John 14:6 – “*I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*”

These are Jesus’ Words. This is probably the greatest statement ever made by anyone regarding their own importance; and as we hear it, we must either conclude that Jesus was the most presumptuous person who ever lived, or else the statement was most necessary. Since no one who ever read the story of His life and ministry, could ever find the slightest trace of personal pride; and since He abundantly verified every claim He made, therefore we must agree that these words are true, and Jesus really *IS* the only door into the Kingdom of God.

Let us come a little closer to this threefold declaration, and learn a little more of what is involved in this 6th verse of the 14th chapter of John. Jesus was answering Thomas, who had voiced the cry of us all when he said, “*How can we know the way?*” This word *way* has a threefold meaning. First of all, it means *a road*; secondly, it means *a journey*; and thirdly, it means *a habit or custom of life*. All three senses are meant in this sweeping statement, “*I am the Way.*” Since sin began, men have been trying to find a road that would lead to God, to heaven, to security, and to peace. And among all races the idea seems settled, that there must be a mediator, a go-between, one who is sympathetic to both parties, and able to bring about reconciliation.

One of the oldest pieces of literature in the world is the book of Job in the Bible. And in Job 9:32-33, we find these words, “*For He is not a man, as I am, that I may answer Him, and that we should go to court together. Nor is there any mediator between us, who may lay his hand on us both.*” This man knew there was a God, he knew that something had come between him and his Creator, but at this time he didn’t know the road that would lead him safely and certainly back to Him Who had first given him life. From that day until now, there have been as many ways suggested, and invented, as there have been generations; until there are so many religions, so many churches, so many theories, and philosophies scattered around us, that many people have thrown up their hands in bewilderment, saying, “*How can we know the way?*” The sad thing about this situation is that some otherwise intelligent folk, have come out with an amazing inconsistency, saying, “*It really doesn’t matter which way you take.*”

As one lady said to me some time ago, when the wheat comes streaming into these elevators, the management doesn’t ask which farm it came from, or what railway brought it, the main thing is that it got there. And I say amen to this. But you will notice that the shippers never would have started a car of wheat on its journey until they were assured that it would be safely delivered. And yet these same people who are so cautious in things concerning wheat or oats or pulpwood or paper, are so utterly reckless and unreasoning with the precious cargo of the human soul . . .

- The soul is eternity-bound, but to *WHERE* in eternity? They don’t know.
- Are they sure they are on the right road? They don’t know.
- Do they have any evidence that anyone ever safely landed in the world of eternal glory, by taking the road they are following? Not a shred of proof.

And yet they travel blithely along. And if one should ask them if they are sure they are on the right road, they would probably say, “*Oh, I’m just taking a chance, and I hope I’ll make it alright. At any rate, I’m just as well off as my neighbour.*” Well, right in the midst of all this confusion, contradiction, and childishness, hear the voice of Jesus say, “*I AM the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*” This is the only road that has ever received divine approval.

At least three times, in His earthly ministry, a voice from heaven confirmed the words Jesus spoke and the works He did. But the greatest confirmation is the historical fact, that God raised Him from the dead, and left Him with His disciples for 40 days, during which He instructed them and encouraged them to carry His message to every creature, so that through Him everyone everywhere may come right to the God of Heaven.

- No other mediator is required.
- No other preparation needed.
- No other information is necessary.

Yes, you may meet with God. He will meet with you without delay. He will hear your prayer, and if

you listen with the ears of your soul, you will hear His reply.

Not only is Christ the *road*, but He's also the *guiding principle of life*. It's not enough merely to establish contact with God; but we must learn how to walk with Him, please Him, and how to serve Him.

Once again we hear this Word, "*I AM the way.*" The way *to* God becomes the way *with* God. Until the ruling habit of life is determined by following Jesus.

One of the wisest of men once said, "*There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.*" (Proverbs 16:25).

But there is *Life*, and *Life Eternal* when your *Way* is the *Jesus-Way*.

WORDS OF JESUS – “*I Am the Truth*”

John 14:6 – “*I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*”

We want to talk about that little word “*Truth*” today. Not by chance is it found sandwiched between “*Way*” and “*Life*” – it’s the link that joins *behavior* with *living*. As we go, we must know.

It is true that the Christian life is a life of faith; but it’s also a life of knowledge. The Christian knows some things for certain – he has come into possession of certain facts which have entirely changed the course of his life. Earlier in the Gospel of John Jesus promised His disciples that they would know the truth, and that this truth would set them free. (John 8:32)

In the very nature of things, every one of us must believe *something* about why we are here, and where we are going. If we don’t believe the truth, we will believe a lie; and believing this lie will ultimately ruin us. There is a bondage to error which the Bible calls “*bondage of sin*” – and there is a freedom found in truth which the Bible calls “*salvation*.”

One very sure test can be applied to all religious instruction: Ask – what does it do for those who believe it? – is there any difference in their “way of life” from those who do not subscribe to that particular doctrine? If it doesn’t set them free from unholy passions, destructive appetites and ungodly habits, then it must be a lie; because Jesus said, “*You shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free..*”

Jesus said, “*I am the Truth.*” (In other words, “*I am the embodiment of Truth – Truth personified*”). There is something about the Presence of Christ – the Way of Christ – that makes every form of deceit unnecessary and undesirable. When we join the word *Truth* with the word *Way*, we have *Way of Truth*. You cannot walk with Him, and be untruthful.

The Psalmist said, “*You desire truth in the inward parts*” (Psalm 51:6). That is, truth where no one but Christ can see. After all, truth is not only a matter of certain words being consistent with facts. You could repeat a story word for word and yet change its meaning entirely by a slight inflection of the voice. One could be legally honest, but morally dishonorable; but *NOT* if you are a Christian – I mean, a real Christ-honouring Christian. For the word “*Christian*” literally means “*one possessed of the Spirit of Christ.*”

If we go back far enough in history, we find that Satan gained an entrance, and established dominion over the human race, through a lie. “*You will be like God,*” he promised; and “*You surely will not die.*” All subsequent history proves that both those statements were lies. Instead of man becoming like God, he became more and more like the devil; and death has reigned from Adam right down to our time.

But Jesus said, “*I am the Truth.*” The way back to God is the Way of Truth. That’s why you have to be absolutely “on the square” to find the Christian way. You must be honest about the sin-question, for it is written, “*He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy*” and, “*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*” (Proverbs 28:13; 1 John 1:9).

Jesus is the true expression of God’s thought toward us – the perfect example of God’s plan for every life. He is faithful and just to meet with us, and deal with us in truth, and in mercy. The *Way* and the *Truth* are both found *in Christ*.

Without a way, we go not;

Without the truth, we know not.

But as we go in the Jesus-Way, we shall know the Truth – and that Truth shall set us Free.

WORDS OF JESUS – “*I Am the Life*”

John 14:6 – “*I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*”

Jesus said, “*I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life.*” Our emphasis today is on the word, “*Life.*” The best definition I have found for this word is: “The sum total of those forces that resist death.” Death is the natural state, life is supernatural.

“*There was a man sent from God, whose name was John,*” and he declared that “*in Him* – that is in Jesus – *was life, and that life was the light of men.*” “*He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God.*” (John chapter 1).

This is life on the highest plane – life of the highest order – for the sons of God have the life of God. If we look at this text again, we notice that Life follows Truth, and we pointed out last week that death follows error. Death is not only the penalty for sin, it's the effect of sin.

The statement by the prophet Ezekiel (18:20) that “*the soul who sins shall die,*” is simply the statement of a fact that had always been. It's the explanation for the tragedy that comes to every home, the inevitable end of all human life. But over there in Romans 8:2, we read, “*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.*”

In all the world of nature, everything is governed by law, and everywhere we see how that the higher law intercepts and cancels the lower law. Mathematically, the bumble bee cannot fly, but “*bumble-bee-and-God*” is greater than the law of mathematics. Water contracts as its temperature drops, until the freezing point is reached; and then another law takes over, and it begins to expand. That's what happens when Jesus Christ comes to the human heart. The law of sin brings death, but the law of righteousness and truth, as it is in Jesus, brings life.

There is a perfect example of this in John chapter 11. Sickness had laid hold of a young man, the power of this sickness was greater than the sum total of physical forces which resist death, and so he died. The record declares that he had lain in the grave four days, so that the law of decay and mortification had set it its fearful work. Then Jesus came, and told this young man's sister that He was the resurrection and the life. He asked them to take away the stone from the door of the cave, and after a few words of prayer, He cried with a loud voice, “*Lazarus, come forth!*”

Accompanying those words was a power of Life greater than the law of death, greater even than the law of gravity, for the Scripture declares that this young man came forth bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and Jesus said, “*Loose him and let him go.*”

There is something so mysterious about life. Everyone can see the effect, but no one can see the cause. It's in the air, for we live by breathing; it's in the food we eat, for we live by eating; it's in the water we drink, for we cannot live without drinking – and yet it's none of these things. Otherwise a combination of air and food and water would bring life.

So then, life must have its origin outside all material things, for these only help to sustain it. One must have life before they eat drink or breath. Jesus said, “*I am the Life*” – that means “*essential Life.*” As the inspired Apostle declared, “*He is before all things and by Him all things consist*” (Colossians 1:17).

The Bible talks about two kinds of life; the one is physical, and the other is spiritual. The Bible says there is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

The Bible talks about the outer man, and the inner man – and the first is but the temporary clothing of the second. The outer, physical man is destined to die, and is potentially already dead. The body belongs to time – the soul belongs to eternity. As *LONGFELLOW* said:

Art is long, time is fleeting, and our hearts though stout and brave,
Still like muffled drums are beating funeral marches to the grave;
But life is real, life is earnest, and the grave is not the goal;

Dust thou art, to dust returnest, was not spoken of the soul. [by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow 1807-1882]

I knew a man some time ago, who often used to say, *“I want to live as much as I can, while I can, because I expect to be a long time dead.”* For him there was no life beyond the grave – eternal death was all he anticipated. As far as I know, he died without being enlightened to the possibility of eternal life. It is true, he heard the Gospel preached, and the Bible read; but he was so spiritually dead that nothing less than an angel from heaven would have awakened him to the realities of another world.

Jesus said, *“I am the Life.”* How often we hear the expression, “This is the Life!” To some, life means pleasure - a continuous round of amusement and entertainment. That is sometimes called “recreation” but actually, it's not. For pleasure cannot recreate, it only temporarily relieves. But it is written, *“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation”* (2 Corinthians 5:17). Re-creation is an attribute that only God possesses.

“And this is the record, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life” (1 John 5:11-12). To some, life means money; to others, life means travel; but the Apostle Paul struck the highest note when he said, *“For me to live is Christ.”* (Philippians 1:21) – or, *“Christ means Life to me.”* And again, *“When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory”* (Colossians 3:4).

WORDS OF JESUS – *“I Will Send You Another Comforter”*

John 14:16-17 – *“I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever— the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you”*

The *Words of Jesus* to His disciples during the last few hours before His crucifixion are filled with promise and precept, with instruction and inspiration. We ought to read these words often, and ask ourselves are we, too, His disciples? And if so, have we realized the full benefits of this last will and testament of the LORD Jesus Christ? And if we are *not* His disciple, then *why not*? For there can be no greater preferment under heaven, than to be a follower of Him who has brought greater good to the children of men, than all the governments that ever sat, all the armies that ever fought, or all the schools that ever taught.

Here are the words of my text: *“I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever— the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you”*

Seven times in this last discourse with His friends, Jesus referred to Another who would come and take His place and be to them all, and more than He could ever be, if He should stay in physical form with them. He said, *“It is expedient for you (to your advantage) that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Comforter (Helper) will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.”* (John 16:7).

And so, all through these three wonderful chapters, 14, 15, and 16, the coming of the Comforter, His ministry, what He would do for the disciples, and what He would do for the world, is emphasized over and over again. But we only have time for these two verses today, and we'll have to hurry . . .

Read verse 16 with me: *“I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Comforter.”* Here is a wonderful illustration of the working of the ever-blessed Trinity; Father, Son and Holy Spirit – working together in the interests of mankind. Jesus, having taken on Himself the form of man, takes our need upon Himself and prays to His Father that He would send the very same Comforter to His disciples, the very same Helper, who had come to Him when He was baptized in the river Jordan – and through whom He had been able to accomplish such mighty works.

Notice the personal pronoun used when speaking of the Comforter – *“That He may abide with you forever.”* Notice that the word *“Comforter”* is spelled with a capital *“C”*, and in verse 17 He is called the *“Spirit of Truth whom the world cannot receive.”* There has always been, and always will be, a distinction and difference between the world and the disciples of Jesus. And the great fact that makes this difference is: that the world cannot receive the Comforter, cannot receive the Holy Spirit. In short, the world cannot receive God – for they will not receive Jesus Christ. Notice now, the two reasons given why the world cannot receive the Comforter.

“Because it sees Him not.” Worldly people are so earth-bound, so materially minded, that they cannot interest themselves in anything they can't see with their eyes or handle with their hands. It never seems to occur to them that the mightiest forces in the universe are invisible. That the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. They can't receive the Spirit of God because they cannot see Him. The next reason is *“Neither knows Him.”* They are not acquainted with Him – not on speaking terms – not familiar with God's ways, with God's desires. They are ignorant of the most important fact of life – God is the Giver of Life. They make it their business to explore the mysteries of nature; they spend long hours of study to learn the laws that govern the affairs of this world; they are so busy learning how to make a living that they never learn how to live. They do not know the Spirit of God because the spirit of the world occupies all their attention.

Think of it again – the world cannot receive the Spirit of God because it *“sees Him not, neither knows Him.”* How the rest of verse 17 is directly to the disciples, *“But you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you”* What a blessing, to have the Spirit of God as a constant companion! It is written, *“Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His;”* and again, *“as many as are led by the*

Spirit of God, these are sons of God." (Romans 8:9, 14). That's what Jesus meant when He said to Nicodemus, *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."* (John 3:6).

Ever since Adam, the only way anyone ever entered the human family was by birth. Much has been done by science to protect that birth, to extend life expectancy, and make the duration of life more comfortable; but science has found no way to *originate* life – and especially, human life.

Birth is the *only* door that admits someone into the human kingdom; and birth is the *only* entrance into the Kingdom of God. Jesus said to His disciples, *"You know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you."* Follow these men a little further, and no one could ever doubt that the Spirit of the living God had taken up residence in their lives – and if any would ask the secret for this overflowing experience, *"It is no secret what God can do, What He's done for others, He'll do for you."*

The chimes of time ring out the news
Another day is through
Some one slipped and fell,
Was that someone you?
You may have longed for added strength
Your courage to renew
Do not be disheartened
I have news for you.

There is no night, for in His light
You'll never walk alone.
You'll always feel at home
Wherever you may roam,
There is no power can conquer you,
While God is on your side.
Take Him at His promise,
Don't run away and hide.

Chorus:

It is no secret what God can do,
What he has done for others,
He'll do for you.
With arms wide open,
He'll pardon you.

It is no secret what God can do. [by Jim Reeves - 1958]

WORDS OF JESUS – *“He Who Believes HAS Everlasting Life”*

John 5:24 – *“Verily, verily, I say to you; he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”*

Returning now to last Sunday's text, John 5:24, we hear Jesus say, *“He who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life . . .”*

Thank God – these *Words of Jesus* are still good today; though there may be those who listened last Sunday who are beyond redemption today. They have gone the way of all flesh, the dust has returned to the earth, as it was, and the spirit has returned to God who gave it. They have missed the greatest opportunity ever offered any person – and *“everlasting life”* that could have been theirs last Sunday, has been lost forever, and eternal death with all its darkness and despair will be their portion forever.

But again, I say, Thank God that most of us have enjoyed another full week of divine favor, and the *Words of Jesus* on this, another LORD's Day, are still as true as ever they were. He said, *“He who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”*

This offer is worthy of our closest scrutiny, and most careful investigation. No life insurance salesman ever offered a prospective customer such complete and adequate protection, and over-all coverage, as we find enclosed in this 24th verse of the 5th chapter of John.

Notice, this policy comes into effect immediately. There's no waiting, and working, and paying for twenty or thirty years, before beginning to realize the benefits of the investment; but *“He who believes HAS everlasting life.”* So many people maintain that no one can know until they die whether they are really saved or not; but *the promises of Jesus are all in the present tense.*

It's *now* that we need salvation, because that's the only time we're sure of – if we have to wait until we die before we can be sure, it will then be too late to do anything about it. How cruel that would be, if God started us on our journey but never told us which road to take until we got to the end – and then condemned us because we had taken the wrong way.

It's our decisions here and now that determine our destiny, and the *Christian way is a way of life*, not a way of death. It's not something to cling to when dying, as the pagan clings to his fetish or Ju-jus. It's an experience with God that fits us for living. There is no record that Jesus or His disciples ever preached a funeral sermon, or prayed for the dead. The Gospel is a living message, to make dead people live.

“Has everlasting life” is the positive part of this verse; *“shall not come into condemnation”* is the negative side. And the word *“condemnation”* is equal to our word *“judgment,”* which in turn is the administration of justice.

That's why we have those triumphant words in Romans 8:1 *“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.”*

No condemnation means no judgment; and no judgment means no condemnation. That's why it's so important to believe in Christ – to receive Him – to depend on Him alone; for He went to judgment in the sinner's place.

As it is written, *“All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”* That's why He was led as a lamb to the slaughter. *“And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth”* (Isaiah 53:6-7).

He faced the sinner's judge, and died the sinner's death, so that *“whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life ... and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”* (John 3:16; 5:24). The last part of verse 24 says, *“shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.”*

That's why it is written, *“It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment”* ... *“Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation”* – that is, without reference to the sin-question. (Hebrews 9:27-28). It has all been settled for us.

In Scripture, death is treated as a present reality to be escaped from – not a future experience to be feared. To pass from death to life is just what happens when Christ comes in to abide. *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ”* (2 Corinthians 5:17-18).

As believers in Jesus Christ, we have been translated from the kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of Light – from the power of sin, to the power of Righteousness – from death and judgment, to Life and Glory.

All Jesus asks is that we hear His Word, and believe on Him that sent Him.

WORDS OF JESUS – “*Search the Scriptures*”

John 5:39 – “*Search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.*”

Our text today, as we continue with the great theme *Words of Jesus*, is John 5:39 “*Search the Scriptures...*” After all, our only hope is found in the message which Christ brought to the world. If His words are not regarded as authoritative, then nothing that I can say will have any value. If the words of the wisest Person, the most perfect Man, history's most outstanding Character, are not accepted, then it's not likely that someone as ordinary as I can hope to gain a hearing.

Jesus said, “*Search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.*” These words were spoken to people who nearly worshiped sacred writings – who memorized entire books, and carried small portions of Scripture on their forehead – whose entire religious life was wrapped up in reading and discussing the words of prophets and poets' writings since the days of Moses. And yet, though they were so familiar with every sentence, with every precept, and every prophecy, they had overlooked the central theme of the books which they considered to be inspired. And when many of the prophecies were fulfilled, that they had studied from childhood, they were so blinded by prejudice that they refused to accept the testimony of their own senses.

When Jesus said, “*Search the Scriptures,*” He directed them to the greatest accumulation of evidence that supported everything He said and did. He said, “*Search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.*” No other person who has ever lived, could ever make such an assertion.

