

WHY FOUR GOSPELS? THE FOUR-FOLD PORTRAIT OF CHRIST

in
Matthew, Mark, Luke and John

by

Louis T. Talbot

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

CHRIST — THE SERVANT OF THE LORD

As Portrayed in
The Gospel According to Mark

In our introductory lesson we sought to outline the central purpose of each of the four Gospel records, stating that Mark's portrait of the Lord Jesus presents Him as the faithful Servant of the Lord.

We need to remember that each of the evangelists, guided by the Holy Spirit, repeatedly and emphatically proves that our Lord was always eternal God, that He is Israel's Messiah and King, that He is the faithful Servant of the Lord, the sinless Son of Man, "**God manifest in the flesh.**" Therefore, in presenting, in these studies, the special emphasis of each Gospel record, we do not want to exclude the other all-important and related aspects of our Lord's Person and work, set forth plainly in all the narratives.

We do want to show why the Holy Spirit has recorded these four accounts, and what the central purpose of each Gospel story is. And without question, Mark's record emphasizes that phase of Christ's Person and work foretold by the Prophet Zechariah, when he wrote, saying,

"Behold, I will bring forth my Servant the Branch" (Zechariah 3:8).

Two other quotations just here will suffice to show that the Christ of the New Testament is the God of the Old Testament; that, from all eternity, He planned to take the lowly place of a Servant, in order to redeem fallen humanity:

"Behold my Servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles . . . to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house" (Isaiah 42:1-7).

“Behold, my Servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: so shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider” (Isaiah 52:13-15).

From the many New Testament passages which speak to us of the fulfillment of these prophecies, we select that one in Philippians 2:5-8, which tells us why the eternal God became the faithful Servant of the Lord when He was born in Bethlehem nearly two thousand years ago:

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:5-8).

The eternal Son of God did not need to grasp after equality with the Father and with the Holy Spirit; He was always One with the Father and One with the Spirit. **“He emptied himself,”** not of His deity, when He became the Servant of the Lord; He **“emptied himself”** of His glory, in order to die for sinners.

As the obedient Servant of the Lord, He died; and more than that, He died the shameful death of the cross, becoming a curse for us.

We stress these truths just here because rationalistic, scoffing teachers have perverted the true meaning of this wonderful passage, trying to make men believe that the text says that our Lord emptied Himself of His deity when He **“was made flesh.”** That is Satan’s falsehood; the text plainly states Christ’s eternal deity in His being One with the Father and with the Spirit from all eternity; and the passage makes it very clear that, in becoming an obedient Servant, He did not lay aside His deity; He laid aside only His glory, in order to die for sinners.

Then, as if to leave no room for doubt regarding the matter, the Holy Spirit continues with one of the most remarkable of all passages, setting forth the eternal Lordship of Christ, saying in Philippians 2:9-11 that He is exalted to the place of all authority and all power and all worship in all of God’s universe!

THE SERVANT OF THE LORD — “OBEDIENT UNTO DEATH”

The key verse of The Gospel According to Mark summarizes the message of these Old Testament prophecies and Philippians 2:5-8, which we have just quoted. It is found in Mark 10:45, and reads as follows,

“For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life (or ‘soul’) a ransom for many.”

It was in His suffering and death that our Lord's "**visage was marred more than any man,**" as Isaiah 52:14 states. We are told that the literal Hebrew is "*terrible*": "So marred from the form of man was His aspect that His appearance was not that of a son of man"; "i.e., not human." (See footnote, *Scofield Reference Bible*).

From the very beginning of the book of Mark, even unto the closing words, we see the Son of Man ministering, serving ceaselessly, working for those He came to redeem. And all the while, even as He worked mighty miracles, healing the sick and speaking peace to troubled hearts, He was steadfastly facing the cross, "**to give his life a ransom for many.**"

The purpose of the Holy Spirit in this second Gospel record is illustrated in Christ's much discussed statement of Mark 13:32 concerning the time of His return to earth,

"But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father."

Those who would rob our Lord of His eternal deity quote this text in a vain attempt to prove their point; for omniscience is an attribute of deity. However, "**the Christ of God**" is not disclaiming omniscience here; this fact is plain as we bear in mind the purpose of Mark; for in John 15:15 the Lord Jesus said also,

"... the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth."

Thus the very passage which scoffers pervert to prove their satanic falsehood becomes a clear mark of divine inspiration!

