

Mark 3

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Preacher: Rev Kenneth I Macleod

- [0 : 0 0] Let us worship God, singing to His praise from Psalm number 62. Psalm 62. This is Sing Psalms, and it's from verse 5 to the end.
- Psalm 62. That's on page 80. And the tune is Herringate.
- Psalm 62, verse 5. Find rest my soul in God alone. In Him my hope is ever sure. My safety, fortress, sheltering rock.
- In Him alone I am secure. My honor and salvation rest on God, my rock and mighty fort. O people, trust in Him always. To Him alone pour out your heart.
- The low-born man is but a breath. The high-born man is but a lie. Weighed in a balance side by side, they come to nothing but a sigh. Do not seek after wealth by force, or triumph in ill-gotten gain.
- [1 : 0 5] And even though your goods increase, set not your heart on what is vain. My God has spoken. I have heard that you are strong and loving, Lord.
- Each one according to his deeds you will assuredly reward. These verses of Psalm 62. Sing Psalms. Tune is Herringate. From verse 5.
- Find rest my soul in God alone. In Him my hope is ever sure.
- My safety, fortress, sheltering rock. In Him alone I am secure.
- My honor and salvation rest on God, my rock and mighty fort.
- [2 : 2 4] O people, trust in Him always. To Him alone for our true heart.
- The low-born man is but a breath. The high-born man is but a life.
- Within a palace side by side, They come to nothing but a sigh.
- Do not seek after wealth by force, Or triumph in ill-gotten gain.
- And even though your goods increase, set not your heart on what is vain.
- [3 : 5 4] My God has spoken. I have heard that you are strong and loving, Lord.
- Each one according to his deeds. You will not surely reward.
- Let's pray. O gracious and ever-blessed Lord, as we gather together this evening, we pray for grace to worship in a way that is right.
- we give thanks for the great opportunity we have, one which too often we are liable to just take for granted. We tend to forget what exactly we are doing, that we are in the presence of our creator God, the governor of this universe, the one who ultimately holds our life in his hand because we're told in the scripture that it is in him that we live, move and have our being.

We give thanks, O Lord, for the opportunity of coming to praise, to magnify, to worship the King of glory. And we pray that our hearts might be receptive to the truth tonight in the singing of it, the reading of it, the reflecting and preaching. We pray that in all these things that your name will be honoured and glorified and that we will receive from the worship good into our own souls. We pray that we may engage in a way that is meaningful and that we may have a fresh understanding of the goodness and mercy of God. We pray to give us a focus to see the hand of the Lord in all things, even in the difficult things, that we might have an awareness that the Lord rules and reigns in providence and in grace and that we may see your hand at work. Lord our God, we pray that we might be delivered from ourselves because if we seek to go through life leaning upon ourselves and upon our own wisdom and our own understanding, then we will fail. We will certainly not live the fulfilling life that is set out before us where we are indeed commanded to trust in the Lord with all our heart and lean not to our own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will direct your paths.

[6 : 42] And so we pray, Lord, for the grace to walk in these paths where we will indeed be looking to the Lord and seeking to acknowledge the Lord in all our ways, in the little things and also in the great things. We pray to bless us in our homes and families, bless us at work, bless those who struggle maybe with regard to lack of work. We're very aware we live in difficult times and we pray to make provision for work so that there will be sufficient work for people in this island. We ask, O Lord, that we might be aware of your hand upon us for good, guiding and leading in these things.

We pray, Lord, to save us from all the attacks that are made upon the Christian church, not only in our own island but throughout our land. Those who are seeking to undermine the Christian faith, those who have a hatred of the gospel, have a hatred of all that belongs to the kingdom of God.

