

## The Weekly Word

November 30 – Dec 6, 2020

Hello Reading the Bible readers. I would love to read your feedback on my new format for this blog. Mark 2&4 are up this week. Happy reading...  
Grace and Peace, Bill

To hear the Bible read click this link... <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio/>.

### Monday, November 30: Mark 2:23-3:6 NIV2011

<sup>23</sup> One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. <sup>24</sup> The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?"

<sup>25</sup> He answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? <sup>26</sup> In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions."

<sup>27</sup> Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. <sup>28</sup> So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

<sup>3:1</sup> Another time Jesus went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. <sup>2</sup> Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. <sup>3</sup> Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Stand up in front of everyone."

<sup>4</sup> Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent.

<sup>5</sup> He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. <sup>6</sup> Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

### What does the passage say? (What is this passage about?)

Sabbath keeping, what is appropriate to do and what is not on the Sabbath is the heart of these two passages.

### What does the passage mean for all Christians? (The meaning of the passage needs to fit believers everywhere in the world.)

The key to the first section chapter 2:23-28 is the pronouncement by Jesus, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. <sup>28</sup> So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath." To understand Jesus teaching is to grapple with this.

*The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath...* Judaism had many rules about what could and could not be done on the Sabbath. I suspect that the rules were first established to give people guidance. I think they were well meaning. Overtime rabbis' well-intentioned guidance became rules that must be followed. Once human rules are added to God's Word we are in trouble because the human rules become more important than God's Word. The people in Jesus' day lived in bondage to the rabbinic rules about the Sabbath.

The big idea Jesus was teaching is that the Sabbath was made for and was a gift for humanity. It was a gift because it was a day of no labor, a day to rest and a day to renew ourselves in God. Sabbath should be a welcome gift not a day with so many rules which results in constricting our joy and rest.

In the first story the disciples pick some grain to eat as they walked through a field. Grabbing a handful of grain was interpreted by the rabbis as harvesting. Therefore it was work! Sabbath broken!

Really, grabbing a little grain for a meal or snack as you walk is work? Would it be better to starve? Starving on the Sabbath when food is all around is not what God intended when He said rest! It was a corruption of the Sabbath, which was meant for the betterment of humanity.

I believe we still need to get our minds around Sabbath and that it is meant for our benefit...

The second story hits the same topic of Sabbath-keeping from another angle. Yes, doctoring is work, but is the healing of a man work or gift if it is done on the Sabbath? Jesus says gift. Making His point Jesus heals the man in front of everyone. And this was not a life or death healing, making Jesus' point all the stronger.

I also note that we are only in the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Mark and the Pharisees have begun working with the Herodians (normally a group Pharisees would never work alongside) to kill Jesus. Hatred does make strange bedfellows.

### **What is the Holy Spirit saying to me through this passage?**

So where is the Spirit taking me through this reading? The Spirit is probing my practice and attitude of Sabbath. I typically take my Sabbath on Mondays. Sunday is definitely a workday for me. I love worship and I am blessed that I am able to worship during our Sunday service, but believe me preaching and leading other elements of worship are work for pastors, worship leaders and some others. Just watch us starting early in the morning thinking through the service, rewriting, rehearsing... it is work and I cannot get around that. This is why I Sabbath on Monday, I try to avoid 'work' stuff, emails, texts, etc. I still have growth in my 'Sabbathing' but it definitely is a gift to me, physically and mentally.

I do still have some work attitudinally... I am still plagued by the thought if I could get this or that done the week might be better; meaning my workweek might be better. This is not good. It undercuts the spirit and blessing of Sabbath.

### **Tuesday, December 1: Mark 3:7-19 NIV2011**

*<sup>7</sup> Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake, and a large crowd from Galilee followed. <sup>8</sup> When they heard about all he was doing, many people came to him from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, and the regions across the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon. <sup>9</sup> Because of the crowd he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him, to keep the people from crowding him. <sup>10</sup> For he had healed many, so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him. <sup>11</sup> Whenever the impure spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God." <sup>12</sup> But he gave them strict orders not to tell others about him.*

*<sup>13</sup> Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him.*

*<sup>14</sup> He appointed twelve <sup>e</sup> that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach*

*<sup>15</sup> and to have authority to drive out demons. <sup>16</sup> These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to*

whom he gave the name Peter), <sup>17</sup> James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means “sons of thunder”), <sup>18</sup> Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot <sup>19</sup> and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

### **What does the passage say? (What is this passage about?)**

Crowds are crushing Jesus. Because He healed many, the sick and lame were pushing to get near Him. On the day we read about He had to get in a boat so that He could be just off shore rather than be ‘crushed’ by the pressing crowds. The need was great.

