

Allow God To Do Mighty Works

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 07 July 1985

Preacher: Harry Robinson

[0 : 00] It is my happy privilege this morning to bring you from the courts of Wimbledon to the courts of heaven. And the way I want to do it is by having you turn to Mark chapter 6, verses 1 following, the passage which has just been read for us, and to just highlight that story, which I'm sure is familiar to you all, of Jesus going to the synagogue in Nazareth.

At the synagogue, let me remind you, it's not very different from what we have here. The actual Hebrew word for synagogue has a certain contemporary ring to it. The word is Knesset, which, as you know, is the parliament in Israel. So the synagogue is a company of people gathered together where education takes place, where prayer takes place, and where local government takes place.

And I'm not sure about how much governing we do, but in England they're still called parish councils that do the local government.

At the front of the church is a portable ark, and in the ark are the great scrolls of scripture, and the highlight of the service is not the breaking of bread, perhaps, but the reading of the word.

[1 : 38] So there is a synagogue, and here is a synagogue, and let me show you what happens. If you were to look back in Luke chapter 4, verse 16, you would find, don't do it, but let me tell you what's there in case you want to do it subsequently, you would find that Jesus visited this synagogue once before.

And it was the same synagogue, presumably much the same congregation, and peculiarly enough, the same text from which Jesus preached.

The reaction to his sermon the first time he went there, let me remind you, was that having preached about the fact that a prophet is not without honor in his own household, he then went on to show how in the time of Naaman, there were many lepers in Israel who were not healed.

And in the time of the widow of Sarepta, there were many people suffering from famine, and none of them were fed except that widow who was a Gentile. And having heard this exposition from the Old Testament, the congregation took on their judiciary function, marched their preacher out of the synagogue, up a hill, and were about to throw him headlong to his death when he passed out among them and disappeared from them.

So it's surprising that he goes back to the same synagogue with the same text to preach another sermon. And that's what is recorded in Mark chapter 6, verse 1 following.

[3 : 18] This time they are somewhat amazed by him, and they ask these three questions. Where did he get all this?

What is the wisdom given to him? What mighty works are wrought by his hand? And I'm particularly happy that we have a brother in Christ who is a stranger to us all in the person of Howard Martin who would come and suggest to such a congregation as this that worship may well include dancing. Because I think you might have quietly inquired in your mind, as they did of Jesus on that day, where did this man get this from? What is the wisdom given to him?

And I'd like him to prove that he can do something with it. Well, anyway, that kind of questioning mind to say, what is this thing that's happening?

Well, having asked those questions, then there descends on the congregation the terrible reality of unbelief finding expression.

[4 : 36] They had to deal with him. And so they dealt with him. They dealt with him by saying, this is the carpenter. This is the son of Mary.

This is the one whose brothers, James and Joseph and Simon, are here with us and his sister. They say all that about him as a kind of corporate put-down so that they don't really have to listen to him.

It's a terribly intriguing thing. That Christianity is apparently very difficult.

In three areas. It's difficult in our country, it says.

It's difficult among our social acquaintances. And it's difficult in our family. When we're confronted by being in our own country, among our own friends, and with our own family, any expression of Christian faith isn't easy.

[5 : 47] Because they can see right through you. And I think it's part of the reason that, that as Canadians, we have this, and I'm sure this may apply to others, but we have this inferiority complex about our country.

We have a terrible sensitivity about what people around us think. And we tend to be crippled in the expression of, worship or faith, in our own family, where it is so often greeted with derision and scorn.

Lovingly, no doubt. But that's what happened. And so there's this terrible curse of familiarity. Why can't you share the thing which means most to you with the people that mean most to you?

Why is that so difficult? Why is that such a universal human problem? Why cannot you share the deepest things of your heart with the people who are most closely associated with you?

Why do you have to go off and find a stranger? More profoundly, why is it that in the time of Naaman, it was a foreigner who was healed of his leprosy?

[7 : 06] In the time of the widow of Sarepta, it was a foreigner who was fed by God's grace. Why does that happen? Why does it happen to us?

Why does it leave us spiritually paralyzed? Because of the impossibility of doing it. Well, I don't know why it happens, but I know that it does happen.