Those who are seeking to eradicate and remove the influence of the Christian church in society. We pray, O Lord, to protect your church in our land. We pray, O Lord, to hold back all the attacks that are made in all the different sections of life, through all the various councils and schools and media and in all the different areas. So many are seeking to undermine and to destroy the Christian faith. Lord, we give thanks for all your people who are in these places and who are witnesses for good, often in a quiet way but yet in ways that maybe they're not even aware. And we give thanks for all who are in places of influence in all the different sections of society. Lord, our God, protect us then and keep us. We pray to bless us with a turning of the heart to the Lord, or that we may seek the Lord, that there will be this sense of desire within people's hearts to know the Lord, to discover within themselves the absolute need of finding the Lord. We give thanks for the service we had here this morning. We give thanks for the clarity and the power of the message that we heard. We give thanks for the young lives that were brought here, the little ones that were baptized. And we pray to bless these young lives and bless the parents who have the great responsibility of bringing them up. Oh, Lord, our God, we pray to protect our young from all the influences and all the harm that comes their way as they grow up in life. We pray then that your blessing may be upon all these things. We pray for the persecuted church throughout our world. And sometimes when we pick up leaflets and magazines that bring before us some of the havoc and the bloodshed and the hatred that is going on, we find it affecting our hearts. We often feel so helpless in light of the brutality and the sheer anger and viciousness and indeed the very fires of hell that burn in hearts against your people throughout the world. We pray for protection tonight. We pray for deliverance.

In so many different lands today, there are people imprisoned. There are homes that are bleeding because their families have been torn apart. Lord, restore, deliver, help in various ways. We look to your power and your deliverance, oh Lord. We pray to bless us in here and we pray for those who mourn, those who are sad, those who have experienced bereavement and loss. We pray for the McLean family just now.

We ask, Lord, that thy hand will be upon them for good. We pray for all whose hearts are heavy. We pray for those who are in hospital and those who are undergoing surgery. We remember our own elder, Alistair Crichton, who, God willing, tomorrow will have major surgery for many hours and we commit him to your care. We pray for our office bearers who are laid aside at this time and ask for help and restoration, for healing, for comfort, for grace. We pray for all who are going through difficult times.

[11 : 18] We pray that your hand will be upon them for good. Watch over us and we pray. Open the word afresh to us and take away our sin in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to sing in Psalm 25. That's from the Scottish Psalter.

June is Dennis, Psalm 25. That's on page 231.

To thee, you know, it's from verse 4. Show me thy ways, O Lord, thy paths, O teach thou me. And do thou lead me in thy truth, therein my teacher be.

For thou art God that dost to me salvation send, and I upon thee all the day expecting do attend. Thy tender mercies, Lord, I pray thee to remember, and loving kindnesses, for they have been of old forever.

My sins and faults of youth do thou, O Lord, forget. After thy mercy think on me, and for thy goodness great. God good and upright is, the way he'll sinners show.

[12 : 28] The making judgment he will guide, and make his path to know. The whole paths of the Lord are truth and mercy sure. To those that do his covenant keep, and testimonies sure.

Psalm 25, 4 to 10, page 231. June is Dennis. Show me thy ways, O Lord. Show me thy ways, O Lord.

Thy paths, O teach thou me. And do thou lead me in thy truth, Therein my teacher be.

For thou art God that dost to me salvation send, And I upon thee fall the day expecting do attend.

Thy tender mercies, Lord, I pray thee to remember, And loving kindnesses, For they have been of old forever.

[14 : 17] My sins and faults of youth, Will thou, O Lord, forget.

After thy mercy think on me, And for thy goodness great.

God good and upright is, The way he'll sinners show.

The meek in judgment he will guide, And make his path to know.

The hope of the Lord, Our truth and mercy sure.

[15 : 34] To those that do his covenant keep, And testimonies sure.

The hope of the Lord, Let's turn to read in Mark's Gospel. Mark chapter 3. The Gospel of Mark chapter 3.

We read from the beginning. In ESV that's on page 1010. Mark chapter 3.

Again he entered the synagogue, And a man was there with a withered hand. And they watched Jesus to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, So that they might accuse him.

And he said to the man with the withered hand, Come here. And he said to him, Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, To save life or to kill?

[16 : 39] But they were silent. And he looked round at them with anger, And they grieved at their hardness of heart, And said to the man, Stretch out your hand.

He stretched it out, And his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out, And immediately held council with the Herodians against him, How to destroy him. Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea.