Remember those two disciples on the road to Emmaus, who were so disheartened by recent happenings in Jerusalem. A Stranger joined them, and after asking them the reason for their sorrow, He took them to the Scriptures, saying, “*O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! . . . And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.*” (Luke 24:25-27).

Remember Philip the Evangelist who met the Ethiopian on the road and heard him read the book of the prophet Isaiah. He asked him, “*Do you understand what you are reading?*” and the man replied, “*How can I, unless someone guides me?*” So Philip found where he was reading, and began at the same Scripture in Isaiah, and taught him about Jesus. “*He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so He opened not His mouth. . .*” (Acts 8:32-33; Isaiah 53:7-8).

The point we want to establish in our thinking is, that Jesus Christ is the Christ of the Bible. When He came into the world there were writings nearly 1,500 years old that described *in detail* the fact of a Coming-One who, by virtue of His relationship to God and His relationship to man, would be able and willing to lift the curse that sin had placed on the whole human race.

Promises extending from the third chapter of Genesis to the fourth chapter of Malachi gave hope to all the sons of Adam, that a Redeemer would come whose name would be *Immanuel* (God with us). And now Jesus said, “*Search the Scriptures,*” as much as to say, “*see if there is anything written therein that contradicts anything I have done or said.*”

This challenge is still given. The great increase in education in the past fifty years, and the discovery of ancient manuscripts due to modern methods of research, have served to strengthen and support every claim that Christ made as to His authority and ability. And still there are people by the thousands who read the Bible, or hear it read, who still can't see that Christ, with the salvation He offers, is the very heart and core of divine revelation.

The Scriptures are the greatest evidence we have, to support the claims of Christ; and the greatest evidence we have that the Scriptures are true, is the Christ of whom they speak.

Scriptures foretell, and Christ fulfills. Each corroborates and confirms the authority of the other; so that, *to know Christ is to believe the Scriptures and to believe the Scriptures is to know Christ.*

Some time ago, I read a true story of an elderly couple living alone on their little farm. During wintertime, the evenings were long; and to fill in the hours between getting the chores done and going to bed, the husband began to read the Bible. One evening he stopped reading and said to his wife. If this Book is true then we're wrong. A few nights later he stopped reading again and said, "Wife, if this book is true then we're lost." Just a few nights later he stopped reading again and said, "Wife, if this book is true, we can be saved."

Well, that's the process and the progress – the sure result of searching the Scriptures. They all point to Christ. And when you find Him, He in turn points back to the Scriptures as the sure way of life and peace.

Amen.

WORDS OF JESUS – “. . . Uprooted”

Matthew 15:13 – *“Every plant which My Heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted”*

The WORDS of JESUS for today's consideration are found in Matthew 15:12-13 *“Then His disciples came and said to Him, ‘Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?’ But He answered and said, ‘Every plant which My Heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted.’”* The central idea around this text is that there is a ministry of uprooting or tearing down, and pulling out that is just as necessary and important as the ministry of planting and building.

Just the other day, I read the story of the call of Jeremiah the prophet; and in the book that bears his name we read, *“Then the LORD put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me: ‘Behold, I have put My words in your mouth. See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant.’”* (Jeremiah 1:9-10).

A harvest of grain from unbroken sod is impossible, and in bush land especially, before a plow can ever be used, the clearing of trees with their roots is the most costly and difficult of any of the work that must be done before there can ever be a harvest.

And so it is in the farming of the hearts of men. Wrong ideas, false conceptions, perverted desires, must all be torn out. Prejudices must be broken down before cultivation and planting can ever be effective.

Jesus said, *“Every plant which My Heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted.”* Anything and everything that is not of divine origin must go – to make room for planting and growing of those fruits that will honor the great husbandman, and bless the life of the one who produces them.

The people of whom Jesus was speaking were so filled with ideas and activity that had no relation whatsoever to God's plan for their lives, that when the Son of God came among them to enlighten them with truth and lead them in paths of righteousness, they were offended and indignant. The sentimental idea that the world only needs a generous scattering of kind words, and generous actions, until all wrong thinking and doing is crowded out, has no foundation in fact, and is nothing more than wishful thinking.

No generation in history ever enjoyed so many great sermons, as the people among whom Jesus lived and taught. But His hearers, instead of allowing their lives to be transformed by His teaching, they led Him outside the gates of the religious capital of the world and nailed Him to a cross between two thieves.

It was not until much later that they realized their guilt for this wrongdoing. It was after the day of Pentecost, when a small handful of believers (who had made room in their minds and hearts for the *Words of Jesus* and the power of His Spirit), lifted up their voices and charged their countrymen with the blackest crime in history, that there came conviction for wrongdoing and a cry went up from 3,000 people, *“Men and brethren, what shall we do?”* Their feeling of complacency had been thrown down – their self-righteous attitude was rooted out – their narrow-minded bigotry was swept aside – and the inspired Apostle Peter was able to plant the word of God, saying, *“Repent, every one of you, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”* (Acts 2:38). Amen.

“Every plant which My Heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted.” We're living in times when there's a desperate need for God's axe-men to move in and uproot and tear down everything and anything that the God of Heaven has not planted in this generation.

As it was in the days of Jesus, so it is now – tradition has taken the place of submission, so that church-rules have more authority than the Word of God. Superstition has supplanted contrition. Our country is filled with superstition – misplaced reverence – placing sacred values on things that have no spiritual significance. We have people all around us who fear Friday the 13th, and black cats, and tea leaves in a cup; but *“There is no fear of God before their eyes; Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known.”* (Romans 3:14-18).

Not only has tradition taken the place of submission, and superstition supplanted contrition, but religion has crowded Christianity off the throne. Devotion to Christ has been transferred to devotion to a creed – ritual takes the place of righteousness. Jesus said, *“Every plant which My Heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted.”* All this ground has to be cleared of its ignorance, hypocrisy, formality – to make place for the knowledge of God, a sincere desire to serve Him, and a personal appreciation of Him who loved us so much.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

SUNDAY BEFORE EASTER

JESUS' DEATH – *planned, sacrificial, vicarious, and victorious*

Just a brief meditation this afternoon, on the death of the KING. His death occurred nearly two thousand years ago, and as yet the full meaning and significance of that event has never been fully understood or appreciated. However, this death has meant more to more people, and has had a greater impact on the thinking of men and nations, than any other event in history.

It's not too much to say that greater good has come to more people through the death of the *LORD* Jesus Christ than ever could have come if He had died what we call a natural death. First of all, it was the most carefully planned death of all creatures that have ever died.

- 1 Peter 1:20 tells us that it was “*foreordained, before the foundation of the world.*”
- Revelation 13:8 tells us that “*the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world.*”
- Before the earth received its frame, before the evening and the morning of the first day, the death of the Lamb of God was anticipated and prepared for.

In other words, a sin offering was prepared before sin ever entered this world. To make certain that no sinner need ever be lost, a Saviour was provided.

Foreshadowed in type and foretold in prophecy, the death of Christ is the very heart and core of all Old Testament Scripture. Take *that* from the sacred pages, and the Bible would have no meaning at all; for the Bible is a Book that tells the story of man's sin and God's remedy for it – and God's remedy is found in the death of His Son.

The death of Christ was a sacrificial death. The Bible is a book of sacrifice. Divine revelation knows nothing about salvation without sacrifice. The Bible says: “*without shedding of blood there is no remission.*” (Hebrews 9:22). The word “sacrifice” has come to mean very little to so many in our time, because it is used so loosely. The merchant advertises a “sacrifice sale,” but he hopes to make a substantial profit. Others talk about “sacrificing legitimate pleasure” in the interest of duty. But *the fundamental idea of sacrifice is an offering made to God* – an offering that is acceptable to Him. Not to placate His anger, nor to induce His favor, but a sacrifice that will effectively cover the guilt of the one who offers it, and provide a satisfactory ground for forgiveness.

Christ is God's “love gift” to the world, for we had no means of providing ourselves with an acceptable sacrifice whereby God could justly pardon our transgressions. And so, it is written, “*God commends (demonstrates) His love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*” (Romans 5:8).

Everyone who has any concept of God, and a desire to please Him, is willing to make some sacrifices. Some consider going to church as being a sacrifice. Others hope to gain favor by donating to charity. Some go on long pilgrimages to so-called shrines; while others deny themselves a few luxuries for forty days every year. But the greatest insult anyone can offer God is to refuse to accept the sacrifice that God has provided in the Person of His Son, and offer instead a few beggarly trifles that are already polluted by personal hope of earthly gain.

To meet with God, you *must* have a sacrifice that will settle the sin-question. and the only such sacrifice known to Scripture is the Lamb of God, who came to earth to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Not only was the death of Christ a *planned* death, and a *sacrificial* death, but it was a *vicarious* death. The word means “in place of another.”

- It is written, “*But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone*” (Hebrews 2:9). The whole argument of Scripture supports that fact.
- Again, “*Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends*” (John 15:13).
- Again, “*Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures*” (1 Corinthians 15:3)
- Again, “*For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him*” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

He died the sinner's death; He died the murderer's death, the drunkard's, the harlot's. It is written, *"All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."* (Isaiah 53:6).

That's why He was silent in the judgment hall. That's why, when He was reviled he reviled not again, but *"as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth"* (Isaiah 53:7). He voluntarily assumed my guilt, and yours; and by doing so, assumed the penalty. For it is written, *"The soul who sins shall die"* (Ezekiel 18:4, 20). And so, as the poet has said:

It was not the crowd whose cries assailed Him;
It was not the hands that rudely nailed Him,
That slew Him on the cursed tree;
'Twas mine, the sin that from Heaven called Him –
It was mine, the sin whose burden galled Him
In that sad Gethsemane.

Finally, I must tell you, that it was a *victorious* death. For we read in Hebrews 2:14-15, *"through death He destroyed him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and released those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."*

"Death no longer has dominion over Him, for the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God" (Romans 6:9-10).

Jesus said to John, on the Isle of Patmos, *"I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of hell and of death."* (Revelation 1:18).

Accept Him as your Saviour. He has suffered as your Sacrifice, and died as your Substitute.

WORDS OF JESUS – “*Woman, Why Are You Weeping?*”

John 20:13-15 – “*...Two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. Then they said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping?’ She said to them, ‘Because they have taken away my LORD, and I do not know where they have laid Him.’ Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?’ She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, ‘Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away.’”*

Here we find the very first *Words of Jesus* after His Resurrection. These are actually the first words of the New Testament. They were spoken FIRST – before Matthew, Mark, Luke or John – by two angels, and afterwards repeated by the LORD of life (who has now proven Himself to also be the LORD of death). They are very significant words to open a new dispensation, and introduce a new covenant. Let us read them carefully, prayerfully, and gratefully.

“*Woman, why are you weeping?*” The woman in question is *Mary Magdalene*, who had three days before buried all her hopes with the burial of Jesus. Mary who had known more of sin and sorrow, and shed more tears than most women of her age; but she had also known the joys of a life of freedom through the ministry of the Son of God. But now He was dead and all her hopes had died with Him. All the sorrows she had ever known were as nothing, compared to this – for the very Light of Life had been extinguished, the Fountain of all Good had been sealed, and the River of Life had been stopped by death, the king of terrors.

Little wonder that Mary wept. She wept until her eyes were dim, and her strength was spent. She wept until not even the voice of the angel could not penetrate the dark dungeon of her soul's despair, nor the voice of Jesus Himself dispel the gloom. And well she might weep, and all others with her; for if there is no resurrection, if death is the end of life's weary road, and there is nothing beyond, then we are indeed “*of all men most miserable,*” and of all living creatures, the most disillusioned. (1 Corinthians 15:19).

- If Christ does not rise from the dead, then no one ever will, and we are condemned to a vale of tears and strife, and all our thirst for a better land, can never be realized. All our hunger for immortality is but an empty dream.
- If Christ rises not, then the last hope of the race is perished, there is nothing left to believe in, there is no Heaven to strive for, no future to hope for, no promise to trust in.
- If Christ rises not, there is no Gospel to preach, no message to carry, no Church to build.
- If Christ rises not, then His death is in vain, the sacrifice of Himself, a mistake, His blood is unavailing, the sin-question is still unsettled, Satan still reigns.
- If Christ rises not, then wickedness has supplanted righteousness, the lie has prevailed over the truth, darkness has won the victory over light.
- If Christ rises not, then virtue has perished, purity has been conquered, holiness must stay on the Cross, whilst falsehood takes the throne.
- If Christ rises not, then God is defeated and is not Sovereign LORD of all.

No wonder that Mary wept. Though she may not at this moment have understood all of this. But listen! Someone is speaking to her – someone is asking a most vital question; and though it is addressed to Mary, it concerns all the children of men, for we are all tearful creatures.

Read the question again, “*Why are you weeping? What is the cause of your grief? Didn't I tell you that I had come to bind up broken hearts, to comfort all that mourn, to wipe away every tear, to banish every sorrow? Why are you weeping?*” What a question to usher in a new Dispensation.

The Old Testament is full of tears, and it was a woman to whom God said, “*I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children...*” (Genesis 3:16). Not

many years after, this same woman sat with Abel's head in her lap, and poured her tears over the face of her dead boy. But now, *"Woman, why are you weeping?"* The curse of sin has been lifted – the serpent that beguiled us is potentially slain – the death that sin brought has been canceled.

I said that the Old Testament is full of tears, the very sorrow of God is heard in the sobbing of the Prophet when he said, *"Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people"* (Jeremiah 9:1).

Once in a while, however, there is a ray of light, and we find such prophetic utterances as these: *"He will swallow up death forever, the LORD God will wipe away tears from all faces."* (Isaiah 25:8). But clearest of all is Isaiah 53:4 *"Surely, He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows."*

Just as the Old Testament is full of tears, the New Testament is full of song. The Resurrection of Christ makes certain and solid some things we had always hoped for, but *now we know*.

We know beyond all doubt that Jesus is the Son of God. He is *"declared to be the Son of God with power ... by the resurrection from the dead"* (Romans 1:4).

Once Paul wrote to Timothy, *"Remember,"* he said, *"that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead, according to my Gospel"* (2 Timothy 2:8).

"Woman, why are you weeping?" Jesus is nearer than you think, closer than you know. If you will listen, you will hear Him call *your* name. You will find that He *is* alive, and since He has won the victory over death, then it follows that He is sufficient for all problems of life.

The New Testament opens with, *"Woman, why are you weeping?"* and among the last words in the Bible you will read, *"And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying . . ."* (Revelation 21:3-4).

WORDS OF JESUS – “Go Into All the World . . .”

Mark 16:15-16 – “And Jesus said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”

The disciples of Jesus are having one of their last meetings with their risen LORD, and these words are sometimes called the Great Commission, and rightly so; for no group of men were ever charged with so mighty a responsibility. All the world is their parish, and every creature their congregation. There’s not a person anywhere, no matter what race, what language, what age, or what color, who doesn’t need the Gospel that Jesus told His disciples to preach.

Notice they were not sent to educate, or elevate, or cultivate – they were not sent to civilize, or even Christianize. *They were sent to preach the Gospel.* And once the Gospel is preached, the hearer must do one of two things; believe and receive it, or doubt and reject it. Wherever men and women have believed the Gospel, education and elevation and civilization have always followed. These are a by-product of the Gospel of Grace. Maybe we could have some form of civilization without Christ, but we couldn’t have Christ without civilization.

Down through the ages, since Jesus Christ, when He was about to leave them, told His disciples what to do, the “Go” of the Gospel has gotten into the hearts and minds of men and women – they must *go* and preach “*The Gospel to every creature.*” You see, every creature needs the whole Gospel, all the redemptive work of Christ was necessary to make it possible for even one person to be saved. It took a miracle of the virgin birth, the sinless life, the sacrificial death, and the victorious resurrection to provide salvation for the individual. Christ died for everyone. He died for *me*. He died for *you*. All the resources, all the interest, all the intelligence of God the Creator, is directed through Christ to save rebellious mankind.

“*The Gospel to every creature*” indicates that God deals with the human race, not by nations, not by cities, nor by communities; but by individuals – speaking to every *person*. As Jesus said, “*He calls His own sheep by name, and leads them out*” (John 10:3). This may seem a very slow process to some, but let us remember that when God sends the snow, it doesn’t come in great blankets, but by individual snow flakes – each one different than the other, but in just a few hours the entire landscape is changed. So it is in revival time, in times of great spiritual awakenings, enough individuals have their lives touched by divine power, to transform communities.

“*The Gospel to every creature*” indicates that God has great respect and confidence in the individual. The disciples of Jesus were all hand-picked. History proves the wisdom of His choice. To each one was given all the Gospel to share with every creature. The old saying, “What is everybody’s business is nobody’s business,” is certainly true in the affairs of the Church. The idea that a few specially trained technicians can care for the religious needs of the community is quite foreign to Scripture. Jesus said, “*Preach the Gospel to every creature.*” Romans 1:16 tells us that the Gospel is “*the power of God to Salvation to everyone that believes.*”

That word *salvation* is one of the greatest words in the Bible. It means *deliverance*, it means *freedom*, it means *soundness*, it means *safety*, it means *healing* – in short, it means all that God can do in the human heart to give life and peace. Preaching the Gospel, then, is proclaiming to everyone that the power of God for *SALVATION* is available through Christ.

“*The Gospel to every creature*” indicates that God wants to share, equally with everyone, the full benefits of what Christ accomplished when He died on the Cross.

WORDS OF JESUS – “No One Ever Spoke Like This MAN.”

The theme of the message on Elim Glad Tidings is still the *Words of Jesus*. We have spent more than two years on it now, so that must be more than one hundred 6-minute talks on His words, “*in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*” (Colossians 2:3). It was said of Him, “*No one ever spoke like this Man!*” (John 7:46). And again, “*For He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes*” (Matthew 7:29). And again, it is written, “*The words that I have spoken will judge him in the last day*” (John 12:48). And then He said, “*Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away*” (Matthew 24:35).

There is an eternal quality *Words of Jesus!* The wisdom, authority, power, and justice in His words make them applicable to all men, of every generation, of every race, and of every social level.

The question is often raised – If Jesus were to return to earth again, which church would He associate with? And the only answer to that question is, which church would have Him, if He taught as He did in Palestine, nearly two thousand years ago? But it's quite superfluous to ask the first question, because He *is* coming back again, and our acceptance of the truths He left us will determine where we stand with Him when He returns.

Beginning today, I would like to take up with you some of the great *doctrines* that Jesus and His disciples taught – both to Jews and Gentiles. First of all, and most obvious of all, Jesus taught the absolute necessity to His mission to earth. That all men everywhere need a Saviour, and that He was sent from the heart of God to accomplish man's redemption. Here are His very words on the subject:

- “*The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many*” (Matthew 20:28).
- “*As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life*” (John 3:14-15).
- “*I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep.*” (John 10:11).
- “*I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly*” (John 10:10).
- “*This is My body which is given for you ... this cup is the New Covenant in My blood which is shed for you.*” (Luke 22:19-20).

These words, with many others give the only possible explanation for Christ's mission on earth. But the sad fact is that His message was not any more welcome then than it is today.

Organized religion had worked an elaborated system of ceremony and ritual, which glorified man, and humanized God. They wanted Jesus to use His influence in the political field to free themselves from the dominion of Rome. Some wanted Christ to intervene in a domestic dispute over an inheritance; many came to Him for physical healing, and quite a number were charmed by His gracious manner, and impressed by the wisdom of His words.