For it is significant that Mark, which presents Christ as the perfect Servant, records this statement about the hour of the Lord's return. In His ministry as a Servant, He made a voluntary surrender of certain knowledge, in order that He might walk the path of faith, thus becoming an object lesson to all believers. While He ever remained the eternal Son of God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and with the Holy Spirit; yet as a Servant He chose a limitation of His knowledge, bounded by the Father's will.

Our Lord's obedience as the faithful Servant of the Lord is emphasized by the frequent use of the Greek word, variously translated: "**straightway,**" "**forthwith,**" "**immediately,**" "**anon,**" "**as soon as.**"

This same Greek word appears more than forty times in the sixteen chapters that comprise the book of Mark. Without hesitancy or delay, the Lord Jesus went about doing His Father's will; so that those who witnessed His mighty works were "beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well" (Mark 7:37).

This second Gospel record is the story of deeds more than of words.

Let us observe the forcefulness of this often repeated key word, suggestive of a continuing ministry:

“Jesus . . . was baptized of John in Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened . . .” (1:9, 10).

“And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness. And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan” (1:12, 13).

“And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him” (1:17, 18).

“And straightway he called them . . .” (1:20).

“ . . . and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught” (1:21).

“And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee” (1:28).

“And forthwith, (i.e., ‘straightway’) when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew . . .” (1:29).

“But Simon’s wife’s mother lay sick of a fever, and anon (i.e., ‘straightway’) they tell him of her” (1:30).

“And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her . . .” (1:31).

“And as soon as (i.e., ‘straightway’) he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him” (1:42).

“And he straitly charged him, and forthwith (i.e., ‘straightway’) sent him away” (1:43).

“And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them . . .” (2:2).

“And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them . . .” (2:8).

“And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all . . .” (2:12).

“And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him” (3:6).

“And some fell on stony ground . . . and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth” (4:5).

“ . . . but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts” (4:15).

“ . . . when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness” (4:16).

“ . . . when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word’s sake, immediately they are offended” (4:17).

“But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come” (4:29).

“And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit” (5:2).

“And forthwith Jesus gave them leave” (5:13).

“And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up” (5:29).

“And Jesus immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him . . .” (5:30).

“And straightway the damsel arose, and walked...” (5:42).

“And she came in straightway with haste unto the king . . .” (6:25).

“And immediately the king sent an executioner . . .” (6:27).

“And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship . . .” (6:45).

“And immediately he talked with them . . .” (6:50).

“And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew him” (6:54).

“And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed . . . “ (7:35).

“And straightway he entered into a ship with his disciples . . .” (8:10).

“And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed . . .” (9:15).

“ . . . and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him . . .” (9:20).

“And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (9:24).

“And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way” (10:52).

“... Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as (i.e., ‘straightway’) ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied ...” (11:2).

“... and straightway he will send him hither” (11:3).

“And immediately, while he yet spake, cometh Judas ...” (14:43).

“And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to him, and saith, Master, master; and kissed him” (14:45).

“And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation ... and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate” (15:1).

The never ceasing activity of the Servant of God, as He went about ministering to others, is also suggested by the frequent use of the word **“and.”** This little conjunction seems to link one deed of mercy and power with another and yet another, without pause or even much time for rest. It occurs eighty-four times in the first chapter alone.

It is the first word of twelve of the sixteen chapters; and when we remember that the Greek language was not divided into chapters and verses; when we count the numerous times this little word occurs throughout the narrative, we begin to realize the fact that our Lord’s work was one complete and perfect whole; that He never grew **“weary in well doing”**; that the very urgency of His mission kept Him continually serving, serving, serving those whose souls He came to ransom. More miracles, therefore, are recorded in this than in any of the other three Gospel records. It is the account of the service of **“The mighty God”** during His life on earth.

SIGNIFICANT OMISSIONS FROM MARK

In our first lesson of this series on the four Gospels we tried to show that the very facts in our Lord’s life omitted from the different records evidence the inspiration by the Holy Spirit.

We mentioned, in this connection, Mark’s omission of the genealogy and birth of Christ. This is so important to the understanding of the purpose of the book that we emphasize it again just here.

