

Four Views Of Christ (Part 4)

Mark

John W. Ritenbaugh

Given 11-Dec-93; Sermon #105

We are going to begin this sermon in Proverbs 14. While you are turning to that, I will give a very brief synopsis of last week's sermon, which primarily consisted of an aspect of the book of Matthew, where we saw the symbolism of the lion. That, of course, symbolizes authority and leadership in regard to a kingdom. Recall how frequently the word kingdom appears in the book of Matthew. Jesus appears there as a representative of that kingdom. He is its King. That Kingdom is of heaven.

It is very essential to your understanding of the book of Matthew that you understand why he said "of heaven." He wanted to designate very clearly that this was a Kingdom that was not of earth. All other kingdoms that are dealt with in the Bible are of earth. All other kingdoms that we deal with in our daily lives are of earth, but this is a kingdom that is of heaven and as such, it is going to have characteristics that are different from the kingdoms of this earth. He stressed those characteristics. He showed a kingdom in which law and righteousness are frequently stressed.

He did not go into other aspects that we might consider in regard to this Kingdom, but it is going to consist of spirit beings. He did not go into that. But it is going to be a Kingdom in which law and righteousness are extremely important, and that makes it different from *any* kingdom that is of this earth. Therefore, it is something we need to try to be a part of.

Today, we are going to be delving into the book of Mark. I need to apologize to you that I forgot to assign to you the reading of the book of Mark, but, just in case I forget at the end of this sermon, your assignment for next week is to read the book of Luke.

Some of the little sidelines that you find when doing some research about these things are very interesting. Did you know that in that early period of time, Mark actually had a nickname, which is recorded for posterity? His

nickname was 'stump finger.' It is not a very elegant or dignified name, but apparently the man had very short fingers. I do not mean that they were chopped off unnaturally in anyway. He just apparently had very short fingers. Nobody mentions that he had lost them in anyway. Maybe he was also short and stocky in stature as well—I do not know. But his close associates called him "stump finger."

Proverbs 14:4 Where no oxen are, the trough is clean; but much increase comes by the strength of an ox.

In Mark, Christ is viewed as a patient and sacrificial servant, spending and being spent to serve the sons of men.

The book of Mark is the shortest of the accounts of the life of the ministry of Jesus Christ, but in terms of practicality, it is probably the most useful on a day-to-day basis. The reason for that is because it has to do with growth. Remember the command of Peter, to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. It is generally conceded by most of the scholars that Peter is actually the author of the book of Mark, though he, himself, did not write it, nor has there been any research to show that he actually dictated it either. But rather, the strong feeling among the researchers is that what Mark did is he compiled a list of sermons. It is actually a compendium, a compilation of the sermons of Peter, which Mark heard and arranged them in this order. The general arrangement is chronological, but not necessarily completely chronological.

In some ways, the book of Mark is the least distinctive of the four. It basically tells the same story as the others, but though the peculiarities of it are small—they are minute; they are subtle—that is compensated by there being so many of them. There are oodles and oodles of differences and additions to the book of Mark, little touches, which the others do not have.

Some of these interesting omissions we are going to get into in just a little bit, but we need to understand that this concept of looking at the omissions is a very important teaching tool. I want to turn back to the book of Hebrews to give you an example of how the apostle Paul took advantage of an omission that occurs back in the book of Genesis.

Hebrews 7:1-3 For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated "king of righteousness," and then also king of Salem, meaning "king of peace" [Now here comes the omission that Paul found in the book of Genesis], without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually.

Genesis has nothing at all to say about Melchizedek's father, his mother, his beginning, or his end. To Paul, that said a great deal, did it not? From silence he got the teaching that Melchizedek was not a normal human being. With authority, he put him in a position of being our Savior. That omission became a teaching of the New Testament church.

Another example in the Old Testament, which we are not going to turn to, but just as a reminder, is in the books of Kings and Chronicles. Those two tell basically the same story, but they are very different. There are things that appear in the book of Chronicles that do not appear in Kings. There are things that appear in Kings that do not appear in Chronicles. When the two are compared, you get a much clearer picture of what God is getting across. Giving two different pictures flushes the history out. We get a lot of precise instruction, a greater depth of information, as a result of that.

I might remind you of something that I have spoken of and that is: Why are there kings missing in the genealogy of Jesus Christ in the book of Matthew? There are at least three, and possibly four, kings that are missing ["Why Three Kings Are Missing From Matthew 1"]. I am sure that God intends that we look at the three or four who are missing and try to determine why they are missing. There are powerful moral and spiritual lessons in going back to the Old Testament and finding out that this king lived and what he was like. How did he conduct his life? Was he a good king or was he a bad king? As we saw, at least three of those kings were recorded in the Bible as being good kings and yet they are not on the list. There are very evil kings in Jesus Christ's genealogy that are recorded.

