

LOOKING AT JESUS

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1. **THE UNIQUENESS OF JESUS** Based on John 7:25-46

An advertisement that was originally printed in the Miner's Magazine as a serious add was later published by the Reader's Digest as humor. The ad read, "Wanted: Man to work on nuclear fissionable isotope molecular reactive counter and three-phase cyclotronic uranium photosynthesizers. No experience necessary." Of course, it

was a joke. No one is that unique. On the other hand, how can you find anyone with experience in a field that never existed before?

The New Testament has a similar problem in the spiritual realm. The complex task of saving sinners, and yet remaining just an absolutely loyal to his nature of holiness was God's problem. Of course, it is only a problem from our point of view. In His eternal wisdom it was solved before the world began. The job called for an extremely unique person. He had to be fully man, for only a man could live a perfect human life. If he was not truly man, the life he lived would not be truly human. Yet, only God could insure that such a life could be lived. The paradox is that only God could do what was necessary, but it could only be done as a man. The solution could only be Jesus Christ-the God-Man. All the paradoxes and problems of the relationship of God and man are resolved in Christ who was both.

Robert C. Moyer wrote, "In Jesus divine omnipotence moved in a human arm. In Jesus divine wisdom was cradled in a human brain. In Jesus divine love throbbed in a human heart. In Jesus divine compassion glistened in a human eye. In Jesus divine grace poured forth from human lips." Jesus was the most unique of all men, but not just because He was God, but rather, because He was really man. That is, He was the only complete example of ideal manhood ever seen on this planet. Adam was the only other man who was ever perfect in his manhood, and he fell. Jesus alone lived a perfect human life. Jesus was unique, not just because He

was more than a man, but because He was fully a man. He was the man par-excellence.

We need, therefore, to stress His humanity as He did of Himself. His favorite name for Himself was the Son of Man. In the bureau of standards in Washington there is a gold bar exactly one yard long which is the standard by which every measuring instrument in the United States is judged. There has to be one, and only one, final absolute standard. Jesus is that standard in the realm of human life, morality, and character. As deity He was no standard for human life. Only as man did He become our standard and ideal. In the incarnation the human ideal became real.

Herman Horne points out that realism and idealism are combined in Jesus Christ. He writes, "Human nature at its possible best gives us the ideals for man. If we want to know what the ideals of man's complete living are, we must know what human nature is at its best; what its elements are; what it is possible for each element to attain in its development. Thus the real is the basis of the ideal; the real at its best is the ideal; the real is the actual; the ideal is what is possible for the real to become. Such idealism as this has its feet on the ground; is practical. Idealism without reference to what the real can become is visionary." Christian idealism is based on the real of Christ. Jesus is the example of what the real man can become. He is the ideal which we shall attain, for we shall be like Him when we see Him as He is, according to John.

Meanwhile, it is our task to learn of Him, and strive toward His ideal manhood. Paul said in Eph. 4:12-13 that the gifts of Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers was, "For the equipment of the saints, for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." He is our standard, and we are to measure up to Him as the goal of all our study, listening, worship, and service as Christians.

**O Man of the far away ages,
O Man of the far away land,
More art Thou than all of the sages,
More art Thou than creed or command.
To crown Thee we need but to know Thee;
We need but to live Thee to prove,
For time nor decay can o'er throw Thee-
Humanity's ultimate Love.**

Author unknown

Jesus has no competitors in the field of perfect manhood. Hunter Blakely writes, "Men can conceive nothing higher than to be Christ like. It is significant that non-Christians all around the world have been revising the character of their deities with one purpose--to bring them into conformity with Christ. Mohammed is not compared with Buddha, nor Confucius with Krishna, but one in all are brought before the moral masterpiece, and the question has to be answered, is it Christ like?"

Jesus is universal because of the perfect balance of his manhood. He combines in his life and character every type of human goodness. He fits into every age and culture. Whatever goodness is being emphasized in a particular age it will be found exhibited at its best in Jesus. This uniqueness of Jesus in combining every value of manhood in perfect balance can be abused. All men have to do is take one aspect of Jesus and exaggerate it as the whole, and ignore the facts that bring balance, and thereby have a Christ for their cause. W. A. Vissert Hooft, former president of the World Council of Churches, an author of numerous books, gives concrete examples of this abuse.

He writes, "...There is an 18th century Jesus who looks strangely like a dignified free-mason, and a 19th century Jesus, who resembles in all essentials an enlightened democrat of the liberal variety. There is the revolutionary Jesus of the Communist Barbusse, the pacifist of Tolstoy; the militant Jesus of the Kiser. There is the Aryan Christ of H.S. Chamberlain and the "German Christians;" the Jewish Christ of the liberal Jews, the Russian Christ of Dostoievsky. The Indian Christ of Radakrishman. Some of these portraits are better than others. Some are naive or cynical attempts to exploit Jesus for some cause which has no imaginable relation to his message and mission. Others are attempts to honor him by bringing him into the closest possible relation to the concrete realities of our time. All, however, reveal a tendency to use this man for some extraneous purpose which originates, not from him, but from some other source."

It is good for us to be aware of this as we study Jesus. Wherever there is power there is exploitation and abuse, and in Jesus Christ there is great power, for even as a great man, apart from his deity, his influence is great. If you can persuade others that Jesus backs your program and ideas, you have the best possible support. Let us keep in mind, therefore, that Jesus Christ is the perfect man with perfect balance. No cause has exclusive claim on Christ, nor does the advocate of any particular virtue. Perfect balance must characterize any true study of the character and teaching of Jesus.

Take the question of whether Jesus was manly or womanly in character. Some authors will dwell exclusively on his strength and courage. Others will magnify his compassion, gentleness, and loving care of children. Both are right, but both are wrong if they imply their picture is the whole of Christ. Jesus combines in his personality the ideals of both sexes. Perfect manhood must combine the virtues of male and female. How could Jesus be the example and standard for all if he had none of the feminine ideals in his character. Westcott wrote, "Whatever there is in men of strength, justice, and wisdom; whatever there is in women of sensibility, purity, and insight, is in Christ without the conditions which hinder among us the development of contrasted virtues in one person." Failure to keep this balance led to the feminine virtues of Jesus being forgotten in the Middle Ages. Jesus was presented as just and severe. Men longed for tenderness and compassion also, and the result was that Mary was exalted to provide these qualities.

Mariolatry could have been avoided had a full picture of Christ been presented to men.

In reaction to the Christ of severity a pietistic Christ was developed. Sentimentalism characterize the Christian, and Christ was made effeminate. Men left the church to the women and children, for they sensed Christ had nothing to offer to fulfill the masculine aspirations of life. We are still suffering from this defective portrait today. A balance view of Christ would reveal he is the perfect ideal of both the masculine and feminine. He redeems the best in both. Christ has done more to lift womanhood to a level of dignity and respect than all the religions of the world combined. We should rejoice that Christianity is a woman's religion, for our mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters are women, and in Christ they can be the best of women. Women feel that no man really understands their feelings, and they are probably right, but Jesus, the unique and perfect man, understands completely.

There is no male and female in Christ, for he combines both in one complete whole. This is why we see women following Jesus, and being loyal to him all the way even through his crucifixion. It is good and wonderful that this is so, but men must also see the masculine Christ. The Christ in our text could make such an impression on the officers sent to arrest him that they were afraid to lay hands on him. When they reported back to the Pharisees without him, their reason was, "No man ever spoke like this man." This is the testimony of his enemies. They said he was the most unique

of men. He spoke with such authority, power, and certainty. He was a leader of men and captured the allegiance of strong men like Peter, and zealous men like Simon the Zealot. He offered men a challenge that called for the best that a man can be. Jesus calls all men to heroism. He calls him to take up the cross and follow him.

The history of heroic men is the history of those who have followed Jesus Christ. Our first conviction about the manhood of Christ must be that he was unique. Not only did no man ever speak like him, no man ever lived like him. Grace N. Crowell wrote,

**“One man alone to change the ways of men!
One humble man to draw the world to him!
Never before, nor will there be again His like-
The stars made fade, and the sun's light dim,
And still no one will walk as once he walked,
Among the lowly, healing every ill,
And still no man will talk as once he talked,
To teach mankind to heed God's holy will.
Never a man like this-no one at all
Moves as he moves within a circling light.
Head-high above all others, straight and tall
He stands, imbued with power and with might.
He is the one, o men, who sacrificed
His life for ours--the loving, living Christ.”**

It is when we see Jesus as one of a kind in his humanity that we most see the reality of his deity. He was the most

unique of men.

2. OUR EXCELLING EXAMPLE Based on John 13:1-17

You cannot imitate what you do not know. Any parrot who learns to swear does not reveal its own character, but rather that of its owner and example. To copy or imitate by definition implies an original to go by. It is the original that determines the nature of the copy. This concept is not limited to paper, metal and material objects. It applies to human lives as well. Practically all of life is an imitation of one philosophy or another, one principle or another, one person or another.

We are not living totally unique and original lives, for we are all following patterns that existed before, and they were lived by millions before we were born. The better we are acquainted with the pattern the more we conform to it as a copy. This, of course, explains why Christians can often be so unlike Christ, and so much like the world. They are so much more acquainted with the world. The example of the world is constantly before them, and they begin to imitate that pattern. The example of Christ is one to which they are so seldom exposed that there is little chance for imitation.

The painter who would imitate Rembrandt, or the musician who would like to be a copy of Beethoven must immerse themselves in the works of these men. They will

succeed only to the degree that they know the original they seek to imitate. It is obvious that this holds true for the Christian life as well. How can we be Christ like if we do not know what He was like, and how He lived, and what He taught?

Every experience that life brings is an opportunity to imitate Christ, but how can we do so if we do not know how He would respond? He had a home, He played, He worked, He went to school, He had joys and blessings, He faced embarrassment and trials, and He had social pressures. He had to take a stand on social and political issues. He lived a genuine involved and complicated human life filled with decisions, and it is worth all of the effort needed to become acquainted with His life.

Before we launch out into this sea of living water we need to chart our way so as to stir clear of the island of liberalism that attracts so many as a landing spot, and from which they do not depart again. What I am referring to is the fact that the liberal element as far back as the 18th century has made much of Christ as an example. They cannot be surpassed in their stress on Jesus being the supreme example of humanity. It was a very attractive religion, but unfortunately, even though it was Christ centered, it was not Christianity. It was because the Christ it exalted was divorced from His deity. His example and teaching was isolated from His atonement, and this left Him as an example period, and not the Savior and Lord.

Understandably, the Evangelicals opposed this diluted theology, and stressed the atonement. When ever the life of Christ was mentioned they would say, “Yes, but His death was more important.” The result of this emphasis was a neglect of the lessons we are to learn from our Lord’s life. James Stalker, the evangelical author of Christ Our Example, said, “It is time to object to these divisions. Both halves of the truth are ours, and we claim the whole of it.” Why should we be robbed of any of God’s precious truth in Christ just because it can be perverted and abused? To let error have the monopoly on any truth is an evil, and a departure from God’s will.

We cannot rightly ignore any part of inspired revelation. It leads to the philosophy that says, “Ignorance is the mother of devotion.” Certain truths are confusing to the people, and so the way to keep peace in the church is to keep people ignorant. Such was the thinking of many in the past, and it worked. There was only one casualty and that was the truth. The result was a loss of true Christianity. No amount of peace is worth that price. As evangelicals we dare not yield to the temptation of ignoring and hiding any part of God’s Word just because it can be perverted. Even the deity of Christ was once so exalted for the purpose of denying the reality of Christ’s humanity. In fact, this was the first heresy in the early church. No one could be so foolish as to ignore the deity of Christ just because it can be abused. We are to hold forth all of God’s truth.

This long introduction is to clarify what we are doing. We want it clear that what we will be studying is vital and important, and it is given by God for our instruction, but in itself it is an inadequate Christianity because Christ as our example will not save us. We must know Christ as Lord, and we must yield our lives to Him as our Redeemer, for it is only from within the family of God that He is our example. Once we become a child of God by accepting Christ as Savior there is no higher goal in life than to be like Him.

This is the witness of the whole New Testament. “Learn of me,” “Follow me,” said Jesus. “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ.” “Walk in love, as Christ also has loved us.” Jesus said, “This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you.” All we do is to be a pattern of what Christ did. Rom. 15:2 says, “Let everyone please his neighbor for his good to edification, for even Christ pleased not himself.” Col. 3:13 says, “Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.” When we can appeal to the example of Christ for any attitude or conduct we stand on solid rock, for what is Christ like is eternal.

And now to our text and to a specific case in which Jesus is our example. This passage is a logical place to begin since no one can miss it. Jesus states plainly in verse 15 that the purpose of His action was to give His disciples an example to follow. We have here one of the most basic passages in the Word of God, for Jesus goes to special lengths to become an example of humility. It doesn't sound like such a big issue,

but John tells us if all was written that might be about Christ, the world could not contain the books. If half a chapter of his 21 can be devoted to this lesson on humility, that means it is certainly a major issue from God's point of view.

Humility seems like such a dull virtue because of our misconceptions. Like the Greeks and Romans, we don't have much time for self-depreciation. Like them we equate humility with weakness, cowardice and inferiority, and none of these are attractive. All of these false concepts are shed quickly, however, when we look to Christ our example. Humility is not stepping on yourself, or degrading yourself. Jesus never did either of these things. It is a surrendering of yourself to be most useful. Humility means availability. The humble man is not so wrapped up in himself that he is never available for the needs of others. Proud people are too busy with their own agenda, but humble people will take time out of their own pursuits to meet the needs of others. They are the volunteers who do not have to do it, but they do because it needs to be done.

Did humility in Christ mean a low self-estimate? Was Jesus like the Carthusian monk who was describing his little known order to a stranger saying, "As for learning, we are not to be compared to the Jesuits, when it comes to good works, we don't match the Franciscans, as to preaching we are not in a class with the Dominicans, but when it comes to humility we are tops." Such a concept of humility is naturally laughable, for it means to specialize in inferiority.

If this was true humility, it would be an easy virtue to attain, for the only requirement would be to do nothing. He who can most magnify his inability becomes the most humble. This foolishness has no part in the humility of Christ. No one has ever had such a high estimate of himself. Jesus said, "A greater than Solomon is here." He said, "I am the light of the world." He said, "I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but by Me."

Look at our text where Jesus is emphasizing His humility. Does He lower His self-estimate? Not at all. In verse 13 He says that my calling me Lord and Master you are right. That is just what made His act the highest example of humility. It was His superiority which made His act of washing their feet a great example of humility. It is not humility for a servant to do so, but it is for a master to do so. He did not hold on to His superiority and fear to stoop lest He lose it. True humility is to use all of your ability to serve. It is false humility to say you cannot serve when you really are able. True humility is to say I will stoop to do the job.

Humility is being strong and using that strength to lift the weak. It is to be wise and intelligent and using your gifts to teach the less fortunate that they might share the values of your advantage. True humility does not say I am nothing, but it says I am something by the grace of God, and I can be used of God to help others be something as well. Humility puts the best of men into the service of the rest of us that we all might be lifted to higher ground. The disciples needed

this virtue because they had the typical attitude that to be special and superior should put you in a privileged position of being served. They wanted to reign and not serve, but Jesus made it clear that privilege and special ability is only of value when it is used to serve.

Jesus is the greatest possible example of true humility. He did not grasp at equality with God, but as Phil. 2:7-8 says, “But made of himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men....He humbles himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” The greatest act of service in history was by the King of Kings when He died for the sins of the world. Albert Schweitzer said, “Example is not the main thing in influencing others. It is the only thing.” Jesus laid down His life as an example of just how much He loves us, and there is no greater example of love than this in the universe. He is our excelling example.

Someone has said that a good way to gain humility is to read the help wanted ads. You will be surprised how many positions there are which you are too ignorant, too unattractive, or too old to fill. This is the false and negative kind of humility. We look to Christ as our example, and He teaches us a positive type of humility that says I have ability and blessings which I will use, not for self-glorification, but for the edification of others. Christ like humility is a virtue of power and strength and not the popular concept of anemic withdrawal.

A Christ like definition of humility is, the willingness to give one's self and any superiority he may have to the service of others. The highest profession on earth, from God's point of view, is to be a servant. We haven't begun to expound the text, but have just seen the over all purpose of it. We want to look at one detail lest we have a misconception. There are Christians who take this message literally in terms of the example Jesus used to teach His lesson. They continue to wash one another's feet in obedience to His words in verse 14. It is certainly not wrong to do so, but it severely limits the application when the context makes it clear that the act was filled with a non-literal spiritual significance.

In verse 7 Jesus shows that His act is symbolic of a higher spiritual significance beyond the literal act of washing. The question of verse 12 asks if they know what He has done. Certainly they knew what He had done, but the meaning was what was important. The washing of feet was just a method of demonstrating the principle of humility, and of the superior serving the lesser. They could continue to use foot washing as a method of service because it was a real necessity and a part of their daily lives. To continue it in our culture is not really a service, for we don't need our feet washed when we are invited to eat with someone. We do not wear sandals, nor do we set low on couches with our feet near our food and another. It becomes a mere ceremony as an end in itself, and it can lead to the false view that one has fulfilled his obligation to be humble by doing so. Jesus certainly did not take up such a large portion of revelation to teach us to wash one another's feet.

He is teaching us to follow His example as a total way of life by giving ourselves to the service of others. This is Christ like humility, and He is our excelling example.

3. HIS STEADFAST FACE Based on John 19:1-16

You never know when something embarrassing will happen to you. We are constantly on guard, for we do not like to be humiliated. Mrs. Howard Field was walking to a near by funeral home for the funeral of an old acquaintance when she saw an Easter bonnet that caught her eye. She went in and purchased it. She felt it was improper to carry it into the chapel, so she asked an usher to take care of it for her. You can imagine her dismay when she saw it being placed on the coffin with the flowers. At the grave site she hoped to recover it, but she was too embarrassed to do anything, and so she watched her new Spring hat lowered into the ground. She hardly knew the woman being buried, but she was weeping as sincerely as the immediate family.

Her embarrassment was real but hidden. In other situations we cannot hide, and we are embarrassed by what is beyond our control. The poet gives an example:

**I sat next to the Bishop at tea;
It was just as I feared it would be.
His rumblings abdominal
Were simply phenomenal,
And everyone thought it was me.**

Then there are the deliberate efforts to get a laugh at the expense of others. It can be funny to embarrass others. This is the motive behind roasts and many other types of humor. We do this frequently as men. It is part of our sense of humor. Sometimes it borders on the cruel, however. For example, Bernard Shaw was browsing in a secondhand book shop when he found a copy of one of his own books peeping out at him from a dusty shelf. He looked at the inside cover and found it was an autographed copy he had given to a friend. He bought his own book just so he could return it to the friend with these words on the flyleaf- "With renewed compliments of Bernard Shaw." You can imagine the embarrassment of the friend.

The desire to humble another can be just good fun, and when people are friends it can be good for a laugh, even for the one embarrassed. But there is also sadistic side of this that we see dominating the whole scene of the trial of Jesus. John chapter 19 is just one embarrassing scene after another as the church and state try to manipulate each other by means of humiliation. Pilate represents the state. He is the power of Rome, the secular Gentile state. In the other corner of the ring are the chief priests and officials of Israel. They are the church, or the religious establishment in the legal conflict over the issue if Jesus is worthy of being sentenced to death.

It is one of the greatest paradoxes of history that the state tried hard to release Jesus, but the religious leaders would not let the state do what was just, but used the power of

humiliation to compel Pilate to send Jesus to the cross. Let me share with you the clear facts of this great paradox of that pagan secular state trying to do the right thing, but the clever religious people thwarted justice, and manipulated the state to join them in the evil plot to officially murder the only perfectly innocent man who ever lived.

Pilate was a pagan, but he knew when a man was innocent, and he knew Jesus was just such a man. In fact, the Gospels tell us Pilate acknowledged seven times that Jesus was innocent. We see three of them in our text. In verse 4 Pilate said to the Jews, "Look, I am bringing Him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against Him." In verse 6 he says it again, "As for me, I find no basis for a charge against Him." In verse 12 we read, "Pilate tried to set Jesus free." The Gospels confirm that Pilate found no fault in Jesus, and that he did seek to release Him. Even his own wife had a dream about Jesus and warned Pilate not to sentence Him. He tried every trick in the book to set Jesus free. He even gave the people a choice to let Barabbas or Jesus go free. He thought for sure they would choose Jesus rather than a known violent killer, but they did not.

The record is clear, Jesus was killed by religious people and not secular people. The religious leaders forced Pilate to give the order to Crucify Jesus. They embarrassed him into it. Here were the people who had the promise of God to have a Messiah sent to them, and they demanded that the

state put this Messiah to death. There is no guarantee that in a conflict between the religious and secular that the religious will always be right and the secular wrong. Pilate was a pagan but he was right. Jesus was innocent of any crime. So why did he give in and sentence Jesus to death? It was because of the clever minds of the Jewish leaders.

They knew that Pilate dreaded the thought of being embarrassed before the Emperor Tiberius Caesar. It would be humiliating to have Caesar get a report that he had let a rival king live when the Jews were clamoring for His death in order to be loyal to Caesar. Caesar was touchy about rivals as most tyrants are, and Pilate would feel more comfortable standing before him naked than with the charge against Him that He was a traitor in supporting a rival ruler. The Jews knew this and they shout in verse 12, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar.

These hypocrites hated Caesar and would gladly see an opponent take his throne, but they knew this threat would be more than Pilate could defy. They were right, and Pilate was humiliated into handing Jesus over to be crucified. He played by their dirty rules to the end, however. Even knowing Jesus was innocent, he had Him flogged and mocked, and presented to the Jews as a pathetic king. He hoped to embarrass them by mocking their fear of Jesus.

In verse 5 Pilate brings Jesus out to the Jews looking so pathetic with His crown of thorns and purple robe, and he

says, "Here is the man!" He was saying that here is the man you so fear. He is really dangerous looking isn't He? No wonder you want Him dead so bad. He is so fierce and threatening. But his plan did not work. They were too cold hearted to slink away in embarrassment. Pilate could not embarrass them to back off their plot. They were harder-hearted than himself, and he gave in instead. But he got in the last punch in this battle to embarrass. Verse 19 says Pilate had a notice fastened to the cross that read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." The Jewish leaders protested, but Pilate would not give in on this, and he said, "What I have written I have written." They were embarrassed by the message that they were killing their own king, but they went ahead in spite of it.

Here is another paradox. The Jews were as determined to get Jesus to the cross as He was determined to get there. Jesus had set His face steadfastly to get to the cross, and not all the power of Satan and evil men combined could make Him swerve from this path. But those who despised and rejected Him had the same goal, and they were equally determined. They would not let their law or Roman law stand in their way. Compassion and justice meant nothing to them. They were hard as steel, and nothing could stop them from getting Jesus to the cross.

The paradox is, you have the forces of evil and the forces of good aiming for the same goal, which was the cross. Can evil and good have the same goal? Of course they can. We see it all the time. In every election we see good people and

evil people fighting for the same candidate. Even the Mafia wants a certain candidate to win, for they feel he is more likely to benefit them. The drug dealers and pimps vote for someone too, for they feel that someone will be to their advantage. Good and godly people can want the same candidate to win also, but for very different reasons, but both have the same goal and can be out supporting the same man. The fight for freedom can mean freedom of religion, freedom of the press, but also freedom to use drugs, or practice anti-social behavior, and so forces for freedom to do good or evil have the same goal.

So we see Jesus and His opponents aiming for the same target-the cross. Their motives are radically different, of course. Jesus is going to the cross because that is the only way He can atone for man's sin and reconcile man to God. The Jews want Jesus on the cross to get Him out of their hair so they can go on with their legalistic religion that enables them to manipulate people. A goal is not a bad one to aim for just because evil men aim for it as well. The motive is what matters. Jesus did not reason that these wicked leaders want me crucified, and so if that is the goal of evil men I must resist it and find another way. On the contrary, Jesus sided with the evil Jews and did not give Pilate the support he needed to stand against them.

Pilate is desperately searching for some way to get Jesus released. He even violated Roman law in his efforts. He had Jesus flogged and mocked as a an innocent man in hope of placating the Jews, but it didn't work. Then he took Jesus

back inside to talk privately, and Jesus refused to answer him. Jesus was uncooperative with Pilate, not because He had anything against a man doing his best to be just and fair, but because He did not want Pilate to succeed in helping Him escape the hands of these wicked leaders.

Jesus is our advocate, which means He is our lawyer before the court of God, and He pleads our case and seeks acquittal for us as guilty sinners. But here He is being condemned as an innocent man, and He does not speak in His own defense. Poor Pilate- his perfect prisoner is siding with his perverted prosecutors to assure His condemnation. Pilate did not have a chance. He was embarrassing alone, for he was the only man who cared that Jesus was innocent. All His disciples had forsaken Him, and there was not a single witness in His defense. Jesus would not even defend Himself, and so Pilate gives in to what seems inevitable and condemns an innocent man to the cross.

Jesus embarrassed Pilate too by His refusal to cooperate, but Jesus also comforted Pilate and let him know that He understood his dilemma. Jesus knew Pilate had no real choice, for Jesus would not let him save Him from the very goal He was determined to reach. Even if Pilate could change the minds of the Jews he could never change the mind of Jesus. He was going to the cross one way or another. But notice the comfort Jesus gives him in verse 11. Here is another paradox, for we see the prisoner comforting the judge who is about to sentence Him to death. Don't feel

too bad judge, its and awful thing you are forced to do, but the one who handed Me over to you is guilty of the greater sin. The choice you are making to condemn Me is wrong, but the real crime is in the hearts of those who are forcing you to do it.

Jesus is saying that not all are equally guilty in this wicked plot. Some are victims like Pilate. Others are the master minds, and they will be held accountable for the greater evil. By so saying, Jesus is in essence telling Pilate I know you are the only good guy in this whole legal maze. You can count on it, I will not hold it against you. The prisoner is letting the judge off the hook. Pilate knew this and fought like crazy to get Jesus released, but he could not do it. The best he could do was to embarrass the wicked schemers who forced him to be a partner in their evil plot.