And I know that it's God's grace somehow to break through that, to break it down, and allow something quite different to happen in our lives. Look at the text again.

Mark chapter 6. And it says that after they had asked these questions, they took offense at him.

And that wonderful word offense is the word, in Greek it's the word scandal.

They were scandalized by him. And you know how terrible it is for us that we in our proud 20th century secular technological society are scandalized by Jesus.

[8 : 20] Somehow he doesn't fit. And we are tripped up by this reality, the reality of who Jesus is.

We find it a scandal. And we don't want to be caught in a scandal. It's not the usual kind of scandal, which we're more familiar with, and perhaps more at home with, and enjoy more, especially when it happens to somebody else.

But it's nevertheless a scandal that we proper, dignified, white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants are scandalized by Jesus Christ.

That's what happened to him in his home synagogue of Nazareth. You see, the funny thing is that Jesus, who is, according to the Jewish dictionary, the most famous Jew that ever lived, he is a scandal to the whole of his people.

Jesus is a scandal to proper orthodox Christians like us so often. You cannot know how to come to terms with him.

[9 : 39] He is a stumbling block to us. We like religion, except when it comes to the person of Jesus. And the result of this, we're told, is he could do no mighty work.

He marveled because of their unbelief. I long with all my heart that God would do a mighty work in your life.

There are, I don't know whether you'd like it to happen, I'd like him to do a mighty work in my life. I'd like him to do a mighty work in this congregation. Now, the reason, if you look through the New Testament to see when mighty works were done, the reason was to attract people to him that they might put their faith in him.

And so when Jesus, when Peter is preaching at Pentecost, he says of Jesus, a man attested to you by mighty works. When in Acts 19, it talks about Paul, it talks about a man who is attested by the mighty works which God did through him.

I was reading last night about a famous prophet on the ivory coast of Africa who went and he had a little bamboo cross and he preached to people and he said, I want you to come and touch this cross and you will be healed.

[11 : 11] And hundreds of people came and touched that cross and they were healed. And when he finished the meeting, he took the cross and smashed it and threw it in the fire and said, it wasn't the cross that did it, it was God who did this mighty work among you.

And that's what so much needs to happen that God might do a mighty work. The story of the synagogue in Nazareth was that God wasn't able to do through Jesus a mighty work because of their unbelief it seems.

And it's not that he was not, he was too weak to do it or he wasn't omnipotent. It was simply that they weren't able to receive it because of their unbelief.

A hard phalanx of unbelief was what he was confronted with in that synagogue. Now I think that Jesus is no less here among us this morning.

That his work is resisted by unbelief in our hearts. And that the work of God, the Holy Spirit, is to bring us to the place of faith where we can say, Lord Jesus, do in my heart and my life what you want to do.

[12:44] And allow him to do that mighty work. And that we might be so joined together as a congregation that we might say, Lord Jesus, do in us the mighty work you want to do.

And don't let our familiarity stand in the way. Don't let our unbelief stand in the way. Did you notice, as I noticed, when Howard was speaking to us this morning about dancing and the whole problem, I mean we dance, he doesn't know that we dance, but we usually have a dance up the aisle which is called the procession and a dance down the aisle which is called the recession.

And fathers dance up the aisle with their daughters to be married and grooms dance down the aisle with them followed by, you know, bridesmaids and what you'd call a limited kind of dance.

Staged with great dignity, but nevertheless, there it is. We haven't gone much beyond that. But the thing that I see in that, because it was a help to me to sit in on one of Howard's classes this weekend to be asked to do all sorts of quite ridiculous things.

And once you got over being hopelessly self-conscious, being paralyzed with self-consciousness, it was simple. It might have been a great comedy to the rest of the people in the room, but it was simple.

[14:20] For me, once you get over the self-consciousness, and I'm sure that in our worship on a Sunday-by-Sunday basis, the thing that God wants to do in our hearts is to lift us from the terrible quagmire of our self-consciousness, that we may be conscious of Him and of His glory and of His love and of His purpose and of His mighty works, and that we might praise God unashamedly for who He is and not let the problem of who we are get in the way.