No one asks for the story of the lineage and birth of a servant; and the faithful Servant of the Lord came **“to minister”** — not to establish His right to David’s throne; not to trace His genealogy, through Mary, back to Adam, in this particular book which portrays His Servant-work. Accordingly, we do not read in Mark of David’s royal line, through which Israel’s Messiah was born into the world; or of the wise men, seeking the King of the Jews; or of the shepherds and the angels. We do not read of the angelic messengers to Mary and Joseph and the shepherds of Judea. Instead, the opening verse touches the very heart of the purpose of Mark, as he was guided by the Spirit of God,

“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God . . . “

The “**Gospel**” is the “*good news*” of salvation by faith in the Son of God, who, according to Mark, “**came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.**” And this second Gospel record opens with the beginning of the public ministry of the faithful Servant of the Lord — witnessed to by John the Baptist; baptized by the Holy Spirit, anointed for service; tempted by Satan — all this crowded into thirteen brief verses.

Then “**immediately**” He was preaching, calling His disciples, casting out demons, healing the sick, “**rising up a great while before day**” to pray — all of this recorded in the very first chapter! It is a breath-taking record; so swiftly, so continuously did the Lord enter upon His ministry as the faithful Servant of God.

- In Matthew we read much about “**the gospel of the kingdom**”; in Mark that expression does not occur, but rather, it is “**the gospel of Jesus Christ.**”
- Matthew writes much of “**the kingdom of heaven**”; Mark speaks of “**the kingdom of God**” (1:14, 15), the more inclusive term.
- Matthew devotes three chapters to “*The Sermon on the Mount*”; Mark omits most of that message, except for scattered portions of its teaching. He is not proclaiming the laws of the kingdom; he is witnessing to the faithful ministry of the Servant of the Lord.
- Matthew records many parables of the Lord; Mark, only a few, all of which have to do with service.
- Matthew tells of the King’s command over angels; Mark writes of how “**the angels ministered unto him**” following His temptation by Satan (1:13).
- In Matthew we read the King’s pronouncement of “**woe**” upon rebellious Israel; in Mark the Servant of God does not arraign Israel in judgment.
- In Matthew the Lord quotes Old Testament Scripture in answer to every temptation of Satan; in Mark we read only this, for the most part, found nowhere else in the Gospels:

“And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness. And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him” (1:12, 13).

His holy soul shrank from the meeting with the devil, even as His own Holy Spirit literally drove Him to meet the archenemy of man, in order that He might faithfully serve those He came to redeem!

He served us in defeating Satan by His sinless life, by His vicarious death, by His triumphant resurrection! He serves us now all the more sympathetically, in that He Himself “**was tempted**” — sin apart! “He knows; He loves; He cares!”

We might go on endlessly with striking contrasts between Mark and the other three Gospels; these illustrations should suffice to prove the purpose of the Holy Spirit in causing Mark to omit many details, yet include others, in his record of the life of the Lord.

As we shall see when we study Luke and John, “**the beloved physician**” records very many incidents and teachings from the life of Christ that none of the other evangelists tell; and most of the narrative of the “**beloved disciple**” is found nowhere else in the Scriptures. Why? Because their purpose is different from that of Matthew and that of Mark; because the Holy Spirit painted a particular portrait of Christ in each of the four Gospels.

Attention has been called to the fact that, as Matthew portrays Israel’s King, so Mark pictures Him in His ministering on behalf of His ancient people, Israel; and is, therefore, like Matthew more than Luke and John in its appeal to those who were familiar with the Old Testament Scriptures. Possibly that is why these first two Gospels are placed nearest the Old Testament. In other words, Luke’s vision is world-wide; his message, particularly for Gentiles; whereas John, writing a generation after the first three evangelists, gave a special message to the church, which is the bride of Christ, composed of Jew and Gentile.

Mark is the most brief of all the Gospels; and yet, as we have seen, it records more of our Lord’s miracles. The outline of its message is simple and comprehensive. While we shall not attempt an analytical outline; yet as we read this second Gospel, we cannot help observing that it falls logically into four parts:

THE PORTRAIT OF THE FAITHFUL SERVANT OF THE LORD

I. “The Beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God,” Mark 1:1-13.

- His messenger;
- His baptism;
- His temptation.

II. The Public Ministry of the Servant of the Lord, 1:14 — 13:37.

- His preaching;
- His calling disciples;
- His working miracles;
- His praying;
- His teaching.