Another thing out of the book of Matthew that is an addition: Matthew includes five ladies in his genealogy. Why? As I confessed to you in the last sermon, I do not know why. I think that a very good lesson can be gotten from Tamar's life. There is an allegory there that is full of instruction, but I do not know why Bathsheba is there. I do not know exactly why Rahab, the harlot, is there. I can understand why Mary's name is there.

There is instruction there. So God, rather than repeat, He leaves something out to draw attention. It focuses emphasis upon something, upon somebody's life. It draws us to that and there is instruction for you and me.

That is the way He has done with Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, but it is Mark that has, as we are going to see, all of the little touches that the others ignore—or something is left out that the others put in. There are so many of them to make this book stand out in this regard. Each addition or each omission is perfect. For you and I who are disciples who are willing to look at it and to dig into it, there is great instruction and understanding in there.

As an example in the book of Mark, what is obviously missing—we will not go very far in regard to this—there is no genealogy. Even John, in a sense, has a genealogy. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." It is a brief genealogy; He had no beginning of days or end of life. Mark has nothing at all. There is no miraculous conception mentioned in Mark. There is no birth story. There is no reference to Bethlehem. There are no wise men, no childhood at Nazareth, no questioning at the Temple, no subjection to parents, no increase in stature and wisdom, no reference to His pre-existence and glory. We could go on and on.

There is a logical and obvious reason for this. Though they are important points where they do appear, in the book of Mark, they would be superfluous. They would be additions that would have nothing at all to do with the underlying thrust that is in the book of Mark. They do not have a great deal to do with the untiring, the enduring servitude and sacrifice of an ox, who produces a great deal in the way of growth. Those things may have

an important bearing in regard to the Kingdom, or Jesus Christ as a person, or as a Man and God, but they do not have any particular bearing on His service.

Let us notice how Mark begins.

Mark 1:1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Nobody else makes that statement. That is an addition. But it has another reference to you and me that is important. Once we understand that the underlying thrust of this book is to show Jesus Christ as a servant, it is a subtle encouragement to understand that what follows is to show how a son of God serves. Listen to that. It is very important. Are you a son of God? This is how a son of God serves.

Turn with me to chapter 10. We will not do a lot of expounding on this, but just to tie it with something.

Mark 10:42-45 But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all [Strong words!]. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Undoubtedly, the giving of His life was an act of service, but here He divides them into what He did in His death and what He did in all that period of time leading up to it. It is the eye—therefore the eye of a son of God, regardless of whether they are Jesus Christ or one who is regenerated by the Spirit of God, is going to be directed toward service.

What does an ox do? An ox serves. What did we just read in Proverbs 14:4? "Where there is an ox, there is much increase." Do you want to grow? Do you want to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ? Do you want to *be like Christ*? Do you want to be in the image of Jesus Christ? Do you

want to be like God? This little book of Mark is going to show you how to do it. I think, when we get to the end, the answer might be somewhat surprising.

It is good to understand that service **is not** what makes one a son of God. What makes one a son of God is faith. What makes one a son of God is repentance. What makes one a son of God is the receipt of God's Holy Spirit. It is another way of saying that nobody is going to work their way into the Kingdom of God, but yet everybody who is going to be in the Kingdom of God is going to be a worker! They are going to be serving.

Let us understand, right from the beginning, that service is not what makes one a son of God, but rather it is the assurance of being a son of God that *moves one to serve as Christ did!* Did you notice the twist there? When one *believes* that he is a son of God, he is going to serve on the basis of that faith. That faith that he is a son of God will motivate him to serve.

When we look at the book of Matthew, the service that is given there by Christ is primarily seen in terms of power, in terms of authority, in terms of law-keeping, in terms of responsibility to a government. A son of God will effect those positions. But when we look in the book of Mark, it is service to whom? It is service to your fellow man because of faith in God. There is quite a difference between the approaches of these two books.

Again, back to Mark 1. After touching very briefly on John the Baptist and then Jesus' baptism (we are up to verse 11 now), and then two verses on the temptation in the wilderness, Mark then moves directly into Christ's services. Those services in the next couple of chapters involve preaching, preparing disciples, and healing.