Unclean spirits would cry out that Jesus was the son of God, but Jesus forbid them to speak...

After this Jesus gets away from the crowd and appoints the 12 to be with Him and to be sent out by Him to preach and drive out demons. Then the 12 are named. Interesting from the get go, Judas is named as the betrayer!

### **What does the passage mean for all Christians? (The meaning of the passage needs to fit believers everywhere in the world.)**

Jesus has spiritual power to heal and drive out demons. Elsewhere it says He has all authority. Banishing the demonic world is part of Jesus’ ministry.

Jesus calls all kinds of people to continue his ministry of preaching and driving out demons. The 12 are an odd mix of siblings, zealots and tax collectors (two groups on the opposite poles of life; one fighting for Israel’s freedom from Rome and the other complicit and working for Rome). Yet in Jesus, differences are apparently laid down for the greater good of being with and serving Jesus.

### **What is the Holy Spirit saying to me through this passage?**

It is the last observation that seems to pierce me. I sense the Holy Spirit saying to me I have to lay down worldly differences that I have with sisters and brothers in the body of Christ for the sake of serving Jesus and advancing His name and fame in all the earth.

### **Wednesday, December 2: Mark 3:20-35 NIV2011**

<sup>20</sup> Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. <sup>21</sup> When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, “He is out of his mind.”

<sup>22</sup> And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, “He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons.”

<sup>23</sup> So Jesus called them over to him and began to speak to them in parables: “How can Satan drive out Satan? <sup>24</sup> If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. <sup>25</sup> If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. <sup>26</sup> And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. <sup>27</sup> In fact, no one can enter a strong man’s house without first tying him up. Then he can plunder the strong man’s house. <sup>28</sup> Truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their sins and every slander they utter, <sup>29</sup> but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin.”

<sup>30</sup> He said this because they were saying, "He has an impure spirit."

<sup>31</sup> Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him.

<sup>32</sup> A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, "Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you."

<sup>33</sup> "Who are my mother and my brothers?" he asked.

<sup>34</sup> Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers!" <sup>35</sup> Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."

### **What does the passage say? (What is this passage about?)**

First the passage tells us that Jesus' family was worried He had lost His mind and they traveled to get Him. They obviously didn't understand yet.

The teachers of the law were speaking against Jesus saying He is a demon. Jesus confronts them with their illogic. Why would Satan cast out Satan? He ends His confrontation saying that all sins can be forgiven except the sin that blasphemes the Holy Spirit.

His family arrives but Jesus rather than going with them, makes a profound statement, "Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother".

### **What does the passage mean for all Christians? (The meaning of the passage needs to fit believers everywhere in the world.)**

Much ink has been spilt on the 'unforgiveable' sin. I don't presume to answer this question. The context makes it clear that it has something to do with believing Jesus is demonic Himself.

The next portion concludes with the amazing statement that *Whoever does God's will is [Jesus'] brother and sister and mother*. A person doesn't need to be a blood relative of Jesus to be His family. When we live for God, when we do God's will, we become a sibling of Jesus. Therefore we become part of God's family. This is a wonderful gift from God to be adopted and grafted into God's family.

### **What is the Holy Spirit saying to me through this passage?**

Tommy Walker sings a song, *He Knows My Name*. The second stanza goes like this:

*I have a Father  
He calls me His own  
He'll never leave me  
No matter where I go  
  
He knows my name  
He knows my every thought  
He sees each tear that falls  
And He hears me when I call*

This stanza captures what the Spirit is saying to me. Through believe in Jesus I have been adopted into God's family. God in heaven is my Father in heaven... who has gladly brought me into His family. I am His and He is mine....

*I have a Father  
He calls me His own  
He'll never leave me*

*No matter where I go  
He knows my name  
He knows my every thought  
He sees each tear that falls  
And He hears me when I call*

Praise God... He has me in His hand.

### **Thursday, December 3: Mark 4:1-20 NIV2011**

<sup>1</sup>Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge. <sup>2</sup>He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: <sup>3</sup>"Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. <sup>4</sup>As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. <sup>5</sup>Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. <sup>6</sup>But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. <sup>7</sup>Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. <sup>8</sup>Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times."