In short, He had a great many admirers; but at the end, only a small group of earnestly believing disciples. Many were willing to use Him for temporal advantage, but few bowed their will and accepted Him as sovereign LORD.

A feeling of independence and self-sufficiency is characteristic of human nature. An unwillingness to admit their need of a personal Saviour has kept thousands out of the Kingdom. In the Bible, the root of this is clearly diagnosed as pride – stupid, stubborn, rebellious pride. Pride is more offensive to God than any other sin in the catalogue of human depravity. But the deep seated individual *need* for a personal Saviour is the clear unmistakable theme that Jesus and His disciples preached. They taught this in Jewish synagogues, on the hill tops, or beside the sea.

Jesus came “*to seek and to save that which was lost*” (Luke 19:10). He “*did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance*” (Matthew 9:13). He did not come to give us a crown for outstanding behavior, but a cross, because we have sinned. There was no change in the message committed to the Church. We have no authority to alter the doctrines of Jesus in any way; nor have we any reason to think that the need for a personal Saviour has diminished with the progress of civilization.

Discoveries in science do nothing to set us free from that awful disease which the Bible calls “sin” – as old as the human race. There may be temporary, and local improvements in human relationships, but the overall relationship of man to God is as bad today as ever it was, and there can be no lasting improvement in human behavior until man is right with God. The Bible tells us that there is only one thing wrong with humanity, and that is sin. And there’s only one cure, and that is Christ.

- If Jesus were to talk to you personally today, He would tell you,
as He said to Nicodemus,
– “*You must be born again*” (John 3:7);
as He said to Peter,
– “*If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me*” (John 13:8),
as He said to all His disciples,
– “*Without Me you can do nothing.*” (John 15:5).
And if you will believe on Him, He will say to you,
as He said to the paralytic,
– “*Your sins are forgiven you. Rise up and walk*” (Luke 5:23).
-

WORDS OF JESUS – “*When You Pray . . .*”

Our subject today is Jesus’ teaching on the subject of Prayer; and there certainly is no other source as authoritative and informative as what was recorded by the four Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

The *First Lesson* is given in the Sermon on the Mount – Matthew 6:8-15. In eight short verses, that great PATTERN PRAYER includes all the essential elements of satisfactory living. Jesus said, “*When you pray, say: Our Father in Heaven.*” (Matthew 6:9; Luke 11:2). The first requisite then, for effectual prayer, is a *right relationship with God*. I read some time ago of a lady who came to her pastor to ask why it was that though she had prayed so earnestly so long for a certain thing, there was no answer. Her pastor was an Irishman with little gift for tact; so he asked her right out if she was really and truly a child of God – had she ever been converted and really born again? She admitted honestly that she had never had such an experience; and so he said, “Well, Ma’am, you’re tuggin’ at the wrong skirt. First get into God’s family and then you’ll have a right to call Him Father.”

The *Second Lesson* is in Luke 18:9-14. It’s the parable of the two men who went up into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee, and the other a Publican. Both men prayed, but only one got an answer, and surprising though it may seem, it was not the good Pharisee, but the bad Publican. The Pharisee was rejected in spite of his goodness, and the Publican was accepted in spite of his badness. The reason is that, human goodness can never merit divine favor; nor will human badness exclude divine mercy. These two men were quite different in the eyes of society, but in the eyes of God the one was not one whit better than the other. When will we ever learn that God’s favors can never be bought, nor earned, nor merited. There are those who imagine that God will be obliged to answer them, just by virtue of the fact that they take time to say their prayers, are generous with their donations to charity, and are strictly honest in business. Everyone ought to do these things because they are right, and not to get a reward. To pray effectively then, we must have the *right attitude toward God*, and the only acceptable attitude is humility – not expecting an answer because we deserve it, but only because God is merciful.

The *Third Lesson* on prayer is given in Mark 11:22 – “*And Jesus answering said to them, Have faith in God.*” Faith is the only channel through which God can meet us and answer our prayer. “*Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to God, must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of all those who diligently seek Him*” (Hebrews 11:6). And again, it is written, “*But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the LORD.*” (James 1:6).

- Jesus said, “*These signs will follow those who believe*” (Mark 16:17).
- He said, “*All things are possible to him who believes*” (Mark 9:23).
- He said, “*According to your faith let it be to you*” (Matthew 9:29).
- He said, “*If you would believe you would see the glory of God*” (John 11:40).
- He said, “*If you have faith as a mustard seed*” (Matthew 17:20).
- He said, “*Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace*” (Luke 7:50).
- He said, “*Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?*” (Matthew 8:26).
- Jesus said, “*Have faith in God.*” (Mark 11:22).

The *Fourth Lesson* on prayer is found in Luke 18:1-8 – “*Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart.*” The same idea is presented in Luke 11:5-10. And that idea is persistence. God does not weary of our oft-coming. He has invited us to come to the Throne of Grace often, “*that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need*” (Hebrews 4:16). The more frequently we pray, the more often we expose our heart before God. So that He can give us things we haven’t even asked for, and perhaps didn’t even know we needed. We do not pray often to overcome God’s reluctance, but to enable Him to conquer our resistance. Praying often keeps the fire burning, and it is still true that “more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.” [Alfred Lord Tennyson 1809-1892]

Our time has nearly gone; but before we say goodbye, there is one more lesson we desperately need.

The *Fifth Lesson* on prayer is found in Mark 11:25 – “*And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.*” God cannot hear prayer from an unforgiving heart.

- Bearing a grudge against another keeps our prayer from reaching the Throne of Grace.
- An unforgiving spirit undermines health, destroys peace of mind, creates nervousness and sleeplessness.
- An unforgiving spirit makes one critical, cynical, irritable, and disagreeable.
- An unforgiving spirit will not only close Heaven to your prayer, but will keep you from going there.

If such should be your affliction today, will you go into the place of prayer and say, as the Publican did, “*God be merciful to me a sinner*”? (Luke 18:13).

WORDS OF JESUS – Mother's Day

The *Words of Jesus* for today's consideration, have to do with the most ancient of all human institutions – *The Home*. Mother's Day again reminds us that there never can be a substitute for the divinely appointed order of husband and wife, with sons and daughters, living together, working together, planning together, and praying together. No other religion in the world has done so much to elevate and consolidate the home as the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Christian home is as essential to the welfare of the State as the Christian Church. Indeed, unless the Christian Church can produce Christian homes, its value is lost to society.

Jesus was raised in a God-fearing home. We can't over-estimate the profound effect this early environment must have had on His young heart and mind. All through His public ministry we find Him referring to God's requirements, God's laws, and God's provisions for the home. In Mark 10:1-12 we have some of the most emphatic, and authoritative statements on this subject in all the Bible:

¹*"Then He arose from there and came to the region of Judea by the other side of the Jordan. And multitudes gathered to Him again, and as He was accustomed, He taught them again. ²The Pharisees came and asked Him, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?' testing Him. ³And He answered and said to them, 'What did Moses command you?' ⁴They said, 'Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce, and to dismiss her.' ⁵And Jesus answered and said to them, 'Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept; ⁶but from the beginning of the creation, God "made them male and female." ⁷For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, ⁸and the two shall become one flesh; so then, they are no longer two, but one flesh. ⁹Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate.' ¹⁰In the house His disciples also asked Him again about the same matter. ¹¹So, He said to them, 'Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. ¹²And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.'"*

We ought to read these words often in these days when the very foundations of society are being undermined by a reckless generation who think of marriage as only another form of amusement, to be dropped as soon as it ceases to amuse. Who want all the privileges of the marriage relationship, with none of its responsibilities. The Pharisees came to Jesus to ask His position on the divorce question. Four great facts are set forth in His answer.

1. In the fifth verse of Mark 10, Jesus said that the law of Moses allowed divorce, only because of the wickedness of the people; so that a broken home in Moses' day was a public testimony that one or both parties were not doing the will of God. The divorce did not change either one, but made possible an escape from an intolerable situation, brought on through disobedience to the will of God.
2. In verse 6 we are referred to the first marriage on earth as a pattern, as God's thought for the human race. We'll never improve on God's plan. There was only one Eve for one Adam, and we are just old-fashioned enough to believe that no one ought to marry until, and unless they have found that one and only one.
3. The third fact is that this young couple should strike out on their own, *"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife;"* the home they will build will be their own, the things they buy will be their own, and the children they have will be their very own. (Mark 10:7).
4. The fourth fact is that this couple are now one – *"no more two, but one flesh."* (Mark 10:8). And so, it is written, *"He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh..."* (Eph. 5:28-29).

Husband and wife are *one* by divine edict – by an act of God. To recognize that unity is to care for one another with the same concern that self is given. The interest of each is the concern of both, and the welfare of both is the concern of each. Selfishness is the chief cause of divorce; yet both parties lose something infinitely precious by trying to dissolve a partnership that God intended should be *"till death do us part."*

Christ Himself is the cure for selfishness, He is the Saviour of the body, and the Keeper of the home.

WORDS OF JESUS – “*After This The Judgment*”

The teaching of Jesus on the subject of future Judgment is the subject we would like to consider with you for a few moments. And there is no other fact of human experience to more certain of fulfillment than this, that “*it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the Judgment.*” The Bible never tries to prove that there will be a Judgment day; it doesn't even try to prove that there is a God who created all things; it simply speaks of these facts as though everyone would recognize the necessity of both a Creator and a Judge. In Matthew 13:30, the Judgment day is spoken of as harvest time, when the fruits of the seasons operation are gathered safely in, and the weeds, the tares and the chaff, are given to the fire. Jesus said, “*Let both grow together until the harvest. The good and the bad, the righteous, and the ungodly, let them grow together.*”

History will confirm the fact that all through the ages, this has been the case. Everywhere we meet people who ask, why doesn't God do something? Why doesn't He intervene? Why doesn't He put a stop to the crime, to the suffering, to the misery that abounds everywhere?

But no. Jesus said, “*Let both grow together until harvest.*” And they have been growing together for so long that some have concluded that there is no justice, there is no God, it doesn't matter what people do, as long as they are clever enough to get away with it.

The Bible says that, because sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed, therefore the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil. Let both grow together until... There is a day already set by the Almighty God, in which He will judge the world in righteousness, by that Man whom He has ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead.

“*He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead*” (Acts 17:31).

“*The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!*” (Matthew 13:41-43).

Those are the words of Jesus about the Judgment Day; I wouldn't tamper with them. Here is a clear case of *law* versus the *lawless*, of justice at last overtaking the transgressor, and the decisions of this court are absolutely final.

But someone will ask, “What about the poor heathen, who have never heard the Gospel?” Jesus said that it would be more tolerable for the land of Sodom than for the people of his generation, on the day of Judgment. He said again, that the queen of the south would rise up at the Judgment and witness against the people of his generation, He also said that the men of Nineveh would rise up at the judgment and condemn the men of his generation. So then, at the Judgment Day, all those in ages past who heard about the true God and obeyed His will, will be assembled at the Judgment Day as silent testimonies that even in those far-off days, God would save whoever would obey.

If the queen of the south traveled such a great distance to hear the wisdom of Solomon, then what about people who live right next door to the church, and yet never enter its doors to hear the wisdom of Jesus Christ? If the wicked men of Nineveh repented after a few days of earnest preaching by a Jewish evangelist, then what about people of our day, who have heard the truth of a Judgment Day preached since they were children, and still haven't repented?

Well, the Judgment Day is going to deal with all these things; and since we are all heading in that direction as fast as the wheels of time can carry us, then there is only one sensible thing to do, and that is, *prepare to meet thy God!*

There's another side to the question of Judgment Day that must be mentioned, and again we quote no less an authority than Jesus Christ. “*Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world’*” (Matthew 25:34). And again, “*His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were*

faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord” (Matthew 25:21).

Only two groups of people are described at the Judgment: the saved and the lost. And the difference between the two is Jesus Christ.

It is written, *“He who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life”* (John 5:24). And, *“There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”* (Acts 4:12).

WORDS OF JESUS – “No One Can Serve Two Masters”

Matthew 6:24-25 – “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore, I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?”

ANXIETY is the problem for consideration this afternoon; and once again we would refer you to the *Words of Jesus* for a sure remedy of this universal disease that is blighting so many lives; filling our hospitals, and making life intolerable for so many people. Verses 24 & 25 of the 6th chapter of Matthew is our starting place, and in five minutes, if you can listen that long, you will see that there is a *cause*, and there is a *cure* for worry.

CAUSE – Verse 24 is the cause. Let's read it carefully and prayerfully; “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

The picture here is of a person constantly torn between two opposing masters, and never quite sure which one shall have dominion. The result is confusion, conflict, uncertainty, and a feeling of insecurity. “How long will you falter between two opinions?” is a question that all ought to face today. “If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.” (1 Kings 18:21).

In other words, make up your mind whether the LORD God of Heaven shall have preeminence in your life, in your plans, and purposes; or whether you will dedicate all your powers, interests and ambitions in service to the god of this world, that we call *materialism*.

But before you decide, be sure to examine the benefits that each one offers. If possessing material things will take away all worry, all anxiety, all fear, all uncertainty, from your heart and home, both for time and eternity, then by all means, bow daily before the shrine of the dollar sign, and give yourself neither rest, nor peace until you are sure that you have enough. But let me remind you just here, that as far as history records, as far as human experience confirms, no one has ever yet succeeded in accumulating that much.

Someone asked *JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER*, “How much money does one need in order to be satisfied?” and his answer was, “Just a little more.”

In Scripture, we have the personal testimony of someone who, in God's providence, gained more of this world's goods, pleasures, and palaces than any other person in history. And he summed it all up by saying, “All is vanity and vexation of spirit.” (Ecclesiastes 1:14 and several other places in the book).

The very *abundance* that some people have is the chief cause of their anxiety – there are so many people after it – so many dangers of losing it. And then, added to that, the certainty that at any moment death may pay a visit and advise that everything of material worth must be left behind; and unless something more than material gain has been gathered in life, that soul goes out into eternity naked and penniless, to beg forever – and *never, never, never* be satisfied.

CURE – Now let us read verse 25, of Matthew 6. “Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?”

The whole problem is that of *putting first things first*, and recognizing that He who gave us this life is abundantly qualified to supply all its necessities. I'm not surprised that people, who don't know the Almighty God in a personal way, worry themselves sick. The wonder is that they are as cheerful as they are, when everything they trust in is so uncertain.

But that anyone should go right on worrying, *after* they've given their life into the hands of the all-wise compassionate Redeemer for safe-keeping, is both unreasonable and inconsistent. *Why worry when you can pray?* is a good question to ask, when fear comes knocking at the door of the child of God.

The inspired Apostle said, *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 4:6-7).

A little further on in this 6th chapter of Matthew, Jesus said, *“Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.”* We know that the flower’s spotless dress and graceful form is not achieved by worry, or struggle. It is only obedient to the laws of God that govern its life, and the result could be nothing less than a beautiful lily.

So then, let God plant you in His garden – let Him water you with the dew of Heaven – let Him warm you with the sunshine of His love – let Him protect you with the strong fence of His directive will – let Him supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus – and eventually, in His own good time, and in His own kind way, He will transplant you into the gardens of Heaven where you will, indeed, be free from fear and care forever.

WORDS OF JESUS – “Whoever Comes, Hears, and Does”

Luke 6:47-49 – “Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great.”

The subject for today's consideration is *building*, and once again I would refer you to the Master Architect and Builder, the LORD Jesus Christ – of whom it is written, “For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.”

The words of our text, Luke 6:47-49, are very familiar words – and just as true today as they ever were. First there is the *builder*, for as the Scripture says, “every house is built by someone” (Hebrews 3:4). Actually, every one of us is building a house, and the name of that house is *character* – when we finish, it will either be a thing of beauty and a joy forever, or a thing of shame and everlasting regret.

I think it was *LONGFELLOW* who said,

All are architects of fate, working on the walls of Time;
Some with massive deed, and great; some with ornaments of rhyme.
For the structure that we raise, Time is with materials filled;
Our todays and yesterdays are the blocks with which we build.

Jesus said, “Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock.”

The builder, then, must choose his material carefully, he must go to the right source; because, you know, the building can't be better than the material that goes into it. A little paint and decoration may improve the exterior appearance, but time will test the real quality of the structure.

Some time ago I read of a man who had been foreman for a construction company for a number of years. One summer the boss of the firm called him in, showed him the blue print of the house he wanted built, went over all the plans with him, and described the type of material he wanted used – nothing but first quality in every part. He told the man where this house should be built, and didn't see him again until it was finished. Now this foreman was, in his own mind, quite a smart guy – he figured that this house was going to cost so much, but by putting cheaper material wherever it wouldn't show, he could save about two thousand dollars and no one would ever know the difference. Well, he finished the house and took the boss over to see it, and after looking it all over very carefully, the boss told him that the company was giving this house to him as a gift, in recognition of his many years of service. So there he was, stuck with a poorly constructed house, when he might have had the very best. And there was no one to blame but himself.

Well, life is like that, isn't it? You and I are building a house, and the very best of material is available for the asking, and when we have finished it, it will be ours for eternity.

Listen again to these words of Jesus. “Whosoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them. He is like a man who built a house.” The way we are building, then, is by *Hearing* and *Doing*. What we *hear*, determines what we *do*.

If you listen to the argument that all there is to life is what you can accumulate, you will build a narrow, mean, self-centered life, with windows too small to let in the sunlight of God's Love.

But if you listen to Jesus' words, “He who saves his life shall lose it, and he that loses his life for Jesus' sake shall keep it unto life eternal,” and you will build a house that is gracious, and spacious, that is generous, and kind, with windows big enough to take in all the beauty, and wonder of God's great world.

Jesus said that the man who heard His words, dug deep and lay the foundation on a rock. How deep is *your* foundation? Now is a good time to examine it, before the storms of affliction and sorrow begin to

rage. Is your house resting on surface blocks of occasional visits to church, good intentions for improving your behavior, the comforting thought that you aren't near as bad as some people, and the vague hope that in some way or other everything will turn out all right in the end? Your house may seem quite secure, just resting on the surface of material things, but just as sure as there is a God in Heaven, there will be storms that will test and shake your house, and according to the Bible, all who are not founded on the Rock will be destroyed.

These are good days to dig deep, get down below the superficial, shifting sands of human opinion, human religion, human reasoning. Dig, and dig until your house is founded on the Rock of Ages, until you can say with the hymn writer, Nothing in my hand I bring,

Simply to Thy Cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless, look to Thee for Grace;
Foul, I to Thy fountain fly;
Wash me, Savior, or I die.

WORDS OF JESUS – “. . . *Let Him Hear*”

For a good long while now, we have been talking about the *Words of Jesus* on this afternoon broadcast. Next Sunday, LORD willing, I would like to begin a special series on the *WORKS of Jesus*, and His works prove His words. But for today, I would like to present a few suggestions as to what we should do about His Words, for obviously, we have to *do* something with them. Anyone who has heard the *Words of Jesus* can ever be the same again, a new responsibility is laid upon them, because new light has come to them. Jesus said of the people of His day, “*If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.*” (John 15:22). The old saying that “ignorance is bliss, when it’s folly to be wise,” has to be reversed in spiritual things, for *there*, wisdom is bliss and it’s folly to be ignorant. God will hold us responsible both for what we know, and for what we may have known. Only three courses of action are open to us after hearing the *Words of Jesus*: ¹Believe and obey; ²Refuse and reject; or ³Examine them honestly to learn if these things be so. We ought to believe the *Words of Jesus* because we believe the word of our friends; as Jesus Himself said, “*If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater*” (1 John 5:9).