And a great crowd followed from Galilee and Judea, And Jerusalem and Diem, And from beyond the Jordan, And from around Tyre and Sidon.

When the great crowd heard all that he was doing, They came to him. And he told his disciples to have a boat ready for him, Because of the crowd, lest they crush him.

For he had healed many, So that all who had diseases pressed around him to touch him. And whenever the unclean spirits saw him, They fell down before him and cried out, You are the Son of God.

[17 : 42] And he strictly ordered them not to make him known. And he went up in the mountain and called to him those whom he desired. And they came to him. And he appointed twelve whom he also named apostles, So that they might be with him.

And he might send them out to preach, And have authority to cast out demons. He appointed the twelve, And Simon to whom he gave the name Peter, James the son of Zebedee, And John the brother of James, To whom he gave the name Boanjs, That is, sons of Thunder, Andrew and Philip and Bartholomew, And Matthew and Thomas and James the son of Alphaeus, And Thaddeus and Simon the Canaan, And Judas Iscariot who betrayed him.

Then he went home and the crowd gathered again so they could not even eat. His family heard that they went out to seize him, for they were saying, he's out of his mind.

And the scribes who had come down from Jerusalem were saying, he is possessed by Beelzebul. And by the prince of demons he casts out the demons.

And he called them to him and said to them in parables, how can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

[19 : 07] And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan is risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand but is coming to an end.

But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods unless he first binds a strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house.

Truly I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man. And whatever blasphemies they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin.

For they had said, he has an unclean spirit. And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him.

And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, your mother and your brothers are outside seeking you. And he answered them, who are my mother and my brothers? And looking about at those who sat around, he said, here are my mother and my brothers.

[20 : 13] Whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother. Amen. And may God bless to us this reading of his holy word. We're going to sing from Sing Psalms, number 13.

That's on page 14. Sing the whole psalm. How long will you forget me, Lord?

Will you forget always? How long, Lord, will you hide your face and turn from me your gaze? How long must I be sad each day in deep perplexity?

How long will my opponent stand and triumph over me? O Lord, my God, consider me and give me your reply. Light up my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of those who die.

Then would my enemy declare, at last I've laid him low. And so my foes would sing for joy to see my overthrow. But still I trust your constant love.

[21 : 14] You save and set me free. With joy I will extol the Lord, who has been good to me. The whole psalm, stand to sing, How long will you forget me, Lord?

How long will you forget me, Lord? Will you forget always?

How long, Lord, will you hide your face? And turn from me your gaze?

How long must I be sad each day in deep perplexity?

How long will my opponent stand in triumph over me?

[22 : 27] How long will you see me? How long will you up my eyes, for I will sleep the sleep of those who die.

Then would my enemy declare, at last I laid him low.

And so my host would sing for joy, to see my overthrow.

But still I trust your constant love, you stay and set me free.

With joy I will let's call the Lord, who has been good to me.

[24 : 03] Amen. First, because we find that after Jesus had healed the man with a withered hand, that the Pharisees went out, as it says in verse 6, and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, against Jesus, how to destroy him.

And so I want us to think about this verse first of all before it then leads us into this little section from verse 7 to verse 12. And it's quite an amazing thing how a common cause will bring people who are normally pulls apart in their thinking and in their ideals, how a common cause will bring people together.

And that's what we find here. You couldn't have two sections of society or two groups of people that you would say could be more distant in their thinking than the Pharisees and the Herodians.

The Pharisees, as we know, were the religious elite. And there's no question about it that they morally, they were upstanding, they were upright.

But they had created for themselves so many laws and rules and regulations that life had become an intolerable burden for the people because they had set standards that were really impossible for any person to keep.

[25 : 56] The Herodians, on the other hand, were supporters of Herod, who were in turn supporters of the Romans who were the ones who occupied the land.

And the Jew, of course, resented the Roman occupation and the Jew resented having Gentiles overruling the land who were, as they termed them, were unclean.

And the Pharisees, naturally or normally, would have no dealings with the supporters of the Roman occupation.

But here, because there is a common cause, and that common cause was to destroy Jesus. Because the Pharisees knew that in order to really destroy Jesus, they needed the help of the Roman authorities.

