

Mark - The Words of Eternal Life

“Disciples, Demons and Diseases”

Mark 1:16-35

Well, please turn in your Bibles to Mark 1: 16-45. Now the gospel writer is drawing us in now to continue in his introduction to what it means for Jesus to bring his kingdom to bear. And as we've already noticed, Mark is not like the other gospel writers. Matthew is very content to sit with his Old Testament open and show us every place that Jesus is fulfilling the words of the law, the prophets and the writings. And Luke is offering us a very apologetic style, delving into the philosophy and using apologetics to defend the case of Jesus to those Gentiles who were flooding into the churches of the first century. John in his stance late in the century, responding back and providing theological commentary and correcting errors that had emerged in the church. And yet here we find Mark doing what Mark does, uh, breathlessly sharing with us everything that we need to know in order to be saved. And there is a sense you probably have friends, you know, who also in evangelism, they've kind of honed down their evangelistic message to the very few fine points. I've seen debates amongst evangelical groups where they're debating what really is the core of the gospel, what's the least amount that one needs, say, for someone to be saved? And that's true. There's a sense in which Mark is doing that. And yet also, as we read this somewhat longer passage today, I want to encourage you also to pay attention to how Mark is not just trying to breathlessly get through the events that he's describing, but rather he is drawing a picture. He is. He's putting together a collage. It's something like those portraits that you would see maybe twenty years ago. They seem to be somewhat popular. They still pop up from time to time where it's a picture of a face, and then as you get closer to the picture, you realize the picture is actually made up of a bunch of other pictures related to that person's life and the things that they had done. It's something like that here. Uh, Mark is giving us a significant little vignettes that as we take them all in, they become overwhelming evidence each individually just seems to be an interesting story. And yet it becomes overwhelmingly evident that this Jesus of Nazareth is not any other rabbi. He's not any other priest. He's not any other prophet. There's something different about him. And as we'll see, starting today already, we get the first of our rhetorical questions that people ask when they see Jesus. And they ask a question and Mark doesn't answer the question. He just lets it sit there. And we're supposed to hear the question too, and let it sit there and weigh on us as we find the answer within our own hearts. So looking at Mark 1:16-45...please stand as I read the word of the Lord.

Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men. And immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going a little farther, he saw James, the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were in their boats mending the nets. And immediately he called to them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and followed him. And they went to Capernaum. And immediately on the Sabbath he entered into the synagogue and was teaching. And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who

had authority, and not as the scribes. And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, what have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of Israel, the Holy One of God. But Jesus rebuked him, saying, be silent and come out of him. And the unclean spirit, convulsing him, crying aloud out with a loud voice, came out of him. And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, what is this? A new teaching with authority. He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him. And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee. And immediately he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John. Now Simon's mother in law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told him about her. And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. And the fever left her, and she began to serve them. Now that evening at sundown they brought him to. They brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. And the whole city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak because they knew him. And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to the desolate place, and there he prayed. And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, and they found him. And they said to him, everyone is looking for you. And he said to them, let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out. And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons. And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling, said to him, if you will, you can make me clean. Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, I will be clean. And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. And Jesus sternly charged him, and sent him away at once, and said to him, see that you say nothing to anyone, but go show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded for a proof to them. But he went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in desolate places and people were coming to him from every quarter.

This is the word of the Lord. Please be seated.

Well, as we look at these vignettes, we see that Jesus is doing a variety of things that if we just look at them at face value, they kind of look quite different. And yet they're woven together here. If you notice, we start with the disciples, and the disciples keep showing up throughout these other vignettes. And then we are introduced to demon possessed people. And then the demons keep showing up throughout the different, uh, the different vignettes. And then we have illness introduced into the equation, and then illness and leprosy keeps showing up throughout all of the individual vignettes. And woven through it all. Is this point about Jesus preaching this, this unique thing about how Jesus preaches, that he preaches with one as one with authority. He says not like the scribes, but as one who has authority. So let's look at these each individually and try to put together what is the collage. What is the painting. The portrait that Mark is painting for us about Jesus who is Messiah as he will be named, but much later in Mark chapter six. Well, Simon, first of all is called out. It's interesting how he is called out. Simon and Andrew, they're called out as they are out fishing. An interesting thing about