III. The Vicarious Suffering of the Servant of God, 14:1 — 15:47.

IV. The Risen and Ascended Lord — Ministering Still as Our Great High Priest, 16:1-20.

THE FAITHFUL SERVANT WAS THE GOD-MAN AND KING OF ISRAEL

Several times in this series of studies we have emphasized the fact that each of the evangelists portrays the eternal deity, the sinless humanity, the faithful service, and the coming glory of Israel’s King and the Saviour and Lord of all the redeemed. In our consideration of the special purpose of each Gospel writer, we must not forget this all-important fact.

Accordingly, we take time just here to prove that the very titles ascribed to the Lord Jesus in Mark establish the truth that He is the only true God, Creator, Lord, and King, as well as the faithful Servant of the Lord.

As we have read the book of Mark, we have made a list of some of the names by which Christ is called; we give here only a few of the many references.

For example, in the first chapter alone, He is spoken of as “**Jesus Christ, the Son of God,**” “**The Lord,**” “**One mightier**” than John the Baptist, “**My beloved Son,**” “**The Holy One of God.**” In these names, which can be applied only to deity, we see something of our Lord’s glory, which even His humiliation as a Servant could not conceal!

Then He is called:

- “**Son of man**” (2:10, 28);
- “**Lord**” (2:28; 7:28; 9:24; 12:36, 37; 16:19, 20);
- “**The Son of God**” (3:12; 15:39);
- “**Jesus**” and “**Master**” very many times, both names of lowly and meek humanity;
- “**Jesus, Son of the most high God**” (5:7);
- “**The Christ**” (8:29);
- “**Son of David**” (10:47, 48; 12:35);
- “**Jesus of Nazareth**” several times;
- “**Christ the King of Israel**” (15:32);
- “**King of the Jews**” (15:2, 9, 12, 18);
- “**Christ, the Son of the Blessed**” (14:61).

These names portray the many-sided picture of our wonderful Lord!

Not only so, but His deity is asserted:

- By His foreknowledge of His death and resurrection, as told by Mark;
- By His power to work miracles;
- By His forgiveness of sin;
- By His transfiguration, resurrection, and ascension into heaven.

His humanity is established:

- By His weariness;
- By His prayers;
- By His sympathy,
- As a Man, for the suffering and sorrowing.
- His right to David’s throne is established by His teachings.

And yet the central fact remains that Mark is emphasizing the Servant-work of our Lord.

And now let us read this second Gospel again.

Let us see yet more clearly the beautiful portrait it gives us of the faithful Servant of God, who **“came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.”**

There is a deeply spiritual message for every Christian worker in our Lord’s every act and word.

CHRIST — THE HUMBLE SERVANT

The eternal God **“humbled himself”** to serve! He served with such humility as is not common to man, not even to those who minister in the name of the Lord! Like the Jews of old, we all too often seek the chief seats in public worship, the applause of men. Not so the meek and lowly Jesus. And Mark portrays His humility, in keeping with his purpose. Here are a few incidents, selected from many of like nature, to illustrate the lowliness of the Servant of the Lord:

When **“Simon and they that were with him followed after him,”** and **“found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee. And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns . . .”** (1:36-38). He was not seeking publicity!

After He had opened the blind man’s eyes outside the city of Bethsaida — a miracle recorded only by Mark — He sent the man away, saying, **“Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town”** (8:26).

As we think of the humility of the eternal God who **“was made flesh,”** in order to redeem us, we are reminded once more of the admonition of His Holy Spirit when He said to us,

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5).

Then follow the marvelous words which we read at the beginning of this lesson today, stating that the eternal God **“humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”** God forbid that we, poor, miserable sinners, should become puffed up, especially in the service of the lowly Man of Galilee!

CHRIST — THE COMPASSIONATE SERVANT

Mark portrays Christ as the tender-hearted, compassionate Servant of God.

His kindness is emphasized by the touch of His hand upon the sick and suffering, even upon the untouchable leper!

When He healed Peter’s wife’s mother, He **“took her by the hand, and lifted her up”** (1:31).

When a leper begged for cleansing, **“Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean”** (1:41).

He took the twelve-year-old daughter of Jairus **“by the hand,”** and raised her from the dead (5:41).

When a deaf man was brought unto Him for healing, a man who also had “**an impediment in his speech**,” they begged Him “**to put his hand upon him**.” The Lord “**put his fingers into his ears . . . and touched his tongue**” — a beautiful act of grace, recorded only by Mark. But as we look further at this story, we note that “**looking up to heaven**,” the Lord “**sighed**.”