And, of course, the Herodians would actually be Jews who were sympathizers with Herod and with the Roman occupation. And so it's strange how people link up.

[27 : 04] But then again, you say to yourself, when you look at Jesus at work here, and it's something that we'll see as we will come to this in a little down there at verse 11 about the unclean spirits and so on.

We see here very clearly how the powers of darkness are always at work behind the scenes. Always there. Sometimes scripture brings it to the fore.

But often we're oblivious to it. But the powers of darkness are always there. Always working in the background. Because we've always got to remember that the kingdom of darkness is absolutely opposed to everything pertaining to the kingdom of God, to the kingdom of light.

The kingdom of darkness is opposed to our gathering here tonight. The kingdom of darkness is opposed to the work of the gospel. And Satan and his fallen angels will do everything in their power to make things as difficult, as awkward as possible.

So we must never lose sight of that, although we mustn't become crippled by it. We mustn't be sidetracked and always focused upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Because his rule, his authority, his power is greater than all the forces of darkness together.

[28 : 24] But they're there. And I believe that this is part of what's going on as they're working in the hearts of the Pharisees and working in the Herodians, the Satan and his demonic followers.

They're all at work there. And I suppose that's why when you look at the history of the church, you look at, for instance, Jewish history. Nation after nation has tried to obliterate, to annihilate the Jewish race.

And you remember how way back, the beginning, how God called Abraham and how he set, gave the great promises that through him and through his seed that all the nations of the world would be blessed.

Of course, it was through the seed of Abraham right down that Jesus came into this world. And it's amazing how there has always been because God has, for his own glory and for purposes of the good of this world, he set blessings upon the Jews.

And nation after nation, we see that in church history and in world history, trying to obliterate, annihilate the Jewish people.

[29 : 41] And it's continued with the Christian church down throughout the centuries where there's so much hatred against the cause of Christ.

Satan is at work. But if we home in just for a moment upon these men, the Pharisees, we find it really quite extraordinary because we've got to remember they are the religious elite.

And they are the people who should be leading the people in the ways of righteousness. These are the people who should be excited at the coming of the Messiah into this world.

If there were any people who should be embracing Jesus and people who are glad in their heart that Jesus was now here, it were the Pharisees. But it's the very opposite.

Destroy them. Why? Because he was a threat to them. He was a threat to their ways, to their power. And you know, it's an awful thing, but one of the major lusts in people's hearts is the lust for power.

[30 : 51] People want to have power. Whether it's in a home, whether it's at work, whether it's in a church, whether it's in a community, people, one of the lusts within it and the destruction.

When we think of lusts, we often think of lusts of the flesh, we often don't think down these roads, but what havoc they have caused throughout life. And that was one of the lusts that was at work within the heart of the Pharisees, was this lust for power, that they wanted to have dominion and to rule.

And Jesus was a threat. He was, to them, he was a revolutionary. And he was, they were afraid they were going to lose their control.

They had to destroy him. And you know the great problem with the Pharisees? There were two great problems. One was, they didn't know themselves.

And the other problem was, they didn't know God. Their worship of God was all outward. They had no, I shouldn't say that for all of them, because we know that there were some who quietly followed Jesus.

[32 : 00] But by and large, they didn't know the Lord. And they didn't know themselves. And you know this, there's nothing that will change a passion, change a community, change a land, like coming to know the Lord and coming to know ourselves.

When that happens within a passion, when we come to see something of ourselves, and to see something of the glory and the majesty and the power and the authority and the dominion of God, it changes everything.

And that is what we must pray will happen in our nation, in our society. Nothing, that is the revolution. It would change people's perspective, change their goals, their ambitions.

It would remove so much of the self-centeredness and so much of the lovelessness and so much of the jealousy and all these things. It will break the critical spirit, the judgmental spirit.

When you see yourself, when the Lord gives you a little glimpse of what you really are, and when you see something of your sin, and that one day you're going to have to stand before it, where you are stripped of every excuse and every other person, and where there is nothing but you and your life and what you have been and what you've done, when you see something of that, it takes away all forms of criticism and judgmental viewing of other people.