Now again, we will make the contrast to Matthew whose opening is of course, legal, genealogical, and the righteousness approach. Mark has no Sermon on the Mount because it is out of place within his book where he is emphasizing service. There is no Lord's Prayer because it has no bearing on what he is writing about. If it had been needful, God would have included it. But there is no Lord's Prayer. Think about what the Lord's Prayer is about:

Send your Kingdom; Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done; the power and glory and the Kingdom. It does not fit into Mark. It is not that Mark is against it, but it just does not fit into the flow of what he is writing about.

In the book of Mark there are no lengthy discourses. There are very few parables, because what Mark is presenting is more concerned with *doing*—action. Even though teaching and preaching is action, it is a different kind of action that Mark is concerned about. We might call it a more humble labor. We will see this as we go along. I am presenting concepts to you so when we get to more specifics you will be able to see how these things fit.

Mark is concentrating on a more humble labor than teaching. Our Teacher holds a position of authority that is consistent with the idea, or the concept, of pure service out of an almost incomprehensible depth of love.

Jesus is seen teaching in the book of Mark, but it is mostly in very brief bursts, during informal circumstances. Like He just happened to be standing there and somebody came up with a question. He responded to it, and He teaches for a short period of time. It is not like Matthew or Luke where we have chapters that are all on the same material.

The ox, then, to get back to the type in the book of Mark, is not seen carrying authority but burdens. That is what an ox does. He carries burdens. Mark is not so much showing Christ's claim on men, but rather men's claim on Christ. Without Mark saying it directly, he is showing us in the person of all the people who came up to Christ and asked Him to do this or that—whether it was to heal them, to cast out a demon, or tell them the truth on something—that is you and me going to Christ. They represent us in that sense. So, without directly saying it, Mark shows us calling on Christ for His grace, His gifts, and His power to intervene in our lives.

Let us jump to Mark 4. There are only four parables in Mark and one of these parables is unique to him. When we look at chapter 4, we find a very familiar parable.

Mark 4:3 "Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow.

Sounds just like Matthew 13. Then we find a bit of teaching in verse 13. The Parable of the Sower is explained, then the light under the basket responsibility given to you and to me, then beginning in verse 26 is a parable that is unique to the book of Mark.

Mark 4:26-29 And He said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

Then comes the Parable of the Mustard Seed after that, but flip back to Matthew 13. Again, we find the chapter opening up with the Parable of the Sower and the Seed. It is very similar to the book of Mark. Then, the same instruction that follows the Parable of the Sower and the Seed appears in the book of Matthew. That is the purpose of parables. Then we find again, just as in Mark, the Parable of the Sower explained. So far, everything is exactly the same. Then comes the difference.

Beginning in verse 24, the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares is inserted by Matthew where Mark has the Parable of the Seed that grew by itself, that grew secretly. Then we find the Parable of the Mustard Seed, right back on track with the book of Mark; then a number of parables that Mark does not have there in chapter 4. The other parable that Mark has is the wicked vinedresser that appears in chapter 12.

Why the difference between the two? They apparently heard the same teaching at the same time, but Mark inserted a parable and Matthew inserted a parable that the other did not care to include.

Again, it is because of the teaching. The Parable of the Tares shows Christ making a judgment and acting with authority. He gives the judgment, "No, leave them all there until the end and then we will gather, we will separate so

that we don't hurt the wheat along with the tares." He is seen as a King commanding His troops. "Don't do this, don't do that until I give the order to do it."

In the book of Mark the teaching of that parable is very interesting because it has very much to do with the way God wants you and me to serve. It says you sow a seed and the thing grows. You do not even know why it grows. But it grows until it actually produces fruit and then you reap it.

What does that have to do with service? It is an encouragement to you and me to not be afraid to serve when nobody is looking. He is saying, "Don't worry. It's going to produce the right kind of fruit and in the end, you're going to reap because you sowed the seed." That is a promise from God, if it is done in the right attitude.

We are beginning to have a foundation laid as to God's approach to service. We are going to see a little bit later how frequently the book of Mark tells us that whenever Christ did something, He told the people, "Don't tell anybody." Or, He grabbed the person by the hand (maybe "grabbed" is a little too strong), but He took the person by the hand and led them out of town to a private place where nobody would be around before He did the healing. He was, as much as His life made possible, trying to do things quietly, in secret, the way God *wants* the service to be done by His people.

Nobody has to know but God. That is why that parable is there. It has to do with service, not with authority. It has to do with service, and it is a promise that growth will occur. It will take place and it will produce the right kind of fruit.