What compassion! What sympathy! Little wonder the people said of Him, “**He hath done all things well**” (7:31-37)!

Again, the people brought the blind man of Bethsaida to Him, “**and besought him to touch him**” (8:22). “**And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town**”; and twice thereafter we read that “**he put his hands upon him**” (8:22-26).

When the father brought his demon-possessed boy to the Lord, following His transfiguration, He “**took him by the hand, and lifted him up**” (9:27).

Twice we read in Mark that the Lord took little children up “**in his arms**” and “**put his hands upon them, and blessed them**” (9:36; 10:16).

Twice we read in Mark that He was “**moved with compassion**” for the multitudes who were hungry; and He miraculously fed them (6:34; 8:2).

Although Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell the story of the rich young ruler, yet Mark is the only one to tell us that “**beholding him**,” the Lord “**loved him**” (10:21).

We who bear the name of Christ need to learn well this lesson in loving-kindness; yet often we are slow to learn.

Mr. Moody once said,

“A man may be a successful physician and not love his patients; a successful lawyer and not love his clients; a successful merchant and not love his customers; but he cannot be a successful worker for the Lord and not love humanity.”

The ultimate purpose of all Christian service is to reach the hearts of men with the Gospel, and love is the only means by which that Gospel of grace may enter the human heart.

The story is told of the love of Robert Murray McCheyne for lost souls, and how he led a boy to Christ. Following his death, even after many years, an American minister of the Gospel preached in the pulpit of the Scotch man of God, who was mourned by all his countrymen, even though he had died at the early age of twenty-nine.

Upon inquiring for any parishioners who had known the beloved man of God, the American minister was introduced to an old man, of whom he asked, “Did you know Robert Murray McCheyne?”

“Yes,” the man replied.

“Can you remember any of his sermons, any of the Bible texts from which he preached?”

“No,” was the response; but then the old man said: “One thing I shall never forget. I was just a boy on the road-side when Robert Murray McCheyne passed one day. He came over to where I stood and said, ‘Jamie, I am going to your home to see your wee sister. She is dying, and I want to point her to Christ. And, Jamie, I want you to know Christ, too. I cannot allow you to go on outside of the kingdom.’ He put his hand on my head, and I have never forgotten the trembling of his fingers in my hair.”

My friend, men and women, boys and girls are still waiting at the road-side for the human touch of compassion that will point them to the divine Lord and Saviour!

CHRIST — THE RESOLUTE SERVANT — IN SPITE OF OPPOSITION

As in all the Gospel narratives, Mark shows the opposition the Lord Jesus faced from His enemies, as well as the resolute determination with which He faced His cross.

- He tells us of how the rulers of the Jews accused Him of speaking “**blasphemies**” (2:6, 7);
- He tells of eating with “**publicans and sinners**” (2:16) — as if that were wrong!
- He tells of how His enemies “**watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him**” (3:2);
- He tells of how they “**took counsel . . . how they might destroy him**” (3:6);
- He tells of how they accused Him of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub, “**the prince of devils**” (3:22);
- He tells of how they “**began to pray him to depart out of their coasts**” (5:17);
- He tells of how “**they laughed him to scorn**” (5:40);
- He tells of how they “**found fault**” with Him (7:1, 2).

These are only a few of the recorded instances when the enemies of the Lord Jesus persecuted, ridiculed, criticized, and opposed His ministry in every conceivable manner. Yet He went on “**doing good**,” serving, preaching, teaching; fulfilling the work which His Father in heaven had sent Him to do; finally laying down His life as the only atonement for sin, “**obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.**”

As we think of the patient endurance and the steadfast purpose with which the sinless Son of God suffered for us, we are ashamed of our impatience and wavering in the face of little, irritating hindrances to our Christian walk. May the Holy Spirit give us the wisdom to wrestle with the powers of darkness, not in our own strength, but by His unfailing power.

CHRIST — THE SELF-SACRIFICING SERVANT

Repeatedly, in the book of Mark, we get glimpses of the untiring, self-sacrificing ministry of the faithful Servant of the Lord. Throughout whole days, even at the close of the long, busy hours,

“they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with demons,” and He healed them.