In British jurisprudence, a man is assumed innocent, until proven to be guilty. By this rule, Jesus Christ is assumed to be truthful, until proven to be false; and after nearly two thousand years of most careful examination, we have more reasons for believing Him today than ever before. Then again, if we do *not* believe the *Words of Jesus* (His explanation of spiritual values, His direction for peaceful living, and His provision for joyful dying), then we must bring forth something better. We must believe something about the great issues of life, death judgment and the future state. There are thousands of theories, private religions by the score, and millions of pagan superstitions; but again, I say, that the *Words of Jesus* outshine and outclass them all, and they have more historical proof to substantiate them, than any other fact of life.

When we have the choice to believe what we will, then I would rather believe what Jesus said, than what *MOHAMMED* or *BUDDHA* or *JOSEPH SMITH*, or *PASTOR RUSSEL*, or *MARY BAKER EDDY*, or *KARL MARX*, or *TOM PAINE*, or *VOLTAIRE*, or any other personality the human race has ever produced. Wouldn't you? *Jesus' Words* ought to be carefully, methodically, and prayerfully examined. Jesus said, “*He who has ears to hear, let him hear*” (Luke 8:8). Give His words the consideration that their importance demands, for it's not only a question of life and death, but eternal life, and eternal death are at stake. If children paid no more attention to their teacher at school than many people give to the preacher of the everlasting Gospel, they'd never pass out of Grade One. We are all interested in living and getting the most out of life. From the beginning of Grade School to the end of University training is a long hard road, but it doesn't always mean a successful or happy one. Why not spend a little while with the *Words of Jesus*?

His words ought to be read methodically. Compare statement with statement, verse with verse. Be as fair with it as you would with a lengthy letter from your friend. It has been truly said that you can prove anything by the Bible; but not if you take first things first. The very magnitude of the issues that Jesus dealt with are such that they couldn't possibly be covered in two or three verses. Take everything that He said, on every subject He spoke of, and you'll have all you need to know in order to be saved.

Finally, *His words must be read prayerfully.* Jesus said, “*The words that I speak you are spirit, and they are life.*” (John 6:63). The Bible is the only book that provides a special instructor to guide into its truth and verity. The Holy Spirit, who prompted men like Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, to write the four Gospels, is ever present, as Jesus said He would be, to guide you into all truth.

Ask God's blessing on His Word before you read, just as you would the food before you eat. You don't need to understand all the Bible in order to be saved. John 3:16 will let you into the Kingdom of Heaven, and then all the Bible is open for your exploration – a world of truth, an ocean of revelation so vast that you would need more than a thousand lifetimes to discover all its wealth. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, practice it to be holy. Here is comfort to cheer you, food to nourish you, a compass to guide you. Paradise is here revealed and the gates of hell disclosed.

WORKS OF JESUS – The Healing of a Servant

Matthew 8:5-13 – *“Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, saying, ‘LORD, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘I will come and heal him.’ The centurion answered and said, ‘LORD, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.’ When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel! And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ Then Jesus said to the centurion, ‘Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you.’ And his servant was healed that same hour.”*

Our text is the story of a Roman Centurion of the city of Capernaum, whose servant was sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. (Just by the way, this city of Capernaum witnessed some of the most outstanding and convincing miracles of Jesus, but still would not believe in Him.) But this Roman soldier, a man from a pagan nation, out of concern for his servant, sought an interview with Jesus.

Here is an interesting side-light of an ideal labor and management relationship coming from the pages of antiquity, when, it is commonly supposed that people were quite primitive, ignorant and savage. But here is a man who has a profound affection for someone whose position is that of a slave.

We pride ourselves in our social advances, and like to think that there is no caste system in our Canada, that our democracy recognizes the equality of all men; but actually, that is only wishful thinking. I have known men who lost their jobs because they took sick; and for an employer to come to church and ask prayer for his hired help is extremely rare, to say the least. It is true that Christianity is true democracy, but a democratic country is not always a Christian one.

But this Centurion came to Jesus, imploring Him and saying, *“LORD...”* (Note that title again. Caesar is this man's emperor, but Jesus is LORD.) He said, *“LORD, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented.”*

Let me say just here, that the Bible is a Book of reality. It takes a realistic approach to the problems of this life. Sickness is real, organic disorders are a very part of an organic world. There was nothing imaginary about this servant's sickness, and, thanks be to God, there is nothing imaginary about the Person of Christ. He's just as real as the problem. It is true, that some diseases are promoted by an unhealthy mental attitude; but that mental attitude is caused by a lack of faith in the Almighty God, and a faulty relationship to Him, who is Master of every circumstance.

Now, let us read verse 7, *“Jesus said to him, ‘I will come and heal him.’”* How quick the response, and how willing is the LORD Jesus to hear and heed the appeal of the needy. Never once do we read of Jesus saying, *“Come again tomorrow, and I'll see what I can do.”* Never once does He answer, *“This is not the time to meet your need.”* With Christ, *NOW* is always the acceptable time. *NOW* is always the day of salvation.

Jesus said, *“I will come”* and then follows one of the most amazing statements of faith in all the New Testament. The Centurion gave two reasons why Jesus should not come to his house. First, because he wasn't worthy. Humility is the first step of faith, as long as anyone feels that they deserve or merit anything from God, no miracle will ever happen in their life. Think of this proud Roman Captain, of the proud Roman race, bowing in humility before the lowly Nazarene, this despised Galilean. Here is faith at its best.

And then He said in substance, *“LORD, you don't need to come, but speak the word only, and my servant will be healed.”* He explained his position by the fact that he had soldiers under him who would do his bidding, who would go where they were sent, and do what they were told, and he believed that Jesus was Master in the realm of sickness, and needed but to speak the word. When Jesus heard it He

marveled, and said to them that followed, *“Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!”*

Israel had been given the Word of God – their religious life was made up chiefly in reading, or reciting portions of the divine revelation; and yet, it was left to a Roman soldier to grasp the spiritual intent, and content of that Word. It was left to a man from a pagan nation to understand that here was the very one of whom Moses wrote in the Law and the Prophets – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of David. *“Speak the word,”* said he, *“and my servant will be healed.”*

Perhaps he had read in the Hebrew book of Psalms, *“He sent His word and healed them”* (Psalm 107:20), or perhaps he read the story of creation and saw there that God brought the world into being by the word of His power, and he could say with the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, *“By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.”* (Hebrews 11:3). At any rate, he did understand that the power of this Jesus was not in His understanding of medicines or herbs; or any other material thing. Jesus’ power was in His Word. Amen!

And it's still there for *your* need today.

WORKS OF JESUS – The Healing of Peter's Mother-In-Law

Matthew 8:14-18 – *“Now when Jesus had come into Peter's house, He saw his wife's mother lying sick with a fever. So He touched her hand, and the fever left her. And she arose and served them. When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: ‘He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.’ And when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave a command to depart to the other side.”*

The healing of Peter's mother-in-law was not only an outstanding miracle of healing, but is also a picture of the ministry of Christ where He is needed most – in the home. Like the healing of the Centurion's servant, this event took place in the city of Capernaum, where it seems, Peter had his home. It was on the Sabbath day, and Jesus had preached in the Jewish synagogue, and at the close of the service, Peter had invited Him to come to his house, and *“when Jesus was come into Peter's house...”* What a world of meaning is pressed into those few words. Peter had been a full-time disciple of Jesus for more than a year, and as far as we know, this was the first time he had entertained Him in his home. What a pity that so few people, after attending a place of divine worship, where they hear the words of Christ, invite Him to their home. No other place on earth so desperately needs the presence and ministry of the Son of God as our homes.

As long as the Saviour of men is confined to places of a certain type of architecture, where religiously inclined people go on set and special occasions, then the Christian Gospel is nothing more than a theory which people admire but never apply to themselves. As a rule, people are at their best when they are in church, and at their worst in their own home. All barriers are down, all artificialities are dropped off, and there we are in all the stark naturalness and in all the crude selfishness of human nature. Now, when Jesus came into Peter's house. . . (How wonderful! that He, whose home is the Ivory Palaces with all of Heaven's best, should condescend to enter the homes of sin-cursed mortals. Your home may be little more than a shack, on the wrong side of the tracks, but it doesn't matter to the LORD. He'll come wherever He's invited. Some are kept from inviting Him to their home, because they are so poor, others because they are so rich; the poor because they think they're too hopeless, the rich because they see their need.)

Well, let's go back again to verse 14 of Matthew 8. *“When Jesus had come into Peter's house, He saw his wife's mother lying sick with a fever.”* There was trouble in this home, just like in almost every home. It's not always a mother-in-law issue – there are many kinds of trouble; but none too bad, if you can leave them outside the door of your home. But when there's trouble in the home, then there's no peace anywhere else. Christianity shines brightest in the home – the ministry of Christ is indispensable there. Peter's mother-in-law was sick of a fever... Luke's Gospel tells us it was a great fever, and Mark tells us that when Jesus entered the house, they told Him about this need. Matthew tells us that He, that is Christ, touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she arose and ministered unto them. She got right up and helped make the dinner.

There are many kinds of fever in homes these days: medical science has gone a long way in fighting typhoid fever, yellow fever, and scarlet fever; but there are other fevers that medical men are helpless to deal with. The fever of *jealousy* seems certain to destroy the home unless a cure can be found; there is the fever of *discontent*, because the house and its furnishings are not so fine as the Jones's; there is the fever of *covetousness* an inordinate and unholy desire for things, so that people are willing to mortgage their entire future and that of their children in order to obtain. Then there is that fearful fever of the *alcoholic*, that insatiable craving for a liquid that burns out manhood, blights virtue, partially paralyses the brain, undermines the health, and eventually destroys the home, and damns the soul.

Now when Jesus saw Peter's mother-in-law sick with fever, He touched her hand and the fever left her. This is a miracle! This is supernatural religion! This is not the power of mind over matter, it's not the power of argument, nor the power of logic, it's not even the power of religion – it's the power of God.

Jesus said, *“Behold I stand at the door and knock...”* (Revelation 3:20).

WORKS OF JESUS – Stilling the Storm

Matthew 8:23-27 – ²³*“Now when He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him.”* ²⁴*And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep.* ²⁵*Then His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, ‘LORD, save us! We are perishing!’* ²⁶*But He said to them, ‘Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?’ Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.* ²⁷*So the men marveled, saying, ‘Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?’”*

Turning now to the Word of Truth, we would examine another inspired and inspiring record of the *Works of Jesus*. The *wisdom* by which He spoke, and the *power* by which He worked show that, surely, this Man of whom Matthew, Mark, Luke and John wrote, is none other than the Son of God. *Wisdom* and *Power* are the two attributes of God most desired by men, and nowhere in all history are these two gifts so wonderfully blended and balanced as they are seen in this One who, in Scripture, is called the Son of Man.

“Now when He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him.” Both Mark and Luke tell us that Jesus had invited His disciples to accompany Him, *“Let us cross over to the other side.”* You may travel alone or with the crowd; or you may accept the invitation of Christ and go with Him; but one thing is sure, we are all going to the *“other side”* and we who are in the studio today, and millions of others, have decided, that in the interests of safety, we had better go with One whose *wisdom* is infinite, and whose *power* is omnipotent – *wisdom* to choose the right path, and *power* to overcome every obstacle in that path.

“And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep.” Here a great flood of questions fill our minds. For this experience of the twelve disciples is a true picture of what may happen at any time to anyone. Without warning, and to all appearances without reason, the weather changes – a cloudless sky and placid sea, when all life seems pleasant and hopeful, is suddenly and violently disturbed by circumstances over which we have no control. I said, everyone is subject to experiences like this.

A saint of ages past, said, *“Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward”* (Job 5:7). The rich and the poor, the wise and the unlearned, the old and the young, every one of us is surrounded by forces over which we haven't the slightest control. Sickness, affliction, accident, fire, flood, or cyclone, may interrupt our peaceful voyage at any moment, and so upset our plans and purposes that our very life seems uncertain. It is quite evident from this lesson, that even sincere and devout Christians have their sorrows, accidents and storms. These disciples of Jesus were obedient to His will, in fact, it was their very obedience to the will of the Master that led them into this place of danger. Why then the storm? Why all this trouble? Why this sudden change in circumstances? Why this accident? Why this disease? Why this loss of income? Why, why, why? is the question that troubles many a heart today.

Well, let's look at this story again. Ask yourself this question, and answer it honestly. *“Have I been faithfully doing the known will of God? Have I been walking in the path of His choosing?”* If your answer is *“Yes”* then be of good cheer. For He who led you into this trouble will also lead you out. Be sure of this, if you've been sincerely serving and following the Good Shepherd, then He *will* deliver you.

Hear this word of promise engraved as in eternal brass, Isaiah 43:2 *“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you. For I am the LORD your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior.”*

But why the storm? Mainly for two reasons: *First, to reveal our utter helplessness.* Bear in mind that these disciples were seasoned fishermen who had weathered many a storm; but none like this one. As long as there is any feeling of self-sufficiency, there cannot be perfect trust. Self-sufficiency means independence, and so a storm comes and sweeps away everything that we had rested in. Every prop is torn down, every anchor torn loose, every shelter swept away, until at last we cry out with Peter in desperation, *“Save us LORD, we are perishing!”* And *Second, to reveal the all sufficiency of Christ* – that

He is enough for every situation.

My heart goes out these days to the many all around us who are caught in some storm of affliction or grief – who have no Christ journeying with them, no faith in God, no confidence in the Almighty. They were trusting in friends, but those have gone; or they were trusting in money and now find that their problem cannot be solved with money. They weren't expecting this crisis, this storm, and are at their wits end. How often a minister is called to pray for people who never learned to trust in God when life was peaceful and pleasant! “Please pray for me” is a request that many people make who have no personal contact with the Saviour of men.

Time is nearly gone for us again, but let me read verse 27, “*So the men marveled, saying, ‘Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?’*” Amen! That's why COWPER wrote

God works in a mysterious way His wonders to perform

He plants His footsteps on the sea And rides upon the storm

All the forces of nature are in the control of the Creator. Trust him with your life.

WORKS OF JESUS – Healing Two Demoniacs

Matthew 8:28-34 – *“²⁸When He had come to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two demon-possessed men, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way. ²⁹And suddenly they cried out, saying, ‘What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?’ ³⁰Now a good way off from them there was a herd of many swine feeding. ³¹So the demons begged Him, saying, ‘If You cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine.’ ³²And He said to them, ‘Go.’ So when they had come out, they went into the herd of swine. And suddenly the whole herd of swine ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and perished in the water. ³³Then those who kept them fled; and they went away into the city and told everything, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men. ³⁴And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus. And when they saw Him, they begged Him to depart from their region.”*

It's the story of two maniacs, described as exceeding fierce, whose dwelling place was the cemetery. They were the terror of the community, for in those days there were no mental hospitals and the insane roamed at large. The inspired historian tells us the cause for their terrible condition – they were possessed with devils – an explanation which medical men have laughed at, calling it medieval superstition. But until they are able to come forth with a better answer, and a better cure than what we find in the Word of God, we'll accept the Gospel record as entirely satisfactory.

We have friends working in the far East who have told us of personal experiences with both men and women – identical with these that we read of in the Gospels. The Bible doesn't try to prove the existence of demons, neither does it try to prove the existence of God; but it does describe the works of both, and leaves us with the responsibility of choosing to either believe or reject what we find there.

Matthew 8:28 says, *“There met Him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass by that way.”* You will notice that this account follows closely after that of the storm at sea, which was a real storm, with real water, with real men in a real boat. And thanks be to God, there was a real Christ on board who was able for that situation. As the ship comes to land, Jesus and His disciples are met by these real men who are possessed by real demons.

The sooner we accept the fact that this world is governed by spiritual forces that are just as real as natural forces are, the sooner we will accept spiritual remedies for these things that have no natural explanation. I have talked with men who are giving their lives in the interest of the mentally ill, and they have told me that, as yet, the problem is beyond their skill and out of reach of the findings of science.

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day.” (Ephesians 6:12-13).

The Bible everywhere sets forth the workings of an unseen, sinister adversary of the human race, who hates all that God loves, and loves all that God hates. He cannot strike directly against God, but he does strike at the objects of God's affection – people like you and me. And so, it is written of Christ, that God anointed Him *“with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.”* (Acts 10:38). And again, it is written, *“For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.”* (1 John 3:8).

Well, let us look at this conflict and contest. Matthew 8:29 says, *“And suddenly they cried out, saying, ‘What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God?’”* These demons were more sound in their theology than many who are called ministers of the Gospel. They believed in the deity of Christ. They believed Him to be the Sons of God. As James says, *“Even the demons believe – and tremble.”* (James 2:19).

Not only so, but they also believed in the prophecies that tell of future judgment and punishment, for they said, *“Have You come here to torment us before the time?”* They had taken up temporary residence within these men, and were working their diabolical natures out through them. This picture can be

duplicated to a greater or lesser degree, a hundred thousand times in this generation. There is no other explanation for the unreasonable behavior of otherwise reasonable men and women.

When you read in the paper that a mother and children had been hacked to pieces with an axe, and then their house burned.... When you hear of mothers and fathers abandoning their children to starve to death.... Or, as happened on North Dakota about two weeks ago, a young fellow, sixteen, was weighted with stones and thrown into a creek... Surely there must be something inhuman, vile, and devilish to promote such outrageous acts. If I saw the tracks of a bear, I'd know that a bear had passed that way; and when I see the works of evil, and read in the Bible of one who is the author of such things, then I know he is still at work.

In our lesson today, these demons besought Jesus that they might enter a herd of swine. I think it was *BILLY SUNDAY* who said they chose swine because that was the next best to humankind in point of cleanliness. Call this obsession, perversion, possession – whatever you will; but it is completely and perfectly mastered by Jesus the Son of God. *“He said to them, ‘Go!’ and they went.”*

Luke's Gospel tells us that when the people of the community went out to see what had happened, they found these men sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in their right minds. And would you ever believe it? The people asked Jesus to leave their country. I suppose they were afraid they might lose all their pigs if, He were to stay. They would rather have pigs and maniacs than see men delivered by the power of God.

But Jesus said to the man who had been delivered, *“Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you.”* I don't think the song, “All hail the power of Jesus' Name” had been written then, but if it had been, I'm sure he would have sung it with all his heart.

All hail the pow'r of Jesus' Name!
Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him LORD of all!

Ye chosen seed of Israel's race,
Ye ransomed from the fall,
Hail Him Who saves you by His grace,
And crown Him LORD of all!

Let every kindred, every tribe,
On this terrestrial ball,
To Him all majesty ascribe,
And crown Him LORD of all!

Oh, that with yonder sacred throng
We at His feet may fall!
We'll join the everlasting song,
And crown Him LORD of all!

[by John Rippon 1780]

WORKS OF JESS – Healing the Paralyzed Friend

Luke 5:17-26 – “Now it happened on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting by, who had come out of every town of Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem. And the power of the LORD was present to heal them.¹⁸ Then behold, men brought on a bed a man who was paralyzed, whom they sought to bring in and lay before Him.¹⁹ And when they could not find how they might bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the housetop and let him down with his bed through the tiling into the midst before Jesus.²⁰ When He saw their faith, He said to him, ‘Man, your sins are forgiven you.’²¹ And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, ‘Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?’²² But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He answered and said to them, ‘Why are you reasoning in your hearts?’²³ Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Rise up and walk?’²⁴ But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins’—He said to the man who was paralyzed, ‘I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.’²⁵ Immediately he rose up before them, took up what he had been lying on, and departed to his own house, glorifying God.²⁶ And they were all amazed, and they glorified God and were filled with fear, saying, ‘We have seen strange things today!’”