Let us go back to generalities again in regard to Mark. Mark has no arraignment of Israel before its judge, like Matthew and Luke do. There is no judgment in the book of Mark passed against Jerusalem. "Woe unto you Jerusalem!" That does not appear in Mark because a servant does not do that kind of thing. There are no woes in the book of Mark on the Pharisees. You know what Matthew 23 has to say in regard to that.

Let us look in Mark 12. Both Mark and Matthew have this parable and my explanation has a little bit to do with this thing in regard to judgment. When

a judgment does appear in the book of Mark, it always is in a certain kind of context. That is, his eye is always on sacrificial service in regard to that judgment. In this case, it appears in the book of Matthew as well, in that the son of the husbandman dies. We know who the Son is. The judgment is passed that the son dies and then the parable goes on to give further teaching. If the Lord then must judge, it is with an eye toward sacrificial service, unsparingly spending His life. In the parable He gives His life for the people who are judged.

Back in the book of Matthew, chapter 21—Mark encompasses in chapter 12 almost everything, in very short form, what Matthew has in three chapters (21-23)—Jesus makes His entry into Jerusalem before His crucifixion. After making the entry, what does the King do? He cleanses the Temple—He makes a judgment. He says, "This is a den of thieves!" and He cleans out the place. There is nothing like that in Mark.

What is the next thing that happened? He makes a judgment against a fig tree and it dies. That is what kings do. They judge, they execute the authority of the law. Then His authority is questioned as we find in Matthew 21:23, and He responds to that.

He then comes to the Parable of the Two Sons and asks which one did his father's will. Then comes the Parable of the Wicked Vinedresser, which is also the one that Mark has in chapter 12.

In Matthew 22, we have the Parable of the Wedding Feast. What happens in the wedding feast? The King makes a judgment. The people who showed up without the right kind of clothing—out they go! And He says, "Bind them hand and foot, and take away them, and cast them into outer darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Many are called, but few are chosen."

Then He is tested with a number of questions. He responds to all of them, and then comes that very heavy chapter 23, which He pronounces all those judgments against the Pharisees because of their attitude and their conduct. There is quite a difference between the two books. That is very obvious between the two.

Let us look at another generality, the Olivet Prophecy, which appears in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. In Mark, though, we have the shortest version, and not only that, there is no bridegroom as in Matthew 25; there is no rejecting of the foolish virgins; there is no receiving of the wise virgins; there is no Lord judging between the sheep and the goats; there is no King who is enthroned in His glory (Matthew 25:31). That is out of place in the book of Mark.

We have to study these books with understanding as to why those things are inserted or why they are left out. There is an underlying theme to every one of these books. They all tell basically the same story, but each one is emphasizing a different aspect of the life of Christ. Mark is concentrating on His service.

Mark nowhere denies Christ's Lordship, but we only see Him serving His Kingdom. In the garden of Gethsemane, there is no mention by Christ of His right to summon twelve legions of angels as it appears in Matthew 26:53. There is no promise to His companions on the stake (the others being crucified with Him) as there is in Luke 23:43. There is no mention of the resurrection of others at the time of the resurrection of Christ, as in Matthew 27:52.

I want you to turn to Matthew 28, where we have the commission given to the church. Notice the difference in the wording. This is very important.

Matthew 28:18-20 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority [Does that not ring true with the book of Matthew?], has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Now let us look at that in Mark 16.

Mark 16:15-18 And He 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. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

Any mention of power? Yes there is, but it is subtle, is it not? They would have power to heal. They would have power to cast out demons. But the wording in the book of Matthew is so obviously focused on authority and power. He said, "I have the power and I am giving it to you!" That is Matthew's approach.

Mark's approach is quite a bit different. He says, "Go," and He implies they are going as a servant. He even hints at a measure of rejection and resistance, and other difficult experiences despite the right attitude and the best of service. The approach is, "I will be working in you."

Even where Mark and Matthew are very similar, we find that Mark softens and he lowers the tone. That was one example. Let us go back to Mark 1 where John the Baptist is speaking.

Mark 1:8 "I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Let us look at what Matthew says in chapter 3.

Matthew 3:11 "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I [see the concentration on power?], whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

Matthew throws the fear of God into us. Mark throws his arm around you and he does not threaten. It is very interesting. Let us look at Matthew 10.

Matthew 10:1 And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease. . . .

Matthew 10:5-7 These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying, "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'"

Mark 3:13-14 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.

Quite a bit different, is it not? He goes on in verse 15 to say that He gave them power to heal, but the approach between the two authors—the difference—is so obvious. In Mark, the approach is that they are seen as being companions with Him in serving the people of God and the world as well. That is pretty much the relationship the book of Mark shows that these men had with Jesus.