The New Testament makes it clear, the primary guilt for sending Jesus to the cross falls on the Jewish leaders. The evidence is overwhelming. Yet the tragedy of this truth is that Christians have used it to promote anti-Semitism. Jews have been called Christ-killers, and have suffered repeatedly at the hands of bigoted Christians who have the reasoning power of a cutting board. To hate all Jews because of what the Jews did to Jesus is as foolish as holding all white men responsible for killing the Indians buffalo. Crimes of folly and prejudice of the past are not pasted on through the genes making future generations guilty of those crimes. Besides this, Jesus forgave from the cross even that generation who were fully guilty. Anyone who holds any

Jew responsible for the death of Jesus today is as blind as those Jews who really were guilty of history's greatest legal injustice.

Some of history's greatest Christians were filled with prejudice against the Jews because they refused to let the spirit of Christ be their guide. Luther, for example, was terribly anti-Semitic. It is easy to find plenty of New Testament evidence to support being anti-Semitic toward that generation of Jews who crucified Jesus. But to carry that attitude beyond that generation should embarrass the Christian. If it does not, that Christian is exhibiting the very blindness that made the Jews who crucified Jesus so despicable.

What we need to see is that this hatred of Jesus by the Jewish leaders was His final hurdle to overcome to get to the cross. This is where other men would fail. I don't know about you, but I would have a hard time choosing to suffer one minute from a paper cut on the finger, let alone crucifixion, for people who so despised me. This was the final test of the love of Christ. Could He go through with the plan to die for men when they could be so cruel? He could, and He did. Here is the proof that love is the strongest power in the universe. Hate met love in a head on collision, and love just kept on going pushing hate off the road. They could not stop Jesus from loving them. They were as cruel, brutal, and hard-hearted as man is capable of being, yet Jesus did not call ten thousand angels to wipe them from the face of the earth. He said, "Father forgive them for they

know not what they do." Then He died for them that they might be forgiven and restored to fellowship with God.

Their hate was as black as coal, but His love made them able to be made as white as snow. Nothing, absolutely nothing, could stop Jesus from loving even the most unlovable of men. We do not even know what love is until we study the love of Jesus and see the love of God reflected in His face. In the Old Testament the highest source of glory was the awesomeness of God's glory in creation. "The heavens declare the glory of God..." But now in Jesus we have a far greater glory. The sun, moon, and stars are still wonders to behold, but they cannot give us the light we can get from the face of Jesus. Paul says it in II Cor. 4:6, "For God, who said, let light shine out of darkness, made His light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."

If you want to know how to think and act in any situation, look to the face of Jesus, and ask, what would Jesus do? This is not always easy, but there is no better way for guidance for in the face of Jesus is all the light we need. It will lead us to choices and attitudes where love will conquer all the evil and prejudice we struggle with. The face of Jesus was marred by unbelievable cruelty. Verse 3 tells us the mocking soldiers used His face as a punching bag. He was bruised and blackened, and the crown of thorns would send blood running down His forehead. Jesus knows what it is to be an abused person, and to be violently hurt by brute force for no good reason. Yet we do not see His face

bitter with resentment. He was surrounded by faces of horrible hatred who with sadistic determination would not be satisfied until Jesus was crucified. Yet the face of Jesus was calm with a love even more determined than their hatred.

Fitzgerald asked Tennyson, as they looked at the marble busts of two famous men, "What is there in the face of Dante which is absent from the face of Goethe." The poet responded, "The Divine." The presence of God makes all the difference in the world, and that was what we see in the face of Jesus.

**God of sun and stars and space,
We can your glory trace.
But your best we can embrace
In your Son's loving face.**

Jesus met every hate filled face with a look of determined grace. If you want to know how to face life with all of its burdens and problems, turn your eyes upon Jesus and look into His face and you will receive the light you need to go the way that pleases God. The face of Jesus becomes the sun of our spiritual solar system. On the Mt. of Transfiguration the face that Jesus had for all eternity past, and which He will have for all eternity future, broke through His limited earthly face, and we read this in Matt. 17:2, "His face shown like the sun."

Jesus had to endure every indignity men could devise to embarrass Him and humiliate Him, and create on Him a face of bitterness. They did make His face ugly and repulsive, but they could not, by their vile and violent behavior, wipe the light of love from His face. Christina Rossetti, the great poetess, wrote,

**Is this the face that thrills with awe
Seraphs who veil their face above?
Is this the face without a flaw,
The face that is the face of love?
Yes, this defaced, lifeless clod
Hath all creation's love sufficed,
Hath satisfied the love of God,
This face the face of Jesus Christ.**

There is an old legend that when Adam was driven from the Garden of Eden he asked the angel who stood guard with flaming sword, what shall I bring back to God when I return? The angel replied, "Bring him back the face in gave you in the garden, and I will let you in." Sin had changed the face of man. The inner corruption distorted his external features. We see it full blown in the trial of Jesus. The ugly hatred of man is seen at its worse. In their rebellion against God they marred the face of His Son. But Jesus refused to let the externals change His inner face. He remained calm, loving, and endured it all that He might have a face worthy of entrance again for man into the paradise of God.

Do you realize that the vision of the face of Jesus is one of the key blessings of heaven? In John 17:24 Jesus prayed, "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see My glory...." The ultimate answer to this prayer is revealed in Rev. 22:3-4, "No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and His servants will serve Him. They will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads."

The most beautiful face in the universe forever will be the face of Jesus, for this is the face that made it possible for man to return to paradise and to fellowship with God. Man did his very worst to embarrass and shame the face of Jesus, but He came through with a face aglow with love. Jesus passed the final test and refused to forsake the goal of the cross because of shame and embarrassment. May our Lord's example motivate us to set goals in our service for God, and then pursue them like our Savior did with His steadfast face.

4. THE GENTLE ENCOURAGER Based on Matt. 12:9,15-21

Harry Reichenback in the book World's Most Spectacular Hoaxes tells of his grand deception in promoting Francis Bushman. Bushman was a small time actor in Chicago, but Reichenback was able to get his salary raised to a commanding figure. He took Bushman to New York and

carried 2000 pennies in his pockets. As they walked along 42nd street toward the Metro office he dropped handfuls of pennies. At first only children came running to pick up the coins, but so conspicuous was the commotion that soon everybody was following them. By the time they reached Metro the streets were milling with crowds. When the officers of Metro looked out of the window they judged Bushman's popularity by the vast throngs that had followed him, and he received a 1000 dollar a week raise without an argument. Reichenback confesses, "The fact was, not a living soul in the mob knew Bushman."

Jesus was tempted to get mixed up in a clever scheme something like this in which he would exploit the crowds of his day. The only difference is that he did not have to fake popularity He could have the real thing. Satan said to him, "Jump off the pinnacle of the temple and you will be preserved from injury." Such a sensational stunt would have had the crowds clamoring after Jesus to be their king. Satan had some great ideas for promoting the popularity of Jesus, but Jesus refused to give heed to any of his schemes.

One of the strangest paradoxes of Scripture is that Satan sought constantly to promote the popularity of Jesus. Satan wanted it shouted from the housetops that Jesus was the Son of God. He wanted Jesus to be ruler over the kingdoms of men, and longed for a revolutionary movement in which the people would put Jesus on the throne as their king. All through his ministry Jesus had to fight the efforts of Satan to promote his popularity, and derail him from his purpose.

Jesus did not hesitate to perform spectacular miracles for great crowds such as feeding the 5000. His healing ministry was not behind closed doors, but in public places. Yet, there is the mysterious effort of Jesus to suppress an all out proclamation that he was the Messiah. Jesus wanted this message saved until after his death and resurrection.

People were coming to all kinds of conclusions about him. Some said he was John the Baptist revived; others that he was Elijah or Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. All agreed he had to be a great person, but only a few knew he was the Son of God. After Peter said, "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God," we read in Matt. 16:20, "Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ." Jesus deliberately suppressed the fact that he was God in human flesh. Jesus was over 30, and so 30 Christmas' have already gone by, and no one had ever celebrated one of the greatest event in human history. It was because Jesus did not permit this good news of the incarnation to be proclaimed.

Jesus even had to use his supernatural authority over demons to keep them from blabbing the greatest news on earth. In Mark 3:11 the unclean spirits cry out, "You are the Son of God." In verse 12 we read, "And he strictly ordered them not to make him known." Jesus was the first person to try and silence the preaching of his deity. Friend and foe; disciples and demons, were anxious to make it known, but Jesus was always telling them to be quiet concerning his true identity. We haven't looked at all the

occasions on which Jesus urged people to hold down on the publicity concerning him. It is frequent enough to be conspicuous.

What is behind this mysterious behavior which we see again in our text? It seems so strange and even senseless, for verse 14 tells us that the Pharisees were taking council to kill him. Verse 15 says that great multitudes followed and he healed them all. Then verse 16 hits us with a strange charge that they not make him known. Who in the world was left to tell? This is like trying to hide the sun. The whole nation was either out to kill him, or receive life from him. Great multitudes were following him, so it is obvious that the cat is out of the bag. Somebody has already let it slip that Jesus is where the action is. He was the most popular person in Israel, yet he never stopped trying to prevent further promotion. Even when the fire of his fame was raging uncontrollably across the Judean landscape, he still tried to throw a wet blanket on the desire to make him known.

Did Jesus ever do anything more mysterious and unusual than this? I know of nothing to match it, and if it was not for Matthew we might never have guessed why Jesus did it. In verse 17 Matthew tells us that the motive behind this behavior of Jesus was to fulfill prophecy. This is the largest Old Testament quotation in Matthew, and it reveals to us the quality of character the Messiah was to exhibit to be pleasing to God. It matches the manner of his birth. Such a humble way for any child to be born, but how much more so for the Son of God? Such a humble beginning implies that

his purpose in life was not to be showmanship. No spectacular calling of attention to himself, but rather, obscurity was to characterize most of the life of Jesus. When he did begin his public ministry it was with no ambition to be a mighty leader with masses bowing before him. He had all the potential of being the great rabble rouser who could have stirred his people to follow him in conquest. Jesus did not exploit that potential, for that was not his purpose.

Jesus intended to conquer, but not like any other conqueror who had ever lived. His method was sheer folly to the world and still is today, but Jesus goes on reigning while the mighty mock him and then disappear into the dust of oblivion. No strategy, they say, could be more stupid than that of recruiting the weak and the poor, the sick and the oppressed. Jesus let his enemies capture him and crucify him while he wasted his time with the misfits of society. Hitler knew better that this, and so does every tyrant who ever lived. They know you get rid of the weak and the deformed, for they are hindrances to victory. People only count when they are powerful and can help the cause. The rest can be eliminated. This is a practice commonly practiced by tyrants.

Nature is pointed to as a justification for this strategy. Nature eliminates the weak. The survival of the fittest is a law of nature, and men who have no higher revelation than what they see in nature are led to act on the level of the brutes. The Christian does not look to nature, but to the author of nature, who made man in his image, and of infinite

value above the world of nature. Persons are not just animals, but are the creatures with the potential for partaking of the divine nature, and, therefore, they are to be treated with dignity and respect however weak they may be.

Armed with this view of man, the Son of God entered human history with a totally unique strategy for conquering the world. He would not use force and destructive weapons to crush the weak and helpless, but would stress gentleness and encouragement of the weak. Military men have always mocked, and will continue to mock this strategy of the prince of peace right up until the victory, and the meek inherit the earth. All other conquerors come with great noise and commotion, but Jesus seeks to conquer quietly.

Verse 19 says he will not strive nor cry, nor will any man hear his voice in the streets. Jesus was not a rabble rouser, and one who went looking for an encounter with those opposed to him. He did not stand in the streets and denounce his opponents. In verse 15 we see that when he knew his opponents were out to get him he withdrew himself. He had no desire for a noisy showdown. He was a man of peace who would retreat to avoid trouble if necessary. The Hebrew word in this quote from Isaiah means that he will not scream under excitement. So many when they are unjustly attacked become loud and boisterous, and begin to denounce their attackers, but Jesus calmly slipped away. On the positive side it was the same. Many who draw crowds and do a great work want to crow about it to the world. Jesus was not interested, but would

slip away in silence, and ask his praising fans to join him in this virtue, and not make him known.

It was just a part of the character of Christ. He was not interested in the power of noise. He was interested in the superior power of silence and gentleness. Men have gone far by arrogant boasting, and shouting in the streets, but they were not going the same direction as Jesus. Deep and lasting power cannot be based on noise. Truth works quietly like the silent power of the sun. An unknown poet wrote-

**How silently the great stars shine,
How silently the dawn comes in,
How silently in forest depths
The oak to massiveness doth win.
The noblest powers are quiet all,
And He who comes the soul to greet,
He shall not strive, He shall not cry,
Nor shall His voice sound in the street.**

The Speaker's Bible says here, "The mission of Jesus was to save rather than destroy, to build up rather than to pull down. His method was not that of the axe and hammer, but of the slow working leaven and the seed growing silently. And his strength lay not in heroic courage or desperate activity, but in the gentleness of an exhaustless love and in the patience of a divine pity." This gentleness and pity is so vividly portrayed in verse 20. Who in all history has ever been so gentle and soft hearted that he would not break a bruised reed or quench a smoldering wick? Jesus was an

extremist in gentleness, even when we recognize that literal reeds and wicks are not meant, but rather, weak, broken, wounded and despairing people.

When Jesus encountered a person who was badly bruised, such as the shameful woman who wiped his feet with her hair, his word of condemnation could have broken her, but instead, he treated her with gentleness, and she was healed. Martin Luther wrote, "He does not cast away, nor crush, nor condemn the wounded in conscience, those who are terrified in view of their sins; the weak in faith and practice; but watches over them and cherishes them, makes them whole and affectionately embraces them." A bruised reed is a symbol of what is weak and worthless, and of no use to anyone. What everyone else would break, Jesus seeks to save and restore to usefulness.

Jesus was not one who needs to see great fire, or he gives up. Even if there is only smoke, he will take interest and seek to rekindle the flame. Most people have a tendency to want to give up and dump people when they cease to burn brightly, but Jesus will shelter that smoldering wick, and by gentle encouragement seek to fan a spark of fire into a renewed flame. Jesus specializes in those that others give up on and forsake. The Spartans killed the sickly and deformed, and Plato was all for exterminating the weak. But for Jesus no human being is to be broken, no matter how maimed in body or spirit. Not even a sparrow falls without God's notice, and of how much more value is even the weakest of men?

Jesus came into history with a special ministry to the weak, needy, and oppressed. In Matt. 11:28-29 we read his own commentary on his character of gentle encouragement. Jesus said, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." This sounds like slushy sentiment to the self-sufficient worldly person, but to the wise such gentleness is the greatest power on earth. Someone said, "Gentleness! More powerful than Hercules." Henry Martyn, the great missionary, said, "The power of gentleness is irresistible." Jesus knew this and still does, and that is why he refused to be a noisy rabble rousing leader. His power was in gentleness.

That is why the Lamb of God is such an appropriate symbol of Christ. That is why the dove is such an appropriate symbol of the Holy Spirit. The world, and often even Christians, feel that the only way to conquer in any battle is with noise and force. The Prince of Peace entered history to demonstrate the folly of this strategy, and set in motion a ministry of gentle encouragement that would conquer the world. Men who count for time and eternity are men who exhibit the character of Christ in this respect.

Abraham Lincoln as a young lawyer rode the circuit with a party of friends who were also lawyers. One day as they rode past a grove of trees they noticed a baby bird which had fallen from its nest and lay fluttering by the roadside. After they had gone a short distance Lincoln said, "Wait for

me, I will be right back." He turned around, rode back to the helpless bird, and tenderly took it up and put it on the limb near the nest. When he rejoined the group one of them laughingly asked, "Why did you bother yourself and delay us with such a trifle as that?" Lincoln respond, "My friend, I can only say this-that I feel better for it. I could not have slept tonight if I had left that helpless creature to parish on the ground." It is no wonder that God used Lincoln to perform a multitude of compassionate deeds that made him the most kind and gentle president of our nation.

Gentleness is equivalent to greatness according to God's judgment. Jesus in whom all power in heaven and on earth resided was the most gentle of men born of woman. Yet his birthday and the seasons surrounding it is often characterized by roughness, pushing, and shouting. We live in constant tension, and everyone bears a burden, but few are kind and gentle. Observe people in stores and you will see why the world is in turmoil. A grandmother looking at a toy horse asked two clerks coming back from their break if there was a box for the toy. "O no" one said indifferently. The frustrated grandmother cursed and threw the horse into the toys breaking the wheel off the bottom. A frustrated husband following his wife sees her slip down an aisle to look at something which he feels is irrelevant to their purpose. In anger he forgets he is in public and shouts at her, "You get sidetracked so often you don't know which end is up," and he heads for a different destination in a huff. These are normal daily events in the life of the average American. What nobody needs is more of the same.

What everybody needs is the gentle and kind concern and encouragement of Christlike character. It is very little honor to Christ to celebrate his birthday and not exhibit his character. May God help us to be among those who put Christ in Christmas by being Christlike toward others. This will be a powerful witness that will encourage people to consider Christ seriously as their Lord and Savior. Gentle encouragement will win trust as it did for Christ.

A Christlike character is the greatest gift you can give to the world. Christians sometimes doubt the power of gentleness, but history clearly supports it. Henry Morehouse, a young preacher began his ministry among miners in North England. Ike Miller, a rough and wicked man who threatened to break up the service came to hear him. He preached on the love of Christ. When the meeting was over some of the old men gathered around him and expressed their regret that he didn't preach right. You should have warned him of his dreadful danger, and frightened him for his wickedness. That soft sort of preaching on love won't do him any good.

Meanwhile, the big miner had entered his home and called his wife and children whom he had often abused in his drunkenness. He knelt down and prayed the only prayer he had ever heard in distant days from his mother. "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild, look upon a little child; pity my simplicity, suffer me to come to thee." There was only one cord left in his hard heart and gentleness touched it, and he awoke to salvation. Men have been won by other methods,

but none has been more effective than the Christlike method of being a gentle encourager. The coming year, and every year will be a better year if we exhibit gentle encouragement in relation to all whom God will bring across our path.

5. THE ANGRY KING Based on Matt. 21:1-17

Boleslaus II was the king of the Polish Monarchy, but he didn't like the job. One day while hunting he slipped away from his companions and disguised himself as a common laborer in marketplace. He hired the use of his shoulders for carrying burdens for a few pence a day. A search was made, of course, and when his majesty was found there was an indignant cry among the elite that he should debase himself by so vile an employment. He responded that the weight he bore in the marketplace was nothing compared to the crown. He said he slept more in the last four nights than during all his reign. He told them to choose whom they would to be king, for he was through with the madness. He was forced, however, against his will to return to the throne and reign.

In his book *Royalty In All Ages*, Thiselton-Dyer tells of many kings in history who have longed to get out from under the crown and escape from the robes of royalty, and live among the common people. In contrast to this, Jesus was a king who all His life lived among the common people, and only at the end did He ever wear a crown, and then it was a

lowly crown of thorns. Jesus was born king of the Jews, but all His life He managed to do what so many kings have tried to do and failed. He managed to disguise Himself and dwell among the people, and learn of their needs and longings in life. No son of royalty ever got to know his people better than did the Royal Son of David. He not only lived among them, he was one of them.

There were times in His public ministry when the crowds were so excited about His miracles that they tried to take Him by force to make Him king, but Jesus avoided this. Right up to the final week of His life Jesus remained a king in disguise totally removed from all that had to do with royalty. Palm Sunday, however, brings us to that one day, at the beginning of His final week, where He removes the disguise and proclaims Himself to be the king-the Royal Son of David; the promise Messiah, and the King of Israel. This act did not sever his roots from the soil of the common man, however. In fact, everything about Palm Sunday exalts the common man, and everything common. Jesus never became a royal snob who looked down on any man. The very way in which He rode into Jerusalem revealed Him to be a king of the common people, and not one who would cater to the elite and powerful.

Jesus did not ride into the holy city on a noble Arabian stallion to appeal to the military like any other king would do. Instead, He rode on a colt. Matthew tells us this was to fulfill the prophecy of Zech. 9:9 which says, "Tell ye the daughter of Zion, behold, thy King cometh unto thee meek,

and riding upon a donkey and upon a colt a foal of a donkey." Jesus did not come as a king of war, but as a king of peace. He came in the tradition of the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They were not men of war like the kings of Israel. They were men of peace. Only once was Abraham forced into military action. Jesus too was forced into violent action on this occasion, but primarily the Patriarchs and He were men of peace.

The colt was symbolic of the fact that Jesus was a king of peace, and a king of the common people. Jesus is a king who exalts the lowly, and the poet describes even the donkey responding to those who mock his worthless hide.

**Fools! For I also had my hour;
One far fierce hour and sweet;
There was a shout about my ears,
And palms about my feet.**

The Apostles that Jesus chose were common men, and if you check the backgrounds of the great men He has used in history, you will find lowly tinkers like John Bunyan and William Carey, or shoe salesman like D. L. Moody, or the great Scottish preacher Alexander Whyte who was born out of wedlock. He was unwanted by men, but Jesus wanted him and used him, for he was, and is, the king of the unwanted. And it was because he did care for the common man that he was so angry on that first Palm Sunday. Jesus was very seldom angry, but on this occasion He was so filled with righteous indignation that He could not be content to give

only a verbal lashing to the offenders as He had done before. Here we see Jesus engaged in violent action to express His anger.

Before we examine the cause of this unusual display of emotion, it is important that we note first of all that nobody was hurt by Jesus. There was no injury inflicted upon any man or animal. Jesus upset some of the furniture, and drove out those who were corrupting the house of worship, but there is no hint of any suffering He inflicted. It is important to note this so that we do not link His action with any kind of revolutionary tactics that destroy, injure, and kill. No such violence can be justified by pointing to this passage of an angry king. The only thing Jesus hurt was the pride and pocketbook of these corrupters. The only blood Jesus ever shed was His own. Keeping this in mind avoids misconceptions where this passage can be abused by justifying violence.

The anger of Jesus was the righteous anger of a king who saw a system which deprived His people of their right to worship, and robbed them of what little wealth they possessed. If there is anything that is clear in Scripture, from one end to the other, it is the fact that God despises any system which discriminates and is a respecter of persons. God will not tolerate injustice to the common man. When Jesus saw the corruption that had developed in the temple, it made His royal blood boil, and He struck a blow for the rights of the people. Jesus started the long history of the battle for the common man to have equality, and religious

and economic freedom. If you study the history of social reform and civil rights, you will discover that most of the great leaders have been men and women who acknowledge this angry king as their Lord and Master.

We only have this one portrait of Jesus in anger, but it is all we need to tell us how he looked upon injustice. It gives us a balanced picture of the perfect man. We see He cannot truly be perfect by being always kind and gentle. There are times in life when a just man encountering injustice must in anger strike a blow to stop it, or be guilty of the sin of omission. It would be a sin to see evil and not try to stop it if you had any power to do so. Jesus as the king of Israel now had the authority to cleanse the temple of its racketeers, and He does so. This angry act of indignation is a clear evidence that Jesus is declaring Himself the King of Israel. He was the highest authority in the land. Doubtless, it was a shock, not only to the money changers and officials of the temple, but to His own Apostles. Many would be frightened by His anger, and they would want to give this advice.

**Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Why have you suddenly gone so wild?
If its true the house of prayer
Has been corrupted anywhere,
Why not go through regular channels,
Appoint a committee-discuss it on panels.
If you continue this stepping on toes,
You'll create for yourself a host of foes,**

And a future filled with many woes.

Jesus knew that this show of authority would lead Him straight to the cross, for it was an attack on the establishment. He made a whole new group of enemies by this action of anger. Before this cleansing of the temple the priests had little to do with Jesus. The Pharisees were His primary enemies, for He violated their legalistic system, and debated their interpretations. Later the Saducees began to oppose Him because He became a political nuisance. But now, after He invaded the realm of priestly authority, He brought their wrath upon Him also. Luke tells us about after the cleansing in Luke 19:47. "The chief priests and the scribes and the principle men of the people sought to destroy Him." Their only problem was the crowds of common people who loved Him, and this made the leaders afraid. Jesus was a hero king among the masses.

For Jesus to deliberately oppose all of the authority of Israel, and, thereby, to guarantee a departure for Himself out of the world, He had to have a very good reason for what He did. Jesus had always lived a balanced life. He was not a fanatic. A fanatic becomes all excited about things which are really of no great importance. Jesus is not angry over some mere triviality here, but issues of basic importance. He could deal calmly with people who had fallen into personal sin, but here was organized sin. It was deliberate and planned injustice, and no righteous man can look upon an evil system and remain calm.

In the first place, the whole system of selling sacrifices turned the court of the Gentiles into a stable instead of a place of worship and prayer. Jesus quoted from Isa. 56:7 where the prophet said, "...For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples." Jesus said this ideal was not fulfilled because the court of the Gentiles had been turned into a den of robbers. The racket of selling and changing money, and the noise of animals made it impossible for the Gentiles to have a place of reverence for prayer and worship. Business had pushed worship right out the door, and God's purpose in the temple was being destroyed by greed.

This discrimination against the Gentiles, and the indifference of the Jewish leaders to their rights to a place of worship, made Jesus angry. He had come into the world to be the Savior of all men. He came to die for the sins of the world. He was to be a universal Savior and king, and it gripped Him to see the temple of His Father being used to discriminate against the Gentiles. This cleansing of the temple was just temporary and Jesus knew it. He knew the corruption would continue and that the temple would have to be destroyed. But He spoke of a new temple, the temple of His body. Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up said Jesus. As the Son of God and as the King of Israel, He was going to fulfill God's purpose for the temple in His own body. He would create a temple which would truly be for all people. Jesus would fulfill the ideals God had for Israel, but which they failed to accomplish. They were to be a channel by which God would reach the whole world with His plan of salvation. They forgot why the court for the

Gentiles was there in the first place. They let their greed for profits destroy the purpose of God.

Another thing that made Jesus angry about the whole setup was the fact that it robbed the common people of their money. The animals and birds sold for sacrifices had to be bought with special temple money, and to get it you had to exchange your regular money for it. The fact that Jesus called it a den of robbers makes it clear that they were gypping the people in the exchange. They had a monopoly and nobody could do anything about it. Many people may think that Jesus was too other worldly to be concerned about economic matters, but this is not so. Jesus was very concerned about money. When people's money was taken from them unjustly, or with inadequate return, it made Him angry. God's wrath fell on Israel in the Old Testament because of unfair business practices. In the second chapter of Amos we read, "Because they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes-they trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth-and in the house of their God they drink the wine of those who have been fined." Like Father, like Son- the very things that made God angry in the Old Testament make His Son angry in the New Testament.