It's the story of four men who carried a helpless paralytic through the streets of an old eastern town until they came to the house where Jesus was preaching. Pharisees and doctors of the Law were there from every town of Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem; “*and the power of the LORD was present to heal them.*”

Naturally we would consider this an ideal setting for a great demonstration of divine power. Had we been there is such a prominent company we would no doubt have thought “Well, at last the teachings of Christ are reaching the right kind of people, these men of influence will give His cause the prestige it deserves and no doubt make a tremendous impression on the people of this community.”

The fact of the case is, however, that instead of being a help, these men were a hindrance. They took up all the space, but received none of the blessing. “*The Power of the LORD was present to heal them,*” but none of them were healed. Never before in the history of the world had anyone had such a wonderful opportunity to hear the voice of the Son of God. But evidently they were not too greatly impressed. All of which teaches us that the cause of Christ doesn't need men of distinction, men of influence, men of means, but rather men of sincerity, men of humility, men of faith.

Well, it was to this very meeting that these four men brought their friend, but they couldn't get into the building because of the crowd. We all like to see a crowd at church, but if that crowd is not sympathetic for the needy, and considerate enough to make room for a man on a stretcher, then the church is better off without them. These four men are worth more than all the distinguished congregation. *They were not only listeners, but they were workers* – and their job was to bring the needy to Christ. They were so confident that this man would be healed if they could get him through, they inspired enough confidence in the paralyzed man to let them carry him through the streets to where Christ was preaching and teaching.

This is where the church's work begins. Professing Christians must be so trustworthy that the needy, the afflicted, and the distressed will trust them implicitly. And, trusting the Christian, they will come to trust the Christian's Saviour. It is useless to invite people to Church if you don't believe the Gospel that is preached there, and it's useless to say that you do, and not do something to win the lost.

Another interesting thing is seen in this account. These four men *worked together* on this job. And yet, they were all different. I know they were, because no two people are alike in every way. These four had different dispositions, different temperaments, different ideas about politics, about religion, about history and prophecy; but one thing they were agreed on – that, if this poor man could be brought to Christ he would be healed. And they were willing to *set aside all their differences* in the enthusiasm of this conviction. Whether they knew it or not, they were setting the pattern for the future work of the Church, and living out the story of the good Samaritan, before that parable had come from the lips of Jesus.

Now let us see them as they come to the house where Jesus is speaking and find that they can't get in because of the crowd. There was no way through, but there was a way up. In Luke 5:19 we read, "*And when they could not find how they might bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the housetop and let him down with his bed through the tiling into the midst before Jesus.*" I like that word, "*and when they could not find how, they went up on the housetop.*" When men are sold on the idea that *Christ is able*, there must be a way. They might have said, "*Well it looks like this isn't the time;*" or "*It can't be done today.*" But *no* – they have started with this man and they are not giving up until the work is done. So, up on the roof they went.

Mark's Gospel tells us that they broke up the roof. Picture, if you will, these doctors of the Law, sitting in the house listening to Jesus, and suddenly the plaster begins to fall on their heads. And looking up, they see men tearing up the roof, and then when the hole was big enough for a stretcher, picture their consternation when four men start to lower down a paralyzed man. Surely, they must have thought, what an undignified way to come to church; what an unorthodox way to enter a building.

But we read in verse 20, "*And when He (that is, Jesus) saw their faith ...*" There it is – these four men had faith that could be seen; it was an active, energetic conviction, that expressed itself in this act of enthusiasm. "*And when Jesus saw their faith...*"

Perhaps not one of these men thought much about their faith, perhaps not one of them had enough faith to see this thing through, but when four of them *put their faith together*, and then put their legs, and arms together, they found it sufficient for this hopeless paralytic.

Our theme is *the Works of Jesus*, and this is the way He works in our time – to meet our need. This paralytic had two great burdens; the *burden of sin*, and *the burden of sickness*. But, on the day when four men stayed with him until he was brought into the presence of the Master, he lost both burdens at the feet of Jesus.

Thus, the theme song of this broadcast is *Tell Me The Story Of Jesus*.

Tell me the story of Jesus,
Write on my heart every word;
Tell me the story most precious,
Sweetest that ever was heard.
Tell how the angels in chorus,
Sang as they welcomed His birth,
"Glory to God in the highest!
Peace and good tidings to earth."

Fasting alone in the desert,
Tell of the days that are past,
How for our sins He was tempted,
Yet was triumphant at last.
Tell of the years of His labor,
Tell of the sorrow He bore;
He was despised and afflicted,
Homeless, rejected and poor.

Tell of the cross where they nailed Him,
Writhing in anguish and pain;
Tell of the grave where they laid Him,
Tell how He liveth again.
Love in that story so tender,
Clearer than ever I see;
Stay, let me weep while you whisper,
"Love paid the ransom for me."

Tell how He's gone back to heaven,
Up to the right hand of God:
How He is there interceding
While on this earth we must trod.
Tell of the sweet Holy Spirit
He has poured out from above;
Tell how He's coming in glory
For all the saints of His love.

Refrain:

Tell me the story of Jesus,
Write on my heart every word;
Tell me the story most precious,
Sweetest that ever was heard.

[by Frances J. Crosby 1880]

WORKS OF JESUS – Salvation – Faith, Fact, Feeling

Mark 5:25-34 – “Now a certain woman had a flow of blood for twelve years,²⁶ and had suffered many things from many physicians. She had spent all that she had and was no better, but rather grew worse.²⁷ When she heard about Jesus, she came behind Him in the crowd and touched His garment.²⁸ For she said, ‘If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well.’²⁹ Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of the affliction.³⁰ And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned around in the crowd and said, ‘Who touched My clothes?’³¹ But His disciples said to Him, ‘You see the multitude thronging You, and You say, ‘Who touched Me?’³² And He looked around to see her who had done this thing.³³ But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing 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.’”

Our text is Mark 5:25-34. Last Sunday we read the story of a man who had four friends carry him to Jesus. Today we have the account of a woman who came to Christ herself, under great difficulty. And without even a prayer, her life was changed, and she was delivered from a physical burden she had carried for twelve years. This story that sets forth the three “F’s” of *Salvation* more clearly than any other I know of – *Fact, Faith, and Feeling*.

We need to be often reminded that this Gospel that we preach is a factual Gospel; based entirely on historical facts that cannot be disproven. The experience of the unnamed woman of our text illustrates several of these facts, and the very first one is the *Fact of her need*; she wasn't neurotic, she wasn't suffering from imaginary troubles, hers was a real case of chronic hemorrhage. And just here let me say that humanity's need, your need and mine, is very real; one single issue of the daily paper will prove this point, and we have nearly six thousand years of human history to add to that.

I'll read two verses now: “A certain woman had a flow of blood for twelve years, and had suffered many things from many physicians. She had spent all that she had and was no better, but rather grew worse.” This is not an indictment of the physicians of that day, but simply a statement that her case was incurable from a human point of view. Here is the *Fact that, we entirely lack the means* within ourselves heal, or to cure ourselves, of the many plagues that sin has brought on us. “Many physicians” is the word we read here, and the pages of history tell us of many physicians who have tried to cure the awful diseases of the human race, and staunch the flow of blood that sometimes runs like rivers.

“Spent all that she had.” The *Fact of cost* is self-evident: when we think of the staggering cost to our nation alone for defense, add to that the daily cost of crime, add to that the daily bill for alcoholic beverage, add to that the cost of tobacco, and then add to that again the cost in fires and accidents caused by these things, we begin to realize that sin is the most expensive of all diseases.

And then we have to add the next sad *Fact that it gets worse* – “no better, but rather grew worse...” I know that this fact is strongly disputed by those who resent the implication; those who proudly point to our social services, our welfare institutions, our care for the sick, our charitable organizations and educational systems. But actually, these things are only the thin veneer of what we are pleased to call civilization, just the whitewash that makes things look better, while all the while the real heart condition is described in the Bible as “*deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.*” (Jeremiah 17:9).

Let us read now, how the picture changes, in verse 27, “When she heard of Jesus.” Here is another fact that outweighs all other facts – *the Fact of Jesus Christ*. He is the most outstanding figure of all history, the One Person from antiquity, who has more facts to substantiate who He was, what He said and what He did and where He went than any other person on record.

“When she heard of Jesus” – nothing is said of how the information came, if she had been living in our day, she might have heard of Him on her radio or by the printed page; or she might even have gone to some church and heard about Him; though I understand there are some churches who no longer preach Jesus Christ. However, she did hear of Jesus. And enough was said to convince her that He was the answer to her great need.

Now let us see *Faith* at work, faith at its best; so many people bemoan the fact that they have so little faith, they wish they had more faith, they fondly imagine what they would do if they had great faith. But I say, *Faith is at its best in this inspired story*. This woman acted on what she had heard about Jesus, she started out to find Him, and finding Him pressed through the crowd until she touched Him.

Faith is not credulity; it is not blind acceptance of creed or doctrine; nor is it mental assent that certain things are true because they are in print. In its final analysis, *Faith is an act*, and unless and until it stirs you and me to action, it is nothing more than passive acceptance of history.

If you had asked this woman, as she pressed through the crowd, if she was sure she had the faith, she would probably say, "I'm not depending on my faith, my help is in Christ." If you had asked how she became so sure that she would be healed by touching His clothes, she would probably give that most logical of all answers, "I just know it." For *Faith gives substance to the reality of things not seen*, so that we act as though they were, and behold, they are. She said within herself, she had that deep conviction within herself, that there was healing in Christ and determined get through to Him. Hebrews 11:6 had not yet been written, but it was fulfilled in her, "*He who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*"

Well, there we have *Fact* and *Faith*. One more thing is necessary – *Feeling*. Verse 29 says, "*And she felt in her body that she was healed of the affliction.*" There was nothing imaginary about her ailment, and her healing was just as real. "*She felt in her body.*"

Let all those who want Christianity without feeling, help themselves to it. The country's full of it.

Everyone who feel their need, should also feel the cure; but not until they have put their faith to work and come to Christ.

WORKS OF JESUS – In His Own Home Town

Mark 6:1-6 – *“Then He went out from there and came to His own country, and His disciples followed Him. ²And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing Him were astonished, saying, ‘Where did this Man get these things? And what wisdom is this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands! ³Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?’ So they were offended at Him. ⁴But Jesus said to them, ‘A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house.’ ⁵Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. ⁶And He marveled because of their unbelief. Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching.”*

The theme that we have been following for several weeks is *the Works of Jesus*. And, as the Apostle John said, *“These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”* (John 20:31). And then again, the end of all our preaching is that we might realize that, *“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever”* (Hebrews 13:8).

Today's text is from the Gospel of Mark 6:1-6 – it's a disappointing incident in the ministry of Christ; one that could have been, and should have been, a most triumphant experience. The time is quite early in the public ministry of this Mighty Worker, and the place is His own home town; the place where He had been brought up – Nazareth. Those who had come to hear Him were His own friends and neighbours – people who had known Him from childhood.

Just on the surface, one would assume that this would be an ideal situation – those people all knew Him intimately; they must have had utmost confidence in Him, for He had lived a blameless life among them. But human nature is such an unpredictable thing, and for creatures with reason, we are most unreasonable. These people of Nazareth were guilty of the same faulty attitude that is so common in what we are pleased to call our "Christian country."

Because they knew of Jesus' extraordinary character and supernatural ability, these people took Him for granted. They could tell from memory all the circumstances of His birth in Bethlehem, His escape into Egypt from King Herod, and many other instances of His remarkable life. They probably admired Him as a neighbor, and had great confidence in Him as a carpenter, but failed utterly to see Him as their Messiah, their Deliverer, their Redeemer.

You will see, then, the parallel between Nazareth and the Lakehead – and, no doubt, will agree with me that Christianity is very disappointing in our community. There are those all around us who say that Christianity is a failure – the church is impotent – the ministry is weak – and the Gospel, instead of being the power of God for deliverance, is nothing more than an outdated religion, no longer suitable for an enlightened generation. Why?

Let me read Mark 6:4 for you – *“But Jesus said to them, ‘A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house.’”* There you have the explanation. These people were so close to Him, they couldn't see Him. You will remember that at His birth, wise men came from the East. They probably traveled hundreds of miles to see and worship Him, while hundreds of people in His own community never bothered their empty heads to think about Him. This is without doubt the chief reason why Christianity (and that means Christ in the Church) is making such a weak impression on the heart and conscience of this generation, in this community. You have grown up with a church within a few blocks or a few miles at most, where you could attend any time you please, with the result that too often you are pleased to ignore it altogether. It is a dangerous thing to take vital issues for granted, without investigation and confirmation.

Most people who argue that we have too many churches, couldn't tell you how many we have, nor what they are all working for, they don't know that the total seating capacity of places of worship in this community wouldn't accommodate half the population if some national calamity should occur and people rise up and say, "Let us go to the house of God." These people at Nazareth resented the authority by

which Christ spoke to them, and that He challenged them to really believe their own Scriptures (which they had memorized as children), and accept the unanswerable conclusion that He indeed was their only hope.

(This is supposed to be a sermon on the works of Christ, but instead, it's becoming an explanation why they are so limited, so feeble and so seldom seen.)

Now let's read verse 5, "*And He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them.*" Notice that phrase, "*He could do no mighty work there.*" He had as much power in Nazareth as He had in Capernaum; but He could do no mighty work. There is one bright spot, however, in this disappointing story. He laid His hands on a few sick folk and healed them. Thank God, there are a few, even in these days of unbelief, who have felt the hand of the Master. He has touched them, He has healed them, He has saved them, He has changed their lives.

In its final analysis, Christ can only do for us what we will let Him do, and believe Him for. And it is mockery to profess admiration for His teaching and reject His authority. Christ marveled at their unbelief. There was no excuse for it. They had overwhelming evidence that He was their Messiah. And now, nearly two thousand years later, even more evidence has accumulated that the hope of the world *is* found in Jesus Christ. Your community may not be ready to receive Christ as LORD, but what about *you*?

There may be little evidence of the power of Christ in your neighborhood, but your life would be a good place for Him to start. *He is willing. Are you?*

WORKS OF JESUS – A Widow's Son Raised from the Dead

Luke 7:11-16 *"Now it happened, the day after, that He went into a city called Nain; and many of His disciples went with Him, and a large crowd. ¹²And when He came near the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the city was with her. ¹³When the LORD saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, 'Do not weep.' ¹⁴Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried him stood still. And He said, 'Young man, I say to you, arise.' ¹⁵So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother. ¹⁶Then fear came upon all, and they glorified God, saying, 'A great prophet has risen up among us'; and, 'God has visited His people.'"*

Three times, during Christ's public ministry, a dead person was raised to life again; the daughter of Jairus, about twelve years of age; the brother of Mary and Martha, whose name was Lazarus; and this account of the only son of a widow in the little town of Nain. I'll read Luke 7:12 – *"Now when He came near the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the city was with her."*

The scene is an Eastern funeral procession, with a grief-stricken widow, following the bier of her only son. Neighbours and friends have joined together to do the only thing they can do, "weep with those who weep." It's a picture, in miniature, of the whole human family, traveling to the cemetery. As *LONGFELLOW* once said,

Art is long, and time is fleeting,
And our hearts though stout and brave,
Still like muffled drums are beating
Funeral marches to the grave.

If we could listen in to all the sounds from human voices that rise from this earth today, and hear it all as God hears it – the voice of weeping and sorrow would completely drown out the songs of joy. Some are weeping because others have died, others are weeping for the sorrows of living; but all are marching as fast as the wheels of time will allow, to the place of burial. Friends, who have come to offer sympathy, are well-meaning, but helpless. The world has many comforters with their well-meaning, but useless, advice. Some say, "Keep your chin up! Don't let these things get you down." Others say, "Cheer up! Everything will turn out all right in the end." Others again, sing for us, "Beautiful isle of somewhere." But I read some time ago, that the man who wrote, "Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag and smile, smile, smile" committed suicide. Evidently, he didn't have a kit bag big enough for all his troubles.

Well, this is a gloomy picture; but it's true, nevertheless. But here's why we call the preacher a *"minister of the Gospel"* – it means, *"a servant who brings good news."* And the *"good news"* in this story is that Jesus met the procession. Evidently, He did so on purpose. In Luke's account, it sounds as though that was the real purpose of His going to this city of Nain. And certainly, the only reason that brought Him down from the realms of eternal glory was that He might contact those who are traveling to the grave, and bring life and immortality to light through the Gospel.

The explanation for this act of power (verse 13) – *"And when Jesus saw her He had compassion on her."* He had compassion on her, *"and said to her, weep not."* We read in Scripture of a time to come when God Himself shall wipe all tears from our eyes; and in this sacred story we see how this will be done, and why Jesus told the mother not to weep.

Perhaps her neighbours had said the same thing, but this was different, for here stands One who is ready, willing and able to remove the cause of grief.

Here the Prince of Life meets the angel of death, and with one touch of His hand and a word from His mouth the enemy of the human race is overcome; the chains of death are broken; and the king of terrors is put to flight. This miracle in Luke chapter seven is not only an act of compassion toward this poor widow, but also gives historical evidence that this Christ, whom we serve and whose Gospel we preach, is able for every circumstance of life, and will ultimately and eternally conquer even death itself.

– Read 1 Corinthians 15:25-26 – *"For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death."*

- Then read 1 John 5:11-12 – *“And this is the record: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.”*
- Then read Revelation 21:4 – *“And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”*

Now, let us go back to the city of Nain. The funeral procession has stopped, and Compassion Incarnate summons His infinite power to dry a widow's tears. The inspired record says, *“And He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried him stood still. And He said, ‘Young man, I say to you, arise.’”*

It was around this time that Jesus had said in His preaching, *“Verily, verily, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live”* (John 5:25). And now, the boy in the coffin hears His voice – *“And he who was dead sat up and began to speak.”* Amen!

I wonder what he said? I wonder what his mother said? The 16th verse tells what the neighbours said. *“They glorified God, saying that a great prophet is risen up among us, and that God has visited His people.”*

Just as we leave the air, let me remind you that this Jesus, whom we preach, stands ready to minister to you in *your* sorrow.

He does not always raise the dead to life again, but He always dries the tears, and gives good reason to hope that *through His death and resurrection we may enter a life that is abundant and eternal.*

WORKS OF JESUS – Feeding Five Thousand

Luke 9:12-17 – *“When the day began to wear away, the twelve came and said to Him, ‘Send the multitude away, that they may go into the surrounding towns and country, and lodge and get provisions; for we are in a deserted place here.’¹³ But He said to them, ‘You give them something to eat.’ And they said, ‘We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless we go and buy food for all these people.’¹⁴ For there were about five thousand men. Then He said to His disciples, ‘Make them sit down in groups of fifty.’¹⁵ And they did so, and made them all sit down.¹⁶ Then He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the multitude.¹⁷ So they all ate and were filled, and twelve baskets of the leftover fragments were taken up by them.”*

The story of the feeding of five thousand people with five loaves and two fishes is one of the few miracles that are recorded in all four Gospels. Evidently, there are lessons in this event that everyone who reads the Bible shouldn't miss. For the Scripture setting today, we'll go to Luke 9:12-17. *“When the day began to wear away, the twelve came and said to Him, ‘Send the multitude away, that they may go into the surrounding towns and country, and lodge and get provisions; for we are in a deserted place here.’”*

This is the story of a great open air meeting, where thousands of people had spent most of the day listening to the words of Jesus. All afternoon He had fed them richly on the Bread of Truth, the very Word of very God, and now at the close of the day, the disciples of Jesus came to Him and said, send the people away so that they might buy themselves food for the body. Jesus said, *“You give them something to eat.”*

The first and evident lesson here is that Jesus Christ is just as much concerned about the physical as the spiritual need; but spiritual comes first. Modern philosophy is: first feed the body, and then look after the soul. But as a rule, the more people have of this world's good, the less interest they have in things eternal. Well, this congregation had listened to Jesus all afternoon.