Simon's name is that the way it's spelled actually is a Hellenization. It's Greek name, but it's a common Greek name that particularly in Galilee, in the northern region, which was more Hellenized than perhaps the southern region of Judah, it was a common thing to do. You take a Hebrew name, Simeon, and then you would kind of Hellenize it. You make it Greek so that it would you could possibly fit in easier. This is not out of the ordinary, but it actually kind of shows you something about the nature of these disciples, as the Lord is calling them. And notice that he uses the occasion of finding them out fishing to sort of speak not just to their vocation, but to the new vocation to which he's calling them. He notices as they fish that they are fishermen. And he says, I will make you a different kind of fisherman, a fisher of men, as it were. Now we know from the Old Testament that this idea of fishing up men is something that shows up throughout the rest of the scriptures. It's not something that is new to Jesus, and yet he is using it in a particular way because we find it used in two different ways in the Old Testament. One in one way, it's used as kind of a judgment against people. If you are being fished up right, just like a fish, he's not happy about being on the hook. So if you're being fished up by a fisherman, then that means you are being judged. As a matter of fact, this is exactly the language that the Lord uses to describe the King of Babylon as he's coming across the countryside. And Habakkuk, the prophet is watching this happen, and he says, Lord, you're setting straight the injustice in Jerusalem. And the Lord says, don't worry, I've got a guy who's going to take care of the injustice in Jerusalem. His name is the King of the Chaldeans, the king of the Babylonians. And as he's coming across the countryside, the Lord describes him as a fisherman who's going out and he's laying his hook and he's catching all of humanity in it. He's throwing out his driftnet and he's pulling it in, and all of the nations are coming in like fish in the driftnet. So in that case, saying someone is a fisher of men is kind of a judgment picture. It's not it's not a positive picture. It's a judgment picture. But we find elsewhere in Jeremiah, the other prophet who uses this imagery, Jeremiah sixteen, he talks about the fact that the Lord, when he comes back to restore Israel, will go out into the diaspora, and he will fish out the faithful amongst the nations. And it seems that this positive use of the parable, the positive use of this symbol, is what Jesus is laying hold of here. Now, Jesus, interestingly, is very interested in Jeremiah. He quotes Jeremiah over and over and over again, particularly as he gets closer and closer to the cross. Even his cleansing of the temple is famously just a reenactment of something that Jeremiah did back during his ministry. So it seems that Jesus has Jeremiah on the mind as he sees these two fishermen out there and he says, come, follow me. I will make you fishers of men. He does the same with James and John, two more brothers. And so at this point now we have four disciples, not yet the full twelve, but four disciples, all of whom were called on the spot in the middle of their vocations. And instantly they drop what they're doing and they follow Jesus. It's kind of a fascinating thing. It's something that we see throughout the gospel stories. There are those who will see Jesus do amazing things and yet will not believe in him and not follow him. And then there are others who will have no good reason to follow Jesus. They'll just be going about their business. All they'll do is hear his voice. And when they hear his voice, no matter what it means for them in their practical life, they will drop everything and follow him. John, our gospel writer who gives us theological commentary on the life of Jesus, explains it this way. He says, the sheep know the shepherd's voice, and when they hear it, they follow him. Some of you know existentially exactly what that feels like.

You stumbled upon the gospel, or someone shared it with you at some point in your life, and you had no good reason to believe it, other than the fact that you heard it and you knew it was true. Then there are others of you, probably who have friends and family members who have so many good reasons to believe in the gospel. They've seen the change that it made in your life. They've seen the change that it makes in your family. They yearn for the peace. They yearn for the reconciliation. They yearn to put aside the bitterness and to put aside the shame and the self-loathing that comes from sin. And yet, no matter how often you offer them the gospel, right, they don't respond.