King Jesus was going to establish a temple and a religion which no longer depended on sacrifice, or any material objects that had to be purchased. He would end the sacrificial system by His own sacrifice, which was once for all, and which would abolish forever the need for sacrifices. There is no longer any need for special things or special

places to worship God. All that is necessary under the kingship of Christ is free. Never again would the common man need to depend upon a human system to worship God and gain His best. It is true that clever men were still able to keep the masses in ignorance about this liberty in Christ. They would set up again many corrupt systems even in the church. The church became a den of robbers many times, but the fact remains that the angry king set us free from all man made systems of corruption. That is why it is so vital that the Bible be kept available to the common man in all the world.

Verse 14 shows that Jesus gave His service to the people without charge. He healed them freely. He could have set up a booth and made a fortune for His healing, but there is not one record of Jesus ever accepting a payment for any of His miracles of healing. He was the king of the common man-a king who came to set them free from the bondage of sin, and all of the man made burdens of religion. That is what makes Palm Sunday a day for rejoicing. John Wesley wrote,

**Rejoice, the Lord is king, your Lord and king adore;
Mortals give thanks and sing, and triumph evermore.
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice;
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice.**

The leaders of Israel rejected His kingship and plotted to crucify Him. They did not realize that the cross was the road by which Jesus planned to ascend to the throne as universal king. He said, "If I be lifted up I will draw all men to Me."

The cross is where He gained the right to be the king of all men, for there He did what no other king could do for men. He died for their sin and set them free. He is the King of Kings because He is the Lord of Liberation. He, and He alone, can save kings, for He alone has defeated the kingdom of darkness and death which has power over kings as well as all other men.

He alone deserves the allegiance of all men, for He is the only king who ever lived that made it possible for all men to enter the realm of royalty. John said, "But to as many as received Him to them He gave the power to become the sons of God." What other king ever invited the masses of common men to join His royal family and become joint heirs with Him. There is no other king like Jesus, and that is why God exalted Him to the throne of the universe, and gave Him a name above every name.

**The head that once was crowned with thorns
Is crowned with glory now;
A royal diadem adorns
The mighty Victor's brow.
The highest place that heaven affords
Is His by sovereign right;
King of kings and Lord of lords,
He reigns in perfect light.**

Scripture says He must reign until all enemies are put under His feet. In other words, the glorious king is still an angry king as he was on that first Palm Sunday. He is still

fighting against those who hinder the progress of His kingdom. What does the king want? He wants what God has always wanted. He wants us to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God. He is a king of relationships, and not one of pomp and ceremony.

Justinian had a great church built in Constantinople. It required ten thousand masons to build it. Marble was ransacked from the whole Roman Empire. Justinian walked through the completed church on the day of its dedication in the year 538. He exclaimed, "Solomon, I have surpassed thee." He had, and it was the supreme expression of Byzantine art, say many scholars. But is that what the King of Kings really wanted according to His own actions on Palm Sunday? What our king wants is for us to make Him Lord in our lives, and to look upon all people as He did. The Christian who sees people with compassion, and longs to be a part of the answer that leads them into a relationship with God in Christ, has caught the message of Palm Sunday. If you want to be great in the eyes of your king, you will be a servant, and minister to the needs of people in all classes. If you do this you will please your king, and in relationship to you, He will never be an angry king.

6. THE MASK OF THE MASTER MARK 1:21-28

There is an old story called the magic mask. It is about a powerful lord who ruled over a great domain who became so

hard and cruel that ugly lines deepened into his face. On a tour of his country one day he saw a surprisingly beautiful girl, and he longed to take her as his wife. But he was appalled as he looked into the mirror and saw the hard and cruel lines in his face. He could never win her love with such a face, and so he called for a magician to make him a mask of thin wax that would make him look kind and loving. The artist agreed to do it if he promised to pray daily to the God of love to change his heart and make him loving toward his subjects. He said he would and the mask was made. The lovely girl became his wife, and they enjoyed a remarkable period of peace and prosperity. He became a truly loving ruler, and the people marveled at the change in him.

He finally became so bothered by his deception of the wife he loved so dearly that he begged the magician to remove the magic mask. It was with fear and trembling that he then went to the mirror. But to his delight he did not need the mask any longer because the ugly lines on his face were gone. His changed heart and spirit had changed his face, and he had a loving face even without the mask.

We all have to wear a mask at times to hide the ugliness of our negative spirit. If we let people see all that we are all of the time, it would not be a pretty sight, and so we mask ourselves and put on a good front that is pleasant and acceptable. In contrast to many Halloween masks that are put on to scare people with their grotesque faces, we put on a mask to protect people from the real scariness in us. Only God can see us totally naked in our soul and still love us. We

need to mask some of who we are to be acceptable on the human level. So wearing a mask of some sort is very common.

The proof of this is that Jesus Himself, the sinless Son of God, wore a mask. Jesus hid His identity as long as He could, and did so in a very conspicuous manner. The first thing we need to do to get to the bottom of this mystery of the Master's mask is to establish that there is, in fact, a mystery. Let's begin by looking at-

1. THE REALITY OF THE MASK.

The first hint we have of this mask is the encounter Jesus has with the demonized man in the synagogue. When the evil spirit in this man cried out at Jesus, "I know who you are-the Holy One of God," Jesus did not say, "Speak up, this is just the kind of publicity I need right now." Instead, He said, "Be quiet!" Other translations have it, "Shut up!" He stopped this positive testimony to His identity, and cast the evil spirit out. Now if this was just an isolated incident we could ignore it and not try to read anything into it of significance. But this was just the beginning of a pattern Jesus followed.

Notice verse 34: "And Jesus healed many of various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but He would not let the demons speak because they knew who He was." I can see if He would not let them speak because they didn't know what they were talking about, but it says He would not let

them because they did know what they were talking about. The demons could identify Jesus, and so He stopped them, for He was not ready to take off His mask and be known for who He was.

Even two such mysterious incidents could be over looked as a possible idiosyncrasy of Mark, but when we see Jesus going out of His way many times to protect His identity, then we have to face up to the reality of His mask. Look at verses 43-45. Jesus had just cured a man of leprosy. It was a marvelous miracle, and one that could bring a lot of publicity. But note the response of Jesus. "Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning." Note, it was not a polite suggestion, it was a strong warning. And the warning was, "See that you don't tell this to anyone."

You would think that whatever His reason for trying to keep His identity a secret, that those whom He healed would be grateful enough to cooperate with Him. But one of the paradoxes of the Gospel account is these very people that Jesus warned and begged to keep His secret were the biggest blabber mouths in His life. This man went out and spread the word and the result was Jesus could no longer enter a town openly. He had to stay out in lonely places it says. His life was negatively affected by this very man who received new life from Him. Jesus did him life's biggest favor, and in return he made life miserable for Jesus.

But the mystery is, why did Jesus want to keep His identity a secret so bad that He worked at it overtime? We

will try to solve this mystery after we demonstrate beyond a shadow of a doubt the reality of the mystery of the Master's mask. We have only looked at the first chapter. What if we can show that Jesus kept up this battle to hide His identity over and over again? Let's look at chapter 3:11-12. "Whenever the evil spirits saw Him they fell down before Him and cried out, you are the Son of God. But He gave them strict orders not to tell who He was."

Jesus was perpetually trying to keep evil spirits from telling who He was. Evil spirits were especially a threat because they knew His identity perfectly. The mask did not fool them at all. His whole incarnate body did not hide from them the reality that He was the eternal Son of God. He had to use His authority as Lord over the spirits to keep their mouths shut and maintain His secret. People were guessing all sorts of things about Jesus. Some said He was John the Baptist, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. In spite of all the blabber mouth spirits Jesus was succeeding to fool everybody with His mask.

Jesus has just raised a little girl from the dead, and all who saw it were astonished and we read in 5:43, "Jesus gave them strict orders not to let anyone know about this.." In this case Jesus was able to suppress His wonder working power. It is one of the few occasions where He succeeded to get the cooperation of others. But look at 7:36, where after He healed a deaf man, it says, "Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more He did so, the more they kept talking about it."

Jesus had a terrible time trying to keep His mask on. But in spite of almost consistent disobedience to His wishes, He was able to keep people guessing. They did not really know who Jesus was. Elijah or one of the prophets were popular guesses, but then one day Jesus asked Peter who do you think I am? Peter gave his great confession in Mark 8:29: "You are the Christ." Peter was the first to acknowledge that Jesus was the Messiah. He saw beneath the mask of this wonder worker, and knew this was the Messiah. You would think Jesus would then end His masquerade, but not so. In the very next verse Mark 8:30 we read, "Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about Him."

This was no game with Jesus. He has been very seriously avoiding exposure of His true identity through His whole ministry. One of the greatest mysteries of the life of our Lord is that He was the primary hindrance to people knowing He was the long awaited Messiah. Don't blame the devil for this or his demons. Don't blame the Pharisees or the fickle masses. The facts are clear: Jesus wore a mask and prevented the knowledge that He was the Messiah from spreading. What few people did come to that conclusion, He warned to keep quiet. All the demons that would have proclaimed it, He silenced. The number one cause why Jesus was never received by Israel as their Messiah was Jesus Himself. His disciples were instructed to keep it quiet. Now if this is not a mystery to beat all mysteries, I don't know what a mystery is. There can be no question about the reality of the Master's mask. But now we need to seek an answer to this mystery, and look at-

II. THE REASON FOR THE MASK.

It is real all right, but why in the world would the Messiah Himself be the primary suppresser of the good news that the Messiah had arrived? He was the answer to millions of prayers, and now that all these prayers were finally answered, Jesus would not let the people know by taking off His mask and proclaiming, "Look! It's me, the Messiah!" He never did that, and it was all clearly a part of a pre-conceived plan.

It was His intention that only a few would ever see behind His mask and know without a doubt that He was the Messiah. He only took Peter, James, and John up to the Mt. of Transfiguration where they saw Jesus glow with the light of deity, and talk with Moses and Elijah, and hear the voice of God saying, "This is my Son whom I love. Listen to Him." None but these three had such clear evidence of who Jesus was, but they were not allowed to share this unique experience with anyone. Mark 9:9 says, "As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead." The next verse says they kept the matter to themselves. The secret of Jesus was to be kept until after His resurrection, and so His own disciples were muzzled.

Obviously we are dealing with a major strategy in the whole purpose of Christ coming into this world. Keeping His identity a secret is a vital part of the plan of salvation. And it

really does make sense when you think about it. If Jesus would have taken off the mask and let the whole world know the truth of who He was, there is no way He could have ever been sacrificed for our sins. No Jew could ever dream of killing the Messiah. If He had permitted this message to be broadcast over the land, He would have been followed with such enthusiasm that there would be no chance of Him being despised and rejected of men, and offered as the Lamb of God for the sin of the world. Even the Pharisees and Saducees would have been willing to die for Him.

So Jesus had to do what the Messiah was to do and fulfill the Old Testament prophecies. Yet, at the same time keep it hidden that He was, in fact, the Messiah. What we have here is the mystery of concealed revelation. He was ever revealing that He was the Messiah by doing what only the Messiah could do, yet ever keeping it a secret that He was the Messiah. He was like the Lone Ranger, and people were always wondering, who is that masked stranger. Jesus never took off the mask, and so there was always the mystery in people's minds: Yes He seems like the Messiah, yet we do not know if He really is. He does not say I am the Messiah. He seems like He might be, yet maybe He isn't. This was Jesus succeeding as the popular, yet hidden Messiah.

Why such a strange strategy? It was the only way Jesus could have it both ways. He could be the Messiah, and yet be also the suffering servant who would die for the sin of the world. It was cleverness on the highest level. Jesus had to work hard for the chance to die for us. The demons sought

to destroy the plan of God by trying to expose Jesus. Disobedient people also tried to foul up His plan by their spreading the news that He must be the Messiah. Fortunately, His disciples did cooperate with Jesus, and they went along with the secret. This seems so crazy. The demons were preaching the deity of Christ, and the disciples were suppressing it, and it all makes sense. If Jesus would have become only the Messiah of Israel, He could not have become the Savior of the world.

So what we have here is Jesus sacrificing the good for the better. He had to wear His mask and keep His identity as Messiah a secret in order to achieve a far greater goal of being the redeemer of the whole lost race of man. If Jesus had had the limited goal of saving only Israel, then none of this mystery would have been necessary. He would have proclaimed Himself Messiah, and the story would not have ended in death and resurrection, but in an earthly kingdom for the people of Israel with Jesus as their king.

I have read some authors who say the reason that did not happen is because the Jews rejected Jesus as their Messiah. But the facts are, that did not happen because Jesus rejected that limited kingdom. The scope of His salvation was not limited to Israel, but His love went out to all the world. He had no intention of being a king of the Jews only. He intended to be kings of all kings, and be Lord of all peoples. That was His goal all through His life, and that is why He wore the mask and refused to settle for anything less than being the Savior of the world.

No wonder the demons would have loved to derail His salvation plan by getting the Jews to go wild over Jesus as their Messiah. If they could have limited Jesus to one segment of the human race, they would have won the largest portion for hell. Jesus refused to allow them to interfere, and so the first thing He did with demons was to shut them up when they exalted Him for who He really was. They tried to take off His mask, but they did not succeed. Jesus was able to remain hidden enough so that He made it to the cross. The cross was the reason for all the mystery of the mask.

The failure of the leaders of Israel to receive Jesus as their Messiah was not a frustration of the purpose of Christ, but a fulfillment of His purpose. The cross was the goal of Jesus in all that He did. It takes the very mind of God to figure out how to become amazingly popular, and yet still be hated enough to be crucified. It takes divine cleverness to be able to fulfill all the prophecies of the Messiah, and yet still keep people in dark about it so you can be rejected and fulfill an even greater plan.

When Jesus prayed on the cross, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do," He was expressing the success of His mask. Nobody but a few disciples knew that He was really the Messiah. Those who crucified Him did not know even though Jesus clearly fulfilled all prophecy. He revealed that He was the Messiah, yet He also concealed it, and, therefore, they never realized they were crucifying their own Messiah.

None but the wisest can both reveal and conceal a thing at the same time, but that is what Jesus did. It was essential to His plan of salvation. Paul confirms this in I Cor. 2:7-8. "...we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." In other words, without the mask Jesus wore He never would have made it to the cross. Your salvation and mine, and that of the whole family of God depended upon this mysterious mask of the Master. We have been saved by a masked man.

Jesus fought through His whole ministry to prevent the good from robbing Him of the best. If He became too popular, and if too many people would have acknowledged Him as the Messiah, it could have ruined His greater goal. He had to avoid fulfilling the dreams of the Jews in order to fulfill His own dream of being the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. Sometimes that dream was hanging by a thread as the people tried to take Jesus by storm and make Him king. He had to use His supernatural power to avoid that kind of popular uprising.

Don't ever waste your emotional energy feeling bad that Jesus was never accepted as Israel's Messiah. The reason He wasn't was He fought it with all the cleverness and power of His divine mind. He masked His Messiahship, and all the power of hell could not rip that mask off, try as they did. Satan's only hope of maintaining control of the earth and mankind was to prevent the cross. This is the hidden battle

that is going on all through the life of our Lord. Satan was trying to get Jesus limited to a earthly lordship where Satan would still be in control. Satan wanted Jesus to be the most popular man in Israel. Leap from the temple and let the people carry you to power. Bow down to me and receive power over the nations. Satan wanted Jesus to take off the mask and let it be known He was the Messiah. This was the point of all the temptations, and Jesus had to fight constantly to keep His mask on.

This explains those mysterious sayings of Jesus about His parables. Jesus had a paradoxical purpose in His teaching with parables. He told them in order to make truth simple to understand, and at the same time make truth so obscure that people could not understand. The parables were part of His mask. Listen to Mark 4:11-12."He told them the secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables so that they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding..."

Jesus explained His parables to His disciples so that they could understand them, but they were puzzles and riddles to the leaders of Israel. This was not by accident, but by plan. Had they understood, they would have make Him their Messiah. Jesus kept them confused and puzzled on purpose to fulfill His greater plan for the whole world. Whose fault was it that Jesus was not accepted as Israel's Messiah? It was His own fault, for this was His plan. Anybody who hates Jews for rejecting Christ and crucifying Him has a screw

loose somewhere, for this is the way Jesus planned it. You just as well hate Jesus for getting Himself crucified, for He planned it, and then cleverly orchestrated His whole ministry to make sure it happened. If you want to blame anybody for the cross, blame Jesus, for He had a thousand chances to escape it by removing His mask. But He kept it on to be our Savior.

Which would you rather have Jesus be: The Messiah of Israel or the Savior of the world? By means of His mysterious mask He became both, and the result is both Jews and Gentiles can forever say, Thank God for that masked man who outwitted the subtle serpent and the wisdom of men to be our Savior. He avoided the limited destiny that others would have forced on Him to fulfill that greater destiny His Father had planned for Him, that He might be King of kings and Lord of lords with a name above all others.

So much of the life of Jesus is explained by solving the mystery of the mask. I use to look at Jesus before Pilate and wonder why Jesus did not speak up in His defense. Why be silent when you can speak out and do a miracle and reveal your power? It never made sense to me that Jesus would be so passive when so much injustice was happening. But now I see, for Jesus would not let all the power of hell make Him remove His mask, for that was the key to His getting to the cross.

Jesus could have made Himself King of Israel with no problem. He could have had the Pharisees and Saducees

bowing to Him and swearing allegiance. If Jesus had wanted no higher goal than to be the Messiah of Israel, He could have easily achieved that ambition. But Jesus chose to sacrifice that goal to be the Savior of the world.

He had one last chance as He hung dying on the cross. He could have called legions of angels to come to His rescue. He could have ripped His mask off and said, "Look you blind sinners. I am the Son of God. Nobody does this to me and gets by with it." And He could have wiped out the whole lot of them. But Jesus refused to remove the mask. He died looking like a common criminal. One Roman Centurion got a peak under the mask and saw who He really was and said, "Truly this was the Son of God." But it changed nothing, for the rest saw only the mask and they crucified Him.

To the end He wore His mask because of His love for all mankind. If saving men meant so much to Jesus, there is certainly something missing in our love for Jesus if we are not motivated to share this good news of His love. Paul said he would become all things to all men that he might win some. Paul would wear any mask and be what he had to be to win men. Are we willing to play different roles in life to touch others for Christ? Jesus paid an awful price to wear His mask for us. Are we willing to wear a mask for Him? We need to learn how to relate well to anyone God brings into our lives that we might in some way touch them for Christ. This was a goal Jesus had in mind all along, and it will help

us cooperate in fulfilling the ultimate purpose of the mysterious mask of the Master.

7. THE GREAT PHYSICIAN MARK 2:1-12

People who survive great dangers and diseases are often creative people who do the unusual. Robert Muller, in his memoirs, Most Of All, They Taught Me Happiness, tells of how creative he became under pressure. In 1943 he was a member of the French Resistance. Using the name of Parizot, he infiltrated a government agency, and was able to gather information on German troop movements. He was tipped off that the Nazis were on to him, and coming to arrest him. He fled to the attic of his office building. Gestapo men were soon searching the premises.

Muller knew he had to come up with a plan to survive. So he took off his glasses, and slick down his hair, and grabbed a file folder, and walked down stairs. He walked right into the office where his secretary was being interrogated. He asked her what all the excitement was about. She didn't bat an eye, but said the gentlemen were looking for Parizot. "Parizot!" He exclaimed. "I just saw him a few minutes ago on the fourth floor." The Nazis rushed upstairs, and Muller was led to safety by his friends.

Cleverness and creativity are the keys to surviving what seem like hopeless situations. We see it in the realm of

diseases also. Senator Frank Church of Idaho was told at age 33 that he had incurable cancer, and he was given 6 months to live. He decided to take chances, and he submitted to a new radiation treatment just being developed. He also decided to take chances, and be creative with his life. He went into politics and sponsored risky legislation on civil-rights and the environment. He was the first Senator to publicly oppose the Viet Nam war. He did eventually die of his cancer, but not until 1984, which was 37 years after he was given 6 months.

The point is, people who are clever and creative, and who chose to do the unusual, are the people who experience the exceptional in life. They survive when others perish. They are restored to health when others die. The paralytic in Mark 2 is just such a man. He was bed ridden, and yet he got his body where men with two good legs could not get. Jesus was surrounded by people, and no one could even get through the door into the house, let alone, near to Jesus. Even Zacchaeus's idea of climbing a tree would not work here, for Jesus was in the house. We don't know if it was his idea, or that of his friends carrying him, but they were like an ancient ambulance team who got their patient to the doctor on time. When the normal route is closed, you need to come up with a creative alternative to reach a goal. This team recognized that sometimes you have to start at the top and work down, and that is what they did.

They created a skylight before anybody thought of such a thing, and let their patient down through the roof right into

the presence of Jesus. They had no doubt what would happen, for Jesus, as far as the record reveals, never had a sick person in His presence that He did not heal. We have no hint that any sick person ever went away saying, "I am not healed." Nor do we have any record of Jesus ever walking away from a sick person, and not healing them. They knew if they could just get him into the presence of Jesus, their labor would not be in vain. Their faith in Jesus motivated them to be clever and creative.

I've read this account many times, and I always read verse 5 in a restricted sense. Jesus seeing their faith responded and healed the paralytic. Their faith, always meant to me, the faith of the friends who let him down. Some make a big point of this being their faith, rather than his faith. It is true, if it would have said his faith, the friends would be excluded. But saying, their faith, does not exclude his. The their, is plural, and could refer to all five of the team, including the young paralytic himself. There is no reason why he should be excluded, as if he was just a lump of clay, with no say in what his friends were doing. For all we know, he was the coach, and the whole thing was his idea from the start, and the roof route was his creative choice.

All we know for sure is, there were many paralytics who never walked again, but here was one who carried his bed home that day. He was the exceptional paralytic. He was aggressive in his search for a miracle. We have all had experiences where it was hard to get into see the doctor, because he or she was so busy. That was the problem with

this paralytic. When he got to the place where Jesus was, he realized he should have made an appointment. The line of those ahead of him was long, and his only hope of seeing the doctor was aggressive cleverness.

This morning we want to look at this event from the point of view of the doctor's response to this most aggressive patient. Keep in mind, it is aggressive patients who are often a pain to the doctor, who are the most likely to get well. Let's begin with a negative aspect from the doctor's point of view, and look at-

I. THE DISTURBANCE OF THE DOCTOR.

I've often thought that one of the hardest aspects of being a doctor is the perpetual interruptions. They can be doing one thing, and get a call to do another, at anytime of the day or night. They can have a waiting room full of patients, and get called away to deliver a baby, or some other emergency at the hospital. Being interrupted can put a lot of stress on people.

In our text, you will note that verse 2 tells us that Jesus was preaching to the crowd. He was preaching the word, and nobody likes to be interrupted in the middle of a message. This is highlighted by the police report concerning the New Testament Baptist church in Stockton, Cal. It seems that Oscar MacAlister interrupted the morning message by shouting at the pastor that he was getting out of hand. After the service pastor Murphy Paskill had an idea on how to

prevent further such disturbances. He got a revolver, and shot MacAlister for four times. The pastor was booked on charges of attempted murder. We do not know if he was as poor as preacher as MacAlister thought, but he was obviously a very poor shot.

The point is, interruptions can be very disturbing. They can add so much stress to life that they become a cause for illness. Rabbi Joshua Liebman wrote the popular book, Peace Of Mind, that started the avalanche of such books. He was so swamped with calls and letters from people who wanted his help to get peace of mind, that he lost his own peace of mind. He tried to help all who interrupted his life with a cry for help, and in just three years he was dead at age 43.

Perpetual disturbance can be deadly. That is why Jesus very wisely got away from the burden of dealing with people's problems perpetually. He was a physician who healed Himself by getting rest for restoration. But we see also, that He handled interruptions in His life as opportunities. It was a radical disturbance to have the roof torn away while you are preaching, but Jesus was not overly disturbed by this disturbance. He was preaching the word of God, but he recognized that even the best things in life can be set aside to deal with the emergency of the moment. If you are having your devotions, and are in prayer, and your child comes crying with a cut finger, it is not an offense to God to leave you devotion to care for the cut.

Jesus was a good emergency doctor. He took this radical disturbance in stride, and gave it His full attention. What Jesus demonstrates here is that we can decide to make an interruption in our life a burden or a blessing. It was a very rude thing to do, to come in through the roof. It is not only not appropriate in polite circles, it is not appropriate in any circle. Jesus could have been offended, and He could have complained, and gotten the whole crowd to be critical of this team of disturbers of the peace. Instead, He turned it into one of His greatest messages. By healing this paralytic, Jesus not only demonstrated His power to heal, but His authority to forgive sin, and even more important, His willingness to do.

The crowd learned more that day about Jesus than they would have had this disturbance never taken place. This paralytic became a powerful object lesson for the Greatest Doctor who ever lived. If we are going to be like Jesus, we need to ask of every interruption in our lives, "How can I use this for a blessing?" Next look at-

II. THE DIAGNOSIS OF THE DOCTOR.

Diagnosis is a Greek word used only once in the New Testament in Acts 25:21. It refers to a judgment based on thorough knowledge. Jesus judged immediately that this young man was a paralytic because of sin, for he did not say this to most of His patients, which He said to Him: "Son, your sins are forgiven."

Jesus called him son, and so he was a young man, and so his illness was not age related nor accident related. He was obviously a victim of a disease somehow related to his life-style. You can break nine out of the ten commandments that do not directly relate to illness, but one does, and that is sexual immorality. Sexually transmitted diseases have been a major health problem all through time. Aids is one of the most talked about diseases of our day. But there is also Herpes, which is epidemic, affecting 20 million Americans.

Gonorrhea is the most prevalent bacteria infection on earth, with over one hundred million cases a year. Syphilis is another major social disease, and this is likely the disease of the young paralytic of our text. Syphilis leads to many other illnesses, and by 1876 it was discovered that if it moved to the spinal cord it could cause complete paralysis. It is the only social disease I could find that could lead to paralysis. The Greek words used to describe this mans disease are paralutikos and paraluomai. Out of 14 uses of these two words in the New Testament, ten of them refer to this young man. He is the most paralyzed man in the New Testament, and Jesus says it was because of sin in his life.

Sin and sickness are sometimes directly linked. Immorality and illness are linked. Defiance of God's laws and disease, often go hand in hand. Here is the immoral man made conspicuous by his paralysis. Note, Jesus said, "Your sins are forgiven." He used the plural of sins, for seldom is an immoral person immoral just once. The man's life-style was an open invitation to infection.