I am going to tell you something that you probably do not know, and it is very interesting and significant in understanding the approach. Nowhere in the book of Mark, until after the resurrection, do the apostles ever call Him "Lord." I think that is so interesting, because even though they knew who He was, Mark is showing their relationship was as brothers. They knew who was in charge, but He was not exercising authority with them in such a way that He was overpowering them. Rather, He stooped so low (if I can put it that way), that they were able to see Him, in some sense, as an equal.

Let us go to Matthew 8. There is, incidentally, one place in the book of Mark before the resurrection where you will find in English Bibles the word 'Lord' used. But I have been assured (if we can trust these people) that that word is not in the Greek versions of the Bible. These are not church of God authorities, but people out in the world. They do appear in interlinears, but these experts say it is not in there. It is something that has been inserted.

Matthew 8:1-4 When He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. And behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying "I am willing; be cleansed." Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus said to him, "See that you tell no one; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

What I was really looking at was verse 2: "Lord." Let us compare this with Mark 1, where the same thing appears.

Mark 1:40-41 Now a leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, "If You are willing, You can make me clean." Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him "I am willing; be cleansed."

We could go with the next two verses, which continue the story, but you see there is no mention of "Lord." Let us look at Matthew 26. This took place very late in Christ's ministry. It is the Passover prior to His crucifixion.

Matthew 26:20-22 When evening had come, He sat down with the twelve. Now as they were eating, He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me." And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to say to Him, "Lord, is it I?"

Let us compare that with Mark 14.

Mark 14:18-19 Now as they sat and ate, Jesus said, "Assuredly, I say to you, one of you who eats with Me will betray Me." And they began to be sorrowful, and to say to Him one by one, "Is it I?" And another said, "Is it I?"

It is such a subtle difference, and yet it is there. Once you begin to see it, it is so obvious. Mark did not look at Christ in the same way as Matthew did. Whoever Luke's sources were, we are going to see that they were different

from Matthew, Mark, and John in the way it was approached. We understand it has all the same Author. God is the Author. These are God-breathed. *God knew what He was doing!* That is instruction for you and me, so that we can see the multifaceted personality of Jesus Christ and the approach His disciples had toward Him. It is very interesting.

The place where "Lord" appears is in Mark 9:24. Compare that with Matthew 17:14-15. You will see and understand that the word "Lord" is not in the Greek.

One more, which we will not turn to is Mark 4:38-39. It is another example where there is a similar occurrence. Compare that with Matthew 8:25-26. Something like this does not happen by chance—something that is so obvious. Our God, who is the Author of this, says He is aware of the sparrow falling. A title that His Son, certainly, rightly has but is omitted—He is certainly aware of it. He intended that it be that way, because there is an aspect He wants us to understand. It is done on purpose to give emphasis.

Now back to Mark 1. Here we are dealing with an addition, something that Mark has that the others do not have.

Mark 1:9-11 It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. Then a voice came from heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Unfortunately, the *New King James Version* did something there that took away something that was fairly obvious in the *King James Version*. Incidentally, the Kings James is correct, not the New King James.

If we would compare this with Matthew and Luke, we will find a difference, and that is that in Mark, John the Baptist is not given any share of the vision. He is there, but he is not given a share of the vision. That is not too unusual. Remember when Paul was struck down by God on the road to Damascus—everybody was aware that something happened, but there were two different versions. Both of them are recorded in the book of Acts. One heard an

indistinguishable sound, which might have sounded something much like thunder. But the apostle Paul heard Jesus Christ speaking to him and giving him—you might say—a very gentle what-for.

In this occasion in the book of Mark, the wording in the Greek is much stronger than it is in the other two. The other two say that heaven was opened. Mark says it was “*torn asunder*,” not that it just opened up like a door silently, but rather loudly, and the heavens were opened. Then, when the voice spoke, Mark says it spoke to Jesus.

What are we going to get from this? There are plenty of people who would say that this was a general announcement to everybody that, “This is My Son.” It was not needed. John the Baptist already knew who He was and He told other people who He was.

Look at what follows right after in the book of Mark: the temptations in the wilderness and then immediately Jesus begins to preach. What did God do here? He filled His Son with faith by reinforcing to Him, “*You are My Son! Go forth and do what needs to be done.*” It was an encouragement to Him. It fit Him for the battle with Satan that was going to occur and then carried over into the preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom of God.