[33 : 41] You don't start looking and say, oh, tut, tut, this and that and the next thing. All you see is yourself. You're like Isaiah. He said, oh, woe is me, for I am undone.

He said, I'm a man of unclean lips. Because you see, Isaiah was given a vision of the Lord. He saw something of the glory of God.

That changes everything. I believe that in a nation there wasn't a greater saint in his day than Isaiah.

I tend to think that because the Lord, there were certain special saints. There's no question of the likes of Daniel. It was a man who was greatly beloved of the Lord.

He was an exceptional saint. The Lord gave to him great visions. The other person who was given great visions was the Apostle John, again, who developed into an exceptional saint.

[34 : 46] And Isaiah was somebody else who was given great revelation by God. I tend to think, again, I believe, an exceptional saint.

And yet here's the man, and he's saying, woe is me, for I am undone. I've seen the glory of the Lord. So that's why I'm saying that is what we need. Let us pray.

Let us pray to see something of the glory of God. And that, as I say, is something that would so radically change, change our whole way of thinking and seeing things.

And so we find that here at this time that the Pharisees, they've linked up with Herodians how they might destroy him. They might destroy him.

You know, there's nothing new under the sun. There are still people today. And that's what they're wanting to do, is to destroy. Destroy Christianity. There are people, and that is their great aim.

[35 : 46] We're living in a day where they talk about militant atheism, and they talk about how this whole humanist and secular society, how it's becoming very militant and seeking to infiltrate and to, it's like attack, attack the whole Christian ethos that remains.

Remember, it's becoming very fragile in our land. And as the Christian church becomes weaker and weaker in our land, it seems like that this militant atheism is becoming stronger and stronger and seeking to infiltrate all the different areas of life with the one aim, to destroy, just like they're doing back then, to destroy.

In many ways, as we look around, they seem to be gaining an advantage. Let us, you know, we have a responsibility to pray, to pray that the Lord will have mercy upon us.

I cannot think of anything worse than that the Lord would hand us as a nation over to ourselves, and that militant atheism would win, and that we would become a secular society, where the church would be so marginalised that it barely existed.

I cannot think of much worse happening to our nation. Let us seek and pray, because if we don't, nobody else is going to. If the Christians in our land are not seeking the Lord at a throne of grace, to be merciful to us, and that we will be protected, and that the cause of Christ will flourish and grow, then we're going to be in really, really dark days.

[37 : 36] But you know, while we have or hear a lot of atheists talk and such like, you know, there's one place where there are no atheists. I'm digressing here.

And that's in hell. There's not one atheist in hell. Every single soul in hell is 100% convinced of the power and the reality of God.

It's just in this world that there are atheists. They don't exist in hell. But anyway, we see here that there's this gathering together of these people, and then we find that Jesus, as a result of this, that Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea, and a great crowd followed him.

So this is, we're seeing now, as it were, almost like the other extreme. You have this group that are really bent on destroying Jesus, but the ordinary people, they're flooding after him.

There's crowds. We're not talking here about a few hundred. We're talking of thousands. In a sense, almost hard for us to understand, but there's this massive movement of humanity after Jesus, because these were the kind of crowds that followed Jesus.

[38 : 50] That's why, on different occasions, we find him feeding 4,000 and 5,000. Huge, huge amounts of people following. But there's a lot of things that we see in here, but one of the things that I find quite interesting, towards the end of verse 8 and into verse 9, when the great crowd heard all that he was doing, they came to him, and he told his disciples to have a boat ready for him, because of the crowd, lest they crush him.

Now, that's something, I believe, just for a moment, that I find quite interesting, because here is Jesus, the God-man, and he is using, you can see quite clearly here, practical resources.

He's making, as it were, contingency plans. The Lord Jesus Christ, we've got to take note of this, is using, he's looking to the practical resources in life, because his very life, to a certain extent, is being threatened by the thousands who are pressing against him.

And he said to the disciples, in case I get crushed, get a little boat. Now, sometimes he used a boat to preach from. He did that on occasions. Remember how they pushed out from the land a little, and he made his boat like a little pulpit, and preached to the crowd on the shore.