(Most people nowadays prefer 10-minute sermons, and for any minister to carry on for more than 45 minutes, is to go beyond all endurance. Someone has said, People in our day like to go to little churchettes, to hear little sermonettes, so that they can be little christianettes – abbreviated editions of the real thing.)

After Jesus announced that all this crowd were staying for supper, the disciples took stock of their supplies and found scarcely enough for one. Five loaves and two fishes, but what are they among so many? And isn't it the truth that the church's resources are, by comparison to the need, so utterly inadequate. And so, because of the big things that we cannot do, and the little things that we will not do, we go half way between and do nothing.

But Jesus prayed a blessing, and bade them all sit down. This *“little”* that we so often despise, is never despised of the LORD who first gave it to us. All down through the age God has been pleased to keep human resources far below minimum requirements, that He might demonstrate His Almightyness, and all-sufficiency.

- Remember, it was a shepherd with a staff who led Israel out of Egyptian bondage, in spite of all the opposition of Pharaoh.
- Remember, it was a humble farmer boy by the name of Gideon with three hundred men with earthen pitchers and torches that completely put to rout the mighty host of the Midianites. It was a shepherd boy with a stone and a sling who met Goliath of Gath in the valley of Elah, and overcame him.
- Remember, it was with 12 quite ordinary men, from ordinary walks of life, that Jesus set His mighty Gospel in motion – which has changed the lives of millions and altered the whole course of history.

But notice, Jesus took these loaves and fishes into His hands – they must *first* be put into His hands, the owner must relinquish all rights of possession. Notice now what Jesus did (Luke 9:16) *“He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them.”* In other words, He asked the God of Creation to touch these common elements with His mighty power and make them sufficient. Nothing can be done for the good of men unless God blesses it. And His blessing gives human weakness a divine power. That's what the Apostle Paul meant when he said *“When I am weak, then I am strong . . . I can do*

all things through Christ who strengthens me." (2 Corinthians 12:10; Philippians 4:13).

The next thing is the breaking. *"He blessed and broke."* And I can't help but be glad that before He breaks us, He blesses. Your life and mine will never amount to anything until, and unless Christ breaks us; but He always blesses before He breaks.

This mighty miracle that took place on a hillside outside the little town of Bethsaida, is a preview of what is going to happen – first to Jesus, then to His disciples. We read in John's Gospel that after this miracle Jesus preached that great sermon on the *Bread of Life*, in which He said *"I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."* (John 6:35).

This same Jesus who took these loaves and fishes and blessed them and broke them, and gave to the hungry, a few months later said to His disciples in that upper room, *"Take, eat; this is My body, which is broken for you"* (1 Corinthians 11:24). And since that *breaking* on Calvary's Cross, there has been enough of Christ, and enough in Christ, to satisfy the needs and heart-hunger of every man and woman, of every boy and girl, of every race, of every age. And the message of the Gospel still goes out today: "Sit down at God's own table while the disciples of the LORD of Heaven and earth offer you Bread; which, if you eat, will cause you to live forever."

For this is Bread that a man may eat thereof and not die.

WORKS OF JESUS – Healing A Syrophoenician Woman

Mark 7:24-30 – *“From there He arose and went to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And He entered a house and wanted no one to know it, but He could not be hidden. ²⁵For a woman whose young daughter had an unclean spirit heard about Him, and she came and fell at His feet. ²⁶The woman was a Greek, a Syrophoenician by birth, and she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter. ²⁷But Jesus said to her, ‘Let the children be filled first, for it is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs.’ ²⁸And she answered and said to Him, ‘Yes, LORD, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children’s crumbs.’ ²⁹Then He said to her, ‘For this saying go your way; the demon has gone out of your daughter.’ ³⁰And when she had come to her house, she found the demon gone out, and her daughter lying on the bed.”*

The healing of the daughter of the Syrophoenician woman is the Bible-picture of the *Works of Jesus* that we want to examine today is the text. The location is somewhere in the suburbs of the twin cities, Tyre and Sidon; notorious for their wickedness, being seaport towns. Verse 24 says Jesus *“entered a house and wanted no one to know it.”* Doubtless, both He and His disciples needed rest and quietness. But a certain woman whose daughter had an unclean spirit heard of Him and came and fell at His feet.

The woman was a Greek – from the Syrophoenician nation. I suppose her neighbours called her a foreigner, and the fashionable Jews of that day referred to such people as dogs. How thankful we ought to be that Christ ignores the narrow, bigoted and stupid racial pride counting us all as foreigners, that He might have mercy on us all. For you know, anyone who is not in the Family of God is an alien, a stranger, an outcast, and a foreigner.

I think that's one reason why Jesus was born in the center of the habitable part of the earth, sometimes referred to by historians as the bridge of the world. Referred to in our day as the “Middle East;” where the Orient meets with the Occident, where people are not just black or white, but mostly brown.

Notice now, that this woman comes boldly into the presence of this Man who is a Jew – not because of her own need, but for the need of her daughter. Scripture doesn't tell us what the nature of this young girl's condition was; it simply tells us the cause – an unclean spirit. Here is an early example of the fervency and potency of a mother's prayers – an early encouragement to all mothers everywhere to come boldly to the Throne of Grace and seek an interview with the great Physician – for He is able.

Reading the account in Matthew's Gospel, chapter 15, we see that the disciples of Jesus were entirely unsympathetic, just as heartless as the average church member of today. Not only were they indifferent to this woman's need, but irritated because of her fervent cry for help. They said to Jesus, *“Send her away.”*

Did the followers of Jesus not know or understand the real reason for the Saviour's Advent into this world? It seems that they following Him for their own benefit, and utterly indifferent to the need of others.

I've often wondered what would happen to some of us if, while we were praying, we overheard another Christian praying, “LORD, send her away, don't listen to her cry, don't bother with her, she isn't important.” I've known people to stop praying altogether, even stop going to church, for things much less insulting than this case. I've known people, and you have too, who say, “Well, if that's the kind of people who are Christians, and profess to be followers of Jesus, I'll have nothing to do with it.” But we mustn't interpret the Christ by His followers; we must interpret His followers by the unchangeable Christ. After all, why should a person's attitude toward Christ change, with a change-in-attitude toward His followers? Why should anyone blame Christ for the failure of anyone who obviously doesn't truly understand Him? Why take it out on God? and make His cause suffer, because of a misunderstanding with one of His children. Why be lost because some seem determined to go astray? Remember that if you hide behind a hypocrite, then that person must be closer to Heaven than you are.

Well, this mother kept on praying. And now comes the most discouraging part of all. He answered her not a word. No response. No sign of interest in her case. I suppose, the hardest thing we have to contend with is the silence of God toward our praying. If He hears, and if He cares, then why doesn't He act? Why do some people seem to get their prayers answered so quickly, and others just wait? These are questions

that we don't have the answer for as yet. But this woman gives us the proper course to take. *Just keep on praying.* Pray until every obstacle is out of the way, until every doubt is buried, until every wrong motive is brought to light until every part of self is on the altar. Pray until the fire of faith burns bright and clear. Pray until there is no thought of turning back, or giving up. Pray until you don't care what the disciples of Jesus do or say – *your eyes are on the LORD.*

Finally, the answer came, but it would have sent most of us away in a rage. Jesus said, *"It is not good to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs."* But this woman knew what most of us have still to learn, that any answer from God is a favorable answer.

As COWPER said, "Behind a frowning Providence He hides a smiling face."

A reply that would have deeply insulted a person with pride, becomes, to the truly humble, the very assurance that help is on the way. She accepted the inference that she wasn't worthy, and had no just claim; but she only asked for mercy, and mercy needs no other argument.

Jesus said to her, *"O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire."* And her daughter was healed from that very hour." (Matthew 15:28).

This woman received the desire of her heart; and Christ also received what He desired – the evidence of and unshakeable faith. *PRAY ON!*

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never failing skill
He treasures up His bright designs
And works His sov'reign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy and shall break
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the LORD by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning Providence
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flow'r.

Blind unbelief is sure to err
And scan His work in vain;
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.

[by William Cowper 1774]

WORKS OF JESUS – On the Mount of Transfiguration

Luke 9:27-35 – Jesus said, *“But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God.”* ²⁸*Now it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, that He took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray.* ²⁹*As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening.* ³⁰*And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah,* ³¹*who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.* ³²*But Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep; and when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him.* ³³*Then it happened, as they were parting from Him, that Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah”—not knowing what he said.* ³⁴*While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were fearful as they entered the cloud.* ³⁵*And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!”*

This is the account of a most extraordinary experience of Jesus and three of His disciples – Peter, James, and John. The place is a mountain where these four had gone to pray. . . And right at the outset, let me say that when anyone is invited to go with Christ, to the place of prayer, great things are in the making – great forces are set in motion – and a fresh revelation of the Son of God is waiting. Both Matthew and Mark tell us that the mountain they resorted to was high. Altitude is important, you know, if you want to really get in touch with God. And that doesn't mean that you will be closer to God on the top of Mount Mackay than at the bottom; but you will have to rise above the level of the average earth-bound materialist who thinks only of temporal things.

I notice that this story is given in each of the three Gospels. This experience follows a promise of Jesus to His disciples that some of those standing near, would not taste of death until they had seen the Kingdom of God. And then about 8 days later, He took Peter, James, and John up a high mountain to pray. *“As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening. And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah.”*

Here we have, in miniature, a very real picture of the Kingdom of God. The central figure is the glorified Son of God, clothed in garments of glory that outshine the sun. All the weakness and infirmity of the human form, transformed, and transfigured. I am reminded of Jesus' prayer recorded in the Book of John, where He said, *“Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me.”* (John 17:24). Here indeed, is an early preview of the Kingdom of God. A confirmation of the claims of Jesus to be the Son of God, and a visual demonstration to these disciples that this despised Galilean is worthy of their worship and has a right to their obedience.

But what about those two men who were talking with Him? The record says they were Moses and Elijah.

Nearly 1,500 years have gone by since Moses said goodbye, went up Mount Nebo in the land of Moab, and gave up his spirit to his Maker. And God's own hand, in that lonely land, laid him in the grave.

About 900 years have passed since Elijah, with his friend Elisha, went for a walk, and God's messengers came, and caught Elijah away in a whirlwind. But here they are:

- Moses representing the Law, and Elijah, the Prophets;
- Moses, a ‘type’ of those who enter the Kingdom by death; Elijah, a ‘type’ of those who will enter by translation. As we read in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, *“Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the LORD in the air. And thus we shall always be with the LORD.”*

Notice again, that Elijah is still Elijah, and Moses is still Moses – their personality have not changed. That's how it is in the Kingdom of God. The question is often asked, "Will we know our loved ones in Heaven? Will we recognize others in that world of eternal glory?" Evidently, we will. For Jesus said that Abraham and Isaac and Jacob will be there.

Now, let us come a little closer and listen in on the conversation. What are they talking about? Luke says they *“spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.”* (Luke 9:31). Notice that His death is spoken of as an accomplishment. And as representatives from the glory world, Elijah and Moses are tremendously interested. Their place for eternity can only be secure if Christ wins the victory at Calvary.

You see, it's by death that He will *“destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage”* (Hebrews 2:15). We can't know all they said, but enough is given to show that the death of Christ and the results that come from His victory, are of supreme interest to those who've passed from time to eternity. Scriptures indicates that even when time is finally passed away, there, in the midst of the Throne, is *the Lamb as it had been slain*.

Now let us look at Peter, James, and John; verse 32 says they were *“heavy with sleep; and when they were fully awake, they saw His glory.”* Here is a picture of the disciples of Jesus, asleep when they should have been praying. But I'm sure they were so glad that they wakened in time to see His glory.

I believe that these are days when God wants to show His people the glory of His Son, Jesus Christ. He wants to emphasize the importance of His death, burial and resurrection. He wants His people to catch a glimpse of the ineffable glory that has become the eternal home of those who trusted in the redeeming work of the world's only Redeemer.

“And when they were fully awake, they saw His glory.” Here is an explanation, and a prescription. This experience was never forgotten. Thirty years later Peter wrote, *“For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our LORD Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.”* (2 Peter 1:16).

Here is a true picture of the Kingdom of God, offered to all who will accept Heaven's KING, our LORD Jesus Christ.

WORKS OF JESUS – Ten Lepers Cleansed

Luke 17:12-19 – *“Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. And they lifted up their voices and said, ‘Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!’ So when He saw them, He said to them, ‘Go, show yourselves to the priests.’ And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. So Jesus answered and said, ‘Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?’ And He said to him, ‘Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well.”*

There is much to be said on this subject on this Thanksgiving Sunday, and much that will have to be left unsaid. Jesus asked two questions, following one of the greatest miracles of His earthly ministry. . .

The setting is an unnamed village in Galilee or Samaria, where *“ten lepers met Him, who stood afar off.”* Their common misery had drawn them together – Jews and Samaritans. They were different in racial background, disposition and culture; but they had one thing in common which overstepped all these boundaries, blotted out all barriers, reduced them to poverty, and made social outcasts of them all.

They are fitting ‘types’ of us all; for, though we differ from one another in so many ways, yet there is one thing that ties us all together, whether we be Jew or Gentile, Barbarian or Greek, male or female – *spiritual leprosy*. The Bible calls it sin, and it has fastened itself upon each of us, making us all outcasts and beggars, as far as the Family of God is concerned. Fortunately, (and we can say, providentially), Jesus came to our village, to our town, to our city, or wherever it was we first heard His Word.

Now, let us look at these ten men in Luke 17, and see how far we can go with them, or how it is that we resemble them, besides the incidence of spiritual leprosy. *“They lifted up their voices and said, ‘Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!’”* Here we have a study on prayer in its most primitive form, unstudied and unrehearsed. Their very need gave both eloquence and fervency to their petition. Again we see that their common need made them united in their desire for help from Jesus.

(This is one of the most hopeful signs of spiritual awakening in our country, and in our community. People who have been separated by denominational barriers for years are at last becoming so conscious of our desperate condition, that they are meeting together for no other purpose other than to pray for help. There will be united prayer meetings held in various places this week, and next in Port Arthur. Why not inquire and attend?)

Notice again, that they *“lifted up their voices.”* They were not ashamed to be heard and seen in an attitude of prayer. Here we have no casual, formal repetitions; but they cried out from the very anguish of their hearts, *“Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!”*

Some accused that fervent English preacher, ROWLAND HILL, of being too noisy and emotional in his preaching and praying; but one day, as he was walking along the road, he heard faint cries for help. Following the sound, he came to a place where a man was nearly buried in a gravel pit. This godly minister realized that he would need help if the man was to be rescued in time, and so he lifted up his voice and with all his might, summoned help from a nearby farm. That night in his preaching, he remarked how that no one thought him too emotional or fervent that afternoon, trying to rescue a man from a gravel pit, and yet people were complaining because of his great concern to rescue men and women from the pit of hell.

This afternoon, I'm not trying to prove that prayer, to be effective, must be loud. But experience proves that most people, when they are dead in earnest, usually show it. The Bible does say, *“The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”* (James 5:16).

Well, these ten lepers lifted up their voice and cried for mercy. *“So when Jesus saw them, He said to them, ‘Go, show yourselves to the priests.’”* The Law of Moses required that when anyone was healed of leprosy, they must come before the priest. And after examination, they could return to their home and family. These ten men evidently took Jesus at His word, and resolutely turned toward the nearest priest. And the Bible says that, *“as they went, they were cleansed.”* Here is where much must be left unsaid, to

get to the Thanksgiving part of the story.

Verse 15 says that one of them, *"When he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan."*

Here is a man whose Thanksgiving is just as fervent as his petition. With a loud voice he asked for mercy and with a loud voice he praised God for that mercy.

But now, these two questions that we started out to deal with. *"Jesus said, Were there not ten cleansed?"* In other words, didn't *all* who called for help, receive help? *"But where are the nine?"* Yes, where are they? Only one out of ten who received mercy at the hands of the LORD is found at the feet of Jesus giving thanks.

In fact, it's even becoming bad form to kneel anymore in the place of prayer . . . Out of ten! And he a Samaritan!.. He wasn't "smart" like the Jews; he wasn't "educated" like the Greeks; he wasn't "refined" like the Scribes and Pharisees; but, in the sight of God, he had something that was worth more than all the learning, than all the culture, than all the refinement of civilization. He had a grateful heart that overflowed with praises and he wasn't afraid to let others hear him in worship and adoration.

One out of ten... *I would like to be that one, wouldn't you?*

WORKS OF JESUS – Zacchaeus

Luke 19:1-10 – *“Then Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. ² Now behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. ³ And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature. ⁴ So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way. ⁵ And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, ‘Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.’ ⁶ So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully. ⁷ But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, ‘He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner.’ ⁸ Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the LORD, ‘Behold, LORD, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.’ ⁹ And Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; ¹⁰ for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.’”*

Our text today, on the *Works of Jesus*, is the account of the conversion of Zacchaeus – found in Luke chapter 19. We are introduced to him in verse 2 – name, occupation, and financial standing. Verse 3 tells of his desire, and his impediment. Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus; but couldn't, because he was too short.

The story of Zacchaeus is so familiar that it has lost its meaning for most people; but actually, it records one of the greatest miracles in the Bible. Here we see the chief reason for Christ's Advent into this world of sin and sorrow.

And, before we go any further, let this point be emphasized above all others – that conversion (the new birth - spiritual regeneration) is a miracle far greater than any divine healing of the body. It is greater in three particulars.

- *First:* the healing of the body brings only temporary relief; sooner or later death will come. But to be born again is to partake of eternal life.
- *Second:* many times, when a physical healing occurs, one has to admit that the patient might have recovered by natural means. But science can never take credit for changing the nature of a person, or for giving him a new heart with new desires.
- *Third:* when someone is born again, he becomes a blessing to many others. Often great multitudes are turned to the LORD through one person's ministry. A physical healing, on the other hand, though it be by divine visitation, is generally of benefit only to that one person.

Note, first of all, that Zacchaeus was cut off from his own people because of his occupation. Having taken employment with the hated Roman government, he was placed in charge of taxation in all that area. He had become rich in this lucrative business. So we see, Zacchaeus had two strikes against him.

Jesus Himself said, *“How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! For 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.”* (Luke 18:24-25). That's what makes the miracle of Zacchaeus' salvation so great.

There is much preaching for the "down-and-outs"; but very little for the "up-and-outs." We have Rescue Missions on "skid row;" but none on "plush row." Yet, the only difference between the two is that one leaves rags when he dies, and the other leaves riches.