There are other occasions like this that I think are also interesting, one of which I will mention. Do you know before the Day of Pentecost in 31 AD, the apostles were pretty insipid, were they not? Does not the record show that? Their faith kept breaking. Not only did their faith break, they ratted on Jesus. He constantly had to explain things that, to you and me, are relatively simple. Explaining parables, for example. But when it was confirmed to them on the Day of Pentecost by the receipt of God's Holy Spirit, and flames of fire were dancing about on their bodies, and suddenly they began speaking in other tongues, and people of other tongues could hear them speaking in their own language, it was God the Father confirming the ordination that Jesus had already applied to these men before they went forth.

I want you to think about that, because I wonder if anybody following in the wake of the ministry of Herbert W. Armstrong has had anything like this announcing to them that they are the one that is supposed to take the gospel to the world. You can fill in your own name. When God wants to send

somebody, He makes it pretty plain—pretty plain to the one He is going to send. He does it so they will be filled with faith that He is with them. He did it for His own Son. He did it for the apostles. He did it for Paul later on. Think about it.

In verse 13 of Mark 1 is again something that is added that does not appear in the other books.

Mark 1:13 And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts.

Nobody else has that. Why is it here? There are two possibilities: Number one is to connect Christ to David—David the shepherd king. What did David do before he had his public battle with Goliath? David was presented to the Israelitish people in general through the battle with Goliath, was he not? Yes, he was. But before that, what had David done? He had fought with wild beasts, and he had killed the bear and he had killed the lion with his hands and with a knife. Is that there to make that connection? It is a possibility.

But there is another one too. Maybe the inference of this is that here is the King of the kingdom of heaven and He is out in the wild with the beasts, and maybe the beasts were at peace with Him—a Messianic reference in that regard. Either way you take it, there is a Messianic reference with this One with whom we have to do.

In the one, He is ready to lay down His life to the wild beasts like David was in his shepherding responsibilities. With the other, there was a foretaste of the Messianic Kingdom in which He is at peace with nature.

There is something else in the first chapter of the book of Mark that is also an addition. It is something that bears very heavily on service. Let us go back to verse 10. What we are going to show here is a truly remarkable repetition of a word in the Greek. That word is *eutheos*. It is translated into English in about five different ways, but all the words mean virtually the same thing. In verses 10, 12, 18, 20, 21, and 28 it is translated 'immediately.' In verse 29 it is translated 'soon.' In verse 30 it is translated 'at once.' In verse 31 it is translated 'immediately.' In chapter 2, verses 2 and 8 it is translated 'immediately.'

If you have a *King James Version*, most times this word will be translated 'straight away.' In a more modern version, it is translated 'immediately.' 'Forthwith' will also appear in English versions. 'Anon,' which means virtually the same thing: soon and at once.

Remembering the theme of servant and service, this is the way the Son of God is serving spiritually. He does it *immediately*. He does not wait around. He serves immediately, straight away. What we are seeing here is something that is later on used by the apostle Paul in a letter to Timothy. He said to Timothy, "Be instant in season and out." He is saying, "Be on the ball to do your work, right away."

That word appears eighty times in the New Testament. It appears forty-one times in that little, short book of Mark. So when you see something that needs to be done, do it. That is simple, is it not? God establishes that right in the first two chapters. This is the way service is to be done—right away.

Let us carry this forward a little bit further, because there are all kinds of indications of Christ's demeanor—little touches that Mark shows that others do not. What they do is that they add a dimension to Christ's personality, because they show the way that He served. We have already seen one aspect: He served immediately. But there are other aspects to that as well.

Let us go to Mark 10. This will give you an example. Here we have the blessing of the little children.

Mark 10:16 And He took them up in His arms.

Let us look at another one in chapter 1.

Mark 1:30-31 But Simon's wife's mother lay sick with a fever, and they told Him about her at once. So He came and took her by the hand.

He touched her.

Mark 8:22-23 Then He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to Him, and begged Him to touch him. So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town.

There are many of those things. Why? Part of the answer is in the book of Hebrews—just an insight there. He made Himself one with man. Think about this: Which of your senses is the most intense? It is feeling, touch. That is the one you react to most strongly. I will give you a very clear example. On the one hand, lips, when they touch, what happens? The sparks, the passion, immediately begins to arise. On the other extreme, when a fist hits a chin, that is another kind of touch. Touching is the sense with which we respond most intensely. Why do you think God wants the ministry to lay hands on you? It has to do with our feeling. It is even something that is faith-building because it communicates to the person something that can come in no other way—concern, empathy.