We have to recognize that this is not just true for us, but this was true in Jesus day as well. The fact that the disciples leave everything behind to follow him, you know, paints a picture of what it means to follow Jesus. To notice Jesus is not just another self-help teacher. He's not just a rabbi offering you a little life hacks so that you can make your life better. But rather, to follow Jesus means to leave everything else behind. As Tim Keller said, Jesus does not invite us to add him to our lives, but rather he calls us to surrender our lives to him and we begin to see this. The first the first of the converts. John was out there. John the Baptist was out there as a as a forerunner to Jesus. But now we're starting to see the fruit of his work now that he's announcing his kingdom in the northern kingdom of Galilee, that region of Zebulun and Naphtali that we just read about in the previous section, he's announcing his kingdom to the world, and people are hearing it, and they are hearing the voice of their king, and they are giving up everything to follow him. What we see in this opening passage is that not only is Jesus now lived out the life of Israel by coming out of Egypt, going through the waters, going out into the desert and succeeding the temptation. But now he is reconstituting the people of God, and he's called the first four of the twelve who will make up a new constitution of the people of God, Israel of the Messiah. And so this is the first work that Mark draws our attention to, and it's highlighted about the fact that this is an extreme radical calling. This is not something you do alongside your day job. This changes everything. And yet. Yet we haven't got down to the essence of what it means to be a disciple that won't come until later, until after Jesus is named as Messiah.

So we begin with this reconstitution of Israel, and then Jesus continues on now in his preaching ministry. And as he goes into the synagogues, now with his four disciples behind him, as he goes into the synagogues, he begins teaching like a scribe would teach. And we get little, little instances of this in the other gospels where Jesus was known as a teacher even in his hometown, and he could go in and sit down and because he had authority, they would give him the, the scrolls. He could take an Isaiah scroll, for instance, he could read it, and then he could sit down and he could teach out of it. And here, as Jesus teaches, people marvel. It says they were astonished. They were shocked at his teaching, for he taught as one who had authority, not as the scribes. The scribes had authority because of their deep knowledge of Scripture in ancient Israelite scribal culture. The job would typically be given to a scribe that they would be in charge of one scroll, and their job would be to know that scroll back and forwards to be able to go all the way through. As a matter of fact, they were so particular in the way that they wrote that they would mark little points in the scroll. They'd mark the middle word in the scroll, and then they'd mark the quarter word in the scroll and the three quarters

word in the scroll. And then at every eighth point, they'd mark the words on the scroll so that as they were copying it, they could check and make sure that they hadn't added even one word or taken away one word. And if they had, they would scrap the scroll and have to start all over again. As you can imagine, many of the scrolls, many of the scribes would have memorized their scrolls. And so if you came to them and you said, I think I have leprosy. What should I do? You'd go to the scribe of the Leviticus scroll, and he could probably off the top of his head list for you all the things that you must do with the priest in order to be rendered clean. If you were dealing with the problem of leprosy. And so the scribes had authority insofar as they were able to teach and articulate the word that they had been given responsibility over. And yet Jesus taught with a different authority. Again, Mark doesn't give us any glimpses of this yet, but we get glimpses elsewhere. For instance, in Matthew in the sermon on the Mount, where Jesus says, you have heard it said, that's what a scroll. That's what a scribe would say. You've heard it said. And then he'd cite the scroll. That was his expertise. But then Jesus goes, but I say to you. And he not only explains, but he expounds, and he develops, and he articulates the Word of God as one with authority. This gets at something interesting about prophets. The office of prophet that Jesus is fulfilling. We know that we had prophets of the Old Testament who would bring new revelation, and they always rooted their new revelation in the old revelation, just as Jesus does. And yet, there's something interesting about prophets.