My problem here is, how can Jesus be so forgiving of such an immoral person? It seems that Jesus is just too lenient with some sinners. I think we all feel like the elder brother at times, and wonder how the father could let the prodigal son off the hook so easy, and welcome him home, when he knew he wasted his substance with harlots. He was immoral, and yet dad took him back like he was still a virgin. There are some hard things to grasp about forgiveness, and one of them is, how can you do it, and still escape being soft on sin. Christlike forgiveness almost seems immoral to us at times, and makes being forgiving very hard.

Jesus diagnosed this man immediately as suffering from a sin caused disease, and yet, without a call for repentance, or a lecture on holiness, or at least a brief condemnation, He healed him, and did so by forgiving his sins. It was not his mistakes, his poor judgments, his inadequacies, but his sins. I have struggled with this for years, for Jesus seems to take sin too lightly at times. Another famous example being the woman taken in adultery. But then I began to look at Jesus in the light of His major role as the Great Physician. A doctor is a healer, and his or her task is not that of judging the patient, but of helping them to be healed. The reason Jesus was 100% successful in the area of healing, when He was not in preaching or teaching, is because in healing there was never a distinction between those who were sick because of their sin, and those who were sick just because they were a part of a fallen world.

Jesus never failed to heal people who deserved what they were suffering, because they brought it on themselves, because of their sin. This explains so many of the mysteries of the world of healing. There is no discrimination in healing. It falls into the same category as the sun rising and the rain falling on the just and the unjust. Healing is not a gift God gives only to His own children. Unsaved people can be healed as well as the saved, for the same laws of health work for them, as for the Christian. They can receive miracles also, for miracles also have laws by which they operate.

In the next paragraph the Pharisees are upset with Jesus for eating with tax collectors and sinners. We are talking about prostitutes here, and people who are immoral, and who spread the sort of diseases that lead young men to become paralytics. Jesus responds in verse 17, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." Jesus never asked anything of His patients except the nature of their illness, and if He diagnosed it as sinned caused, He never hesitated to heal, for the sick need to be healed, and that is a need He always met regardless of the cause.

Not only does this mean non-Christians can be healed, it means Jesus supports all the medical efforts to heal all diseases, even those that are caused by sin. Many Christians are involved in ministering to those with aids, a usually sin caused disease. This is a legitimate ministry for those with the compassion of Christ. I abhor the folly that leads to such

a disease, but at the same time, I must applaud those who seek a cure for aids. It seems that to do so is to be soft on the sin that leads to it, but it is the spirit of Jesus as the Great Physician. If aids is the judgment of God, then how can a Christian be concerned about healing those who come under His wrath? This has been the same question all through history on leprosy, syphilis, and many other diseases.

We need to see that you can know a disease is a direct result of defiance of God's will, and still seek for the healing of that disease. This is so clearly illustrated in Num. 12 where Miriam is cursed with leprosy for her critical stand against Moses. She was facing a horrible fate, and Aaron, her brother, pleaded with Moses not to hold this sin against them, for he too was a part of the criticism. He pleads, "Do not let her be like a stillborn infant coming from its mother's womb with flesh half eaten away." What a gruesome fate. Moses did not say, "She made her bed let her lie in it. She suffers the just reward of her sin and folly." Instead, knowing it was God's judgment on her sin, He prays in Num. 12:13, "O God, please heal her!" And God answered that prayer, and she was made clean, and only had to suffer 7 days of shame outside the camp.

Jesus had the same attitude toward those clearly under the judgment of God. The paralytic at the Pool of Bethesda was an invalid for 38 years. Jesus did not hesitate to heal him, but after He said to him in John 5:14, "See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you."

Sin led to his disease, and again, it was likely a sexually transmitted disease, yet Jesus healed him.

The evidence is clear: Disease discrimination is as inconsistent with Christlikeness as is race discrimination. It does not make any difference if one is suffering from personal sin, or from just being a part of the sinful world, the sick need the physician, and all are to be cared for and healed. A Christian nurse or doctor, or any of us, need not feel we are compromising our faith if we care for, and loving seek the healing of, people who are suffering as a direct result of their sin.

Pat Boone writes about his experience with a Jewish pornographer in Las Vegas. He was facing gall bladder surgery, in feared he would die. He read one of Pat's books and called him up, and asked him to pray for him. Pat not only prayed for this man, so out of the will of God, he got him to pray for himself. When he went in for his surgery they could not find the gall stones on the x-rays, and he was sent home. He was a happy and healed man, and Pat got him to reading the Bible, and learning about the Jesus who healed him. At the time of his writing the man had not yet received Christ as his Savior. Was he right to help a godless man like that to find healing? Would not the world be better off had he suffered a just judgment, and died?

The answer to both questions is yes. Yes the world would be better off without him, and yes it was right to seek his healing, even if he never does come to Christ, and eventually

dies as a lost man anyway. Why is this right? Because in healing there is to be no discrimination. Christian, Jew, Moslem, or Atheist: They are all to be dealt with in compassion, and if possible, by medicine or miracle, be delivered from their disease.

The Christian has the right, and even the obligation, to make a distinction between people in many areas of life. You do not have to cooperate with all people in their projects or life-style. You do not have to let your children date unbelievers. You have to discriminate in dozens of ways, and refuse to let homosexuals be Sunday schools teachers, and camp counselors. Life is loaded with valid discrimination, because light and darkness cannot share the same space. But when it comes to healing, there is a universality about it that cannot be escaped.

It is doctor's orders. Whatever the diagnosis, and however related to sin, the Christian healer does not discriminate. The Christian healer heals all. Jesus is the universal physician, and because it is so, the non-Christian may also experience his healing power. Medical missionaries minister to many non-Christians around the world. They heal more non-Christians than anybody, and they always have, because it was the way of, and the will of, our Great Physician.

8. THE HANDS OF THE HEAD Based on Mark 6:1-6

Albrecht Durer was the son of a Hungarian goldsmith who wanted to study art. He could not do so, however, because his father had a large family and had the well known problem of too much month left at the end of the money. Finally, however, his father let him go to try and struggle through on his own. He found an older man who was also trying to become an artist, but was poor like himself. They became friends and lived together, and studied together. It was a discouraging business, and they were getting nowhere. The older friend said to Durer, "One of us should make a living for both of us while the other studies. After a while this process can be reversed."

Durer agreed to the plan and volunteered to be the first to work, but the friend insisted since he had a chance to work in a restaurant he would begin. This older friend washed dishes, scrubbed floors, and spent many hours at menial labor to help Durer. At last Durer sold one of his wood carvings and came home with the money. He told his friend it was his turn. The older man tried to paint, but his muscles were stiff, and his joints were enlarged. He just didn't have the touch. His hands were working hands, and not artist hands.

One day Durer saw his friend's hands folded reverently and said, "I will paint your hands as they are now, folded in prayer, so the world will know my appreciation for your noble, unselfish character." Those hands became the famous

praying hands so popular as modern symbols. Few people realize, however, that the hands symbolize more than prayer. They stand also for dignified labor and dedicated love.

These hands could very well represent the hands of Jesus, the Head of the church, for no hands have ever more worthily expressed the dignity of labor and the dedication of love. We could look at each of these separately, but it would be an artificial division, for labor and love went hand in hand in the life of Christ. One of the big questions of Bible students has always been, what did Jesus do from age 12 to 30? There are 18 years of silence where nothing is recorded of His life. We have one statement in our text, however, that shatters that silence with a loud revelation, and gives us an answer to the question-

**What was He doing all the time?
From boyhood then to early prime?**

The answer is, He was working with His hands. He was a carpenter. When Jesus came back to His hometown of Nazareth where He spent those silent years, the people were amazed at His wisdom and power. They could not believe it, and said, "Is not this the carpenter whose whole family is still with us?" In other words, they were saying, here is one of us, a common laborer in the community who has come back. How is it He has all this education and leadership ability when we know He has only been a carpenter? We have here then a clear witness to the fact that Jesus labored with His hands.

It is not surprising since all Jewish boys were taught a trade by their fathers, and though Joseph was not the literal father of Jesus, he was His father in every other way. He taught Jesus all he knew. Tradition says that Joseph died at the age of 111 when Jesus was 18 years old. This meant that Jesus as the oldest boy in the family would have to work to support Mary in raising the other children. Some feel the other children were by a previous marriage of Joseph. Some feel they were only cousins. Others simply accept those children as ones that Mary bore to Joseph after Jesus was born. This last view is the simplest, and can hardly be a bad conclusion, for they are called the brothers and sisters of Christ. If the Biblical writers feared anyone would draw the conclusion that Mary had other children they certainly did not do anything to prevent such a conclusion.

It really doesn't matter, however, for the fact is, Jesus had a family to care for. For all practical purposes Jesus knew what it was to be a father. With Joseph dead He had to be the bread winner. He could not go off preaching until He had fulfilled His responsibility as the oldest son to His family. When the Bible makes it clear that he who does not provide for his own is worse than an infidel, we certainly do not expect the Son of God in human flesh to go off on a spiritual mission and leave his family to starve. Before He could begin the job of building the temple not made with hands, He had a job to do with His hands, and that is what Jesus did during those years of silence.

They are silent, for they were years of just commonplace normal living. Most of His life was like that of the average person, and not filled with crowds, miracles, and perpetual excitement. Jesus did nothing unusual in those years, for here are His home town people saying what has happened? This is our community carpenter. How is it He is so wise and powerful all of the sudden? He had not done anything before this to draw their attention to His uniqueness. That is why they are silent years, for there was nothing unusual to record. Jesus lived the common life of a laboring man. He dignified labor as no one else ever could. The poet wrote,

**If Jesus was a carpenter,
On plane and bradawl leaning,
Then workman's tools of every kind
Glitter with heavenly meaning.**

Jesus would seek the best way to do a job. He would use tools to make His work more effective. Man's love for tools and gadgets to build and create with are a legitimate aspect of life, for even the Son of God used tools as a carpenter. This aspect of His life colored His ministry of teaching. Jesus spoke often of wise builders. Jesus built houses before He built His church, and He used the principles of one for the other. He said that wise builders choose a good foundation first. He builds on the rock and not on the sand.

Jesus practiced this in building the church. He laid a solid foundation, and then selected men like Peter, the rock, to build on, with himself as the chief cornerstone. Jesus also

talked of men who foolishly began to build before counting the cost. They had to stop before they finished and let the project go to ruin. Jesus was a master builder. He made sure of adequate supply to build His church. He paid the price for all sin, that any person of any age in history might become a living stone in His church. None will be left out due to lack of funds, for Jesus paid it all. Every man is a potential stone in the church being built by the Carpenter of Nazareth. As a carpenter Jesus made many doors, but the door He made of Himself is the most marvelous. All of those years He made doors out of wood, and His last big project was also made out of wood, the wood of the cross. Never did any carpenter do with wood what Jesus did upon the cross.

In this project His hands played a major role. They were not shaping the wood, for they were nailed to the wood.

**Those heavenly hands that on the tree
Were nail'd, and torn, and bled for me.**

Here was His greatest labor of love. He used those hands to work for years to provide for His family, but on the cross in unmeasurable love He sacrificed His hands, and His whole self to provide atonement for the sin of all men. Here He laid the foundation that nothing can destroy. His hands became a primary symbol of this great act of love because they bore the imprint of the nails. It was the nail pierced hands that Jesus showed to doubting Thomas to convince him He was the crucified but risen Christ. He who pounded many a nail

had nail scarred hands, not because He was a carpenter, but because He was a Savior.

Many feel that the two men on the road to Emmaus recognized Jesus at last because when He broke bread they saw His nail pierced hands. The hands of the crucified but risen carpenter are the hands of security. We can have no security in our riches, or in the fact that we have a great and powerful country. These are but tools in the hands of men. Disease and death can easily snatch us from the hands of men, but Jesus said of His own, "Nothing shall pluck them out of my hands."

**The hands of Christ seem very frail,
For they were broken by a nail,
But only they reach heaven at last
Whom these frail, broken hands hold fast.**

These hands that flung the worlds in space, and fashioned nature's beauty in every place, and formed the whole of the human race, also fulfilled the plan of grace. It was the hands of Christ that reached out to save Peter from sinking into the sea. Only His hands can lift us and keep us from sinking. The hands of Christ symbolize, not only security, but service. Jesus used His hands for the service of others, both in the carpenter shop, and in His ministry. Notice how often Jesus takes a sick person by the hand and lifts them up well. How often Jesus lays His hands on the sick, and with a touch restores them to health. His hands were healing hands. Jesus as the head of the church is now in heaven, but His

hands are still on earth, for the church is His body. This means that we as believers are to continue to be the hands of Christ in a world that needs hands of service, and hands with a healing touch.

It has been proven that everyone of us has the power of healing in our hands, but we so seldom use it because we are so seldom conscious that our hands are to be tools in the hands of Christ. Many children have problems because they lack the security that comes with the touch of their father's hands. We need to put our hands on our children's heads, and put our arms around them, and by touch communicate our love. We cannot do it with words alone. Hands play a major role in communicating love. Reuben K. Youngdahl wrote, "In East Africa a group of natives, having made a long journey seeking medical care, walked right past a government hospital to reach a mission hospital. When asked why they had walked the extra distance, when the government hospital had exactly the same medicine, they replied, "The medicine may be the same, but the hands are different."

The hands of Christians should express the touch of Christ. Jesus specialized in the personal touch, and those who would be instruments in His hands will pray as a poet has written,

**Give strength to lift the wounded up,
And warm our hearts so much
That through our hands each one may feel**

The healing of Thy touch.

When Phillips Brooks died his people hired a sculptor to fashion a memorial. He took his hammer and began to work, but three times he had to start over. He just couldn't get it to come out right. Finally, it came to him what to do. He first fashioned a figure of Jesus, and then made the figure of Brooks with the hand of Jesus on his shoulder. Those who knew Brooks were very satisfied, for they said, "That's how it was. Jesus was always first with Phillips Brooks, and His hand, it seemed, was always on his shoulder."

During the closing months of World War II a group of American soldiers helped rebuild a partially bombed Cathedral in Southern Europe. One GI was assigned the task of repairing a marble statue of Christ. It had been knocked over, and the hands were broken off. He was not able to find the broken pieces in the rubble. He concluded that the statue would have to be discarded, but then he got an idea. He made a plague and hung it on the statue which said, "I have no hands but yours." Jesus wants to lay His hands on us that we might be moved to use our hands to do His will in the world.

**Yours are the hands of God.
How did you use them today?
Did they crush or caress?
Did they ruin or bless?
How did you use them today?**

**Yours are the hands of God.
The hands that He lent you to use.
Did they reach out in greed,
Or to meet someone's need?
Did you use them to heal or abuse?**

**Yours are the hands of God.
Use them well as you travel life's way.
Turn with love to each task,
For one day God will ask:
What did you do with My hands today?
Levent Surleau**

9. THE MIND OF THE MASTER Based on Luke 2:40-52

A teacher began his Sunday School class by starting a discussion. He said he was reading in the Bible about a living dog and a dead lion, and he asked the class which they would rather be? There was a pause, and then Jack spoke up and said, "I'd rather be the living dog. It's better to be alive than dead any day." Alec spoke up and said, "Oh, I don't know about that. A dead lion has been a living lion while a living dog will be a dead dog someday. I think I'd rather be the dead lion." A third child had just sat in silence, but then he responded, "Well, I'd like to be a little of both. I'd like to be a lion like the one, and alive like the other." I am sure the

teacher was surprised at this clever solution. Children can often surprise us with their ability to answer questions in ways that we would not think of.

This was the case with Jesus when He was a child. One of the very first impressions we get of Jesus is that He was a brilliant boy. He had a keen mind, and Luke makes a point of this fact. In 2:40 he writes, "The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the favor of God was upon Him." Luke goes on to show just how sharp His mental growth was by telling us of His experience in the temple with the scholars. In verses 46-47 he says that Jesus was listening and asking questions, and all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and answers. Jesus was only 12 years old, but He was already a diligent student, and was able to carry on intelligent conversations with mature theologians.

We are not to read into this that Jesus was putting the teachers of the temple to shame by His superior wisdom. The language indicates that He was a student. He was learning from them, but was a very keen student with provocative questions and perceptive answers. Luke closes the chapter with another reference to the growth of Jesus in the four basic areas of manhood: The physical, the intellectual, the spiritual, and the social. We want to focus on His intellect.

The very fact of the growth of Christ in knowledge and wisdom is a clear demonstration of the reality of His full humanity. As a child He was not only not the omniscient

God that He was in pre-incarnate state, but He was not even a mature man. Jesus was a true child, and was immature and ignorant of a great deal about life. He had to learn and mature by means of study, observation, and by asking questions and listening to others. This is one obvious reason why we do not have any record of the words and acts of Jesus as a boy and a young man. In that state when He had not yet grown to full maturity of wisdom and perfection of mind, His words were not of eternal value. His wisdom at that point was not worthy of being recorded for all generations, for it would not yet be greater than the wisdom of the scholars of His day.

Jesus waited until His preparation was complete to begin His ministry of public teaching. His years of silence up to that point were years of profound preparation in thought. Jesus was not just killing time. He had a mother and family to provide for, but He was also developing His mind through the study of Scripture. Jesus only had three and a half years of ministry, but He changed the world because He developed quality of thinking. His mind was in perfect accord with the mind of God before He acted. We can never know the IQ of Jesus, but we can assume that as a strong healthy child with the pure human heritage of Mary, and the perfect divine heritage of the Holy Spirit, that He was a genius. Apocryphal stories have Him teaching astronomy and other sciences of the day, and there is no reason to doubt that Jesus could have done so. It is only doubtful that He did because this was not His ministry. He did reveal, however, that He

was a well educated man, even though He did not attend any formal school of higher education.

In John 7:15 we see the response of the people to the teaching of Jesus in the temple. "The Jews marveled at it, saying, how is it that this man has learning, when He has never studied?" G. Campbell Morgan comments: "The emphasis of their question lay, not upon the spiritual teaching of Jesus, but upon the illustrations He used, and upon the evident acquaintance with what was then spoken of as learning. It was not that they were overwhelmed by a sense of His spiritual insight, for, then as now, men knew that spiritual insight often belonged to those who had no learning. They were impressed by the beauty of His expression, the wealth of His illustration, and His evident familiarity with those things, to become acquainted with which, men gave themselves up to long courses of study. The mind of Christ was refined, cultured, and beautiful..."

Jesus was self educated, and was an intellectual of His day. He knew His nations past history well through His study of the Old Testament. He used it often in His teaching, and for sake of argument He could refer back to the stories of Naaman, and the widow of Zarephath. He was alert to the contemporary events, and He used them for illustrations, as in the case of the Galileans whose blood Pilate mixed with their sacrifices, and the 18 on whom the tower of Siloam fell. He was exceptionally perceptive in the use of nature and the common events of life for illustrating spiritual truth.

Jesus was a student of all times, and He was aware of what was, what is, and what was to be. The point we are emphasizing, however, is that He was this as a man and not as God. He emptied Himself of His omniscience when He became a man, and clearly took upon Himself the limitations of finite intelligence. When He was a child in Nazareth He, like Paul in Tarsus, spoke like a child, thought like a child, and acted like a child, but as He matured He put away childish things. Jesus had to develop His capacity just as all men do. Percy Ainsworth said, "Nazareth was silent concerning the great One who had stooped to share its lowly life, because it did not know that He was great, or that He had stooped." He was only an ordinary carpenter to them until He began to express His wisdom and power in teaching and miracles.

Jesus had wisdom superior to any man who ever lived. Solomon had this distinction before, but Jesus said a greater than Solomon is here, and He was referring to Himself. His wisdom and knowledge was supernatural in that it was often beyond what even a perfect could know, but it was nevertheless human knowledge in the sense that it was possible only because of His perfect relationship to God. What I am saying is one of the paradoxes of Christ's humanity. Both His growth and wisdom and His perfection of wisdom demonstrate the full reality of His humanity. His growth and limitation show Him to be like us, but His perfection shows Him to be beyond us, but as an ideal to which we can strive, because He reached that point by developing to its full capacity the relationship of one's humanity to God.

To put it simply, everything that Jesus did and knew which was supernatural, He did as a man, and thus revealed the possibilities of manhood in perfect relationship to God.

S. D. Gordon in Quiet Talks About Jesus states his view of this same idea. He says of Jesus, "He was as truly human as though only human....In His ability to read men's thoughts and know their lives without finding out by ordinary means, His knowledge ahead of coming events, His knowledge of and control over nature, He clearly was more than the human we know. Yet until we know more than we seem to now of the proper powers of an unfallen man matured and growing in the use and control of those powers we cannot draw here any line between human and divine. But the whole presumption is in favor of believing that in all of this Jesus was simply exercising the proper human power which with Him were not hurt by sin but ever increasing in use." This is all the more likely when we consider that men who were imperfect and sinners were endowed by God with supernatural knowledge and power.

Men before and after Jesus did miracles, and foresaw the future. Jesus said men after Him would do even greater things than He did. Jesus demonstrated the great potential of manhood in the realm of the mind if it is centered on God and His will. The secret of the wisdom and power of Jesus was in His total dependence upon God His Father. Listen to His own words in John 5:19-20. "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of His own accord, but only what He sees the Father doing, for what ever He does, that the Son

does likewise. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all that He Himself is doing, and greater works than these will He show Him, that you may marvel."

The perfect submission of His manhood to God allowed His humanity to be an instrument of supernatural knowledge and power. Knowledge in a human mind becomes a force for God in the world when the mind is open to God's leading to fulfill His purpose. If intellectuals are often fools, and promoters of evil, it is not due to their being intellectuals, but due to the lack of their vision of God and yieldedness to His will.

Jesus would have us learn all we can to the glory of God. All knowledge can be so used. Jesus was a keen user of logic, and He used it constantly in His teaching to persuade, and in His arguments with His opponents. Jesus would have us develop our minds as instruments for God's purpose, even as He did. He said to His disciples that they should be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. He urged men to come to Him and learn of Him. He was the fulfillment of the ideal man of the Old Testament. He was a man of knowledge and wisdom. John says He was full of grace and truth. Paul says that in Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. The mind of Christ has had a great impact on this world, greater than any other mind. His church has done more to influence the intellectual development of mankind than any other institution.

Bill Harvey wrote,

**He never wrote a book with pen and ink,
But with His life, He caused more men to think
Then any other man. He never played
Upon an instrument, and yet He made
More hearts to sing and made more fingers glide
Along the string and ivory and guide
More melodies of praise to Him than all
The symphonies this world could e'er recall.**

**Neither architect nor artist He
Was ever called in rugged Galilee,
And yet, a steeple seldom points above
But what a builder has been thinking of
The Carpenter, the Craftsman of Ages.
He built and He is building yet, and sages
Who are wise still recognized this King
And say He's Lord of all; of everything.**

**He is Lord of our minds, and He commands us to love
God with all of our mind. Paul says that we are to let the
mind of Christ be in us. To learn of and submit to the mind
of the Master is to begin a journey toward the highest
possible intellectual development of your humanity.**

10. FOCUS ON FEET Based on Luke 7:36-50

**Centuries ago the Danes decided to invade Scotland. They
very cleverly moved their great army in the night so they**

could creep up on the Scottish forces and take them by surprise. In order to make this advance as noiseless as possible they came barefooted. As they neared the sleeping Scots, one unfortunate Dane brought his foot down on a bristling thistle. He let out with a roar of pain that was like a trumpet blast which rang through the sleeping camp. The Scots were alerted, and quickly grabbed their weapons, and the Danes were driven back.

One could say that they came within one foot of victory, but one foot led to their defeat. The thistle from that time on was adopted as the national emblem of Scotland. Feet are vital for the onward march, but they can also be your foe and lead you to defeat because of their weakness. Not all have the feet of the Kentucky backwoods farmer who never wore shoes. One day he came into the cabin and stood by the fireplace with his callused feet. His wife said, "You'd better move your feet a mite, you're standin on a live coal." He replied, "Which foot?" Unfortunately, most foot soldiers do not have feet that tough. Even Achilles, the great Greek warrior, had one weak spot, and that was the heel of his foot. It was by means of an arrow in his heel that he was brought to defeat. Our feet determine whether we stand or fall in more ways than one.

The statue, or government, or organization, with feet of clay is easily toppled. When we want somebody to become independent, we tell them to stand on their own two feet, and to get both feet on the ground. The unstable position and shaky argument puts a man where we say he doesn't have a

leg to stand on. All of the many texts about the Christian walk and the Christian stand make clear that feet are essential equipment for the Christian life, for you cannot stand or walk without feet.

The feet can bring you to defeat, or they can march you to victory. Either way the feet play a major role in every life, and that includes the life of our Lord. There are 27 references to the feet of Jesus in the New Testament. That is likely a greater focus on feet than you will find in the biography of any other man. Biblical times were times of far greater foot consciousness. There are 4 Hebrew and 2 Greek words for feet. There are 162 references to feet in the Old Testament, and 75 in the New Testament. Feet were just more conspicuous in that world where walking, marching, and cleaning of feet, and sitting at the feet of others, were daily events.

The feet of Jesus were exposed, and so more people beheld the feet of Christ than other great men of history. The feet of Jesus were the center of so much of His activity. In Matt. 15:30 we read, "Great crowds came to Him, bringing the lame, blind, the crippled, the dumb and many others, and laid them at His feet, and He healed them." Mary became famous for sitting at the feet of Jesus and soaking in the wisdom of His teaching. Many were laid at His feet unable to walk, and Jesus lifted them up and stood them on their own two feet again, and enabled them to walk and be restored to the world of folks with feet that would function again. Only those who have lost the ability to walk can appreciate how

beautiful it must have been to be laid at the feet of one, who because He created feet could fix them, and make them work again.

"I cried because I had no shoes till I saw a man who had no feet," is a popular saying, but here were crowds who wept for joy, for those with no feet walked away from the feet of Jesus having been made whole. Walking is being revived in our day for health and exercise, but in the day of Christ walking was a necessity, and that is why one of the most frequent miracles of the New Testament was that of making the lame walk. To be put back on your feet was to be given new life. We take our feet for granted, and do not often consider that they are one of the wonders of creation.

Leonardo da Vinci called the feet, "A masterpiece of engineering and a work of art." There are 26 bones in each foot or 52 in both, and that is one fourth of the bones in our body. By means of these instruments the average person by the age of 55 has walked 70,000 miles, or 2 and one half times around the world. Gillette Burgess may sound silly, but he was rightly amazed when he wrote-

**My feet, they haul me round the house,
And hoist me up the stairs.
I only have to steer them, and
They ride me everywheres.**

Another poet wrote some lines that became more well known.

**Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And departing leave behind us
Footprints in the sands of time.**

Jesus did so more than any other who has ever lived, and we want to sit at His feet and focus on them, for His footprints have changed the course of history. Every place the feet of Jesus touched have become places of deep interest, study, and research. We cannot look at all 27 references, and so we will only get a foot in the door of this lowly yet lofty subject. We will focus on the feet of Jesus from the point of view of them being instruments of sovereignty, suffering, and of service. First lets look at His feet as-

I. INSTRUMENTS OF SOVEREIGNTY.

Many ancient monuments picture the kings with their feet on the necks of the vanquished to show they are sovereign and victorious. They have the enemy in complete subjection. The feet are symbols of power. We see this very thing in Joshua 10:24 where we read, "When they had brought the kings to Joshua, he summoned all the men of Israel and said to the army commanders who had come with him, 'come here and put your feet on the necks of these kings.' So they came forward and placed their feet on their necks." This was to encourage the commanders and give them assurance of victory over the enemy.

We see Paul doing the same thing on a spiritual level for the soldiers of the cross. He writes in Romans 16:20, "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet." The image of the song Onward Christian Soldiers is very biblical, for Christians are to march forward like an army of foot soldiers conquering territory that is under the power of Satan, and liberating those he holds captive. Our feet are weapons of warfare, and by means of our feet we are to gain victory and sovereignty over Satan. In Eph. 6 where Paul describes the whole armor of God that we are to put on, he does not neglect the feet, but urges us to have our feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel. The point is that foot power was, is, and will ever be, a primary power, for the feet of our Lord will forever be a place where we worship His majesty and glory.

Paul in I Cor. 15:25 says of Jesus, "For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet." The last enemy to be destroyed is death, and when this final foe is fully vanquished the whole universe will be under the sovereign feet of Christ. This is the plan of God that Paul explains in Eph. 1. He says that this is why God raised Jesus and exalted Him to His own right hand, "..far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything for the church." He who has the most powerful feet is the head.

When the Apostle John was caught up to see a vision of the ascended Christ he was very conscious of his Lord's feet. In Rev. 1:15 he says, "His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace." And in verse 17 he says, "When I saw Him I fell at His feet as though dead." One day all who loved Jesus will experience the wonder and joy of falling before His sovereign feet.

**Lo, at His feet with awful joy
The adoring armies fall!
With joy they shrink to nothing there
Before the eternal all.**

Whenever you fall at the feet of Jesus you have arrived at a high point in your spiritual life. William Cowper wrote,

**Tis joy enough, my all in all,
At thy dear feet to lie;
Thou wilt not let me lower fall,
And none can higher fly.**

We many never in time walk where Jesus walked, but all who submit to His Lordship will walk with Him in white, and our feet will walk with His on golden streets, and all over a redeemed and perfected earth. Following the footsteps of Jesus will be forever, for His feet will our guide for all eternity. We will sit at His feet; worship at His feet, and serve at His feet with joy forever and ever. "Footprints of Jesus that make the pathway glow. We will follow the steps of Jesus wherever they go."

When Jesus comes again He will come, not with the feet of the lowly carpenter, but with the feet of a sovereign Lord. His feet will then be instruments of sovereignty as all will bow before His feet and acknowledge Him as sovereign. B. Whitney Allen wrote,

**Down the minster aisles of splendor,
From betwixt the cherubim,
Through the wond'ring throng with movements
Strong and sweet,
Sounds His victory-trend approaching
With a movement far and dim-
The music of the coming of His feet.**

**He is coming, O my spirit,
With His everlasting peace,
With His blessedness immortal and complete;
He is coming, O my spirit,
And His coming brings release.
I am waiting for the coming of His feet.**

No one can fill the shoes of Jesus, for He alone will finally conquer this world, and all will be under His feet, for His feet are instruments of sovereignty. Next, we see His feet as-

II. INSTRUMENTS OF SUFFERING.

The feet are a very sensitive part of the body. William Stidger tells of how on one occasion Helen Keller gave a speech to a large crowd. There was a great round of

applause when she finished. Even though she was blind and deaf she knew they were clapping, and she fairly danced with joy, and she clapped her hands as well. The chairman asked Miss Sullivan to find out how she could hear that applause. Helen said, "Through the vibrations in my feet."

The feet are feelers, for they can feel pleasure as well as pain. Jesus felt both in His feet, but the focus of attention is usually on the pain His had to endure. One of the most famous references to the feet of Jesus in all of literature is that of Shakespeare in Henry IV.

**In those holy fields
Over whose acres walked those blessed feet
Which, fourteen hundred years ago
Were nail'ed
For our advantage on the bitter cross.**

It was quite a surprise to me to find that there are no references in the crucifixion accounts to the nailing of Christ's feet to the cross. We only have the reference to the nail prints in His feet in John 20:25. We have heard of it so often, however, that we think it must be there in the accounts of the cross, but it is not. We know His feet were nailed to the cross because that is what crucifixion was, but there is no dwelling on this agonizing fact in the Gospels. Jesus implies that His feet were clear evidence of His resurrected body, however, in Luke 24:39 where He says to the startled and doubting disciples, "Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself." In verse 40 it says that He showed them His hands

and feet. His nailed scared hands and feet were proof that it was the crucified Christ who was the risen Christ. This has lead to His feet becoming symbols of His suffering. Bishop Bradlay of India wrote,

**Christ, if ever my footsteps should falter,
And I be prepared for retreat,
If desert or thorn caused lamenting
Lord, show me Thy feet;
Thy bleeding feet, Thy nail-scared feet,
My Jesus, show me Thy feet.**

It was by means of His nail-pierced hands and feet that Jesus shed His blood which atoned for our sins. When Jesus came into the world, He came with the intention of doing more than just getting His feet wet in the human experience. He came to be tempted in all points like us, and to suffer to the fullest the infirmities of man, even to the point of death. He leaped into life with both feet, and He entered death the same way. He could have escaped anytime, but He was determined to follow God's plan all the way until they carried Him out feet first. We seldom think of it, but the feet of Christ were instruments of suffering by which we are saved, and by which Jesus won the victory which made him sovereign over all.

We need to focus on the suffering feet of our Savior as objects of beauty. Feet are not thought of as objects of beauty in our culture. They are hidden and lowly, and out of sight is out of mind usually. Our culture rejects bare feet,

and it sees them as repulsive and dangerous, and so one of the most common signs we see is, no bare feet allowed. Or we see such signs as no shoes, no shirt, no service. In other words, we will not respect anyone with exposed feet. The modern poetess Eileen Logeer speculates as to how Jesus would be accepted in our culture today.

**No, no, young man, you can't come in
-Your feet all mud like that.
Look how your footprints spoil the steps!
Don't you ever take a bath?
Not mud?
You say its blood?
It's wounds in both your feet?
Then all the worse!
Our carpet's new
And blood stains just won't vacuum out.
A hospital's the place for you,
Most certainly not a church.
We can't admit disgusting things
-It wouldn't honor God.
We aim for things that please Him most.
So, no bare feet allowed.**

There was no beauty in Jesus when He bore our sins according to the prophet. From head to foot He was bruised and bloody, and there was nothing of His body that any appeal. It is only as we consider that He bore all this shame and suffering for us that we see any beauty. His hands and feet were nailed to the cross because He bore in His own body

our sins on that tree. Because He did we will have bodies forever with feet that will walk all over God's heaven. Next we look at His feet as-

III. INSTRUMENTS OF SERVICE.

The first thing we note in our text is that instruments of service need service. The feet in that day were the primary means of transportation, and all means of transportation need to be serviced. The feet of Jesus were often tired and dusty as He was constantly going about doing good and meeting the needs of others. Jesus was not like the young lady that Benett Cerf wrote about.

**There was a young lady of Crete
Who was so exceedingly neat.
When she got out of bed
She stood on her head
To make sure of not soiling her feet.**

Jesus soiled His feet daily in travelling the dusty roads to serve. Any good host knew that you had to focus on the feet to be hospitable. It made a traveling guest feel refreshed and comfortable to have his feet cleansed. Simon knew this, but he neglected this hospitable touch because he did not love Jesus.

The former prostitute, however, saw the feet of Jesus as objects of love. Serving the needs of His feet was one way she could say, thank you for the gift of new life. You cleansed me

from sin, and the least I can do is cleanse and refresh your feet. How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news is the famous Jewish saying from Isaiah. If this be so, then Jesus had the most beautiful feet that ever walked his earth, for He brought the greatest news men have ever received. This is how this woman felt, and she was glad Simon had neglected his feet, for it gave her a chance to wash the feet of Him who washed her soul and made it white as snow. To her it was no lowly duty, as Simon would see it, but it was the highest privilege. Tennyson wrote,

All subtle thought, all curious fears,
Borne down by gladness so complete,
She bows, she bathes the Savior's feet
With costly spikenard and with tears.

There is no hint that the woman spoke a single word. Simon on the other hand was a talker, and he had plenty to say. This woman shows by her actions that love is not something you say only, but love is something you do. Mary of Bethany expressed her love for Jesus on another occasion by doing something similar. The poet put it-

Love is the true economist,
She breaks the box and gives her all;
Yet not one precious drop is miss'd,
Since on His head and feet they fall.

Not many feet in history have ever been washing in the mixture of perfume and tears. It is a unique solution nobody

has figured out how to market because so few have such a deep love as did this weeping woman. Spurgeon says, "She wept because she had sinned so much, and then wept because He had forgiven her so freely. Love and grief in equal measure made up these precious tears." She had no idea what was ahead for these feet she so much loved. She only knew they had brought His love and cleansing power to her. She could not dream that they would one day be nailed to a cross.

**She knew not of the bitter way
Those sacred feet had yet to tread,
Nor how the nails would pierce one day
Where now her costly tears were shed.**

It is a pleasure to have the feet service by being cleansed and massaged. It is so relaxing and refreshing, but it can be a pain to use the feet in the service of others. Service can be costly, and the feet often bear that cost. Many, after a day of service, have said, "my feet are killing me," or "Oh my aching feet." The feet bear the heaviest load, for they get all the rest of the body to the place where service is needed. The hands can do little labor until the feet get them to where the need is for their labor. "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel," was our Lord's command, but it cannot be fulfilled without the feet. That is why the feet of those who bring good news are so beautiful. They are beautiful because they get the tongue to the place where the beautiful message of salvation can be delivered.

Except for His brief ride on the colt on Palm Sunday Jesus went everywhere on foot to teach, preach, and heal. People loved the feet of Jesus, for they were ever active in carrying Him where He could meet the needs of others. His feet were the most precious instruments of service.

**The patient Christ long ago
O'er old Judea's rugged hills,
With willing feet went to and fro
To find and comfort human ills.**

Jesus was not only the Living Word, He was the walking Word, for He was constantly on the move in service. There are over 100 references to His walking in the Gospels. His feet were swift to carry Him about in service, and that is why we have the popular concept of the footprints of Jesus.

**Judean hills are holy;
Judean fields are fair,
For one can find the footprints
Of Jesus everywhere.
Beautiful feet are they that go
Swiftly to lighten another's woe.**

Author unknown

This focus on the feet of Jesus is not a matter of trivial pursuit in anatomy. You cannot know Jesus adequately without a focus on His feet, and the role of the feet in His plan. Two of the major commands of Christ were, "Come follow me," and, "Go into all the world." Both of these

demand the obedience of the feet. Soldiers of the cross are foot soldiers, and only by means of the feet can we be and do what our Lord expects. The world does not look at your feet. They never sponsor a beautiful feet contest. They look for beautiful hair, eyes, face, hands, and legs, but they pay no attention to the feet. God, however, does have a focus on our feet. Are they swift to do folly, or are they beautiful because they are swift to obey and do His will?

Jesus used his feet for the glory of God, and the good of man. He not only had love expressed to Him by means of His feet, but He expressed His love for His disciples by washing their feet. By this act of love He made it clear that the servant is the greatest. D. L. Moody had a pastor's conference at Moody Bible Institute, and he came upon some guest rooms where the pastors from Europe had put their shoes outside the door. This was the custom of their land. It was expected that a servant would clean and polish them for the next day. Moody spotted some students and asked them to polish the shoes. They protested that they came to school to study for the ministry, and not to be cleaning shoes. So Moody did it himself. He followed His Lord on the focus of feet. He recognized that Jesus did not come to be ministered to, but to minister and give His life a ransom for many. He was to be a saving servant who would focus on feet, and we never fully understand the love of Jesus until we too are willing to be a servant and focus on feet.

11. JESUS HAD A SENSE OF HUMOR Text for starting Luke 10:21

A funny thing happened to Jesus on the way to heaven. He met people, and as we all know, people are funny. Jesus was a real person as well, and he had a great sense of humor. I am so sure of this that I wrote a poem about it.

**Jesus had a sense of humor,
Of this truth there is no doubt.
It is based on more than rumor,
If we search we'll find it out.**

**His was a real human spirit,
And we know that this is true.
He was human, not just near it.
He could laugh like me and you.**

**He's the One who gave us laughter
And made funny things galore.
And we know in the hereafter
We will laugh for ever more.**

**Jesus is the Lord of laughter
And for ever He will be.
He of humor is the Master,**

**He'll be that eternally.
Glenn Pease**

Many doubt the truth of what I am saying, for they have heard it said that it is recorded that Jesus wept, but never recorded that he laughed. This is the argument from silence, which is a foolish way to come to any conclusion about Jesus, or anyone else for that matter. It is also not recorded that he ever smiled, or that any of the Apostles ever smiled or laughed. And so the logical conclusion is that Jesus and all of His followers were living in direct violation of all that the Bible reveals about laughter, good cheer, and rejoicing. Neither is there a record of his ever washing his hair, and so are we to assume he was not a clean person? There is no record of him ever hugging and kissing his mother. Was he really so cold and thoughtless as that? Folly! And we could go on and on with all that is not said and come to foolish conclusions.

Even the pessimistic author of Ecclesiastes said there is a time to laugh in 3:4, and Jesus had many opportunities to laugh as he dealt daily with people who were experiencing miracles that restored loved ones to them in health, and some even from the dead. Every night He would sit around the camp fire with 12 men, and who can imagine such a picture without joking and laughter. Jesus and His disciples would have to be total freaks of nature and not ideal men to never fill the night air with laughter after a day of the marvelous teaching and miracles of Jesus. It was definitely a time to laugh.

Tal Bonham wrote the book, *Humor: God's Gift*. It is one of the best you can read, and in it he writes, "Have you ever thought of Jesus as throwing back His head and engaging in a good, hearty laugh? Can you imagine Jesus telling a joke? Or a ripple of laughter in the crowd while He spoke? And can you hear Him saying 'That reminds me of a funny thing that happened in Nazareth when I was a boy'?"

"I contend that, from the beginning of His life to the end of His life on earth, Jesus was surrounded by and caused joy, happiness, merriment, gladness, rejoicing, delight, and laughter." Luke 10:21 and 19:37.

In our text we are using for a starting point we read, "At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure." All three members of the Godhead are here associated with joy and pleasure. It is because God is the creator of joy and pleasure, and Jesus exhibited joy on its highest level, and this would be impossible had he never had the joy and pleasure of laughter. Deny him this and you do not have the ideal man and the perfect specimen of manhood, but a being unlike the best of men that we know of in history.

One of the best quotes in Bonham's book is that by Country Humorous Minnie Pearl. She had this to say about the solemn images of Jesus in religious paintings: "I don't agree with the image many Christians have of Christ as the sad,

tragic man depicted in most religious paintings. You can't tell me He didn't laugh, or that He wasn't happy. I think He had a great sense of humor. If He had walked along the Sea of Galilee with a look of doom on His face I don't believe for a minute all those people would have followed Him. I think they found such joy in His presence they were willing to leave everything behind to go with Him. I am certain He knew the value of humor and the power of a smile."

When God is blessing people there is laughter, and never was He blessing people more than in the ministry of His Son. Look at the joy of people in the Old Testament when God blest. As the Jews returned from exile in Babylon, the Psalmist recorded this observation: "Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, 'The Lord has done great things for them'" Ps. 126:2. He was doing even greater things through Jesus, and He and those with him had to laugh and rejoice or they would be very abnormal.

The heavenly Father of Jesus has a great sense of humor and a spirit of joy, and Jesus is the express image of the Father and so we can assume that Jesus had the same joy and gladness of His Father. We read this of God: "Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem.... He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing" - Zephaniah 3:14,17. As God the Father

entered into the joy of His people, so Jesus would enter into the joy of the people who followed Him.

Man is the only creature that was made to laugh. We are made in the image of God and have this unique characteristic that no other creature possesses. This leads to the logical conclusion that God is a God of laughter, for we are made to laugh, and so this must be a part of the image of God. To be fully human is to be able to laugh. To be fully human is to be Godlike, and this means laughter has to be a characteristic of one's being. Humor then is both human and divine, for it has its origin in the nature of God. If Jesus was both God and man, then he had the gift of laughter and a sense of humor in greater proportion than any other person who ever lived. Helen Salsbury wrote,

**Dear God, we make you so solemn,
So stiff and old and staid-
How can we be so stupid
When we look at the things you've made?
Who watches the ostrich swallow,
Then doubts you like to play,
Or questions your sense of humor,
Hearing the donkey bray?
Could the God who made the monkey
Have forgotten how to laugh-
Or the one who striped the zebra
And stretched out the giraffe?**

To be truly human and to be an encouraging type of person you need to have a good sense of humor. If Jesus was the perfect man, then it follows that he had the perfect sense of humor. All agree that this is a vital factor in the ideal person.

John ends his Gospel by saying that Jesus did many things that are not written, for the whole world could not contain the books that would result if all was recorded. In that massive amount of material that is not recorded is much that has to be implied by what is recorded, and all we know of Jesus implies much laughter and smiling. It is arrogant and presumptuous for anyone to pretend that they know what is not in that massive material about Jesus that is not recorded. Is it possible that Jesus had many a good time laughing with his disciples? Of course it is, and that is what this book is determined to prove beyond any reasonable doubt. Jesus is our example and the pattern for life. If he did not smile and laugh then he makes the ideal life for the believer one of a sad and solemn face only, and not the joyful and vibrant face of one who has assurance of sin forgiven and eternal life.

It is foolish to try and understand the nature of Jesus by what is not said of him. We need to look at what is said, and what He said Himself to know about His sense of humor and laughter. Before we look at examples of this we want to quote those who have studied the life of Jesus and have come to the conclusion that He was, and is, the Lord of laughter.

Max Lucado has written much on the life of Jesus, and he make some strong statements about His humor. In his book God Came Near he writes, "In Nazareth he was known only as Jesus, the son of Joseph. You can be sure he was respected in the community. He was good with his hands. He had many friends. He was a favorite among the children. He could tell a good joke and had a habit of filling the air with contagious laughter."

Lucado does an excellent job of getting Jesus down on a level where He can appeal to the world as He did in his ministry. Jesus was not some ivory tower philosopher, or some hidden high priest seldom seen by the masses. He was down where the rubber meets the road. He was among the people, and not just the important people of leadership. He was among the common people, and He was at their weddings and their banquets, and their parties of all kinds. He was such a party person that His critics called Him a wine bibber and a glutton. He was having far too much fun in life for the sad sack Pharisees who looked like death warmed over because of their fasting to show how holy they were. Jesus did not fast, nor did his disciples. He was a feaster and a fun lover, and He loved to be with the people who were rejoicing because they were being healed, fed, and blest in many ways for which they were praising God.

Chuck Swindoll in the forward to the book Choosing The Amusing wrote, "Of all the things God created, I am often most grateful that he created laughter. How I love to have fun! In all honesty, I can hardly imagine a day spent without

at least a few moments(preferably many) of sidesplitting laughter...either alone or with someone who can enjoy them as much as I. What healing it brings to our heavy hearts!" Millions of pastors and lay people through history would agree, and because of this they cannot imagine that Jesus did not love laughter as well.

It is the conclusion of wise men of all time that laughter and a good sense of humor is a vital characteristic of any ideal personality. Jesus was the only perfect man to ever live, and it is a logical conclusion that this means he had an ideal sense of humor. This should also be a characteristic of those who follow Jesus.

Elton Trueblood wrote the first book I ever read years ago on the humor of Jesus. It is called The Humor of Christ, and it got its start with the laughter of a child at a funny thing that Jesus said. Trueblood writes about it, and here is his story.

"The germ of the idea which has finally led to the writing of this book was planted many years ago when our eldest son was four years old. We were reading to him from the seventh chapter of Matthew's Gospel, feeling very serious, when suddenly the little boy began to laugh. He laughed because he saw how preposterous it would be for a man to be so deeply concerned about a speck in another person's eye, that he was unconscious of the fact his own eye had a beam in it. Because the child understood perfectly that the human eye is not large enough to have a beam in it, the very idea struck him as

ludicrous. His gay laughter was a rebuke to his parents for their failure to respond to humor in an unexpected place." Trueblood goes on to write-

"Anyone who reads the Synoptic Gospels with a relative freedom from presuppositions might be expected to see that Christ laughed, and that He expected others to laugh, but our capacity to miss this aspect of His life is phenomenal. We are so sure that He was always deadly serious that we often twist His words in order to try to make them conform to our preconceived mold. A misguided piety has made us fear that acceptance of His obvious wit and humor would somehow be mildly blasphemous or sacrilegious. Religion, we think, is serious business, and serious business is incompatible with banter." There are endless quotes by those who agree with him.

Martin Luther "It is pleasing to the dear God whenever thou rejoicest or laughest from the bottom of thy heart."

Charles Gruner "Human societies treasure laughter and whatever can produce it. Without laughter everyday living becomes drab and lifeless; life would seem hardly human at all. Likewise, a sense of humor is generally considered a person's most admirable attribute. Indeed, few people would be willing to admit that they are deficient in this quality."

John Wesley "A sour religion is the devil's religion."

Terry Lindvall "The joy of heaven incarnates in the humor of earth."

Samuel Johnson "The size of man's understanding might be justly measured by his mirth."

George MacDonald "It is the heart that is not yet sure of its God that is afraid to laugh in His presence."

Henry Ward Beecher put it this way: "A man without mirth is like a wagon without springs. He is jolted by every pebble in the road."

Jesus had a normal life as a boy, and this means he played with friends and would, like all boys, do his share of fun things, and have laughs with his playmates.

When Mary and Joseph could not find him after their visit to Jerusalem when he was a young boy, they headed for home assuming that he was with his friends, as we read in Luke 2:44. It was common for Jesus to be playing with others as a young boy, and they thought nothing of it. They did not worry about Jesus even though they did not see him, for to be off playing with others was a part of his life. John Oxenham wrote,

**He was a boy like other boys,
And played and sported with the rest.
He has his troubles and his joys,
And strove for mastery with the best.
He was a boy like you-and you-**

**As full of jokes, as full of fun.
But always he was bravely true,
And did no wrong to anyone.**

If this be so, then we would expect to see Jesus grow up as a healthy adult with a good sense of humor. When we go to the Gospels what do we see? We are so brain washed into thinking that Jesus was always serious, sober, and even sad, that we miss all his humor. Until recent times nobody ever saw a picture of Jesus smiling or laughing. But let's stop and do some thinking. Jesus said he came to give us life and life more abundant. He told his disciples that he was leaving them with his joy to be in them. One of the fruits of the Spirit is joy, and Jesus was filled with the Spirit. When you put that altogether, it sounds like a foolish contradiction to think that Jesus never smiled or laughed.

Tennyson did not miss seeing the reality of it, and he said that humor is generally most fruitful in the most solemn spirits, and, "You will even find it in the Gospel of Christ." Much of the humor of Jesus is in short statements of irony, or of the ridiculous. When we read Mark 4:21 we see nothing funny, but if I said in modern language, what do you think of John Smith, who built his home with all the light fixtures under the bed? You would chuckle and say how stupid can you get! That is what Jesus is saying. You don't go get a candle and then stick it under the bed. This is a humorous way of saying how ridiculous for a Christian to hide his testimony when that is the very reason for his existence, to let light shine.

When Jesus denounced the Pharisees we see his sense of humor in the exaggerated pictures. We see him picture a cup all clean on the outside, but inside filthy; we see a blind man leading another blind man and both fall into the ditch; we see a camel going through the eye of a needle, and of swallowing a camel and straining at a gnat. We need to note that Jesus had a humorous way of expressing himself.

Jesus spent a good deal of time in celebration, and he spoke of celebration in such a way that you know he loved a good party and a good time of fellowship and socializing with people. This is impossible to conceive of him in those situations and not laughing with the rest of the participants. He began his ministry at the wedding of Cana. It was a great time of fun and laughter and Jesus was a contributor to the joy of the occasion by his miracle supply of new wine. Listen to his description of the party at the return of the Prodigal. "But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe--the best one--and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate, (Luke 15:22-24, NRSV)."

Some prefer to think of Jesus out with the older brother refusing to go in to laugh, dance and sing with the joy of the party, but those with common sense recognize that every normal man on earth would be enjoying laughter in such a setting as that. It is hard to imagine a party or celebration of any kind in which joyful people do not express that joy with

laughter. Their are killjoys that cannot laugh in any situation, but God forbid that we put our Lord in that category. The perfect and ideal man is not that sulking brother outside the party, but the rejoicing Lord who added his laughter to every party he was a part of.

Paul King Jewett said, "It has been documented that laughter, along with a well-rounded sense of humor, is one of the surest signs of intelligence." If Jesus was intelligent, and we know He was, then He would have a great sense of humor.

Alfred North Whitehead said that he had always noticed "That deeply and truly religious persons are very found a joke," and he admitted "I am suspicious of those who are not." Billy Sunday added, "If you have no joy in your religion, there's a leak in your Christianity somewhere."

"The ability to laugh is one of the most characteristic and deep-seated features of man." Raymond A. Moody.

"Laughter is fundamentally an act of celebrating existence. Laughter is an expression both of enjoyment and of thanksgiving." Conrad Hyers.

"The most thoroughly and substantially a human being exist, the more he will discover the comical." Kierkegaard.

"A Christian theologian without a sense of humor seems to be a contradiction in terms." John E. Benson.

These, and hundred of others just confirms that the perfect humanity of Jesus demands that He be one with an excellent sense of humor, and one gifted with the spirit of laughter on a higher level than the average.