There are others. This is something else Mark deals in that the others do not, at least not to any extent. But he deals in it greatly.

Mark 3:5 And when He had looked around at them with anger . . .

Mark tells us the expression that was on Jesus' face. Mark tells us about the look that was in His eyes when He did things. Mark tells us, in a number of cases—remember the time when the people came to Him and said, "Your family is out there; Your mother and Your brothers are out there." But Mark tells us in his accounting that when Jesus heard that, there was no response right away, but instead He looked around at everybody that was there. Then after looking at everybody, He probably looked them right in the eye and said, "Who is My mother and My brother and My sister? It is those who do the will of God." Mark tells us He looked around, searching with His eyes to make connection, going right into people's hearts when He did it.

Do you remember when the rich, young ruler came to Christ and asked, "What must I do to have eternal life?" Mark alone says that Jesus looked at him and loved him. It came out of His eyes, the expression that was on His face.

What Mark gives us is flashes of personality so we can understand that this One who serves us was not a department store mannequin. He was not just walking through life unaware of what would help people or what was going on in their thoughts. There are things that cannot be expressed by words, which a look can express or a touch expresses. Jesus did them all. Only Mark tells us about these. See the way service is to be done?

There are many times we do not feel like serving. Let me tell you right here and now that if you do not feel like serving, do it anyway! There is a reason why you have to do it anyway. First of all, it is the right thing to do and if you do not do it *you will never have the right feelings! The right feelings grow out of doing the right thing!* Jesus had both. He had the right reason for doing things. He had the wisdom to do the right thing, but He also had the right feelings that go along with doing the right thing. We are never going to have the right feelings until we make ourselves do the right thing.

How about Jairus' daughter? He was an important man in the synagogue who brought news to Jesus that his daughter was sick. Jesus left immediately to go heal this little girl, but on the way, they were told that the girl was dead, do not bother. Mark tells us **immediately** Jesus turned to the man when he was told. "Be of good cheer, your daughter only sleeps." He thought of the man and the reaction he might have. There was tender concern in Christ and He did not want the man to feel badly from that point until the time the resurrection would actually take place. He did what He could to relieve the pressure in the man's mind and keep the sorrow from building.

There are so many of them in the book of Mark. You know, when Jesus was resurrected, do you know what the angel said to Mary? "Go tell the disciples and Peter!" Why Peter? I am sure that was a message from Christ not to forget about Peter. So the angel told Mary specifically to go to Peter. He knew how broken up Peter was. Immediately, he wanted to encourage him: "It's alright. He's risen. Everything is fine."

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

He did not beat people over the head with the truth. He used His mind to discern from the questions, probably from the body movements from the people, what it was they would be able to bear and understand. He did not teach to them the deep things of the Kingdom of God right off the bat. To those who needed milk, He gave milk. To those who needed strong meat, He gave strong meat. To those who needed chewed out, He chewed out. He was a discerner. He did not hit everybody with a cannonball, but He gave them what they needed as they were able to bear it.

There are all kinds of things we could add here. It is Mark who adds touches like showing that Jesus responded with compassion. It is Mark who shows that when somebody came to Him and asked, "Can You do anything?" and Mark says, "If you believe." This lesson is vital in regard to faith. Not only must there be faith on the part of the servant, there also must be faith on the part of the served. I am going to re-word that. Jesus is saying in effect that He can only serve those who trust Him. If you want further proof of that, Mark has it. Mark tells you that Jesus could do no mighty miracles in Capernaum because the people did not believe.

If we want to be served by Christ, then we have to be willing to trust Him, and He will serve us.

Here is another little interesting insight into the crucifixion. Again, this is only something Mark puts in. Mark shows first He was led out in the judgment hall at Pilate's, then the next thing you know he is telling that His stake had to be carried by somebody, by Simon a Cyrenian; then comes the thing nobody else puts in. The Bible will generally say they led Him to where He was crucified. Mark says they bore Him there. He did not have the strength. They had to carry Him, too. The thing I was thinking about there in regard to being borne to the place where He was sacrificed had to do with the ox—the burnt offering. It had to be carried there, too.

Mark 10:21 Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come take up the cross, and follow Me."

Not only does a person have to change what he is and change his life as much as he is able to do at that point in repenting, he also has to bear his cross. That is part of our service to Christ and to mankind.

A little bit later, Peter says, "We have left all and followed you." Jesus responded:

Mark 10:30 "Who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions."

Persecutions are part of the cross that we have to bear. We find that Christ is willing to give us blessings, but they are going to come in our service with persecution.