Have you ever noticed with the three main offices of the Old Testament the prophet, the priest, and the king? With the king, you had a public ratification of his calling, right? You'd have a coronation and everyone would come around and there would be a ceremony and he would be declared king. And so there was no question who was king, because there's only one guy who had gone through the coronation. And the same thing was true for priests. Priests had a covenant. They had an ordination that would happen at either age twenty five or thirty. And at that point they would stand before people, there would be witnesses, they would be ordained, just like we installed the elders here a couple of weeks ago. They would be ordained and set aside in a formal ceremony. What's interesting about the prophets is that the prophets are never ordained. There's never like a public ceremony where people say, oh, you're one of the prophets. And so that leads to this question in the Old Testament, who's a true prophet and who's a false prophet? The true prophet is the one who had been called by God. But oftentimes that happened in privacy. That happened in an intimate situation like Isaiah worshiping in the temple in the year that King Uzziah died, as it's described in Isaiah six, and he sees the Lord, and he's called to be a prophet, and yet there's no one else there to witness this take place. Or Ezekiel, who's, who's out in in the refugee land, okay, in the land of Babylon. And the Lord's chariot comes to him privately in a vision and calls him into ministry. So we find instances in the Old Testament where people say, well, there's a lot of prophets here, but are there any true prophets here? And the trust, the truth of the prophetic calling, the legitimacy of a prophetic calling really lies in what they say. There's this understanding in the Old Testament that people know true prophets of the Lord. It's when you hear his voice, when you hear him teach, people say, yeah, he's a real prophet. This is one of the real ones. This is one of the real guys. There's a there's an analogy to that that's not miraculous or a part of special revelation anyway, even today. But there are people, you know in your life who, when you talk to them, they say things and you say, that's just the truth. I just know it is the way he talks, the way she says that thing.

They know how to see the world as it is. They speak and when they say things, everybody nods and say, yeah, that's the right answer. And you see, Jesus is teaching in a way that's kind of similar. It's analogous to that as he goes into the synagogues, he opens up the scroll and he reads. But then when he speaks, he's not like one who's just articulating the word, but rather he teaches as one who is himself a prophet, who is himself the Word of God, as we see in John one. So as he's preaching, it's interesting. His preaching has a kind of effect on those around him. Those who hear him are astonished because of his authority, and yet also notice it has an effect on the spiritual dynamics in the room.

There's a person there, and we don't know who this gentleman is. We don't know if everyone knew he was possessed by a demon before. But as he's hearing Jesus speak, it brings up in him something and he can't hold it back anymore. And suddenly the demon speaks out of him and says, who are you? What are you doing here? Jesus! Have you come to destroy us already? Is that why you've come? I know who you are. Holy one of God. So we see something interesting here about demons. They recognize Jesus. We don't know a whole lot about the Bible. There's a reason why sections on demonology and systematic theologies are systematic theologies that are rooted in Scripture. The chapter on demonology is relatively short because there's not a lot in the Bible about demons. There's actually not a lot in the Bible about angels either. We get a little bit more. But what do we do with these demons, these fallen angels, these unclean spirits? As a matter of fact, one of the longest sections dealing with demons in the Bible happens in the gospel of Mark. It's going to be in Mark chapter five, when Jesus confronts the man on the shore of the Gadarenes. That's one of the longest interactions in meditations that we get on demons in the Bible. So if anyone comes to you and they've got all kinds of deep, detailed explanations about what demons are and how they work and how you get rid of them, just note whatever they're saying. It's probably not coming from the Bible. It's probably coming from somewhere else. But what do we know about demons from Scripture? Well, we know this. We know that they are self-conscious. They're not just kind of an ephemeral evil force or something like that. They're self-conscious. They know who they are, and they know what they're doing. Notice, even when Jesus meets the demons on the shore of the Gadarenes, he says to them, who are you? And he says, we're legion. There's many of us here. They recognize who they are and what they're doing. But not only that, not only that, we see that they are given to destruction. There's something about demons. They're not. They're not conniving vampires who are astute and well cultured. Right? They are given to destruction. They are forces of chaos. And here we see that their real plan is to turn back God's good work of creation. If you remember in Genesis one where we learn about God's plans for creation, it says that the earth is tohobohu. Right. In Hebrew, it's formless and it's void. And you can't have any life. You can't have any thriving. You can't have the worship of the Lord in a place where there is formlessness and void, where there's chaos and there is emptiness, there is vacuum. You can't have that. So what does God do? He goes about the work of forming the world, separating things out, making spheres, making realms, and then filling those realms with life. But what we see with demons more often than not, particularly in the New Testament, is that they are about the work of destruction. They're tearing down the order. They're trying to eradicate the substance. They're trying to eradicate what's necessary for life. There's a kind of human erasure that we see with demon possession in the New Testament, As we'll see again