Well, Zacchaeus was burdened by wealth and was little of stature, reminding us of Romans 3:23 – *“For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”* We are all "too short" to meet divine requirements. But this man had a desire to see Jesus. Thank God for that desire! Here was something he wanted that money couldn't buy. But if he wanted it bad enough, somehow or other it could be done.

And let me say just here, if anyone really wants to meet the Master, such a meeting will take place not many days hence. I know this is true; because Christ is just as anxious to meet that hungry heart.

Let us read on, *“So Zacchaeus ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Jesus, for He was going to pass that way.”* Note the urgency: "He ran." Note the ingenuity, and resourcefulness. God's tree gave him a height that was above all his countrymen. This was the opportunity of a lifetime; for this would be the last time Jesus passed through Jericho before He was crucified.

No doubt, Zacchaeus had *heard* about Jesus when He had visited this city at other times; but now he must *see* Him. Verse 5 says, “*And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, ‘Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.’*”

Zacchaeus was rich; but what brought the Saviour of men to him, under that Sycamore tree, was his heart-hunger, his poverty and emptiness of soul.

“*Today,*” Jesus said to Zacchaeus, “*I must abide at thy house.*” And the wonderful part of this story is that Zacchaeus “*made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully.*” There is a joy that comes only to those who receive Christ into heart and home. Money cannot buy this joy, and poverty cannot spoil it.

Zacchaeus had been an outcast from his neighbours; but now he is entertaining Royalty – even the KING of kings and LORD of lords.

As we continue reading this story, we see poor rich Zacchaeus standing up at the head of his table. Suddenly the wonder of his good fortune breaks on him, and we hear him say, “*Behold, LORD, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.*”

Here then is the miracle we spoke of at the beginning – the miracle of a changed nature. The covetous tax collector has become a generous benefactor. “*I give half of my goods to the poor*” – fourfold restitution is promised to all he had wronged.

This is the Gospel we preach; this is the type of miracles we believe in. Certainly, this is the kind of religion that is sorely needed today. It's the kind that *makes the miser open his hand; gets the gossip to talk about Jesus; makes the self-centred man to go all out for others; persuades the cheat to make restitution.* This is the miracle of the new birth. This is that supernatural work of Grace whereby “*if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.*” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

A *Promise*, a *Prayer*, and *Faith* are the principle elements that combine to bring about a miracle. I read somewhere that dynamite is composed of nitric acid and glycerine. Neither of these is explosive on its own; but when they are joined in proper proportions they form an explosive that is eight times more powerful than gunpowder. So it is with the elements that bring about a miracle. The promises of God are of no value to us unless we claim them and make them the centre of our petitions. Likewise, faith must have a promise to go with it, or it will accomplish nothing.

“*Without the shedding of blood, is no remission...*” (Hebrews 9:22). I understand that the word 'remission' comes from the same Greek word as our more familiar term 'forgiveness,' and literally means 'to send off' or 'take away.' That is, to send off or take away the sins from the sinner. Divine forgiveness, then, is not excusing the sinner for his sins, it is *taking away* his sins. Now, our text says there is no remission, or carrying away of our sins, without the shedding of blood.

Sin is a moral disease of the blood, and since the blood has to do with every part of our being, sin is carried “*from the crown of our head to the sole of our feet*” as we read in Isaiah 1:5.

But there is the miracle of the new birth – in Christ, we can become new! Praise God!

WORKS OF JESUS – Healing A Man Born Blind

John 9:1-11 – *“Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, ‘Master, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’ Jesus answered, ‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.’ When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. And He said to him, ‘Go, wash in the pool of Siloam’ (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing...”*

Here we read the story of the healing of a man “born blind” – a man who had never seen the light. He had never beheld the beauty of nature nor looked into his mother's face; his was a world of darkness – color had no meaning; day, the same as night. All he knew of the world of light was what his friends had told him – the rest was left to his imagination. The disciples said to Jesus, *“Master, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”* They were interested in the *cause*; Jesus, about the *cure*. The blindness was not caused by the man's sin, nor his parents' sin, Jesus told them, *“... but that the works of God should be revealed in him.”* In other words, this was another opportunity, pre-arranged both as to time and place, in which God should manifest His power through His Son.

Next, Jesus made this profound statement: *“I am the Light of the world.”* He was about to demonstrate that fact by bringing light into this man's darkness, showing the work of God in him. It was the same as when He said to Mary and Martha, *“I am the Resurrection and the Life.”* He demonstrated that fact by calling Lazarus, their brother, from the grave after he had been dead four days. Darkness is a natural state; light is supernatural.

In Genesis 1:2, 3 we read: *“And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.”* Then we read in John 1:4-5 and 9: *“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it... That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.”*

Let us observe, in this account of the healing of this blind man, how light approaches darkness. *Light* (that is, Jesus) takes the initiative. *Light* seeks out the blind man with the intention to manifest the works of God in him. Notice: the man is not condemned for being blind (how could he help it if he was born that way?); neither were his parents condemned (they could not be held responsible for passing on to their offspring such an affliction).

Do you know the Bible teaches that all men have been born blind? That's why Jesus said to Nicodemus, *“Unless a man is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God”* (John 3:3). That's why the LORD Jesus said to Saul on the road to Damascus that He would send him to the Gentiles *“to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins...”* (Acts 26:18). That's why, these words of rejoicing:

“Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins...” (Colossians 1:12-14).

Well, let us stand with Jesus' disciples, as He ministers to this man “born blind.”

“When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. And He said to him, ‘Go, wash in the pool of Siloam’ (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing.” (John 9:6-7)

Let me again repeat this lesson: Human obedience to the Divine Word opens the door for God's Almighty power to meet our need. The blind man's act of obedience became an act of faith. The healing was not in the clay, nor in the water, nor in the washing of the eyes. His faith was in the words of Jesus –

not in something he had invented, or in what the neighbours had said, but in Jesus' words. There was no arguing – no delaying – no altering – no faltering. He went to the pool in darkness, and came back in the light. I like to think what a wonderful walk that must have been, as he found his way back home to his parents and friends – the infirmity of a lifetime taken away.

The rest of chapter 9 is taken up with the various reactions of his parents, friends, and religious leaders, to this supernatural act of God. We'll have to pass it all by, stopping only for another minute at verses 35-38. This man was put out of the synagogue for believing in Jesus, whom he had never seen. But Jesus came to him and asked a question, upon which hangs his eternal destiny, *"Do you believe in the Son of God?" He answered and said, "Who is He, LORD, that I may believe in Him?" And Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you." Then he said, "LORD, I believe!" And he worshiped Him."*

From this last verse, we learn that if we will acknowledge our blindness – the blindness of sin – He will take it away. If not, there can never be a cure.

WORKS OF JESUS – The Source of Jesus' Power

Luke 4:14 *"Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region"*

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

John 6:38 *"For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."*

Before we go any further in our study of the *Works of Jesus*, let us consider, why it was that *"no man ever spoke like this man;"* and how come *"even the unclean spirits obeyed"* His *"authority and power."*

1. *Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit.*

Luke 4:14 marks the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus – mighty Worker and peerless Preacher – and also explains His outstanding personality. *"And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region."*

You will notice that "Spirit" is spelled with a capital "S" – indicating that the empowering Cause and Source of Jesus' ability – the reason for His authority was the Holy Spirit of God.

Remember the testimony of John the Baptist in John 3:34: *"He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure."* That is to say, Jesus Christ was given the right, without reservation or restriction, to draw on the infinite resources of Almighty God, through the Holy Spirit, for everything He would say and do. That's why the title "CHRIST" is joined with the name "JESUS." The word "CHRIST" means, *the Anointed One*, one who is clothed with the Spirit of power. Jesus was conceived by, taught by, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. His life is a "Pattern-Life."

Jesus Himself declared that He is the Head of a new creation (John 3:5): *"Unless one is born ... of the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God;"* and it is the certain privilege of every child of God to be taught of the Spirit. Jesus promised His disciples: *"When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth."* (see John 16:13).

That it is the *privilege* and *duty* of every believer to be empowered by the Spirit is evident – because (again, it is written – Acts 1:8; Luke 24:49): *"You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you;"* and *"tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."* The great *cause* and *Reason* for the supernatural wisdom and power of Jesus Christ was the unlimited supply of the Holy Spirit, filling Him, teaching Him. But two other factors must not be overlooked in our investigation.

2. *Jesus Prayed Every Day.*

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

One derives great good from a study of the prayer-life of Jesus Christ; but it is enough, for our theme today, to point out that *though He was endowed with the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus did not work without prayer.* Rather, the Holy Spirit enabled Him – both to pray for power, and to do those mighty works.

It is one thing to enter into an experience of blessing, but quite another to capitalize on that experience and enjoy lasting blessings. Let me say, if any spiritual experience doesn't do something for your prayer-life, it will be speedily lost.

No one can pray properly until, and unless, he has been converted; and no one can pray like one who is filled with the Holy Spirit. In short, it is prayer that brings us to God; and through prayer our relationship with Him is daily enriched and anointed, enabling us to pray as we ought.

"And in the morning rising up a great while before day..." This new day, for Jesus, would be a busy one with much expected of Him – many people coming to Him for help and comfort, healing and

deliverance. He must not fail them, He must be prepared. His only source of renewed power and wisdom – the supply of the Spirit which comes upon Him even as He prays.

3. Jesus Practiced Perfect Obedience.

“I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me” (John 6:38).

- Through the anointing of the Spirit, Jesus was enabled;
- Through prayer, He was instructed;
- Through obedience, His Father's Will was given perfect expression in power and wisdom.

Power, Prayer, and Obedience make a threefold strand of experience, mighty through God, to do His will. There is no substitute for obedience. That's why Jesus taught us to pray, *“Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.”*

To know that Will, let us look to Jesus, *“the Author and Finisher of our Faith.”* (Hebrews 12:2).

Just before we leave the air, let me read John 6:29: *“Jesus answered and said to them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.’”*

WORKS OF JESUS – Two Communities

Mark 3:10 – *“For He healed many, so that as many as had afflictions pressed about Him to touch Him.”*

Mark 6:5 – *“He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them.”*

Here we read the inspiring record of a great crowd of people in one community, enthusiastically gathering together 'round the Person of our LORD Jesus Christ: *“For He had healed many; so that as many as had afflictions pressed about Him to touch Him.”*

Then, in Mark 6:5, we read these disappointing words of when Jesus was in another community: *“He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them.”*

The first meeting took place on the shores of the Sea of Galilee; evidently, in the early part of Jesus' public ministry. A tremendous interest had been awakened in that area. People by the hundreds were thronging Him and His disciples every day. They couldn't even take time out to eat, so eager were the people for the words and works of this young Man. Psychologists might have called it mass hysteria; religionists, emotionalism; worldlings, superstition. But these great meetings did for people what no psychologist, religionist, or worldling has ever been able to duplicate. The power of God was manifested in miracles of healing as never before.

Jesus' friends said, "He is beside Himself." They wanted to take Him away from the multitude until things quieted down. Many people today are like that. They rejoice in great and enthusiastic crowds at the race track, the football field, or even at wrestling matches; but think enthusiasm at religious meetings is bad form, bordering on fanaticism. Sports enthusiasts are called fans; religious enthusiasts, fanatics.

No matter; the people in this Gospel account got help from Jesus that no one else could give them. And until . . . , and unless we show as much interest and enthusiasm for eternal things as we do for things of time, religion will continue to be to us a dead and lifeless form – like a body without the spirit, a corpse without life, belief without conviction. It will be a burden, instead of buoyancy; ceremony, instead of celebration.

Crowds came to Jesus from Jerusalem and Idumea, from beyond the Jordan, from Tyre and Sidon. They sought Him eagerly – and the Scripture records: *“As many as touched Him were made perfectly whole.”*

An old hymn says: *At even when the sun was set, The sick around Him lay. What burdens they did bring to Him! With what joy they went away!*

At even, ere the sun was set,
The sick, O LORD, around Thee lay;
O, with how many pains they met!
O, with what joy they went away!

Once more 'tis eventide, and we,
Oppressed with various ills, draw near;
What if Thyself we cannot see?
We know that Thou art ever near.

O Savior Christ, our woes dispel;
For some are sick, and some are sad;
And some have never loved Thee well,
And some have lost the love they had.

And some are pressed with worldly care
And some are tried with sinful doubt;
And some such grievous passions tear,
That only Thou canst cast them out.

And some have found the world is vain,
Yet from the world they break not free;
And some have friends who give them pain,
Yet have not sought a friend in Thee.

And none, O LORD, have perfect rest,
For none are wholly free from sin;
And they who fain would serve Thee best
Are conscious most of wrong within.

O Savior Christ, Thou too art man;
Thou has been troubled, tempted, tried;
Thy kind but searching glance can scan
The very wounds that shame would hide.

Thy touch has still its ancient power.
No word from Thee can fruitless fall;
Hear, in this solemn evening hour,
And in Thy mercy heal us all.

[by Henry Twells – 1868]

Let me remind you that the aim of all Gospel preaching is to persuade people that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever – according to Hebrews 13:8. Oftentimes, the discovery of this great fact stirs entire communities; sending people to throng the place of prayer; holding them spell-bound by the unsearchable riches of Christ, which are set before them by God's messengers, aflame with holy enthusiasm.

Let us turn now to our second text, Mark 6:5: *“He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them.”* This is speaking of Jesus, the same Mighty Worker of

chapter three. It's the same province of Galilee. The message is the same. The power is the same. Jesus' willingness to meet everyone's need is just the same. The only thing different is the community.

Isn't it strange, how some communities respond so readily to the preaching of the Gospel and others do not? For instance, the communities of Thessalonica and Berea . . . When the Apostle Paul first came to the Thessalonians, they rioted. Paul and Silas escaped at night and went to the city of Berea where, the inspired record tells us, the people *"were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Therefore, many of them believed . . ."* (Acts 17:11-12). This explains why Jesus Christ can do mighty works in some communities and not in others.

Faulty attitudes hold even His mighty power in check; as do unreasoning prejudices, narrow bigotries, religious pride, smug complacency, and earthbound materialism.

There are many things that tie the hands of the Omnipotent One; many things that keep out of our lives the very things indispensable to our welfare. All those hindrances can be summed up in one word – unbelief. Unbelief results from a refusal to honestly investigate the claims of the Gospel, refusal to meet its conditions, and refusal to give Christ the opportunity He seeks.

"He could do no mighty works there because of their unbelief." (Matthew 13:58). The LORD Jesus Christ wants to deliver us from unbelief and bring us into fellowship with Himself. He wants to make us effective witnesses to His saving Grace.

Well, there you have the story of two communities. It could be the story of two people; one accepts, the other rejects – one is saved, the other is lost – one eagerly seeks the LORD's help, the other turns away to eternal ruin and everlasting despair.

How about You?

WORKS OF JESUS – The Men Chosen To Be With Him

Mark 3:13-15 – *“And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons”*

Our study of Jesus' works would not be complete without some consideration of the men He chose to be with Him; what He said to them, did for them, and did with them. Notice, first of all, the purpose of this special meeting on the mountain: to separate a small group of men from the multitude, for specialized service. It would not be feasible for Jesus to have the whole multitude with Him at all times. Yet, since He did want them all to know both what He said and what He did, He chose these twelve men, and prepared them to carry His message to every town and city.

Here we have the nucleus of the great Christian Church – the laying of the Foundation for the greatest "Institution-for-the-good-of-the-world" that has ever come into being. All that the Church has ever been, or has ever done, is seen in principle in this group of twelve – men whose hearts were touched by the power of the Person of the LORD Jesus Christ.

Three years later, Jesus made this statement to His disciples: *“You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you”* (John 15:16). And their fruit did remain – millions of witnesses in the world today to testify to that fact.

Notice now: Jesus' choice was made from among the common, ordinary people of that day. Someone has said: God must like common people, He made so many of them. In 1 Corinthians chapter 1 we see the reason why His choice was made from the ordinary rank and file: *“But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.”* (1 Cor. 1:27-29).

Christ was not going to win by the power of social influence, nor political strategy. His cause will not depend on men of great intellectual ability, or financial genius. As Jesus said to Pilate later, *“My Kingdom is not of this world”* (John 18:36). It follows, then, that He will not establish His Kingdom by worldly means. That is why the call to discipleship is open to everyone; because Christ has, and will provide all necessary equipment for His followers. All He seeks is human beings through whom to demonstrate His divine enablement to all the world.

Briefly stated, discipleship is the ability to live a godly, temperate, and joyful life in the midst of wickedness, injustice, and oppression; and to give a reason for the hope that is within us, in meekness, and humility.

Let's read Mark 3:14 again, *“And He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him.”* This is the first and most necessary part of their preparation: to be with Him. It is true, He will teach them, He will instruct them, He will enlighten their understanding; but they are going to learn more by fellowship with the Christ of God than by any other method. They will see that His words are not just abstract theories on religious problems; but living truths that apply to everybody's life and circumstance, and in all generations. Many years afterwards, one of these twelve wrote: *“That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full”* (1 John 1:3-4).

Fellowship with Christ is the very beginning of discipleship. It is the aim of preaching: that others, too, might be brought to share this blessed communion. As I see it, the whole business of the Christian Church is to maintain that intimate fellowship with Him. And, from that sacred yet joyful experience, comes the desire to tell others. As we read in Ephesians 3:8-9: *“To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages*

has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ.”

“That they might be with Him” was the explanation for the choice of His disciples then; and still today, Jesus wants His disciples to be with Him. His prayer is recorded in John 17:24: *“Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me . . .”* and again, John, writing years later, said: *“. . . and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth”* (John 1:14).

The glory spoken of here is the glory of His Character, the beauty of His Nature, the wonder of His Person. *“That they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach. . .”*

Time has gone again; we must leave much unsaid. But let me say in closing that Christ wants *you* to be with Him. He is still saying, *“Come . . . Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”* (Matthew 11:28-29).

WORKS OF JESUS – Chosen and Sent

Mark 3:14-15 – *“Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons.”*

Jesus chose His disciples, *“that He might send them out to preach.”* Close association with Jesus, that extraordinary Person, made a tremendous impact on the disciples. Their lives were completely changed. They were given a new outlook on life; a new dynamic for living, with all the emphasis where it ought to be – on eternal and spiritual values.

He chose them to carry His message to every town and city. If believed, this message would revolutionize every level of society. It would touch the life, change the living habits of every thinking person – from the servant grinding the grain, to the soldier in the occupying Roman Army. The disciples were to usher in a new Dispensation – a new era. All religious forms and ceremonies would be changed. The doors of Heaven have been thrown wide open. A universal invitation is given to all men everywhere: Come directly to the God of Heaven, through the LORD Jesus Christ, His Son. The disciples were being asked to set in motion spiritual, moral, and intellectual forces which would change the course of history, affecting the eternal destiny of men and nations.

Although the disciples were chosen nearly two thousand years ago, on the open hillside of a rural community in that tiny country called Palestine, the effect of that choice is being felt today in an ever-widening circle around the world. More than a thousand languages are being used to inform the people of this planet that, in solving the “sin-problem,” our Creator has provided the perfect solution for *all* our problems.