There is no doubt that the major underlying message of this biography is of Jesus' service, as well as His attitude in serving. How does this translate into a lesson for you and me? To answer this, I am going to quote Jesus' brother James. Is there anybody who had keener insight into Jesus than James? I do not know. Remember, James grew up with Jesus. All of James' life, Jesus was around, until the crucifixion. James is going to tell us what pure religion is.

James 1:27 Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

In the past we have tended to emphasize the unspotted aspect. I do not mean in this little explanation here to take away from that at all, because that means keeping the commandments, doing the legal thing that has to do with righteousness that the book of Matthew concentrated so strongly upon.

We are seeing another aspect of pure religion right here. James, the interpreter of his Brother, who was God and Man, says that pure religion is to do both. This statement about visiting the widow and the fatherless and so forth is just a generality showing those who are less significant in society, and pointing us toward doing things that are seemingly insignificant and nobody really cares whether we do it or not except the people who are being

served. Nobody may even see what we are doing in the serving of these people. It is not something that is trumpeted from the lectern and it is not something that is done before the eyes of a number of people.

When James wrote this and when the Bible was translated into English (I am talking about the *King James Version*), the word religion meant something different than it does today. If I ask you what is your religion, what are you likely to say? You are likely to say, "I am a Christian." Or if a person does not happen to be a Christian, he would say, "I am a Muslim," or whatever he happens to be. What we are saying, we are repeating back to these people something they expect, and that is religion consists of a body of beliefs, the principles we follow, and ceremonies that make up the whole. That is what we associate religion with.

This word in the Greek means "worship"—pure worship. Incidentally, the word "religion" in English also used to mean "worship," but in the last three or four hundred years it has come to mean a body of beliefs, a body of people, a denomination, a group that follows certain beliefs. But it used to mean worship.

Worship is what one does *because* of his body of beliefs and what he feels about them. Thus James is saying pure religion—pure worship—consists of two broad areas. There is the moral area of keeping the commands of God, keeping oneself unspotted. There is the other area and that is the one we need to pay some attention to.

James saw his Brother operating day in and day out. Where did he see Him operate? He saw Him in the home. He saw Him interact with their father. He saw Him interact with their mother, with all the siblings within the family. He saw Him interact with the neighbors. He saw Him, if I can make a modern statement, doing the dishes, taking out the garbage, working in the garden, making His bed, working in the family business, dealing with customers, attending the synagogue, talking with the Rabbi.

Putting all of these things together, I think that what he is telling us is what he saw in Christ was pure religion. He saw pure worship that was expressed by a Man who was supremely thoughtful and helpful. Do you know what Jesus did? Jesus made religion, the body of beliefs, into a practical discipline

done because of His faith in God. What Jesus did in being helpful was a pure expression of the body of beliefs.

I am not talking about the irritating fussiness of a Martha, a person who was always hovering around looking for the best way to serve you. She does it in such a way that she is the kind of person you have to thank a hundred times a day for all of these things that she does. Sometimes fussiness actually gets in the way and it is more of a hindrance than it is help.

Any definition of religion this simple is bound to be somewhat inadequate, but I think that James caught the essence of Jesus' teaching and Jesus' example. A person's relationship with God—once that relationship has been established through repentance and faith toward Jesus Christ, and the receipt of God's Spirit—is *dependent upon the way* he interacts with his fellow man. Pure worship.

A simple, sincere devotion to God demonstrated by a kind, compassionate, and helpful relationship with fellow man is very similar to what Micah said, when he said, "What does God require of you, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly before your God." There is nothing complicated about that.

Let us go to Mark 12, and we will finish here.

Mark 12:32-33 So the scribe said to Him, "Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."

What this scribe said is in complete agreement with what is stated in the Old Testament in I Samuel 15, where Samuel was talking to Saul, and again in Hosea. What he is saying here is that the technicalities and rituals are less important than the expression of the religion. What does your belief express? Is it pure religion or does your religion express an argumentative,

technicality-based approach to life? That is the way the Pharisees were. Jesus told the Pharisees the harlots and the sinners are going to go into the Kingdom of God before you.

God is interested in what we express of Him in our family, the way we work with our employer, our children, wife, neighbor, whatever. What are we expressing? Is it pure religion? Is it pure worship? What is it?

What Mark is expressing to us is that Jesus is setting a pattern for us by serving without thought of authority, power, position, status, fame, or gain; but as a patient, enduring expression of an active good will, a desire to be helpful, to share the burdens of others undergoing affliction. He is saying to go and do likewise.