in Mark five. We don't even know that gentleman's name. Who's in the tombs? He's forgotten his friends don't know who he is anymore. He's not really a person anymore. And yet Jesus comes. And what does he do? He restores him to his right mind as the way the mark describes it. He brings him order. He puts back the man who had been robbed of life through these demons. So here, in this case, the man stands up. And interestingly, not only are the demons aware that they're demons, but notice also they are aware of who Jesus is. And as I used to tell my daughters when they were afraid at night of the dark, I'd say, do you know what happens when demons? Because that's who you should be. If you're going to be afraid, you should be afraid of demons. What happens when demons see Jesus? They say things like this. Are you here to destroy us now, or are you going to destroy us later?

Notice the question isn't a matter of if, like, does Jesus have the power to destroy them? It's more a question of when are you going to completely eradicate us now? Or are you going to wait and do it later? But you see, the battle is already done. The battle is complete. As we see demons confront Christ, they always just fall down and beg for mercy and hear Jesus speaking to them just as he speaks to the wind and the waves. Later on in Mark four, he says, be quiet, go speaking on his own authority, not having to pray to the father, not having to ask father, please cast out this demon. Jesus has the authority himself. He speaks directly to the demon and he says, be quiet. Stop! Get out! And the demon is gone. So you see, Jesus is about the work of reconstituting the people of Israel through his disciples. And he's also about the work of conquering and dismantling the structures of power that Satan and the demons have put into place on this earth. As a matter of fact, Jesus completes this work in his inauguration when he sends out his apostles to proclaim the gospel around the countryside. And when they come back, they say, we cast out demons. Jesus. And he says, yes, I saw Satan cast out of heaven like lightning. You see, Jesus is undermining the power of Satan in this world. He's undermining those principalities that Paul talked about at the end of Ephesians that we talked about last fall. He is undermining their power structures. His kingdom is not just about human hearts. It's about taking back the heavenly realm, about undermining Satan and his forces. Now notice the victory is complete. It's not a question of if, but when. As the early Christian theologian and pastor Irenaeus says, the coming of Christ has destroyed the tyranny of the devil. This is it. Now again, the Bible speaks to this a bit in the Book of Revelation elsewhere. But it seems as if before Jesus came, Satan had some kind of surprising power over the nations. But after Jesus came, that power now has been taken away, the power to deceive the nations, and as a result, the nations are now flooding in to his kingdom. You see, that work that is activated is initiated in Pentecost when the spirit goes out. Is a part of Jesus work of dethroning Satan in the world, that the father of lies will no longer have any purchase in human hearts. So he's reconstituted the kingdom. He's reconstituted the people of Israel. He's about the work of undermining Satan's tyranny in the world. And then we move on to the topic of diseases. Immediately after this event. Now, at least the way that the mark presents it. They now go over and they go and stay at Peter's mother in law's house. Now, Peter's mother in law, by the way, is a character that I'm just fascinated by. I wish we knew more. I can't wait to ask her questions in heaven. She's the one who holds the wedding feast at Cana, where Jesus goes and turns water into wine. And it just raises this whole question, what did Peter's mother in law think about his her son in law's new vocation, and this guy that he was hanging out with