<sup>9</sup>Then Jesus said, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear."

<sup>10</sup>When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. <sup>11</sup>He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables <sup>12</sup>so that,

*"they may be ever seeing but never perceiving,  
and ever hearing but never understanding;  
otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!"*

<sup>13</sup>Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? <sup>14</sup>The farmer sows the word. <sup>15</sup>Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. <sup>16</sup>Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. <sup>17</sup>But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. <sup>18</sup>Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; <sup>19</sup>but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. <sup>20</sup>Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown."

### **What does the passage say? (What is this passage about?)**

This passage tells the well-known parable of the sower, who scatters seed on four types of soil and the different outcomes. Only the seed scattered on good soil produces any fruit.

### **What does the passage mean for all Christians? (The meaning of the passage needs to fit believers everywhere in the world.)**

It hit me today that the parable is about yield and only one soil produced any yield. In essence the first 3 types of soil are all the same unyielding. The reasons for not producing fruit may be different, but the result is identical, no fruit, no yield, no grain.

Each of the first 3 soils teaches us about the human heart and what robs the word of God from a person's life.

**First soil, the path...** this path is hard soil, the seed just lays on the top exposed where birds (Satan) can simply pick it up and take the seed away. Some lives and hearts are so hard that even if they hear God's Word preached or read God's Word it doesn't penetrate so it is ripe for being scooped up and taken away.

For a while we had a dog that ran a path in our back yard that wore away all the grass. It became hard and no grass would grow... I tried. Eventually I needed to cultivate the dogs' 'path'. Only after I broke up the soil could I plant seed and watch it grow. This reminds me that even the hardest heart can be broken up and 'tenderized' so that over time it can become good soil that receives seed and yields a harvest.

**Next soil type, rocky soil...** This soil type gives the illusion of success but ultimately failure occurs. Rocky soil doesn't allow roots to take root so they die off before producing any fruit. The ground around the rocks can be nutrient rich but the rocks prevent lasting growth. Rocks in our lives can be hard places we refuse to surrender to the Lord... addictions, habits, attitudes, secret places and so on. We can look good on the surface but have all this hidden just below the thin layer of looking good. If our lives are rocky, people can and do receive the Word with joy, but then in time the rocks in our lives cause the word to starve and die out before yield can happen.

When I lived in a farming community in western PA I observed that after breaking up the soil in preparation for planting came a pass or two that removed the rocks. They dragged a specialized attachment behind the tractor that picked out the rock. Farmers did this every planting season. Rocks are continually working their way up through the loose soil toward the top and the rocks needed to be removed before successful planting could take place. Rocks affect yield.

This reminds me that we all need to constantly be combing our lives from rocks that work their way toward the surface that could affect our yield. And that it is an ongoing need even from believers to keep our yield up...

The third soil, among the thorns... this is the only soil where Jesus provides direct application. He says that the thorns are *the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful*. That what thorns or weeds do, they steal the necessary nutrients from the grain. Also they often grow faster so as they outpace the grain they steal the necessary sunlight as well. This is why farmers pay big bucks for weed control. If you want a yield and your soil is good soil then you have to control the weeds.

As Jesus says we have to control and eradicate things like *worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things*. If it is worth it for farmers to do weed control, it is worth it for disciples to look at these types of areas in their lives to bolster their yield.

Lastly, there is good soil... and it is amazing to see the yields of good soil *some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown*. That is amazingly high yield.

Jesus' point is that good soil produces fruit, which is the measure of success...

### **What is the Holy Spirit saying to me through this passage?**

The Spirit is asking me to examine my life for rocks and thorns... anything that will inhibit my yield for the kingdom...

### **Friday, December 4: Mark 4:21-34 NIV2011**

<sup>21</sup> He said to them, "Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a bowl or a bed? Instead, don't you put it on its stand?" <sup>22</sup> For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open. <sup>23</sup> If anyone has ears to hear, let them hear."

<sup>24</sup> "Consider carefully what you hear," he continued. "With the measure you use, it will be measured to you—and even more. <sup>25</sup> Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them."

<sup>26</sup> He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. <sup>27</sup> Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. <sup>28</sup> All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. <sup>29</sup> As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."

<sup>30</sup> Again he said, "What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? <sup>31</sup> It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. <sup>32</sup> Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade."