“That He might send them out to preach” is a thought-provoking statement. No men have ever been given a more solemn or sacred responsibility. No one in his right senses would choose this work for popularity, social influence, or financial gain. Yet, if ordained by the LORD of Glory, it is a Calling one dare not refuse. Notice, that the disciples were sent out to *preach*. Surely you know – a preacher is an herald, sent on ahead to inform people of the plans and purposes of the King who has sent them. These men were God-sent meddlers. They were to break into, and break up, the thinking habits of men and women; get them to entertain a new idea about God in Heaven and how man should live on earth. Years later it was said of some of these *“Sent Ones,”* that they *“turned the world upside down . . .”* (Acts 17:6). They were sent out to preach, not to regulate religious policy, or to introduce political reform. They were not to concern themselves primarily with social or economic conditions. They were sent forth to preach.

Let me say this – wherever God's *“Sent Ones”* go and preach His message, something will happen in the lives of those who believe. In past history, wherever revival of Christianity has taken place, social and economic injustices have found a cure.

Thanks be to God, He is still sending men and women out to preach. There are no unemployed in the ranks of God's laborers. *It is still true that:*

- *“the harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few”* (Luke 10:2);
- *“it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe”* (1 Cor. 1:21).

And it's still true that

- *“he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life”* (John 4:36).

Even now, as in those far-off days, *“How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent?”* (Romans 10:14-15). That's the question: How can they preach, except they be sent? I know that I couldn't – I wouldn't, were it not for that inner consciousness and conviction that He has sent me!

And now, just before we leave the air, what was it the disciples were to preach? What was this message, so urgent that everyone must hear? Briefly, it is summed up in Mark 1:15: *“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the Gospel.”* Notice the significance of this fourfold statement.

- *“The time is fulfilled...”* What time? The time that all the prophets have spoken of since the world began; the time when the Seed of the woman, promised to Adam, would come and bruise the serpent's head; the time that Joel spoke of when he said, *“And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the Name of the LORD shall be saved”* (Rom. 10:13); the time spoken of when God would take the Law that had been written on tablets of stone, and write in on the fleshy tablet of the heart.
- *“The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand...”* means, Heaven is within reach of everyone; all barriers removed; all obstacles taken out of the way. The Kingdom of Heaven – Heaven's all-gracious King is closer than breathing, nearer than hands or feet.
- And how shall we enter it? *“Repent.”* That means “turn around,” “have a complete change of mind toward God and His Word.” It means “be sorry for your sin – sorry enough to come to Christ and ask for deliverance.”
- And then there is just one more step, *“Believe the Gospel...”* You can't believe if you don't repent, and you can't be saved if you don't believe.

The Gospel's ABC is: ***“All have sinned and come short of the glory of God”*** (Romans 3:23); ***“Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”*** (John 1:29); ***“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”*** (Matthew 11:28).

WORKS OF JESUS – “He Has Done All Things Well”

Mark 7:37 – “*And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, ‘He has done all things well. He makes both the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.’*”

“*He has done all things well*” – these six words sum up everything we have said about Jesus, the mighty Worker and matchless Teacher. They are the testimony multitudes who both heard and saw that Jesus' messages and miracles clearly demonstrated that He could be none other than Israel's Messiah and the world's Redeemer. “*He has done all things well*” has nearly the same meaning as the statement in Genesis 1:31: “*And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good.*”

God is the only Worker and Builder whose work is done perfectly. Man has never yet erected a perfect building, written a perfect book, painted a perfect picture, or invented a perfect machine. Improvements can always be made. But the words “*He has done all things well*,” spoken about Jesus Christ, are as true today as they were in those ancient days when He, the Son of God lived, taught and worked among the people of Abraham's race. He *has* done all things well. The moral standards He erected nearly two thousand years ago have needed no improvement.

Recently I read an interesting statement of a very learned Philosophy professor: The best minds of the world, gathered together to draw up a code of ethics for basic human relationships suitable for all races, could probably only produce a ponderous, clumsy set of rules. But we have a perfect, easily understood standard – Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. In that wonderful sermon, Jesus anticipated every basic problem of society. The only thing that is left is, for us to put it into practice.

Someone said, Christianity has been tried and found wanting. That's not true. The truth is, even in countries that proudly call themselves “Christian,” there is yet to be found someone willing to “really try” Christianity.

“*He has done all things well*” can be written over everything in which Christ has had His way. “*Without fault, flaw, or blemish*” is the testimony of Jesus' teaching, conduct and actions. That's why the disciples went everywhere – teaching and preaching Jesus Christ. That's why we, without hesitation or apology, continually press our listeners to make Christ their Sovereign and LORD.

- Let Jesus have your *difficult disposition*, warped by inherited infirmities and twisted by complexes and inhibitions. When He is finished with you, all the angelic host, with the redeemed of the Ages, marveling at His skill and workmanship, will sing, “*Surely He has done all things well!*”
- What about that *bad temper* of yours? Let Him fix it. Jesus named His quick-tempered disciples, James and John, “*Sons of thunder.*” Yet, after only a few years with The Master, one brother wrote that beautiful, gracious Gospel of John, and the other meekly laid down his life for Jesus' sake.
- What about those *bad habits*, fastening themselves like leaches to the inner man? With ever-increasing desire they master the soul, deaden the conscience, destroy moral principles, and degrade the character. Mary Magdalene had gone to the very depths of sin's degradation. Yet, she was lifted to the very heights by the cleansing power of Christ's forgiveness. Mary Magdalene became the first messenger of the Saviour's Resurrection.

“*He has done all things well*” is the unanimous testimony of millions of people all over the world today. How about you?

Why not give Christ control of your life; ask Him to come in the door of your heart and have His way in every part of your life? He will do all things well.

WORKS OF JESUS – Jesus, Our Counselor

Isaiah 9:6 – *“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given . . . His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”*

This Scripture is an early prophecy of Israel's coming Messiah – the world's only Saviour. The title “Counselor” is equal in importance to any other name given to Jesus Christ. The Psalmist sang *“You will guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory”* (Ps.73:24).

How we need counsel, in face of the complexities and difficulties of life! How invaluable, the advice of a Friend like Jesus. His wisdom and experience abundantly qualify Him to be our Counselor. His advice is authoritative; His judgment, neither biased by prejudice or uncertain through ignorance. Oh, with what confidence we proceed after an interview with Him!

Often, in facing difficult circumstances, we think, *“If only I had someone to go to for advice; someone to show me the way out of this dilemma; someone whose sympathies are on my side, whom I can trust to decide the issue to my best advantage.”* What a pity that so many people don't know the Counselor of Isaiah 9:6. Instead of seeking guidance from Him, the One who directs the planets in their stately march through space, they turn to teacup readers, clairvoyants, and spirit-mediums.

Note the personal nature of Psalmist David's testimony. *“You will guide ME.”* He also wrote, *“The LORD is MY Shepherd; He leads ME.”* Jesus Himself, of whom those words were spoken, said, *“He calls His own sheep BY NAME, and leads them out”* (Psalm 23 and John 10:3).

In all important matters, it's best to get your instructions “first hand.” It is much safer to have a personal interview with your counselor than to trust someone else to bring the word. I couldn't tell you how many times people have come to me, hoping that I, by some extraordinary means, could solve their problem. They want me to tell them just exactly what to do; when, in many cases, I know they haven't spent so much as fifteen minutes in honest, fervent, soul-searching prayer. They haven't taken five minutes a day to read the Book of God. The Psalmist says, *“Your Word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path”* (Ps. 119:105). The Scripture says, *“His name shall be called Counselor,”* and, He will *“guide you with His counsel, and afterward receive you to glory.”*

Let us turn now to Proverbs 1:23-26: *“... Surely I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you. Because I have called and you refused, I have stretched out my hand and no one regarded; because you disdained all my counsel, and would have none of my rebuke, I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your terror comes.”*

In a legal sense (for our case with God is really a legal one), it's a serious mistake to disregard counsel given. This world is governed by laws. Natural laws control the universe; moral laws, the behavior of men. Our judiciary may allow a felon to escape prosecution through legal technicalities; but that could never happen in God's legal system. His Laws are irrevocable; they cannot be broken, canceled or annulled. On the surface, it might appear that people defy God and break His Laws with impunity; but in the end, transgressors will be broken by God's Law. God's Law clearly states: *“The soul who sins shall die”* (Ezekiel 18:4). No one has ever yet escaped this penalty. The soil of the earth, the cemetery of the universe, contains the dust of all past generations; bodies, once living, breathing, pulsating. Death established its awful power over them. Every funeral service is another testimony that God's Law cannot be broken. Is this, then, the end? Does death conclude of the great drama of life? Do the words *“ashes to ashes and dust to dust”* indicate that personality has ceased to exist? No! A thousand times No! *“It is appointed for men to die once,”* says God's Word, *“but after this the judgment”* (Hebrews 9:27).

What has all of this to do with Isaiah 9:6 *“His Name shall be called Counselor”*? It has everything to do with it. Jesus has been appointed by the Crown to serve as Counsel for us, the condemned ones. He is Heaven's official Advocate, representing the accused before the tribunal of God's eternal Justice.

Let me point out again that God's administration has no legal loopholes whereby we may hope to escape. Here is no perverting of justice or bribing of jurors. Here is nothing *“but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries”* (Heb.10:27), unless – and here is where the Gospel comes in – unless we take the advice of our Counselor, the LORD Jesus

Christ, and hasten to the Throne, while it still is called the *“Throne of Grace.”* And don’t plead your innocence before the Presence of the Majesty in the Heavens; but plead your guilt. *“Plead guilty!”* is His advice. *“Plead guilty!”* is the cry of every true minister of the Gospel. *Only Sinners Can Be Saved!*
“... *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*” (1 Timothy 1:15).

ABOUNDING GRACE

Romans 5:20-21 – “...*But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our LORD.*”

The message is clear and strong “. . . *where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.*”

In the history of Israel, it seems that God often waited for them to show their total depravity, rebellion and insolence; and then, against that backdrop, display His mercy and His kindness. You'll remember, when the discontented Israelites were bitterly complaining about the drought – no water, that God sent Moses with the rod. Moses smote the rock, the water gushed out, and there was abundance.

This, of course, was one of the earlier prophecies or “types” of when Christ Jesus, *the Rock*, would be smitten by man, and out of Him would flow rivers of living water. Isn't it marvellous? God waits for people to do their worst, that He might show His greatness and His goodness.

WE behave in the exact opposite way. When people show their worst towards us, we quickly respond by getting even with them – catching up with them – equalling their desperate deeds. Of course, that provokes still more desperate deeds from them. There's no stopping. That's the world's system. That's what the world is doing today. “Meet force with force. Meet evil with evil. Guns with guns – with bigger guns. Bombs with bombs and bigger bombs.” They can't seem to learn that God's way is the good way.

In history (certainly in Scripture), “*where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.*” Now, this does not mean (as Paul points out) that we should make haste to do evil so that good may come; but rather, we should explore the goodness of God, cease to do evil, and learn to do well.

John 3:14-16 (the golden text of the Bible) says, “*As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*”

I suppose no verse in Scripture is better known or more widely quoted than this one. It's been used millions of times to bring people to Salvation, to waken a spirit of adoration and worship in the hearts of God's people. And yet, there's much about it we're still exploring – still wondering at.

In this Golden Text, one word comes to me over and over again. I keep wrestling with it, and rejoicing in it, and wondering at it. It's the little word “*Whosoever.*” WHOSOEVER! It's a marvellous word. I continually wonder – Could we find a better word to meet the following qualifications?

First, the word “*Whosoever*” is so all-inclusive, that wherever you go, whatever person or group you address, it applies to them. It is totally non-discriminatory. It knows nothing of the diversity of language, personality or culture. It knows nothing of the divisions that people have made between races, secular events, styles, or opinions. All the wide varieties, divergences, and differences in the human race are wrapped up in this one word. It is totally without discrimination of any sort. It means *everybody*! Everybody – without distinction. That's a marvellous thing!

There could possibly have been 100,000 believers by the end of the Apostolic Age. There could have been. But, here we are, this late in history, and we've just passed the 5 billionth mark in the population of this earth. Think of it – 5 billion – we just passed it a few months ago. And this word “*Whosoever*” is equal to even 15 billion. Do you believe that? It is equal to that! It includes that! This word has an amazing elasticity. It continually expands, with the increase in population. So, if you're going to shop for a word that enables you to include all people, keep this one in mind. It must be able to include all people.

Now, when you're reading Scripture, this becomes evident. God intends for all men – every person, anywhere, any time – to hear His message. John 3:16 is not limited to a certain period of history. “*Whosoever*” is constant, continual, perpetual. Its force, even at this late hour, has not diminished from when Jesus first spoke it.

It's a marvellous thing! I love this word! I rejoice in it!

Not only is “*Whosoever*” all-inclusive as to the numbers of people – millions, billions of people (I'm getting out of hand here – running out of superlatives), but, in addition to that (can you get a hold of this?), one

single individual, in all those billions, can hear that word and know, *"It must mean me – He's speaking to me – I'm a part of that group."*

"Whosoever" Where would you find another word like it? One which means *"Everybody"* – reaches everybody – and yet meets an *Individual* in the masses of world? Wherever he may be, that one person can say, *"That means me. God is talking to me. It doesn't mean the one beside me, or in front of me, or behind me. It means me. Whosoever!"*

I think of another great verse – Romans 10:13. *"Whosoever shall call on the Name of the LORD shall be saved."* How concise. How compact. How powerful. WHOSOEVER!

So, let's *Call!* This is the essence of prayer. This is the centrality of prayer. *Calling.*

We have developed, (by tradition and superstition) the unwholesome, unhealthy attitude that certain individuals are qualified to do our praying for us. We charge the clergy to look after all those religious activities. We come to pay our respects every LORD's Day, pay the bills incidentally, and trust that the officials in the organization will look after the praying for us. If they don't pray adequately and fervently, or forcefully enough to get results, then it's high time we looked for a change in the pulpit – a change in leadership.

I have maintained for years (I keep on harping at it), that the effectiveness of a pastor's ministry can best be determined by the number of people in his congregation that he can lead into a daily, personal prayer-experience. *"Call on the Name of the LORD . . ." "Whosoever . . ."*

Now, think of *"whosoever"* as applied to a congregation – to a denomination – to the whole association of believers. Think of every individual calling on the Name of the LORD. Isn't that breathtaking? Awe-inspiring? Just picture it for your own satisfaction – your own imagination – your own pleasure . . . (I get a lot of pleasure out of imagination. That's why God gave it to me – it supports and encourages me many, many times.) I like to think of a congregation, such as we have here – up to 400 people, varying in ages, dispositions, temperament, experience, culture. And yet every single one of us could be found *"calling upon the Name of the LORD."* (Is that too much?) What'd happen if it happened? I say, *What Would Happen, If It Happened?* We have no idea what would happen if *THAT* happened . . .

A good friend of ours – an old, old man – told of how, in the early years in Sweden, when he was a boy, it was against the law for anyone but a state minister to pray. But the Spirit was poured out on the community and fell upon children. The farmers of the community gathered together in a home, and a child would get up on the table and preach the Gospel by the Spirit of God. A child!

I was in a prayer meeting in that community. We were praying in a large room and the children were lying on the floor, wrapped up in blankets, under the benches asleep. While we were praying, one little boy rolled out from under the bench and took off his blankets. Then he got on his knees and cried out to God, saying, *"This will never do! This will never do! Come and save us!"* And after a few minutes he rolled up into his blanket again and went to sleep.

What would happen if *"Whosoever"* called upon the Name of the LORD? What if 10-year-olds, 15-year-olds, 20-year-olds stood up in the midst of the congregation and called upon the LORD? I don't know if you would agree with me, but it does seem, as far as we can tell on the surface, that the conditions and problems of our society are out of hand. They're out of control! Whether it's the financial market, the educational field, the labour market – whatsoever – it's entirely out of control. It's running headlong to destruction. Only God can stop the mad race to perdition. But, *"Whosoever"*...

God waits for man to do his worst, before He pulls back the curtains and reveals the greatness of His power. He has prepared for such a time as this. He is adequate to meet it, to roll back the forces of iniquity and establish and raise up pillars of righteousness and streams in the desert. Amen.

"Whosoever"... It's a marvellous word. It indicates to me that there's a weight – a message – back of it; that there's something *"Whosoever"* should hear, should grasp. God has something to communicate. His message could benefit any and every person, world-wide. *But, it requires an individual response.* Before this message can become operative, the hearer must respond. It is as though infinite resources of Good were held back by a great restraining dam, kept from flowing down and bringing good, waiting for *"Whosoever"* to accept the goodness and blessing that God wants to pour out on him.

I will pour water on him that is thirsty; I will pour floods upon the dry ground;
Open your heart for the good I am bringing; While you are seeking Me, I will be found.

Ho! every one that is thirsty in spirit,
Ho! every one that is weary and sad;
Come to the fountain, there's fullness in Jesus,
All that you're longing for: come and be glad!

Refrain

*I will pour water on him that is thirsty,
I will pour floods upon the dry ground;
Open your hearts for the gifts I am bringing;
While ye are seeking Me, I will be found.*

Child of the world, are you tired of your bondage?

Weary of earth joys, so false, so untrue?
Thirsting for God and His fullness of blessing?
List to the promise, a message for you!

Child of the kingdom, be filled with the Spirit!
Nothing but fullness thy longing can meet;
'Tis the enduement for life and for service;
Thine is the promise, so certain, so sweet.

[by Lucy J. Meyer 1884]

God is looking for response. He has everything good to bestow; “*Whosoever*” is informed of it; but, the individual must tap the resources. What follows? What is the next word? What is required before all the goodness of God can be received and enjoyed? It's another powerful word – “*Believes*.” It belongs to “*Whosoever*.” It unlocks the door into the resources. It establishes the fact that God is waiting for us to accept – to receive. God is waiting for us to permit Him (is that too much?) – for us to *permit* God – to give God the right to fill our hearts with His love. For, His Life is His Love; and, His Love is His Life. And, He's awaiting our permission... “*I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation...*” (Rom. 1:16). But, the “*power*” is for the one who “*believes*.” Otherwise, there's no value whatever; it's just a story, just a matter of history. We like to read about it, and sing about it; but, the essence of it is that “*Whosoever*” must give God permission. Does God seek permission? Evidently, He does. “*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hears My voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him...*” (Rev. 3:20). He waits for permission. God is a marvellous God. I don't understand...

I join CHARLES WESLEY, who taught us to sing: And can it be, that I should gain an interest in the Saviour's Blood? Died He for me, who caused His pain? For me, who Him to death pursued? Amazing love . . .” We've been reading from the Old Testament in our daily readings. It's a very grim story. Oh, it's a blood-thirsty story! There's blood everywhere – a horrible mess. I don't understand it. If that's all there was in the Bible, maybe we'd better do away with it... But that was all laying the background for the *New Covenant – the new adventure . . .*

And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Saviour's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain—
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be,
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

'Tis mystery all: th'Immortal dies:
Who can explore His strange design?
In vain the firstborn seraph tries
To sound the depths of love divine.
'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore,
Let angel minds inquire no more.

He left His Father's throne above
So free, so infinite His grace—
Emptied Himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam's helpless race:
'Tis mercy all, immense and free,
For O my God, it found out me!

Long my imprisoned spirit lay,
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray—
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

Still the small inward voice I hear,
That whispers all my sins forgiven;
Still the atoning blood is near,
That quenched the wrath of hostile Heaven.
I feel the life His wounds impart;
I feel the Saviour in my heart.

No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in Him, is mine;
Alive in Him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach th'eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.

[by Charles Wesley – 1738]