because things kept happening to her. And in this instance, they go to the house. They're coming to stay. Have you ever had a houseguest when you're sick and when you're ill, have you ever had your kids come over with friends and you're laid up in bed with a fever? That's the situation here. They arrive at the house. It's only once they arrive at the house that they tell Jesus. Oh, by the way, our mother in law is ill. And Jesus goes to her and he lifts her up. And it says that as he's lifting her up, the fever passes away. This is a new piece of information that Mark is introducing to us when he calls people. Sometimes they just follow him. When he preaches, people marvel at his authority. When demons hear him, they can't contain themselves because of their fear. And when he touches people, his touch has this power to heal. We see it not only here with the fever, but of course much more in full with the leper who he meets, the leper who for some reason, again, it's the. Is it the sheep hearing the shepherd's voice, this leopard who hears about this guy who's teaching and is doing these amazing things, and he contrives of this plan. I think that if I meet him, if I can just get to talk to him, and if he touches me, he'll heal me of my disease. See, the leper comes to him in faith and he stands before Christ. This man, who was probably ostracized from his community. He's probably ostracized from his family. He probably read Leviticus thirteen and fourteen over and over and over again, looking for any detail, any hint as to how he might get free of this leprosy. And if you go back and you read Leviticus thirteen and fourteen, you read all of the different descriptions of of skin diseases and how they does it turn your hair gray or does it not? Does it have an open sore or does it not? Does the sore white on top or is it not? And you have all these questions you're supposed to ask before you present yourself to the priest who will confirm your prognosis? And if he doesn't confirm it, if he says no, you have leprosy, then you're out. That means you're out of the community. That means when your daughter is ill, you don't get to go hold her. That means when your wife is in need and they're looking for food and they need something to eat, you're not allowed to go back and provide for them. And when everyone goes to worship in the temple, you don't get access to the temple. There are harsh laws to read about these laws that are established in Leviticus. We read them and we kind of think, what could be the good of this? And yet, as we read through them, we see what the Lord is doing is he's teaching Israel in this very particular way. He's teaching them about what it means to come before him. What it what it was required of them. If they are going to come into his midst and you can't come into his midst presumptuously, as we talked about this morning, you can't come into his midst without having prepared yourself. You can't coming. You can't come in with some kind of disease that you haven't cared for because he's a holy God and he's cleanliness laws were very vivid and striking and sometimes even painful ways to remind us how unholy we are as humans. That even though we were made in his image and we desire to be with him. Because of sin, we are broken and separated from him and that that changes everything.

The holiness laws are interesting in the Old Testament because they really touch on every aspect of life. It's not just skin diseases, it's who have you touched? Who have you been around? Where have you been walking? Have you been in Gentile areas? What kind of food have you been eating? What is your house look like? Is it clean? If not, why not? And then you look at the house and see, does it have particular kinds of molds or anything within it that might render you unclean? Anything in your life could render you in some way not able, not

getting access to the sanctuary of the Lord. The cleanliness laws served their purpose in driving deep that theological understanding of God as holy and us as profane, and us needing him to make us clean. And yet, in the Old Testament, if you're a leper and the priest comes over to examine you, and he slips and he touches your sore and he contracts your disease. Guess what? That priest's job is over. He's now with you outside of the camp. You see, in the Old Testament, the unclean makes the clean unclean. If you're unclean and the clean touch you, the clean become unclean. And yet, notice what happens under this new priest, Jesus, the Son of God, who's walking along the countryside. And the leper comes up to him and says, you can make me whole. Jesus could have said, therefore just be clean. But the fact that he touches him, and with Jesus, if you're unclean and the clean touches you, the clean does not become unclean. Rather, the unclean becomes clean. Jesus is not rendered unclean by the disease of this man. Jesus renders this man healed. And you see, Mark is again showing us something about Jesus. Not only does he speak with authority, that's unlike any of the scribes, even greater than the prophets, but also he cleanses with an authority and with the power that the priest couldn't have dreamed of. And then that draws us to this point that is made here about the demons and even this leprosy, this leper, after he has been healed, after the demons have been cast out, you notice that Jesus has this little thing that he does in Mark, and he does in some of the other synoptics as well, where he will say, don't tell people about me. That can be confusing to us as evangelicals because we are always told, like, go out and tell people about what Jesus has done. And yet Jesus here will say things like, demons go out and be quiet because the demons know who he is. He tells the leper, go out. Present yourself according to Leviticus thirteen and fourteen. Present yourself to the priest. Let him do all the things he needs to do, so that you can be taken off the unclean list and put on the clean list so that you can worship again. But don't tell anybody about what I've done. Some scholars call this the messianic secret. The idea being here that maybe in some way Jesus is kind of embarrassed or not sure about his calling. And so he's holding back for a time and he's telling people, you know, don't tell people what I am. And yet, of course, that doesn't fit with the whole rest of the gospel accounts. Rather, I'd say we have this idea that we see throughout Jesus ministry, particularly in the Gospel of John, where Jesus is about to do something and his apostles will say, no, don't do that, Jesus. They'll arrest you. And Jesus says, no, they won't. My time has not yet come. Or at other times he'll be going to a place, but he won't go, because if he goes there, it'll instigate something. And so he says, I'm not going to go there because my time has not yet come. And then that all changes in John thirteen as he's partaking of the Passover. And it says Jesus, perceiving that his time had come. And then we go on into the Last Supper, then Jesus later, when he's doing his high priestly prayer in John seventeen, he says, father, my time has come. He realizes that there is a time that the Lord that the father has set aside for the son to go to the cross. And I think that actually better explains this notion of a messianic secret. This is early in his ministry. He's still drawing out his people from Israel. He's still teaching with authority. He's still casting out demons. He's still painting this collage that Mark is painting for us as well, of who Messiah ought to be. And as he does this, as he goes through this, he doesn't want to expedite what he knows awaits him at the end of his pilgrimage to Jerusalem, but rather he's having a slow build in the momentum, saying don't tell people yet. Let them see. Let them hear, but don't tell them yet who I am. So that when I finally, when it's finally