Jesus spread good cheer everywhere He went, and especially to His disciples.

Vance Havner claimed that our Lord gave every believer "three cheers":

The cheer of forgiveness: "Be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." Matt. 9:2.

The cheer of companionship: "Be of good cheer: It is I; be not afraid." Mark 6:50.

The cheer of victory: "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." John 16:33.

Fulton J. Sheen said, "We are made for His gladness and His cheerfulness, and we shall not be able to fulfill our destiny until we know how to be glad."

Henri Cormier in his book, The Humor Of Jesus, says that the fear of looking at the laughter of Jesus is due to our neglect of his humanity. We think we will detract from his deity, dignity and majesty by portraying him with a sense of humor. In other words, we will ignore the clear teaching of His word to exalt him in a way that he rejected. He wants us to feel he was one with us, and truly human. In contrast Cormier writes, "...he has a perfect humor, because he enjoys primacy in everything, since he is the psychologist, the pedagogue, the psychiatrist, the sociologist par excellence.

etc." He reminds us, however, that it takes a sense of humor to find a sense of humor. Those who do not have it will not find it in Jesus, for they feel it is not a value to possess. They are wrong!

Leslie Weatherhead in his book *When The Lamp Flickers* writes, "I expect he was the life and soul of the party. I should like a manuscript to be discovered which said that he told funnier stories than anybody and had the table in a roar of happy mirth. Indeed, through all his parables the grace of a lovely humor lightens the lessons he tried to teach. It is incongruous to hear the fun taken out of his stories. It is sometimes really funny to hear some solemn, ponderous parson trying to pretend that there is no humor in Christ's words, and reading the story of the man who choked at a fly and swallowed a camel, or of the man who put his lamp under the bed instead of on the lamp stand, or of the man who couldn't come to a feast because he had married a wife, and so on-with a score of other illustrations one could give-as if the words "Here beginneth the first lesson" must necessarily precede some solemn exhortation from which all humor must be rigorously excluded."

Gary Webster in *LAUGHTER IN THE BIBLE*, writes, "...attentive reading of the gospel record reveals that Jesus certainly did have a well-developed sense of humor. In fact, he employed humor in such a variety of ways and upon so large a scale that it can be regarded as a major element in his recorded teachings."

7:34	6:41		
7:6			
7:16	6:44		
8:22	9:60		
11:16-19	7:31-35		
12:27	11:19		
15:5		Mark 7:9-13	
15:14			
15:26			7:27
16:18			
16:23		8:33	
18:28			
19:24	18:25		10:25
10:25			
23:3,5			
23:13	11:52		
23:24			
23:25	11:39		
23:27			
24:28	17:37		
24:43	12:39		
			4:21
	5:39		
	11:8		
18:5			
	16:1-9		
22:27			

12. OUR DETERMINED SAVIOR based on Luke 9:51-62

Robert Fulghum, who became famous for his book *All I Really Need To Know I Learned In Kindergarten*, has written another funny book titled, *It Was On Fire When I Lay Down On It*. He has officiated at over 1000 weddings and knows by experience that they are the events that bring out the ding dong in most everyone involved. They are the comedies of life, and he writes, "Not that they are intended as such. But since weddings are high state occasions involving amateurs under pressure, everything NEVER goes right. Weddings seem to be magnets for mishap and for whatever craziness lures in family closets."

He begins his book with this example. When the bride announced her wedding day the mother literally went bezerk. She was so delighted she was going to make this the wedding of the century. It would be a royal wedding fit for a princess. She had the money and 7 months to work toward her grandiose goal. I won't bore you with the details, but everything was engraved, and an 18 piece brass and wind ensemble was engaged. Cecil B. DeMille could not have planned a bigger scene. The final hour arrived with a church packed with people in formal attire. The orchestra was in place, and candle power equivalent to the Northern Lights filled the sanctuary. The mother of the bride glowed as she took her place. Nine chiffon-draped bridesmaids stepped down the isle, and finally the wedding march thundered, and all stood to watch the bride.

The bride who was a nervous wreck because of all this preparation had slipped to the reception hall to eat something to calm her nerves. She started popping pink, yellow, and green mints and mixed nuts, and a couple of shrimp blanketed in bacon, and a cracker piled with liver pate. When people looked at her they saw a face as white as her dress. As she walked down the aisle she was a living grenade with the pin pulled out. She was ready to explode, and that is what she did. There is no nice way to describe it. She threw up and shot used gourmet goodies all over the front of the church, hosing two bridesmaids, the groom, a ring bearer, and the pastor. The bride went limp in her father's arms, and the groom was so stunned that he sat on the floor. The mother of the bride fainted. Bridesmaids and groomsmen with weak stomachs ran for the exits. In the chaos Fulghum says he is not sure of many details, but the mother of the bride thought of everything. She had three video cameras going so that all would be preserved.

Guests were invited to adjourn to the reception hall until all was cleaned up, and the bride could change into one of the bridesmaid dresses. Then the wedding was continued. The mother of the bride wanted it to be a memorable occasion, and it was. Nobody there will ever forget it. But the bottom line is, they have been married for 12 years now, and have three lovely children. This true story illustrates the need for determination to achieve a goal. There are all kinds of things that can go wrong in any plan, and you have to be determined to overcome these obstacles, or you will not arrive at the goal for which you are aiming.

Our text begins with the announcement that the time had come for Jesus to be taken up to heaven. He was to finish His mission on earth and come home to the Father. Unlike the Prodigal Son who went into the far country to waste his substance in riotous living, here was a Son who had come into the far country to save it from riotous living, and to restore it to the kingdom of God, His Father. It was now time to achieve this goal, and that meant the cross.

The cross was the only way back to heaven for Jesus that would open the door to heaven for His bride to follow. If He chose another route the door would be closed to man, and Jesus would fail in His mission to be their Savior. The way of the cross leads home for Christ and His people, and no other way does. The cross was not one of several options. It was the only way. As Jesus is the only way to the Father, so the cross was His only way to the Father that would fulfill His plan. The cross was the single most important goal Jesus had to get to in order to be the Savior of the world. The entire plan of God for man's salvation depended upon Jesus reaching this goal. Thus, we see the absolutely determined face of Jesus. I like the KJV here which says, "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." Thank God for a stubbornly determined Savior.

Nothing could stop Jesus from the cross. It was a rough road with pot holes galore, and obstacles everywhere, but He plowed ahead not looking back. He said that no one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God. He set the example, even though His

plow would take him to the hill of Golgotha. It was an uphill road all the way. Jerusalem is up in the mountains, and Golgotha was a hill up there, and so the road to our redemption was literally and psychologically a climb. Just look at the obstacles Jesus had to face in the few verses of our text.

The people of the Samaritan village where He wanted to stay the night were prejudiced against the Jews, and they did not want Jesus to stay there, for He was headed for the Jewish capital. They were petty and prejudice people. Most of us would have sided with the hot heads James and John, and vote to call fire down from heaven to roast these rotten rebels. These disciples did not even know Jesus was going to Jerusalem to die for these very sinners who rejected Him. All they knew was that Jesus was a perfect and loving man, and He deserved respect. They could not tolerate the blind prejudice of these people, and they wanted to eliminate them from the earth. Jesus had just pointed His face in the direction of the cross, and already He was facing two obstacles to His goal: Prejudice and intolerance.

The prejudice that rejected Him could have made Jesus question His goal. Why should I bother to go to the cross to save the likes of these people who will not even let me stay in their town because they hate Jews? They are so unworthy of my love. They chose to hate people who are different. This is the cause of the wars and man's inhumanity to man all through history. Why should I die for them? I could take a short cut back to heaven and escape the cross, and men like

this would be lost forever, and justly so. But if such thoughts ever entered the mind of Jesus, He did not let them change His mind, or the direction He was determined to go. The unworthiness of man could not stop Jesus from going to the cross.

His own disciples are urging Him to destroy these scum of the earth people, but Jesus has set His face to go to the cross and die for them. He would not be pulled off course by their wickedness. The love of God and the Gospel of grace is great when you are the object of it, and you are forgiven and accepted into the family of God. But when the Gospel is offered to people you can't stand, because of their wickedness, that is so disgusting, it is hard to swallow. It was hard for James and John. They were so repulsed by the injustice of prejudice against Jesus that they became equally prejudiced against Samaritans. They wanted nothing short of capital punishment for this sin of prejudice. If these two were permitted to make the laws, a large proportion of mankind would be executed, for prejudice is almost universal. Jesus rebuked these hot heads of His own disciples, for they did not grasp at all that if you fight evil with evil, you are part of the problem and not part of the solution.

Here is another obstacle to the cross. His own followers did not grasp His spirit. If just getting rid of evil people was the goal, He could have wiped out the Samaritans long ago, as well as the Jews, and every other race. The solution of violent elimination of the sinner is an abuse of power that

James and John would have used, and many in history have used. It is one of the obstacles to the cross, for Jesus could have said, "Why should I die for men when they will often in my name kill people and think they are doing me a favor? Is man worth dying for when he is so unloving toward others?" He wants to solve the problem of evil, but not by killing evil people. His whole plan is to solve the problem of evil by saving evil people and making them righteous people. The Savior's solution to every sin problem is the cross. Atoned for sin and make it possible for every sinner to be forgiven and restored to fellowship with God where he can become a godly person.

Man's way is revenge, but God's way is redemption. Paul states it in a way that is shocking in Rom. 4:5 where he says, "However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness." Paul says God justifies the wicked. This often makes good people mad, as it did James and John on this occasion. Whose side is God on anyway? He should be justifying the good people and not the wicked. God is like a great criminal lawyer who knows his clients are guilty of sin, yet He finds a clever way to get them off and acquitted. That is what the cross is all about. It is about God being for the bad guy. Jesus told us to love our enemies because that is just what God does. He loves them and He gives His Son to die for them that they might no longer be His enemies, but His sons and daughters.

This wondrous Gospel is hard to grasp when it is applied to your enemies. Just ask yourself, who do you most despise in the world? What kind of sinner do you get repulsed by-the rapist, the homosexual, the serial killer, or the child abuser? You name it, and it is not easy to accept the fact that Jesus went to the cross to die for such scum. We probably would have advised against it, and voted for revising the will of God. Our plan would have Jesus skip death altogether, and just deal with sin by brute force, like sending down fire from heaven. That would suit us just fine. If Jesus had to die, then let it not be for the sins of the whole world, but just the minor sins like lying, cheating, gossip, and all the things most of us are guilty of, but let the bad sinners pay for their own sin.

The majority of Christians would probably vote for a package like this, and that is why God does not submit His plan to a vote. The Gospel is not of man, but is solely the plan of God. Good men not liking it, however, was one of the obstacles Jesus faced as He headed for the cross. Anyone of us might have been an obstacle to Jesus, for His determination to die for all men is far beyond our determination to do anything for people we do not like. So before Jesus takes a step toward the cross He is hindered from both within and without. Then we come to verse 57, and they are walking along the road on their way to Jerusalem and to the cross. In the next few verses Jesus is confronted by three men who appear to want to be disciples, but they are defective in their desire.

The first in verse 57 makes an absolute commitment and says, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus is not impressed by people who get emotionally excited and promise the moon. He wants people who will count the cost. Jesus is clearly more concerned here with quality rather than quantity. He wants no mass of followers who will forsake Him at the first sign of a problem. His response to the first man implies that the man hoped to gain some dignity by following Jesus. Jesus said, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." In other words, the perks are few if any, unless you consider it a pleasure to sleep out in the open fields.

Jesus is heading for the cross, and He will not deceive anyone into thinking that if they follow Him it will be a gravy train to glory. It is going to be a terrible ordeal for His disciples, and even the best will fall away and forsake Him. So He is not recruiting any half-hearted adventurers who want to tag along. Only those 100% committed to Him as Lord will survive what He is heading for.

The second man said to His call to follow, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." This sounds like a reasonable request, but we know this was not a request to just finish a funeral. It is request to stay at home and care for his father until he does die and is buried. He is saying, "I'll follow you someday when it is more convenient, and I have other obligations out of the way." In other words, when it fits my schedule and I can fit you into my life, then I will follow you. Again, this is an obstacle to the cross, for Jesus could be

discouraged by all this evasion from wanting to give His life for those who only had leftovers for Him. Let the dead bury the dead was the comment of Jesus. That is, let those who are not believers handle the affairs of this life. Believers need to be busy about the affairs of the life to come. Get your priorities straight and go proclaim the kingdom of God. A major obstacle to the cross was the fact that He knew His disciples would get so involved with the obligations of this world that their labors for the world to come would take a back seat.

I am often appalled by the demands of secular life. The enormous number of hours it takes just to deal with personal and family matters. Shopping, keeping your car and home in shape, and dealing with all the issues of records and taxes, plus health issues, all take a great deal of time. The point I am getting at is not that this is not important, but that it is possible to get so involved in the important that we fail to achieve the best. Jesus knew we would have endless obligations in trying to keep life orderly, but He gave up His all for us, and the cross demands that we do some sacrificing for Him. The issue is priorities. He was determined to go to the cross, for He made it the number one priority of His life. He expects His followers to seek first the kingdom of God, and not make it the choice of convenience. Jesus knew some would say, "I'll do your will Lord when I get all my other obligations in order. I'll seek first the kingdom of man, and the kingdom of God I'll get to when I can squeeze it in."

The third man said, "I will follow you Lord but first let me go back and say good-by to my family." Again, not only does this seem like a reasonable request, but one that should be granted just out of courtesy to the family. It seems ridiculous for Jesus to expect a man just to take off following Him, and not even say good-by to his family. This seems contrary to all that the Bible teaches about loving others and being kind and considerate. Sometimes Jesus can sound too harsh, and it does not seem to fit His loving character. But you have to see the context, and recognize Jesus is trying to teach the lesson by words that He is, at this point in His life, living out- the lesson of priority and determination.

The cross is His goal and the number one priority of His life, and nothing will hinder His getting to that goal. He is now being very strong in teaching His disciples that they too must be committed to godly goals that become their first priority. They must let nothing hinder their determination to get to those goals. The implication is that these would be followers of Jesus were saying, "I want to follow you Jesus, but I've got some other things that take priority, and as soon as I get these accomplished I will be right behind you." Jesus sees these men as half-hearted followers who will soon fall away when He gets to Jerusalem and is crucified. They will not stick with the kingdom of God, for they put their hand to the plow, but are always looking back at all the other things they should be doing. As soon as they feel all is not right in the kingdom of God they will flee back to the kingdom of self.

Jesus is looking for disciples who are as determined to serve the kingdom of God as He is determined to go to the cross. Determination is dominating Him and He wants that in all who follow Him. Jesus knows that success demands determined disciples. Madam Curie and her husband had just failed in their 487th try to discover radium. He cried out in despair at the futility of it all, "It can't be done, I tell you it can't be done! Maybe in a 100 years it can be done, but never in our life time." But he turned and sees his wife's determined face, and she says, "If it takes a 100 years, Pierre, it will be a pity. But I dare do no less than work for it as long as I live." She had every reason to fold and walk away, but she was determined, and she pressed on, and her discovery has led to modern technology that has saved many millions of lives. Radium was her cross, and she set her face steadfastly to reach it, and did not stop till she did. That is what Jesus wants in His disciples.

Get a goal you know is a goal for the kingdom of God and make it a priority you will reach for, and be determined to let nothing hinder your reaching it. That is taking up the cross and following Jesus. We are saved by the Savior's stubborn determination to get to the cross, and our lives are saved for the kingdom when we have a stubborn determination to see that the good news of the cross is conveyed to people in our lives. Jesus reveals the three key ingredients to success in the kingdom of God. They apply to every realm of life, and they are:

1. Destination.

2. Direction.

3. Determination.

First you have a goal. The goal of Jesus was the cross. That was His destination. Second, you make sure you know how to get there. For Him it was to get to Jerusalem. He knew that would lead to the cross, for on Palm Sunday He would provoke the leaders of Israel to show their hand, and carry out their plot to eliminate Him. Third, you have to be determined to stay on the road until you reach your destination. These three steps are the key to Christian growth. You may be trying to achieve a goal as simple as memorizing a Bible verse. That is your destination, and the direction to get there is by repeating it over and over until it is part of you. Your determination is to do it daily and let nothing hinder you from finding the time to repeat the verse. The end result is that you will succeed, for with these three steps success is guaranteed. Jesus by His life and teaching is our example of how these three steps can lead us to be successful disciples. Elect a destination; establish the direction, and exhibit the determination to overcome all obstacles to get there. This was the plan by which Jesus saved us, and it is the plan by which we can be successful in serving Him, and reaching goals for His glory.

13. OUR KING'S GLAD FACE Based on Luke 19:28-44

The final week of the life of Abraham Lincoln has an amazing parallel to that of the final week of Jesus. From Palm Sunday to Good Friday is only 5 days, yet in that 5 days we go from the scene of the triumphal entry of the King to the scene of the tragic exit of the King on the cross. Listen to the parallel of Lincoln's final week.

General Grant was surrounding the Confederate Army of General Lee in the capital city of Richmond. Lee realized the war was over, and the South was defeated, and on Palm Sunday of 1865 he surrendered. What a day of victory! People flocked to the White House clamoring for a celebration. Lincoln addressed the people and said, "Fellow citizens, I am very greatly rejoiced to find that an occasion has occurred so pleasurable that the people cannot restrain themselves." He called for the band to play his favorite tunes of "Dixie" and "Yankee Doodle." The crowds were led in cheers for General Grant and the Army and Navy. When Lincoln went into the White House they cheered him as their hero.

That holy week was one of the best Lincoln ever enjoyed. He worked long hours, but was very relaxed and at peace. On Good Friday he had an early cabinet meeting. In the afternoon he and his wife went for a long carriage ride, and that evening they went to the theatre. On Palm Sunday he was a victor. On Good Friday he was a victim, as he was assassinated. Here was a man so loved he was praised by the

masses, but here was also a man so hated that he was murdered. Love and hate are never far apart, and that is what we see in holy week, the last week of the life of Jesus. It begins with the wildest expression of mass affection that Jesus ever received. When the Jewish leaders complained to Jesus about this excessive display of emotion, Jesus said it cannot be helped, for it is impossible to suppress the explosion of praise. If you silence the people, the very stones will take up where they left off, and continue this cry of rejoicing.

Jesus knew He would soon be on a cross, for that was an essential in God's plan to save man, but He says, not only is Good Friday a necessity, and not only is Easter Sunday a necessity, but Palm Sunday is also a necessity. It is one of the pieces of the puzzle, and it could not be complete without this day of triumphal entry. It was not enough that Jesus died for us, He had to die as our King. He did not die as a carpenter, or as an itinerant preacher. He died as the King of the Jews, who was long promised, and who would be the king of God's people forever. The sign Pilate put on the cross said, "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews." The leaders of Israel would not acknowledge He was their king. In verse 42 Jesus says the truth was hidden from their eyes.

On the night of May 14, 1912, a well dressed man collapsed on the street in the center of Hamburg, Germany. A doctor passing by helped a policeman get him into a cab. He died on the way to the hospital, and since he had no identification on him, he was taken to the morgue until

someone could identify him. It was 2:00 in the morning when the valet of King Fredrick VIII of Denmark realized that the king had not returned from his walk. He called the hotel manager who in turn called the police. After several hours of investigation it was determined that the man who had died in the cab was the Danish king, brother of Queen Alexandra of England, and Uncle of the Czar of Russia. He was a great king, but he died unrecognized. So it was with Jesus. He was the promised king, the Son of David, but He was unrecognized, and died in the eyes of the Jewish leaders as a mere criminal, rather than the Royal Redeemer that He was.

Jesus said in verse 42, if they had only known He was their king, they could have had the peace of God, but because they could not see He was the king, they had to suffer the judgment of God. One of the lessons of Palm Sunday is that we need to listen to the perspectives of the little people, and those outside the circles of influence. From the day Jesus was born until the day He died, the people who saw who He really was were the little people and outsiders.

The wise men came seeking Him asking where is He who is born the King of the Jews. The pagan ruler Pilate put up a sign on the cross, "Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews." Now on Palm Sunday Dr. Luke tells us the multitudes were shouting with a loud voice, "Blessed is the King that cometh in the name of the Lord." Jesus was recognized as king by many, but the leaders of Israel refused to recognize His royalty. They had their own self-centered agenda, and Jesus

just did not fit in. Palm Sunday teaches us that it is possible that a little child may have more insight into the will of God than those who are the official leaders. Leaders can be so full of their own agenda they are not open to the leading of God.

Matthew tells us the children were crying out in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David," and the chief priest and scribes were indignant at this corruption of the youth. Jesus said to them in Matt. 21:16, "Did you never read, out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise." The Word of God was coming to the people, not through the religious leaders who should have been the channel open for God to speak through, but through little children.

In the fourth century a great crowd gathered in the city of Milan, Italy to decide on who was to be their religious leader. Ambrose, the governor of the city, was there to keep order. There was great uncertainty as to who to choose until a child shouted out, "Ambrose for bishop!" He was a layman, and not a trained clergyman. But he was of such exalted character that the idea was like a spark igniting powder. The shout spread through the crowd, "Ambrose for bishop!" Ambrose did not feel qualified, and resisted, but the crowd insisted and forced him to be ordained, and to become their religious leader. He became one of the greatest leaders of all history, and was a major influence in the church for a thousand years. The implication is not to let the juniors run the church, but to be open to listen to the insights of children and the non-professional.

Palm Sunday is a revelation that God often gives greater light and insight through the child on the things that matter most. The pros were totally blind to the evidence that others could see. They were so envious of Jesus, and so anxious to get Him out of the picture, they broke every law in their own book to get Him to the cross. Their law forbid a trial at night, but they had to try Jesus at night to avoid the crowds who would protest. Their law forbid trials during Passover, but they had to get Jesus while He was present in Jerusalem for the Passover, so they set that law aside. The death penalty was not to be carried out until a night had passed, but they did not wait, but went straight from the trial to the place of execution. They had to break their own laws because they were going against the insights of the common people. If they would have followed their own rules, the masses would have prevented their evil plot.

History reveals that the majority is not always right, but the fact is, it is still the wise way to go. The last week of the life of Jesus makes this so clear. The majority could see Jesus was a man of wisdom and loving compassion, and just the kind of man the Messiah was to be. The leaders could only see He was going change their legalistic religion and introduce one of love and grace, and they would lose their power over people. Jesus knew these leaders were clever, and that they would get around the will of the majority, and kill Him. But He had to give us this scene of Palm Sunday so that all through history we would be reminded: If you give the masses of people a chance to see Jesus as He really is, the

commonplace people and children will recognize Him as the one they can acknowledge as their king.

Palm Sunday is a day of great paradox, for it was a day of such contrasting emotions. Jesus was such a glad king; such a sad king, and such a mad king. Many feel it was the single most happy day of His life as Jesus saw the supportive crowds acknowledging His kingship. But it was also a day Jesus felt so sad that He had to weep over Jerusalem, for He knew the leaders were determined to kill Him. He was so upset that day by the corruption of the temple by their greed that, in anger, as never before displayed, He chased them out with a whip. This was the most emotional day in the life of Jesus that we have revealed in the Gospels. We have been looking at the determined and steadfast face of Jesus as He set His face to go to the cross. Palm Sunday was a major event in His plan to get there. We want to focus on the emotions of Jesus on this special day, and look at His sad face and glad face. We will look at the negative first and focus on-

I. THE KING'S SAD FACE.

In verse 41 Dr. Luke says Jesus wept over the city of Jerusalem. It was the city of God's people, and the place where God's temple was, and where God met with man. It was the center of true worship from which God's light was to go into a dark world. Jesus would make it that yet by His death, and the Gospel of light and life would go from Jerusalem into the whole world. But the sad fact Jesus was facing was that these people who had the chance to be in on

the ground floor of God's plan were going to miss it, and not only stay in the dark, but suffer the judgment of God. They would reject the king God sent them, and in 70 A. D. they would be totally destroyed for this blind choice.

It is sad when people suffer judgment, for judgment is never God's chosen will. The whole point of God's plan of salvation is to prevent judgment. God hates judgment, and does everything possible to avoid it. That is why it is so sad, for judgment is always preventable. There are a lot of things sad in a fallen world, but the saddest of all is preventable suffering. It is sad to see people die of lung cancer because they smoke cigarettes for years. Light is there for them to see and heed the warnings, but they chose not to see. Jesus gave all the light needed to see He was the Messiah, but people chose to ignore all the evidence, and reject His kingship. He wept because the price they would have to pay was all preventable.

There is a tremendously positive message in the sad face of the king on Palm Sunday. Jesus cared about these people who would be lost and suffering the judgment of God. There are Christians who believe Jesus only cares about those who will be saved. Not so, He loves His enemies, and He weeps for them. They will not repent and receive His love, but will die and miss His grace, and Jesus is broken hearted over them. He does not say that hell is just what they deserve, and rejoice in their judgment. If you are glad anyone is going to be lost, you are not filled with the spirit of Christ our King.

He hates it that even these wicked leaders who are out to crucify Him are going to suffer judgment.

There have been Christians all through history who miss the sad face of Jesus on Palm Sunday. They have devised their own value system, and reject that of the king. They have taught that it is one of the joys of heaven, for example, to be able to see the lost in agony in the flames of hell. They have taken their values from the people Jesus is weeping over rather than from Jesus Himself. The Old Testament makes it clear that God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, and Jesus did most of His weeping over people who would not respond to His love. The sad face of Jesus is to be our constant reminder that we, as His disciples, are to feel sorrow over the lost. Our task is to do all we can to prevent such judgment by getting light to those in darkness. When they fail to respond we can call down fire from heaven like the sons of thunder, or we can weep over them, as Jesus did. But now let's look at-

II. THE KING'S GLAD FACE.

Jesus was delighted with the response of the people, and the praises He received from the children. If for some reason they had not come through as He expected, He was prepared to do one of the strangest miracles of His life, and make the stones grow tongues and cry out that He was the king of Israel. Jesus was happy that He did not need to do this miracle, for the people did come through and exalt Him as king.

The people were fulfilling the prophecy of Zech. 9:9, "Rejoice greatly, O daughters of Zion! Shout, daughters of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey." Jesus was glad that people are not always as blind as their leaders, and not always blind followers of the blind.