That's not why he asked for the boat. On this occasion, he asked for the boat, tells us quite simply there, because of the crowd, lest they crush him.

[40 : 29] And I think that one of the things that we have to learn from this is that, yes, we live by faith. And if there's any person who is desperate, who would love to encourage people to live by faith, it's me.

But yet we have to use common sense as well. For instance, supposing somebody felt called by the Lord to go to be a missionary in another country.

And they were heading off, and you say, oh, well, you're going away over to, supposing they're going over to South America. And you'd say to them, are you learning the language? Oh, no, I'm not learning any.

I don't need to do that. If the Lord is calling me, the Lord will make provision, and the Lord will open every door for me. You'd say to them, oh, no, no, hold on. You have to use common sense.

If you are going, if the Lord is calling you to be a missionary in another country, then the first thing you've got to learn is the language of the people that you're going to be amongst.

[41 : 36] So that's why I'm saying that sometimes people have this idea that when you go by faith, that the Lord sorts everything. It's kind of this kind of blind faith, and that you don't look at any human things or any human resources, that somehow the Lord will sort it all out.

Well, here's Jesus. And if there's any person that you would say would sort it out, it would be Jesus. And yet he's still looking, and he's saying to the disciples, get me a little boat there in case I get crushed.

I don't think we must, we must learn that lesson. You know, sometimes you'll have it done. Don't get me wrong with this either. Sometimes people become ill, and they say, all right, I've got faith.

I believe the Lord will heal me. Sometimes the Lord does. And praise his glory to his name for that. But he has also given tremendous minds to medical scientists and new cures and new treatments that have been provided.

And so we've got to take on board all these things. The Lord doesn't expect us to just live life oblivious to everything in this world and say, right, the Lord will sort it out in everything.

[43 : 00] Let us learn from Jesus there was nobody who lived in dependence on the Father like Jesus. He lived in dependence upon him all the time. And yet, still we see him using, as it were, the practical resources that are there for him.

So we've always got to be careful that we're not presumptuous before the Lord. And so we find this vast crowd that pushing down upon Jesus. And we find that actually the words here that tell us lest they, for he had healed so many that all who had diseases pressed around him to touch him.

So that there was this, they were like falling upon themselves. There was this heaving mass of humanity. humanity. And I think what we see here is, well, what I like to see in verse 10, for he had healed many so that all who had diseases pressed around him to touch him.

I think that here we have a beautiful picture of the gospel at work. Because here's this crowd and they're seeing Jesus. You know what? It's quite extraordinary.

You have the religious group who we saw a moment before and they're out to destroy Jesus. They saw Jesus as a threat. They saw him as somebody they had to get rid of.

[44 : 27] The ordinary people, they saw Jesus as somebody who was there to help them. He was there as a healer. He was there as a savior. And so they were rushing to him.

And when they were seeing him healing, they were saying, they were looking at, because he was healing the blind, the deaf, the dumb, lepers. He was healing paralysis, every manner of disease.

It tells us elsewhere about that. He was healing every manner of disease. And so there would be people who would be carried there, people whose arms had maybe never worked or through an injury.

There were just limbs that were deformed. There was everything. And people would be carried and pushed along and taken along and people themselves go.

and when they would be seeing the healing power, they would say, I want that as well. And you know, that's one of the wonderful things sometimes in the Christian faith, is the influence that a converted person can have on another.

[45 : 36] And we've seen it happen often before, that when one person gets converted, somebody else says, well, if that can happen to him, it can happen to me as well.

I remember in the previous congregation where I was, there was a man who was wonderfully converted. He was, from the kind of life that he lived, it was a very, very marked conversion.

Christian. And his wife, a lovely woman, she wasn't a Christian, but it was the time of the communion, and there, like, we can't hear because of the numbers, but in a lot of congregations, people actually rise to the Lord's table, and they walk down to it, and they sit at the Lord's table, they set the table at the front, and people are sitting at the back until it's time to come to the table.