revealed that I am Christ, they'll now understand who Christ ought to be, not who they think Christ ought to be. I think that's the best explanation of these passages where Jesus says, hold back. Don't tell anyone yet. Yet, of course, despite his best efforts, lepers, blind men, lame men can't help but talk about this man who has changed their lives just by a touch, just by a word. And so we see this, this dynamic develop amongst the followers of Jesus Christ, these disciples who he will call out that there's this kind of centrifugal force around the gospel, that as soon as you get wrapped up into the good news of Jesus Christ, there's this pull to go out and tell people about what he's done. And finally, when the time is come, when the death has happened, when he's taken upon himself the sins of the world, the one who knew no sin becoming sin on our behalf. And then he rises from the dead. Now, truly the one citizen of the new heavens and new earth walking here on earth. Now when that happens, he now turns to his apostles and says, now is the time. Go out, preach the gospel to the nations. Disciple them. Bring in the kingdom of God.

You see, Jesus was terribly aware of all that it meant for him to be Messiah here on earth. And as we've said before, he knows that as he marches towards Jerusalem, he's not marching to sit on a throne. Herod's not going to be waiting for him to step aside and give Jesus the throne over Israel. But he knows that he's marching to a Roman cross. He knows what it means to be waiting for his time. And this will mark the early chapters of the gospel of Mark. It'll touch every single thing that he does. And we'll see the fulfillment of how he really is, as the prophet Isaiah calls him, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief as he goes around changing people's lives, touching lepers and rendering them clean, lifting up old women so that they are healed of their fevers, casting out demons so that the people who were enthralled in demonic slavery are now free with each salvation, with each miracle. He's marching closer and closer to the end that the father has in store for the son. And as we read this morning, he loves to do the will of the father. That's why he's there. That's why he's come to us. And what a great, great hope that is for all of us who are in him by faith.

Let's pray.

Heavenly father, as we do consider the work of the son, we pray, Lord, that the spirit would attend to our consideration. Help us not only to rightly understand it, but help us to rightly perceive it as the words of the Shepherd. Dear Lord, we know that the cost of discipleship is not cheap, though it is freely given. And as we consider what it means for us to be disciples of Christ, to leave behind our lives, that we might gain our lives. Dear Lord, I pray that you would bless us. Awaken us a desire to seek you, to pursue you, and to know you and Lord Christ Jesus. We pray that we would find you because we would seek you with all of our hearts. It's in Christ's name we pray.

Amen.