History is filled with examples. The leaders said the Bible must be kept in the language of the scholars, and not be put in the common language, but the masses said, "We want to read God's Word for ourselves, and hear Him speak to us directly." Thus, you have the whole history of men like Luther and Wycliff who risked their lives to put the Bible in the language of the people. The people said, "We will honor God's Word," and they did, and Christianity was purified by the people. No longer could leaders keep the masses in the dark, and manipulate them by man made rules. There are endless examples of how Jesus has been glad, and has been exalted as king of lives where the people have direct access to Him as they did on Palm Sunday.

For centuries Holy Week was regulated by the leaders of the church, and the whole plan of Jesus was hidden until Easter morning. The folly was that Christians were blocked from seeing the whole week through the positive eyes of Palm Sunday. The glad face of Jesus was hidden, and not allowed to show until Easter. Good Friday was sad and mournful, and black Saturday, as it was called, was also depressing. The whole emotional content of what Jesus did for us in His

death was seen from the point of view of unbelief rather than from the point of view of the King. In other words, Palm Sunday was dismissed as a fluke, a failed attempt to change things, and so of no relevance, for it changed nothing. This whole perspective is a rejection of the kingship of Jesus, and the glad face of the King.

Jesus was not a victim of the events of that week that led Him to the cross. He was the Victor. Palm Sunday was no failure. It was a total success, and Jesus became the King of Israel, and from that point on was in control of the future and of the destiny of Israel, and the fulfilling of the plan of God. Israel's Messiah was to be the Savior of the world, and that would be the task of the new King to achieve. The events of the coming week that led to the cross were not tragic from His viewpoint, but were the very agenda of the new administration. Even the rebel leaders of Israel were carrying out the orders of the new King. Nobody took the life of Jesus-He gave it.

History has some examples of people collecting and giving a ransom to gain the freedom of their king, but here is the King who is going to give Himself as a ransom to deliver His captive people. Jesus is giving Himself as a ransom for our release. It is His choice. He is the King, and He has the sovereign power to decide, and the cross was His decision. Robert Eisler said, "Jesus was a King who did not reign." He missed the whole point of Palm Sunday. Jesus was reigning all through the events of the week, and His orders were being carried out to the letter.

Even the cross with all its cruelty was the plan of the King, and He had a glad face as He contemplated the fulfillment of the plan. He timed it just right so He would die as the Lamb of God just when the Passover lambs were dying for the sins of the people. It was all perfect, and Heb. 12:2 says, "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

The cross was not a tragedy from His point of view. It was the joyful conclusion of the plan of God for His life as the Lamb of God. He was born to die for sinners, and as the King He fulfilled the plan.

**The truth that David learned to sing,
Its deep fulfillment here attains;
Tell all the earth the Lord is King!
Lo, from the cross a King He reigns.**

The point I am making is that the sad face of Jesus is the face He had for unbelief. The glad face of the King is the face we are to focus on as believers. Good Friday is good because of that glad face. It was His choice, and He did it for us, and it is a day to celebrate His choice for our salvation. It is not a day to mourn the folly of man, but to rejoice in the love of Christ. It is legitimate to have a sad face for the blind who do not see the love of Christ, but the focus for the Christian is to have a glad face like Jesus did because He knows before

the week is over He will fulfill the plan that makes Him King of Kings forever.

May God help us to ever see the cross through the eyes of the glad face of our Palm Sunday King, and join in the eternal chorus-

**The Lord is King! Lift up your voice
O earth, and all ye heavens rejoice;
From world to world the joy shall ring,
The Lord Omnipotent is King!**

Because He is King, and began His reign on Palm Sunday, our focus is to be primarily on Our King's Glad Face.

14. THE KING IN TEARS Based on Luke 19:29-48

Little Bobbie listened with deep interest to the story of the Prodigal Son right up to the happy ending when the son returned; the fatted calf was killed, and the house was filled with music and dancing. Then he suddenly burst into tears. "Why what is the matter Bobbie?" exclaimed his mother. "I'm so sorry for that poor little calf," he sobbed. "He didn't do nuffin!" Here was a case where the expected emotion was to be joy, but the tender-hearted boy responded with

unexpected sorrow, for he saw an aspect of tragedy in the story that no one else even considered.

This same thing happened on the first Palm Sunday when Jesus promoted the biggest demonstration of his earthly life. There was so much emotion kindled in Jerusalem that day that it could probably be called the most emotional day of history. It would be hard to find another day to equal it. Emotion was at such a high pitch that the people spontaneously threw their garments and palm branches before the king upon the colt. They lifted up their voices in a chorus of praise. They shouted with loud voices, "Blessed be the king that cometh in the name of the Lord." There was so much noise the sophisticated Pharisees were getting headaches. They were thoroughly disgusted with this exhibition of emotionalism, and they urged Jesus to put the damper on these flaming emotions.

It would have been futile, however, even to try. Jesus said if he did manage to get them to hold their tongues the noise would not be diminished, for the very stones would immediately take up the shouting where they left off. The air was so charged with the excitement and joy of what was taking place that nothing, just nothing, could stop it. This dramatic and climactic expression of joy and praise had to be. Jesus was the King of Israel, and his triumphant entry into the capital city was a necessity in the plan of God. Here was music that had to be heard. Palm Sunday was no luxury, it was a necessity in God's plan. Vaughn wrote,

**Hark! How the children shrill and high
Hosanna cry;
Their joys provoke the distant sky
Where thrones and Seraphim reply;
And their own angels shine and sing
In a bright ring;
Such sound, sweet mirth
Makes heaven and earth
Join in a joyful symphony.**

While all heaven and earth are joining in this joyful symphony, however, the King whose triumphal entry has produced this unparalleled emotion seems to be adding a note of contrasting discord. Like the boy listening to the joyful conclusion of the story of the Prodigal, Jesus seems to see something that no one else does. His ears hear the music triumphant, but his eyes have focused on the tragic, and the result is what we see in verse 41, a King in tears. Amidst all this joyful shouting, the King for whom they shout, weeps. Make no mistake about it, these are not tears of joy. These are not the tears of a Miss America walking out into a crowd of cheering subjects. These are not the tears of excitement and surprised joy.

These tears of the King were tears of sorrow from the very depths of his being. They were in absolute contrast to the joyful emotions being displayed all around him. Palm Sunday provides us with abundant material for the study of contrasting emotions. People were keyed up to near fanatical enthusiasm, and in contrast you have the utterly disgusted

Pharisees looking on. Jesus, who gave rise to both of these emotions by his actions, also displays dual emotions.

Weeping in tender-hearted sorrow, and then a few moments later expressing anger with an intensity of indignation that had such moral force that men fled in fear before him.

There is no doubt at all that Palm Sunday was one of the most emotion filled days of history. Jesus wept on other occasions, but his tears here say something different. Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus, and revealed his sympathetic understanding of what people must endure in facing the tragedies of life. Jesus wept in the Garden of Gethsemane and revealed his own full humanity. He was not merely playing a role. He actually bore the burden of suffering humanity. Jesus sweat drops of blood. He learned from personal experience what it is like to bear a crushing burden.

There is a great deal being written today about the psychosomatic. Psycho meaning mind, and soma meaning body. When a man suffers in body because of a mental or emotional burden it is called a psychosomatic illness. This is a modern term, but the experience is as old as man, and Jesus experienced it in Gethsemane. His sweating drops of blood was psychosomatic. There was nothing wrong with his pores or his arteries or his blood. There was no physical problem. He sweat blood because of the terrific mental and emotion burden he bore.

Remember this when you flippantly say to someone, "It's all in your head." It was all in the head of Christ as well, but

nothing can be more real than a mental or emotional burden. Whenever you begin to think lightly of the problems of the mind and emotions, you had better sing again, "Lest I forget Gethsemane, lest I forget thine agony...lead me to Calvary." The tears of Jesus tell us that emotion is natural and ought to be a part of the normal healthy person. Our particular culture does not encourage, but rather discourages the stronger sex from exhibiting his emotion in tears. This was not so in Biblical times, for great men like David, Peter, and Paul wept.

Tears are the silent but eloquent language of the soul. They can communicate what words cannot. Emotions are a language of their own, and speak on a level easy to understand. A group of children who were deaf mutes once took part in a reception of King Edward of England, and they did so by marching before him with a banner which read, "We cannot shout, we cannot sing, but we can love our gracious king." What king would not rather have the tribute of their silent emotion than the blare of trumpets and the boom of cannon? Words and noise can be cheap, but emotion is an expression of the real person. Jesus said with his tears more than any lecture could communicate. Jesus was saying, I see something that no one else sees. I see as God, and, therefore, I weep as man. He saw the future as it was going to be, and not as he wished it to be, and not as the circumstances would suggest it was to be.

Jesus saw that in spite of all the enthusiasm to exalt him to the throne of Israel, he would be exalted instead to the cross.

He knew the leaders of Israel would reject and crucify him, and he knew that the result would be the destruction of Jerusalem, and the end of Judaism as it had been. What Jesus saw was literally fulfilled in 70 A. D. about 40 years after this triumphant entry. The tears of the king tell us he is a king who does not take lightly the loss of his people. He knows they will reject him, but he cannot accept this fact without deep emotion. Jesus was no stone-hearted, flint faced stoic who could look upon the tragic side of life and be unmoved. He broke down and wept. He cared that men would perish, and he loved those who despised him. He did not limit his love to those shouting, "Hosanna to the king of David." He loved equally those blind Pharisees, and he wept for them who would lead his people into the ditch of destruction.

The tears of Christ on that first Palm Sunday were tears of hopelessness. At the tomb of Lazarus Jesus could look ahead through his tears and see the resurrection. In Gethsemane Jesus could look through his tears again to the glorious victory of his own resurrection. The tears on those occasions were temporary tears, but the tears of Jesus on Palm Sunday were an expression of a sorrow with no hope. Jesus could not look through the tears to a bright future. It was so dark, and that is what brought on the tears, for there was no silver lining in that cloud at all.

**A king in tears of agony.
A king in tears, how can it be?
Because the men he came to free,**

Chose bondage over liberty.

**But nothing could a charm impart
To sooth the Savior's woe,
For grief was heavy at his heart,
And tears began to flow.**

He came unto his own and his own received him not. This Palm Sunday demonstration was the last chance for their eyes to be opened. It was their day of visitation, but Jesus observed that the leaders of Israel looked upon it as fanatical emotionalism, and so all hope was gone, and he wept. Have you ever felt helpless, and felt like crying because you could not compel reality to be different from what it was? This is how Jesus felt. He had performed miracles; he had taught with unsurpassed wisdom and authority, and now he had fulfilled the prophecy of the Messiah riding into Jerusalem. Yet, it all failed to open their eyes. These are tears of frustrated love.

Those who think man cannot frustrate the grace of God, and resist the love of Christ, have no explanation for the tears of the king weeping over his capital city. Man can leave the king of kings standing at the door knocking, and refuse him entrance. King he is, but he will not reign in any heart except by consent. He could have taken the throne of Israel by force with a popular movement, but he could only take it, in the only way he would, by the consent of those in power. They rejected him, however, and so Jesus refused to be their king. Jesus was not a revolutionary as we usually think of

one. Had he been so, he could have allowed himself to be made king by the force of the masses, but he took no throne, for it was not the choice of the leaders. He will enter no heart but by the consent of its owner. His form of government could be called totalitarian democracy, for he reigns as Lord, but only by the consent of the governed. The consequences, of course, are a king in tears, for men will not give this needed consent. Jesus was no superficial optimist who felt all would turn out for the best in the end. Jesus knew some things were absolutely tragic. Men who might be saved will be lost. Men who could know and experience the love of God will have to endure his wrath.

I believe in the power and value of positive thinking, but it has its limitations. Nothing is so superficial as the denial of the reality of the negative. We could have reminded Jesus of his own wisdom about taking no thought for tomorrow. Why bear the burden of tomorrow let alone those of 40 years in the future? What applies to the temporal does not apply to the eternal, and that is why Jesus wept, and that is why no peace of mind philosophy could dry his tears that day. You could say, cheer up it could be worse, but you would be wrong, for it was hopeless, and that is why he wept.

If we use simple logic and admit the reality of sin, tragedy, and hell, then we know there is no way to escape some tears in life. Heaven is pictured as a place where tears shall be no more, and this implies they are inevitable on earth. When men reject Christ and die as children of wrath rather than children of God through faith in Christ, there is no hope, and

so there is no comfort. There is nothing that God or man can do but that which the God-man did, and that is weep the tears of hopelessness.

The tears of Jesus are the tears of sorrow over what might have been. He was not weeping because of what did happen, but because of what did not happen. His heart was burdened with the grief of lost opportunities. There is no use crying over spilt milk we say and it is true, but it is also true that there is no use trying to stop people crying over it, because once it is spilt it is beyond recovery and that is sad. The milk that might have given life and health is now wasted. The talent that might have been used to bless and enrich the family of God has been devoted to worldly pleasure, and the gift is wasted. The life that might have been for the glory of God shrivels up into a pitiful self-centered bundle that pleases neither God nor man. Don't say we shouldn't cry over lost and wasted opportunities, for Jesus by his tears said it is a valid sorrow.

The dual emotions of Palm Sunday correspond with the dual nature of reality. It can be tremendously triumphant or terribly tragic. None can claim to be realistic who do not recognize this. The tears of Jesus say more about heaven and hell than any words. Tears would have no place in such a glorious and joyful setting as Palm Sunday unless there was a heaven to be lost and a hell to suffer for those who rejected Jesus as king. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He no doubt weeps yet over those persons and nations who go through their day of grace with no response.

The tears of hopelessness are a valid response to reality, but we need to also see that they never cause Jesus to give up. He wiped his tears away, and went into the temple, and in anger he cleansed it. Yes, it is hopeless for some, and they will never respond, but Jesus went on fighting for the rights of others to have hope, and to respond to the grace of God. The pessimist gives up in the face of the reality of tragedy. The optimist denies the reality of tragedy. Jesus was a realist. He weeps over the reality of tragedy, but goes to work, for he knows that victory is also a reality in the plan of God. In other words, no matter how true it is that nothing can change some sad facts for which we must weep, it is also true that nothing should hinder us from fighting to the end for the right of all men to have the opportunity to experience the grace of God.

The king in tears does not die weeping, for he will not let the negative reality dominate his life. He faces that reality squarely, and will not pretend it isn't real, but then he goes on to fight for the positive reality of the triumph of good over evil. Palm Sunday has a message, not of superficial optimism, but of true spiritual optimism which says, no matter how much there is to weep about, there is always much more to rejoice over, and to pursue in the will of God. The full symphony of the Christlike life will have its pessimistic discord, but the major emphasis will be the positive harmony of the victorious. The tragic and the triumphant are both real, and the Christian should feel both, but be ever pressing on through the tragic to the triumphant.

15. HIS HIDDEN FACE Based on Luke 24:13-35

Paul Harvey in For What Its Worth tells of the young lawyer who was sitting in his office waiting for his first client. When he heard the outer door open he quickly tried to sound very busy. As the man entered his office the young lawyer was on the telephone saying this: "Bill, I'm flying to New York on the Mitchell Brothers thing; it looks like its going to be a biggie. Also we'll need to bring Carl in from Houston on the Cimarron case. By the way, Al Cunningham and Pete Finch want to come in with me as partners. Bill, you'll have to excuse me, somebody just came in...."

He hung up and turned to the man who had just entered. "Now how can I help you?" The man said, "I'm here to hook up the phone." His disguise as a busy man was ripped off, and he was exposed as a deceiver. We see the disguise used in the Bible by the wicked trying to hide their identity. King Saul disguised himself when he went to the Witch of Endor, and King Jeroboam sent his wife to the prophet disguised so as to hide her identity. Disguise is one of the ways Satan practices his deceit. He comes as angel of light, but is in fact the prince of darkness. Like Dr. Jekyll, he has something to Hyde.

Hypocrisy is the hiding behind a mask of deception, and pretending to be what you are not. Because the forces of evil

specialize in the mask and hiding behind disguises, we tend to associate disguise with evil. There is a tendency to throw any weapon the devil uses out of the arsenal of Christian weapons. The folly of this is revealed by Jesus on the very day He conquered death and rose from the dead. Jesus became the master of the disguise, for He was the best known person in the lives of His disciples, yet He walked 8 miles with two of them and they never even recognized Him.

To add to the perfection of His disguises, D. L. Moody, the great evangelist, says, these two disciples were His aunt and uncle. The evidence does support his conviction, and many of the great preachers of history agree. One of the women standing at the cross according to John 19:25 was Mary's sister the wife of Cleopas. Moody reasons that it is likely that Cleopas in this passage who was heading home from Jerusalem where Jesus was crucified was the same man, and that his partner was his wife who stood at the cross. They invite Jesus into their home, and it is not likely it is two men living together. If it was today, it would be more likely, but this seems obviously to be a couple, a man and his wife, and they could very well have been the aunt and uncle of Jesus. Yet, here they walked 8 miles to Emmaus with Jesus, and as far as they know, they never saw him before in their lives.

Jesus had the ability to hide Himself so His identity was not known. Mary Magdalene had the same problem. She was at the tomb of Jesus, and He spoke to her, but she did not know Him, for she thought He was the gardener. This couple thought He was a stranger, and she thought Him to be

a gardener. The clothes Jesus wore were different from His usual garb, for the soldiers took His clothes, and His burial clothes were all left behind in the tomb. We do not know if Jesus by a miracle created new garments, or if He had some stashed away for this need. But they were clothes that were not recognized as His. He looked different because He was in a disguise that hid His identity.

This was not a new thing, however, for God loved to play this game all through history. The game of hide and seek, or guess who's coming to dinner were His favorites. When God came to Abraham He came as a way fairing man, and ate with him as a friendly stranger. He came to Jacob as a wrestler, and to Joshua as a soldier. The Old Testament is filled with Pre-Incarnate appearances of Jesus, and He always comes in some disguise to hide His identity at first before He reveals who He is. This is not a game Jesus gets tired of playing with man, but is one that goes on all through history, and that is why we read in Heb. 13:2, "Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it."

The supernatural is often disguised as the natural, and it can be right in front of your nose and you miss it because you assume all is as it appears, forgetting Jesus likes to play disguise. He said, "As you have done it unto the least of one of these my brothers you have done it unto me." And, "I was a stranger and you took me in." Every kindness shown to a stranger could be a kindness shown to Christ in disguise."

A popular children's book is Find Waldo. His face is hidden in a massive crowd, and the challenge is to find him in that crowd. The Christian game is similar. It is called Find Jesus. He is hidden in life, and in the crowd of strangers we meet from day to day, and we never know which face we confront is the face of the hidden Christ-the Master of disguise. The point is that we need to be kind to all strangers, for you may be being kind to your Lord who played the role of the stranger the first day of His resurrection.

The Gnostics of the early centuries threw out most of the Gospels, but they kept this account on the road to Emmaus, for they loved to see Jesus as the Master of illusion, and the great magician. This Easter special was their favorite, for Jesus did special tricks on Easter that He did at no other time. He conquered death, then walked through a closed door, and made Himself appear as someone else. They especially loved His vanishing trick at the end of the story. As soon as this couple recognized Jesus He disappeared into thin air as the grand finale.

What makes this different than any other day in the life of Jesus is that all His miracles were more playful than ever. Before His resurrection Jesus did not play around with His power. He healed and raised the dead, and He fed hungry people, but He did not walk through walls, disappear, and disguise Himself as someone else. His Easter miracles were less serious and business like, and more for fun and amazing as He played with the minds of His disciples. Jesus was alive,

and in a new state of being as victor over the power of death. Life was less serious now, for Jesus had accomplished the task of atoning for man's sin, and opening the way to heaven for all who would receive God's gift of salvation.

Jesus had fought the hardest battle ever fought, and He won, and so now it was time to lighten up. For the first time in His life Jesus did miracles that were not necessary, and which were for Himself and His own purpose. The resurrection changed the whole psychology of the Savior. The devil tried to get Jesus to use His power this way in the temptations. Make the stones into bread; leap off the temple and show the crowd the most spectacular trick of their lives. These were the enticements he tried to get Jesus to fall for, but He would not. Now that Satan is defeated, and Jesus has the keys of death and hell, He can feel free to use His power in a more personal and dramatic way.

Jesus ends His life on earth with the spectacular ascension. With all eyes on Him He, like a space ship being launched, slowly rises off the ground, and the soars into the heavens leaving His disciples in a state of awe. Luke 24:52-53 says of the disciples reaction, "Then they worshipped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually in the temple praising God." The disciples had their whole psychology changed by the risen Lord. They were sad and gloomy and fearful because of the cross, but now they have confronted the living Christ, and they are full of joy. Joy is to characterize the Christian life now because of the resurrection.

The risen Christ revised and revolutionized everything-even the way He taught. No longer does He speak in parables, but He boldly tells it like it is. Before the cross the disciples could never grasp it, but now that the cross is history Jesus takes these disciples on a tour through the Old Testament, and shows them that the cross and all He endured was the predicted plan of God carried out to the letter.

In His disguise Jesus reveals Himself more clearly than He ever did before, and thus, we see through the disguised Jesus the revised Jesus. He is a disguised stranger, but He makes His identity as the promised Messiah more clear than ever before. Concealed He is more revealed. We want to change our focus then from the disguised face of Jesus to the revised face of Jesus which He reveals to this couple. Not everything is revised, of course. Jesus is back to His old ways. He is on the road again teaching as He walks. Jesus was a travelling teacher with a mobile school all through His ministry. He taught as His disciples followed from village to village. Now, on this first Easter, Jesus is on the road again teaching as He did before.

There are some important truths to recognize here. First of all, if the risen Christ is going to spend a good portion of His day teaching, just after doing the most spectacular thing ever done in history, the conquering of death. We need to recognize there are few things more vital than teaching. The kingdom of God depends on informed disciples to do the will of God. Ignorance is no friend of the Christian. Intelligent

belief and behavior depend upon knowing God's Word. So Jesus does not spend His first day back from the dead flying through the air with a banner announcing His resurrection. He spends it in teaching His disciples the Old Testament so they can see God has done just what He said He would do.

Jesus made it clear by His choice of how to spend His first Easter that the need to know the Word of God is more important than religious experience. Jesus gave these two the experience of their lives when He revealed Himself alive and then vanished. For an emotional high point this had to be the peak for them when they saw the risen Christ. But you will note that He did not give them this experience until He first taught them the Old Testament. Jesus is not saying that experience and emotion are not important. He is saying they are not the foundation on which to build. If they were, He could have forgotten the teaching all together, and just appeared and given them a great emotional experience. That is never enough. You can have visions of Christ, and mountain top experiences, but these are the fruits. The roots are to be in Biblical revelation. Neglect the roots and you will soon have faulty fruits.

Experiences are temporary, but the Word is permanent. The foundation for our lives must be built on knowing the revelation of God. There is no higher goal in life than to know God's Word. It was a priority for Jesus to teach it, and it should be our priority to do the same, and to know God's will through His Word. The second thing we see here is that Jesus, the Lord of life, who has the keys of death and

hell, and is at this moment the greatest hero ever to live on this planet, is not gathering great masses on the hillside or in the temple. He is walking along with two obscure disciples to a podunkville called Emmaus.

What kind of strategy is this for the greatest success and winner of all time? Where is the common sense of Jesus wasting His time on this couple? Is this a good way to spend your first day alive from the dead? Is this wise use of the greatest day in history? Does it make sense to be giving the most important lecture ever given on the Old Testament revelation of the Messiah to a couple of unknowns? Apparently Jesus is determined to make the first Easter parallel the first Christmas where the only people in on the secret are the obscure and lowly shepherds.

Jesus has some strange priorities, and does not follow the advice He would get from any promoter on how to make the most of a great event. Christmas and Easter have become the most celebrated and promoted events of the Christian world, but not because Jesus set the example. He made it a day of low profile. He said by His actions there are no unimportant people in His kingdom. There is nobody so obscure they do not deserve the very best in Christian education. Jesus taught two people on the day of His resurrection. We ought not to ask is it worth while to teach just a couple. Jesus says, yes it is. It is worth while to teach God's Word to any number of people who are willing to be taught.

The essence of what Jesus taught these two is a revised picture of the Messiah. They were conditioned by traditions to expect a Messiah who would be a conquering hero. The texts about a suffering Savior were ignored, for they were not acceptable to the leaders of Israel. They did not want a Messiah like that. So all through history we see this tendency in man. He reads the Word of God, but there is a lot He does not like, and so He pushes this off to the side, and builds His theology on the parts He does like. This is going on in all of our minds constantly, for none of us like all that God has revealed. I have never seen a book of theology yet where the author likes all he finds in Scripture.

The only reason there is controversy in Christian circles is because nobody likes all of God's Word, and the result is, different people and groups focus on what they like, and exclude what they don't. The problem is that others like what they don't, and so you have conflict. These two Christian disciples are victims of theologians who did not like the suffering Savior revelation that runs through the Old Testament. They basically never dreamed that God would send the Messiah to suffer and die. It was not a part of their tradition. Jesus had to take them through the Old Testament and show them a new perspective they had never seen. This is the only way He could make it clear that everything that happened to Him was just as God had planned it.

The lesson for all time, and for all Christians, is this: Do not depend on any tradition, but be a searcher of the Scriptures for yourself. People who depend on somebody else

to tell them what God's Word says end up in cults and groups where their faith is in what men are saying rather than what the Word of God is saying. It is never wise to ignore parts of God's Word because you don't like it. It may run counter to your pet theories, or the way you were taught, but it is always better to change and conform to the mind of God than to change the Word to conform to the ways of men. Jesus revised their perspective on the Messiah, and they were wiser disciples than they were under their old convictions. Their revised view enabled them to see the cross as positive rather than negative.

We have seen the disguised face, and the revised face of Jesus, but the story ends with the recognized face of Jesus. Verse 31 says, "Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him." Jesus chose to take off the disguise and let them know it was Him as He handed them the bread. It was only a glimpse of His face, and then He was gone. Not another word did He speak. He did not even taste the bread before He disappeared. That is all it takes to change these two lives, and fill them with enthusiastic energy that took them flying back to Jerusalem to tell the rest of the disciples. History is filled with examples where one glimpse of the face of Jesus changes all of the future for those who recognize Him.

Paul on the road to Damascus is the great example. The face of Jesus was like the sun, and it blinded Paul in a flash, but Paul was made to recognize the one he was persecuting. He is converted by the recognized face of Jesus, and all of

history is changed. Over 200 years ago in England the church was dead. Society was in a state of decay and crumbling, but the clergy were out hunting fox. John Wesley was one of those dry as dust clergymen who cared more about ritual than people. But then he had his Damascus road, or Emmaus road, experience. Like these two, he had a heart strangely warmed he said as he recognized Jesus Christ was the living Lord of his life. He began a revival that saved England from a revolution like what happened in France, and multitudes were saved for the kingdom of God. It never would have happened had he not come to recognize who Jesus was.