And when he got up, he'd become a member, and when he got up from sitting beside his wife, she was so overcome, and she was saying to the Lord, Lord, if you are able to do that for him, you can do that for me.

And the Lord did. And I believe that's been replicated in many, many situations, in many homes, in many families, where you've seen the work of the Lord, and you've said, well, Lord, if you can do that for him, or do that for her, you can do it for me.

[47 : 08] Well, that's exactly what was happening here. And I believe also that it's a picture of the telling of the gospel, because it says there, and he told the disciples, and when the crowd heard all that he was doing, they came to him.

You see, the news was spreading, the news was spreading fast. this man, he's healing, this man is miraculous, this man is making lame people walk, this man is making blind people see, and they came rushing to see for themselves.

My friends, that's how the gospel spreads. You know the quickest way for the gospel to die? It's for people to keep quiet. If the Christians keep quiet, if you don't talk, that's how the early church grew.

The word is, they gossiped the gospel, they shared the gospel, they spoke the gospel, one with another. And you know, nothing will fan the flame in your own heart like speaking about the Lord.

I don't mean sort of contrived or sort of saying, oh well I bet, but where it's spontaneous, where it is natural. If you want the fire of the gospel to keep flourishing in your heart, you speak about the Lord.

[48 : 30] Nothing will dampen it quite like keeping quiet. If you keep quiet day in, day out, week in, week out, let me tell you, the flame will go lower and lower and lower.

Your spiritual vibrancy will become less and less and less. Your effectiveness will become less and less and less. But the opposite is true. The more you share, the more you speak, the more you will fan the flame.

And that's exactly how the early church was. And that's the picture that we have here of the word spreading and everybody wanting to go for themselves.

You speak to people about the God. You may feel, I'm not very good at it. Ask the Lord for the opportunities and ask the Lord to guide you in what to say.

And it's amazing as you go along in life, the number of times as you look back. And you will remember people who spoke to you about the Lord, things that they said.

[49 : 31] Maybe you dismissed it at the time or didn't take it too seriously, but it's stuck there. And later on, it's come back and you say, I do. So you make sure that you speak about the Lord.

My friend, tonight you might be here and you're saying, you know, I would like to become a Christian, but do you know what I'm afraid is that it won't last. I'll just make a fool of myself.

Because I've tried to sort different things out in my life over the years and I've never made a very good job of it. And I reckon it will be the same with Christianity. I might try and have a go at it.

That's not the way it works. You see, you don't make yourself a Christian. You see, it's the Lord's power that comes into your heart.

He changes you. It's not that you say one day, right, I'm going to start really thinking about the kingdom of God. I'm going to read my Bible more and I'm going to pray more and I'm going to go to church more and I'm going to dedicate myself and I'm going to go the Christian way.

[50 : 37] Well, that's all very well and good, but unless there is the, unless the Lord's power, unless the Lord actually touches your heart, unless he comes into your heart, all that effort won't produce, it'll help if you're, I'll tell you, if you are genuinely seeking all these things are important, they're, as we say, a means of grace, it's working to seeking and trying to find the Lord, but you ask the Lord to come in, Lord, please come into my heart and save me.

and the thing is that when he comes into your heart to save you, he'll also keep you, that's what he does, when he saves, he doesn't just start a good work so that you become a Christian for a few days, for a few weeks and then that's it and then he leaves you, no he doesn't leave you, he never leaves you, some Christians have wobbled, some Christians have backslidden, but I'll tell you according to God's word, when the Lord comes into a person's heart and life, he comes in forever, he isn't there as it were, as somebody who comes and goes, and somebody who comes and leaves, he comes to dwell, to live there forever, he will keep you, he will never let you go, that's the wonderful thing, but then we see, finally here, it tells us with regard for he had healed many so that all who had diseases pressed around him to touch him, and whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, you are the son of God, and he strictly ordered them not to make him known.

Now a lot of people sort of disbelieve this whole idea about demon possession, and they say, ah, these were people who were, maybe they had real severe mental disorders, they were people who were taking severe fits of one kind and another, well, we've all got to remember the Bible actually distinguishes and separates these things, and highlights that there were people who didn't have unclean spirits, who had other types of problems, here it is very clear, as in other parts of the gospel, that there was such a thing as demon possession and unclean spirits.