<sup>33</sup> With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. <sup>34</sup> He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.

### **What does the passage say? (What is this passage about?)**

Mark includes three parables in rapid-fire mode. The first parable is about shining our light instead of hiding it under a bowl or bed. Then after this parable Jesus makes a comment chiding listeners to consider what they hear. Then He speaks a second and third parable both on the kingdom of God, which speak to the growth of the kingdom of God by God's activity unseen by humans.

### **What does the passage mean for all Christians? (The meaning of the passage needs to fit believers everywhere in the world.)**

Because there are a number of different parables, there is more than one meaning as each of the parables plus the Word from Jesus all have truth to convey.

By dividing the chapter the way I did reading and studying these parables together I see an interesting connection.

If I read the last two parables alone I would be confronted with the work of God that is accomplished behind the scenes if you will. The seed once planted begins to sprout without the attention of the farmer. And the tiny mustard seed grows to a large bush all by God's design. I could be tempted to say that the growth of the kingdom of God is God's work not mine. And surely the kingdom of God will not grow without God's work.

But my reading today started in verse 21 with the parable about not putting a light under a bowl or bed but on a stand. This word picture underscores the part we play. We need to put our faith life on an stand so people can see it, and by God's grace be drawn to the Lord. Taken alone this parable could lead me to believe the growth of God's kingdom is my work, our work, so we better get on it.

This is even underscored by Jesus' words to consider what we hear, namely that we better let our light shine.

The wonder of the passages I read is that both aspects have to be put together which offers a compelling case that we Christ followers have our part to play but additionally God is at work, where we do not see, causing His kingdom to grow. Taken together I see the interplay between my life and actions and God's. I cannot abdicate my responsibility to shine for Jesus. Neither can I get too heady and think everything depends on me. God is at work where I do not see, causing His kingdom to grow. Understanding both is essential...

### **What is the Holy Spirit saying to me through this passage?**

God is reminding me I have to put my faith on a stand and let it shine for others to see... I always have to be thinking what else can I do to let my faith be visible. I also should think about how I can up the wattage of my lamp so that the reach of the light God has given me to shine travels further...

I am reminded of Matthew 5:16, *In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*

### **Saturday, December 5: Mark 4:35-41 NIV2011**

<sup>35</sup> *That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side."*  
<sup>36</sup> *Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. <sup>37</sup> A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. <sup>38</sup> Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"*

<sup>39</sup> *He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.*

<sup>40</sup> *He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"*

<sup>41</sup> *They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"*

### **What does the passage say? (What is this passage about?)**

I love the small eyewitness account element in the story; *Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion.*

The passage recounts a boat ride after a long day and how Jesus saves the men by calming a storm.

To date all Jesus' miracles have been of the healing variety. In this passage Jesus shows Himself to be more than simply a healer. He has power of nature, which was an entirely new feature of His authority and power.

**What does the passage mean for all Christians? (The meaning of the passage needs to fit believers everywhere in the world.)**

Simply put, Jesus is Lord of nature. His Word has the power to change weather and nature.

For the disciples this puts Jesus in a new category... and they don't know what to make of Him. Their comment reveals their bewilderment... their mind is blown by what they have just witnessed. Waking Jesus they were probably thinking, "Hey Jesus, row with us, we need Your help". Instead He calmed the storm. Struggling to understand, they say, "*Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!*"

**What is the Holy Spirit saying to me through this passage?**

The scripture and the Spirit are reminding me that I serve an all powerful Savior named Jesus. On the one hand I want to have an intimate connection with Jesus as my Lord. At the same time He commands everything and I must never get so comfortable with Jesus that I forget He is absolute Lord of life and universe. He is God over everything!!!

**Sunday, December 6, 2020 - Sunday Worship**

*If any of my thoughts or the Bible readings spark questions send an email reply and I will do my best to answer all questions from people on the list... I will answer personal questions privately; general questions will be answered in a subsequent email installment.*

*If you are reading along with me from the Living Hope website you can send questions or request being placed on the weekly email list by emailing Lisa at [office@LivingHopeCT.org](mailto:office@LivingHopeCT.org).*

Click here for an audio link to my sermons, <https://livinghopect.org/resources/audio-sermons>. Sermons are generally posted within 2 days. We also livestream our full services which are up on our YouTube channel, <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgKURRsbX92qqIFgDF1iRWA>