On one occasion, **“all the city was gathered together at the door”** where the Son of God ministered to the needy and the suffering. He had to rise up **“a great while before day”** and go out into **“a solitary place”** to pray. (See 1:32-35). And even there they sought Him out; and on He went, from city to city, always faithful in His ceaseless ministry to sin-sick and physically sick souls.

At least twice we read that the multitudes pressed upon Him and His disciples so that **“they could not so much as eat bread”** (3:20; 6:31). Little wonder He said unto them,

“Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.”

On another occasion, after a full day, **“when the even was come,”** they sent the multitude away and **“took him even they led and lifted Him into the vessel. And He was so as he was in the ship”** — apparently so weary and worn that tired that even the storm at sea did not awaken Him from sleep! (See 4:35-38). Yet this self-sacrificing Servant of the Lord was Himself very God! That is the wonder of it! That He should love fallen, wretched humanity enough to suffer so! And then there was the agony of Calvary which we cannot fathom. We only know that it cost the Son of God dearly to become our Saviour!

Shall we falter and grow discouraged when the going is hard, since He suffered for us far more than we could ever suffer? When He offers His strength for the battle? It costs something to be a consecrated Christian; but nothing compared with what it cost our Lord to be faithful **“unto death, even the death of the cross.”**

CHRIST — THE PRAYERFUL SERVANT

Luke has more to say about the Lord’s prayer-life than any of the other evangelists; for he is presenting Him as the Son of Man.

As the **“Man Christ Jesus,”** He prayed to His Father in heaven. But Mark is the only one to tell us of the time when, after a crowded day of service,

“... in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed” (1:35).

Thus, at the very beginning of His public ministry, the Servant of God prayed. Surely we, His servants, know that we should follow His example! Surely we know the importance of prayer in our ministry for Him! And yet how slow we are to pray! The reason there is so little burden for souls, so little conviction of sin, so little response to appeals made for workers in the Lord’s harvest field — the reason for our indifference to the things of Christ is our lack of prayer, persistent, persevering, intercessory prayer!

We sing about prayer; we preach about prayer; we talk-about prayer; but do we pray? Like the disciples of old, let us follow Christ's example, saying, "**Lord, teach us to pray**"!

OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST — MINISTERING STILL!

In our last lesson we tried to show that the cross and the empty tomb of our Lord are the very heart of all four of the Gospels.

Today we have tried to show that the faithful Servant of the Lord came into the world, in order to die, "**even the death of the cross.**"

But Mark is the only one of the four evangelists to tell us that our risen, ascended Lord is seated on the right hand of the Father, ministering still for His servants who have gone forth in His name, "**working with them**" by His mighty power, "**confirming the word**" of God as they proclaim it by His grace.

It is true that Matthew, Luke and John also record the Lord's promise of His presence and power — "**always,**" even unto "**the end of the age.**" But only Mark puts into words the clear picture of our risen, ascended Great High Priest, seated at the throne of God, ministering still! It is the truth which Paul later enlarged upon, especially in his epistles to the Colossians and to the Hebrews. Let us read the closing verses of Mark, for the marvelous picture:

"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature . . . So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen." (16:15-20).

It is in keeping with the central purpose of Mark that he should close his Gospel story with the picture of the faithful Servant of God still ministering on behalf of those He came to redeem! His work on the cross was forever finished; therefore, He "**sat down**" in the place of all power and all authority, there to "**work with**" His blood-bought messengers of His cross.

I wonder if I am talking this morning to discouraged pastors and Sunday School teachers?

I wonder if anxious mothers and fathers are "listening in" to this Bible lesson?

I wonder if Christians who have prayed long years for the salvation of loved ones are reading these closing verses of Mark's Gospel with me just now?

Dear Christian friend, let us not be discouraged; the Lord Jesus is "**working with**" us! He who came "**not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many,**" is still laboring together with us for the "**furtherance of the gospel.**"

It is His work; and He is God — all-powerful, all-wise, all-loving! Let us hear the Father's voice, saying, "**Behold my Servant!**"

And beholding Him, let us work with Him, trusting Him for the **“increase,”** seeking to pattern our ministry according to His perfect service, praising Him that He loved us enough to call us into a work with Him who is **“The mighty God.”** And His promises will never fail:

“Be instant in season, out of season,” not **“weary in well doing”** (II Timothy 4:2; Galatians 6:9).

“They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him” (Psalm 126:5, 6).

~ end of chapter 15 ~

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