As I said, it was a time where Satan was, as it were, in overdrive. Three years later, that was where he thought his final triumph had come, in the destruction, where he thought he was destroying Jesus, but it was ultimately his own destruction.

However, here it's as if the gates of hell are open. People may say, well, what were the features of the unclean spirit? Well, I don't know, but I would say there would be two or three things anyway.

[53 : 40] An unclean spirit was just that, a spirit that was morally and spiritually filthy and unclean. And I don't think that such a spirit could be in a passion without manifesting itself in some way in that form.

There would be a stamp of uncleanness, of moral and spiritual filth in the passion that had this demon. I also think, looking at, for instance, a man legion, who had many demons within him, that there was irrational behavior.

Remember, that was a man who was running about, he was cutting himself, he was deranged. They tried to chain him and tether him and he just broke them. He was living amongst the tombs.

If we saw somebody down in a cemetery living there running around naked and cutting himself, we would say, we would be seriously alarmed. Well, that's how legion was, irrational behavior.

There was also, you might say, amazing insight, knowledge, because all the people who came with demons recognized Jesus.

[54 : 56] They shouted out, you are the son of God. Now, they were making out, you are the Messiah. Now, the normal people round about weren't seeing that.

The religious leaders weren't seeing that. So that's what I'm saying, that these seem to be certainly from the Bible, they would be manifestations of this demon procession.

But we find Jesus casting them out and calling upon them to be silent. That's the great command. you are the son of God.

And he strictly ordered them not to make him known. Of course, they're terrified of Jesus. As we said, there are no atheists in hell.

We're told in the Bible that the devil and his angels that they believe and tremble. Isn't that an amazing thought? They believe, they tremble.

[55 : 54] They know the reality of God and they tremble. They know that his authority is an authority that they are actually subject to. And so, this is why we find this response.

So, some people wonder and say, well, why didn't Jesus allow? Surely, when he wanted people to know that he was the son of God, the Messiah, why didn't he allow? Well, again, we can only make suggestions, one or two suggestions.

First of all, here is Jesus, holy, beautiful, perfect, the son of God. Are the messengers of this great message to be demons?

Most certainly not. I would say that in the first case is why Jesus does not want them to be the messengers. I believe another thing is that as they are stating, here is the son of God, this is really the Messiah.

They're saying to the people, this is the Messiah. Now, what we've got to remember is that the Jews believed that when the Messiah would come, that he would deliver them, set them free from the occupation so that they would be delivered from every other nation who would be sort of, or any nation that would be exercising dominion over them.

[57 : 13] Jesus had to teach the people that he was not that kind of Messiah, that he was the Messiah who was there to save them.

He had to teach the people his message and his mission, and he needed time to do that so that it wasn't the time, wasn't the time right here, right now, to declare, I am the Messiah.

He had to, in his own way, at his own time, he had to declare that. And then again, there was another frightening aspect to it because the scribes, we read that in verse 22, the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, he's possessed himself from Beelzebul.

They were saying that Jesus, he was demon possessed. So if Jesus was going to allow the demons to testify that he is the Christ, the Son of God, that would be playing directly into the very things that the scribes are saying.

That's, oh, he's doing that because he himself has a demon. So Jesus is calling upon these demons to be absolutely silent.

[58 : 30] Of course, they were. They had to be under his authority. Well, as we come to conclude tonight, we have this great truth about this great Savior, Jesus Christ.

I have to ask you, anybody in here tonight who does not know Jesus personally, what are you going to do with Jesus? It is the most important question that you have to ask yourself because Jesus Christ, remember, is here tonight in mercy.

Jesus is still Savior. We are still in a day of grace. There's coming a day when it's to be a day of judgment and on the throne will be King Jesus and he will be dealing with everybody as judge of all the earth.

Tonight, he is still Savior and he's offering to save you. Will you put him away or will you say, even so come Lord Jesus into my heart?

Let us pray. Let us pray. Let us pray.