I'm sure that that's what worship is about. And I'm sure that we need somehow to be caught up in the awareness of who God is and to lose the terrible symptoms of who we are.

You know that in the realm of knowledge, we have been told that we only know a very small percentage of all there is to know.

And in our relationship to God, we know an even smaller percentage of all that He is able to do. to understand from this story in Mark 6, what stands in the way of His doing is our unbelief.

I think it should take hold of us very deep that we should recognize what stands in the way and allow God to do in us whatever will bring glory to His name that He may do from why He works what He purposes to do.

[16:12] That we will allow Him to do that in us. Amen. We're going to sing now hymn number 488.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[19:05] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Shall we pray together? Let us pray this morning for Christ's holy Catholic Church.

Let us pray for peace on earth and for the unity of all Christian people. Let us pray for our missionaries at home and abroad. Let us remember before God those of our brothers who have departed this life and are at rest.

And let us pray for the whole state of Christ's Church militant here in earth. Almighty and ever-living God, who by thy holy apostle has taught us to make prayers and supplications and to give thanks for all men, we humbly beseech you most mercifully to accept our alms and oblation and to receive these our prayers which we offer to your divine majesty.

[22:09] We need you to inspire continually the universal Church, the spirit of truth, unity, and concord. And grant that all they that who confess thy holy name may agree in the truth of thy holy

word and live in unity and godly love.

And we beseech you also to lead all nations in the way of righteousness. And so to guide and direct their governors and rulers that your people may enjoy the blessings of freedom and peace.

Grant to your servant, our Queen, and to all that are put in authority under her, that they may truly and impartially administer justice to the maintenance of thy true religion and virtue.

Grant to our Lord, give grace, O heavenly Father, to all bishops, priests, and deacons, especially to your servant, Douglas, our bishop, and Herod and Archie, our rectors, that they may all by their lives and doctrine set forth by true and living word, and rightly and duly administer thy holy sacraments.

Prosper, we pray, thee, all those who proclaim the gospel of thy kingdom among the nations. To all thy people give your heavenly grace, especially to this congregation here present, that with meek heart and due reverence we may hear and receive thy holy word, truly serving thee in holiness and righteousness all our days.

[23 : 53] And we most humbly beseech you of your goodness, O Lord, to comfort and to succor all of them who in this transitory life are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity.

And we remember before thee, O Lord, all your servants the heart of this life in your faith and fear. We bless your holy name for all who in life and in death have glorified you.

We beseech thee to give us grace that rejoicing in their fellowship we may follow their good examples and with them might be partakers of your heavenly kingdom.

And we ask you to grant these things, O Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our only mediator and advocate, whom with you and the Holy Ghost be all honor and glory, world without end.

Amen. Hmm... Amen. We be■■ the■ and would welcome it.

[25 : 13] Holy miljil, we will be lending you to all that we ακ ■■■■ quarantine, and trust our heaven. of our possession to Almighty God, please be healing upon your name.

All mighty God, Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ, and of all things, and of all things, we are obliged to commit our own sins and wickedness, we keep the heart of the time on the streets we have to do. By the love of our own faith, and the desire of our own faith, we do not have a certain name, and our heart of our own heart, whatever needs our■... and our heart of our own faith.

All mighty God, our heavenly Father, youOST is gracedly to prevent forgiveness of sin to all them that were part of repentance and through faith, serve him. Have mercy upon you, pardon, and deliver you from all your sin, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, and bring you to one of our sins, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen. In what couple of words our Saviour Christ said, unto all the truly burning in, Come unto me, all that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.

[26 : 44] God so loved the world that he gave his only forgotten son, that the end of all that believed in him should not perish, but have eternal life. The Lord be with you.

Lift up your hearts. Let us give thanks unto our Lord God. It is very good, right, in our golden beauty, that we can at all times and in all places give thanks unto thee, O Lord, Holy Father, all mighty and everlasting God, creator and preserver of all beings.

Therefore, with angels, archangels, with all the company of heaven, we lord and magnify thy glorious name, ever more praising thee and saying, and fulfill thee, knoweth them somewhere and ever■■, Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[30 : 09] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.