The goal of Jesus on that first Easter was to be recognized, even though he wore a disguise. This is the goal of all we do as Christians. In our worship, and in our Sunday School, and in all our groups, the goal is to see Jesus for who He really is. To recognize Jesus is the bottom line, for it is that awareness that gives meaning to all of life. Their sorrow was turned to joy, and their pitiful shuffle was turned to powerful jogging as they raced back to Jerusalem. If you want to see your energy level rise, and your spirit changed to one of joy and enthusiasm, you need to recognize the face of Jesus in your life.

Russell Conwell, one of the great preachers of the first half of the 20th century, tells of how his father seemed to be uninvolved in his life. He felt bad that he did not seem to take much interest in him. Then one day he fell from the barn beam to the floor, and

was severely hurt. When the thought struck his father he could have lost his son, he became the most tender nurse he ever had. Dad would sit by his bed and entertain him, and eat meals with him. He never had such attention before, and he said, "I would fall again to find my father was my greatest friend."

This is the way it was with these two on the road to Emmaus. They had lost their greatest friend they thought. But the fact is, the cross did not take him away, but rather, gave Him back to them as their permanent Savior, companion and friend. They recognize now that all that was suffered was necessary for God's best to be theirs. God was with them even in their sorrow, but they just did not recognize Him. He was hidden from their view.

Leonard Griffith, a great preacher, tells of Ethel Rogers Mulvaney, a Canadian who worked for the Red Cross in Singapore when it fell to the Japanese in 1942. She, along with 4000 other civilians, was put in jail. They suffered 4 years of crowding and hunger. Filth was everywhere, and they had no contact from their families. Sometimes they felt God forsaken. On the first Easter they were there she asked the prison commandant if they could sing hymns on Easter morning. He barked a loud no, and that was that. 12 times she made this request, and 12 times she was refused. Then out of the blue the order came that women prisoners could sing for 5 minutes on Easter morning. They did just that, and praised the Lord for His resurrection which was their

only hope to cling to. As they were marched back to their cells, a guard pulled out a tiny orchid from his brown shirt and handed it to Ethel. He softly said, "Christ did rise." He then made a military about face, and marched down the hall way. They stood there with tears in their eyes, for not only was Jesus alive, He was recognized, and that gave them the energy they needed to go on until they were released. The energy to cope with life and be victorious comes through the face of Jesus recognized.

16. THE TRIUMPHANT KING Based on John 12:12-19

About 140 years before Christ one of the Macchabee brothers, Simon by name, became the leader and high priest of Israel. Through his effective efforts the yoke of the Gentiles was taken off Israel, and he was called, "The great captain and prince of the Jews." He lead his army against Gaza, and when the people cried out for mercy he dealt with them in peace. He cast out the idols in the city, and he entered it with hymns and praise of the Lord. When he dealt with Jerusalem, he did the same. He came in peace, and cleansed the city of its uncleanness, and then entered it in triumph.

The record of his entry says he entered "With thanksgiving, and branches of palm trees, and harps, and cymbals and psalteries, and hymns, and canticles, because

the great enemy was destroyed out of Israel. This is so similar to the triumphal entry of the Prince of Peace Himself, as he rode into the city of Jerusalem, that it is obvious that the people expected Jesus to conquer their enemies, and lead them to victory. The question is, did he do it, or did he fail? Was His triumph merely temporary, or was it timeless? Was He really the king of Israel? Did He really establish the kingdom of David, or was this all just futile emotionalism soon to dissipate itself among the fickle crowd? These are some of the questions we will seek to answer as we consider this important event. It is important because it is recorded in all 4 Gospels. We will look at it from 4 points of view: The king himself, the people, the Pharisees, and ourselves.

I. THE ENTRY OF JESUS.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all tell in detail how Jesus sent two of His disciples to bring Him the colt the foal of an ass. Never before have we ever heard of Jesus riding. He always walked, but now He deliberately plans to ride. Jesus knew the effect this act would have, and He did it just for that effect. All through His ministry He had avoided publicity when He could. He urged people whom He cured to not spread the news. But now for the first time, and only time, He makes a deliberate and planned appeal to the crowd. He purposely stirs up their emotions.

This was an act of defiance against the religious authorities, and it took courage, for John 11:57 indicates there was a price on His head, and they were anxious to take

Him. Jesus had to have a great deal of popular support if this triumphal entry was to be successful. That is why Jesus let Lazarus remain dead until he began to decay. Others that Jesus had raised had been dead only for a short while, and so they skeptics could always point out that they may have not really been dead. But no one had any doubt about Lazarus, and the result was just the popular support Jesus needed to fulfill Old Testament prophecy in the triumphal entry.

This event was not only planned in advance by Christ as He proceeded toward it, but had been a part of the total plan of redemption even before the incarnation. No where do we see the providence of God working more accurately in human events as in the entry of Jesus to Jerusalem. All of it was according to cause and effect, however, and free wills were not coerced into cooperation. All were moved to act in response to events which Jesus arranged, and which He knew would end at the cross. Calvin said of Jesus that He here, "openly declares that He commences His reign by advancing to death." That is the meaning of this well planned event. Jesus is now declaring openly that He is the Messiah; the promised Son of David for whom the Jews longed, and He hereby declares that He is about to ascend to the throne and establish the kingdom of David.

Mark 11:10 records that some of the people shouted, "Blessed is the kingdom that cometh, the kingdom of our father David." They, of course, did not know that it was by way of the cross that He would reach the throne. Jesus makes it clear by His act, as He did to Pilate in words, that

His kingdom is not of this world. The donkey is a symbol of daily life in contrast to the horse, which represents the military. The colt on which Jesus rode was a way of saying that Jesus was coming as a Prince Of Peace, and not as a man of war, as the Jews had falsely hoped. In the book of Revelation we see Jesus coming on a horse with sword prepared for battle, but then He will be coming in judgment. Here He comes in humility and peace.

Verse 15 says fear not, but why? It is because a king who comes in peace is not a tyrant to be feared, but a leader to be welcomed with joy and song. The prophecy of Zech. 9:9 was literally fulfilled in detail, and no one can doubt that Jesus declared Himself to be the king of Israel. The sign that Pilate put on the cross saying, Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews, was again the work of the providence of God. Pilate did it from a personal motive of revenge against the Jews, but God meant it as a proclamation that He really was the king. On the cross the Prince of Peace conquered the prince of darkness and death, and God exalted Him to His own right hand until all enemies are put under His feet. From Christ's point of view the triumphal entry was the day He proclaimed Himself to be the King of Israel. Next we see-

II. THE ENTHUSIASM OF THE PEOPLE.

The timing of Jesus is of obvious significance. It was the feast of Passover when Jews would come from everywhere to Jerusalem. Men like Simon of Cyrene would travel over 1000 miles to be there. Josephus says there were over 2 million for

one Passover. The word spread like wild fire that Jesus was going to come to Jerusalem. It spread by word of mouth, and verses 17-18 make it clear it was spread by those who had seen Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. Jesus had waited until the period of mourning, when there would be many sympathizers comforting Mary and Martha, so that He might have many witnesses, and so that the news would spread and be impossible to deny. Both before and after the cross the most effective way of spreading the good news about Jesus is by the testimony of persons who have encountered Him. In spite of all of our means of communication today, there will never be anything that can surpass the person to person witness.

When this message spread the people became excited, for they had heard of the miracles of Jesus, but this was the prize that a man could raise the dead. They thought He must certainly be the Messiah, and that they would soon conquer the Romans, for now they could even die and be restored to life. One who can conquer death can certainly conquer the world. No crowd in history has ever had more reason to be excited than those Jews on that day. Henry Ward Beecher said, "In things pertaining to enthusiasm no man is saying who does not know how to be insane on proper occasions." And this was a proper occasion, and it was perfect, for it was all worked out according to divine wisdom.

Hearing that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem in spite of the threat of the Pharisees, the people concluded that this must be it. He is at last going to exert His power, and so they go

out to meet Him, and by song and symbol they proclaim Him King. Verse 13 says they cried Hosanna, which means save now, and it is equivalent to the British cry of God save the king. Blessed be the king of Israel was their cry. Many delight in teaching a lesson here about the fickleness of crowds by saying that these who now shout Hosanna will in a few days be shouting to crucify Him. Crowds are doubtless fickle, but this is a poor place to teach that truth, for there is not a shred of evidence for it, and overwhelming evidence against it. Luke tells us that many who were shouting were disciples of Jesus. These would be shaken by the cross, but they were the first to believe in the resurrection, and would be among the 500 brethren who saw Jesus after the resurrection.

If we read on in all of the Gospels we see that Jesus returned to the city day after day. He drove the money changers out of the temple. He taught the people, and they swarm to hear Him. That is why the rulers could not take Jesus, for they feared the crowds. They had to take Him by night, and that group of people who were led by their rulers to cry crucify Him were, it is agreed by Bible scholars, those from Jerusalem where Jesus was not well received, and not those who had come into Jerusalem from surrounding areas, where Jesus was in high favor. Those who shouted Hosanna meant it, and the point is, that from their point of view this event meant the same as it meant to Jesus. It was the day He proclaimed Himself to be the King of Israel, and the day they acknowledged Him as King. Many of them were, doubtless,

**among the three thousand converted to Christ at Pentecost.
Next we see-**

III. THE EMBARRASSMENT OF THE PHARISEES. v. 19

The Pharisees had good reason to be discouraged, and we know also that they were exceedingly envious. They had laid down the law that He was to be turned in, and what happens? They all turn out to welcome Him as King. Imagine the feeling of a sheriff who hangs out a wanted poster and then discovers that the people on the very next day are clamoring for the wanted man to be mayor. It would be rather embarrassing for the sheriff to say the least, and so it was for the Pharisees.

Their aggravation was evident by their exaggeration. People always exaggerate when they get aggravated. If a child does something when you are aggravated, it is not simply reported that he spilled the milk, but that he spilled the milk and everything. We like to add all inclusive terms when we are aggravated in order to magnify the guilt of the child. This is to make us justified by being so angry about what otherwise would be trivial.

The Pharisees should have been out there shouting too, but they were disgusted with the whole thing. The ignorant masses were being moved by emotionalism, and in despair they say that the whole world is gone after him.

Of course, the whole world hadn't, but enough of them had to weaken their authority, and that to them was the only world they cared about. There was nothing they could do. Luke says that some Pharisees said to Jesus, "Master rebuke thy disciples." But Jesus answered, "I tell you that if these shall hold their peace, the stones will cry out." Nothing could stop the proclamation, for it was pre-ordained of God. From the Pharisees point of view the triumphal entry was indeed a triumph, and Jesus did successfully proclaim Himself King of Israel. Next we consider-

IV. THE ENCOURAGEMENT FOR TODAY. v. 16

John says the full implication of this event was not understood until what it portrayed so dramatically became a fact of reality. John admits that though Jesus planned it, and knew exactly what was going on, the disciples were unconsciously fulfilling God's will. Only after Jesus ascended to the throne did it register. The cross seemed to be inconsistent with the whole plan, but now that Christ had conquered Israel's real foe-not Rome, but Satan-God exalted Him, and gave Him all power in heaven and on earth. Ever since Pentecost the church has preached this message of Peter: "God has made that same Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." John Moment has shown us in verse what Peter said in prose, that the cross was the stepping stone to the throne.

Thy Savior comes, Jerusalem, make haste, thine altar bring!

**His body for an offering take,
His heart of all the world to break,
And on the cross uplifted our God shall own Him King!
He lands afar, His triumph sing,
For with the love of all mankind our God shall crown
Him King!**

The message of Palm Sunday is the same for every age: Jesus Christ is King. Because the kingdom of God is the only absolute monarchy without tyranny, force is of no value. The only way into this kingdom is to accept Jesus as Savior. You must let Him forgive and transform you, and give you a new life, and then you will be a citizen of His kingdom. From our point of view Palm Sunday is a day to acknowledge Jesus as King of our lives, and make it a day in which He enters triumphantly into our hearts, and makes us a child of the King.

17. THE FACE OF CHRIST Based on II Cor. 4:1-6

Dr. Rosenow, a man who devoted his life to medical research, was asked, what led him to this as his life's task, and he told this story. He grew up on an isolated farm in Northern Wisconsin, and as a boy he had an unforgettable experience when his brother became dangerously ill. The nearest doctor was sent for, and when he came to the house, Dr. Rosenow, then only a boy, followed the doctor into his brother's room, and hid behind a sofa to observe. What he

saw determined his career. The doctor poured out medicine to give to the patient, and then he turned and said to his parents, "Have no fear, he is going to get well." The light that came into his parents faces was wonderful to behold, and so deeply impressed him that then and there the boy behind the sofa determined that he would do something that would cause light to appear in people's faces.

We cannot begin to measure the powerful influence of shining faces in history. Longfellow said of one-

**The light upon her face
Shines from the windows of another world.
Saints only have such faces.**

When Adoniram Judson, the great missionary, was home on furlough, he passed through Stonington, Conn. Where a young boy saw his face glowing with the love of Christ. He was so deeply impressed that one of the chapters of the book he wrote when he became a pastor was entitled, "What A Boy Saw In The Face Of Adoniram Judson." This boy became Dr. Henry Clay Trumbull, a great soul winner. Now you may not know Dr. Trumbull or Dr. Rosenow, or the million others whose lives have been changed by beholding faces, but all of you know the man in this third illustration of the powerful influence of a shining face.

He was not a boy as the other two, but was a grown man who had already determined his profession. He was engaged in duties that would make his face bitter and fearful. By his

own confession he says, he was in an angry rage when suddenly at midday he saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, and with that vision his whole character and career was changed. Paul had seen the light, not just a light, but the light, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. In spite of the fact that he was persecuting Christ, the face he saw was not a face of anger like his own, but a face of mercy and forgiveness, and from that time on Paul followed only the light that came from his Savior's face.

To behold the face of Christ, and to reflect the light of His face was the constant goal of the Apostle Paul. He was not a man of a thousand faces, but the man of one face-the face of Christ. He renounced all underhanded and cunning methods, and walked in the open light of the face of Christ. Paul could have written the words of the poet,

**For this I strive, for this I pray,
For this all else resign:
Be like my Master everyday,
Set forth on earth the Christian way,
Reflect His face in mine.**

Author unknown

In Margaret Deland's story, The Awakening Of Helina Ritchie, a small boy looking at a picture of the baptism of Jesus in which the artist had a face looking out of the clouds asked, "Is that a good photograph of God?" Dr. Lavendar, the pastor said, "If it looks like a kind father, I think it is a

good photograph of God." The Apostle Paul would say, however, that the real authentic photograph of God is the Son of God, who is the express image of God. Jesus said, "He who has seen me has seen the Father." Paul says to the Corinthians here in verse 6, that the source of our knowledge of God, in all His glory and beauty, is in the face of Jesus Christ. Back in 318 He lays it down as a spiritual principle, that only as we with open face gaze upon the glory of the Lord Jesus, can we be changed by degrees, and become like Him. Looking at the face of Jesus is not just poetry, it is an essential and practical aspect of the Christian life, for those who desire to be Christlike in all their living.

This means, of course, that the face of Christ is not His literal face, but is the whole character and conduct of Jesus as it is recorded in the Gospels. The face, however, is the part of the body the most expressive of one's life and emotions. If you wish to know if a man is happy and glad, or sour and mad, you look, not at his hair, hands, back, or feet, but at his face. The face is the index of the heart and mind. When Shakespeare said, "You have such a February face, so full of frost, of storm, of cloudiness," it is not hard to guess the mood of the one he refers to. As Lewis Evans said, "Your face doth testify but you be inwardly." The eyes in the face take in light from without, while the face itself is the organ by which we express the light, or lack of it, within. Abraham Coles wrote,

**Contending passions jostle and displace,
And tilt and tourney mostly in the face.**

**Unmatched by art, upon this wondrous scroll,
Portrayed our all the secrets of the soul.**

This was true for Jesus, as for all men. The life of Christ can be portrayed by a series of portraits showing the expressions of His face. The album would begin with the baby face of Jesus in the manger, and then would come the studious face of boyhood, when he debated with the scholars in the temple. Then comes His delightful happy face as he healed and taught. Then on the mount of transfiguration His face shown as the Sun. Then comes His determined face when He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem to face the cross. Then comes His face of anguish and tears in the garden of Gethsemane. On the cross we see His disfigured face from the crown of thorns, and finally His conquering joyful face manifested in the happy days following His resurrection. We can't begin to look at the whole album, but we can focus our eyes on a couple of these pictures of the face of Christ which should challenge us to seek more often to meditate on Him until we literally see Him face to face. First of all let's look at-

I. HIS DELIGHTFUL FACE.

All of this emphasis of Paul on glory in the face of Christ implies a face of beauty and delightful joy. The middle ages lost sight of this face of Christ. It was an age of ascetics. Men were going off to monasteries where they fasted and cut themselves off from the normal life of man. They forgot that Jesus never did this. The artists began to picture Jesus only

as He appeared in those last hours of His suffering. The only text they could see to paint by was that of Isaiah 53:3, "A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not." This was a true picture of Christ in His suffering. The deformed face of Christ was real, and for us who know the love behind that agonizing face, even it contains beauty. Christina Rossetti put it so well in poetry.

Is this the face that thrills with awe,
Seraphs who veil their face above?
Is this the face without a flaw,
The face that is the face of love?
Yeah, this defaced, - this lifeless clod,
Hath all creation's love sufficed,
Hath satisfied the love of God,
This face, the face of Jesus Christ.

Keep in mind that Jesus was the spotless Lamb offered in sacrifice, and so even though He was made ugly by the sin of man, He was in His own perfection the most beautiful of all men. We ought never to lose the picture of His suffering face, but to suppress all others with it, and to impose this gruesome image on the whole life of Christ is a great perversion. Some who have looked so long and often at the face of sorrow have concluded that Jesus never smiled or laughed. This baseless tradition, with nothing but silence for a foundation, began as early as the fourth century, and still has its effects yet today, for it is all too seldom that Christians consider the delightful smiling face of Jesus. The evidence

for this portrait is abundant, even though there is no specific text that says Jesus smiled, as it says He wept.

One half-positive poet suggests that He might have smiled when He blest the little children. "A Man on earth He wondered once, all meek and undefiled, and those who loved Him said-He wept, none ever said He smiled. Yet there might have been a smile unseen, when He bowed His holy face I ween, to bless that happy child." Such a half-hearted defense of the smiling face of Christ is a witness to how strongly men have been influenced by the sad face of Christ on the cross. It is almost as if it was irreverent to think of Christ as a person enjoying life. It would be extremely abnormal for a person with very little to be happy about to go all through life without a smile or laughter. It is inconceivable that He who came that we might have abundant life should do so. Unless we are convinced that joy, laughter, and smiling is of the devil, rather than the gift of God, we must accept the reality of His delightful face.

Just try and imagine Jesus as a special guest at the wedding of Cana where He added to the joy of the occasion by His miracle of changing water into wine. Can you imagine Him all the while expressing no smile or emotion of delight, but keeping His face as solemn as if He was fasting? I can hardly conceive of Jesus being stuck with such a dead pan face even during the 40 days of fasting and temptation in the wilderness. Certainly one who said so often to others in time of trial, "Be of good cheer." Must have had a spring of joy in His own heart to fill His face with light, even while

facing the ruler of darkness. Jesus was the light of the world, and in Him was no darkness at all.

Jesus told His disciples to keep their faces clean and to look happy and healthy when they fasted. They were not to display a sad face in search of sympathy, or to be praised for being so sacrificially religious. This alone, without all of His words of joy and rejoicing, is positive proof that we fly in the face of the facts when we picture Jesus with the face of an ascetic. The very record of His weeping shows it was unique and rare for Him to do so because He was generally so happy. Those who deny to Christ the universal pleasure of laughter, and paint Him as a perpetual man of sorrows have an uncanny ability to draw conclusions in total disregard to the facts. Jesus was not only a friend of children, but of publicans and sinners. He was frequently at the banquet table, and I have never seen a banquet where people were not smiling and laughing.

The Pharisees asked Jesus why His disciples did not fast, and Jesus answered in Matt. 9:15, "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?" Jesus was the leader of a delightfully happy band of men, and fasting just did not fit into their life style at this point. People by the hundreds were being healed, and they were shouting and praising God as their loved ones were restored to health. In such a constant atmosphere of praise and joy, who could fast and be sad? Most of all, how could the Savior, the Bridegroom Himself, the author of all this joy, have anything

but a face of delight? More Biblical is the poet who paints the delightful face of Christ without apology.

**The men who met Him rounded on their heels,
And wandered after Him because His face
Shown like the countenance of a priest of old
Against the flame about a sacrifice
Kindled by fire from heaven, so glad was He.**

Author unknown

Luke 10:21 says Jesus rejoiced in the context of the 70 as they returned from their successful mission. Jesus was seen powerful success everywhere, and He could not help but rejoice as He saw the power of Satan being defeated. If we behold this delightful face of Christ often, we too can be filled with His joy. No wonder Paul said, "Rejoice in the Lord often, and again I say rejoice." Paul was a happy man in spite of all his trials because he beheld daily the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The second picture we want to look at is-

II. HIS DESIRABLE FACE.

His joy is only one of the values we want imparted to us. His face has many other desirable characteristics. His face is a face of peace, a face of purity, and a face of keen intelligence. Everything desirable is found in the face of Christ. If there is anything lovely, think on it says Paul, and nothing can be more lovely than the face of Him who is

altogether lovely and the fairest of the fair. A child was afraid of the dark and the mother said as she left the room, "God will be with you." "Yes, I know," said the boy, "But I want somebody here with a face." He wanted a personal God and not just a God of doctrine and theology. In the face of Christ all doctrine becomes personal. The face of Christ does away with abstract speculation and brings God near in everyday life. Jesus is God with a face.

Caryle said, "I would rather have one real glimpse of the young Jew face of Christ than all the Raffaeles in the world." The face of Christ is so desirable just because an example of perfection to gaze upon changes the gazers into its likeness. Paul is saying this in 3:18, and life proves it to be so. Look at what is evil, corrupt, and defiled and you will tend to become like that which you behold. Thoreau said, "We are all sculptors and painters, and our material is our own flesh and blood and bones-any nobleness begins at once to refine a man's features; any meanness or sensuality to imbrute them." Our face becomes an index of our values and reflects that which we focus our face upon. That is why we are urged to set our affection on things above so we can reflect the light from above.

Nathaniel Hawthorne in the story of The Great Stone Face, tells of a village in a Swiss valley nestled beneath a great mountain. On it was craved a face that was strong, calm, and loving. People said that one day a man with such a face would come and lead them and help them. This impressed one boy so much that he studied the face on the

mountain and watched every stranger who came to town. He compared their faces with the face on the rock. Always disappointed, he grew to be a young man, and still was closely studying the face on the mount.

The time came when he attended a public meeting and the speaker suddenly pointed to him saying, "There he is, the likeness of the great stone face." He had studied the face so much that he himself reflected its likeness. This is fiction, but the principle is not. It is fact, and Paul says look on the desirable face of Jesus for thereby you will by degrees become like Him and reflect His glory. We have no picture of Christ, but we have the mirror of the Word which reflects His glory into our face. Let us be often than at this mirror-the beauty parlor of the soul, and let us sing, let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me."

William Hillyer wrote,

**No pictured likeness of my Lord have I;
He craved no record of His ministry on wood or stone.
He left no sculptured tomb or parchment dim,
But trusted for all memory of Him men's hearts alone
Who sees the face but sees in part; who reads
The spirit which it hides, sees all; He needs no more.
Thy grace-thy life in my life, Lord, give Thou to me;
And then, in truth, I may forever see
My Master's face.**

When a great cathedral was being built the artistic work was entrusted only to the most skilled artists, but an old man kept asking for a chance to carve, claiming he was a sculptor. He was unknown so they refused, but he persisted to ask. In order to get rid of him they gave him a block of stone in a dark corner. Day after day he worked with infinite patience until his work was done. Now a special window has been put in to let visitors see his glorious work. People pass by the carving on the main part of the building to see the face of Christ carved by unknown genius in the dark.

The face can convey inspiration. It is said of Oliver Cromwell, on the eve of a great battle, when the odds were against him, that his soldiers would eagerly seek his face before the bugle sounded the charge. "See," they would exclaim as he passed along the line. "See, he has his battle face today." It was to his soldiers a sign of victory. So also, we need to behold the victorious face of our risen Lord to be prepared to fight the battles of life.

**Would you like to know the secret
Of the sweetness of the Lord?
Go and hide beneath His shadow;
This shall then be your reward.
But when'er you leave the silence
Of that happy meeting place,
You must mind and bear the image
Of the Savior in your face.**

Author unknown

There is a story of Leonardo da Vinci, and of how in the first painting of the "Last Supper" he had put such pains and a such a wealth of detail into two cups standing on the table that a friend, seeing them stared at them in open-mouthed amazement; whereupon the artist seized a brush and with one sweep of his hand painted them out of the picture, crying as he did it, "Not that! That isn't what I want you to see! It's the face. Look at the face!" Fanny Crosby, the great hymn writer who wrote "Saved By Grace," sang often these words from that song: "I shall see Him face to face, and tell the story saved by grace." She said she was grateful to God that she went through this life in darkness, for she said people who see have seen many hundreds of faces, but the first face I will ever see is the face of Jesus.

**Lord, let me see thy beauteous face!
It yields a heaven below;
And angels round the throne will say,
Tis all the heaven they know.**

Norman Vincent Peale tells of the Belgian family whose father had been taken to the prison in Breendonk by the Nazis. It was a death camp and they never saw him again. How did they endure such torture and death he asked, and the son took him to the cell and told him to get down on his knees and reach up under the bench to the wall and feel the wall. It felt like the outline of a face, he said. "That is precisely what it is," the son said. "One of the prisoners carved the face of the Savior under this bench where the Nazis wouldn't find it. And in the night time he would run

his hand over this face." Other prisoners heard of it and asked if they could also run their hand over the face. This is how they got comfort and assurance that Christ was with them in their trials.

In a great church in Copenhagen, Denmark, the famous sculptor Thorwalden made a statue of Christ. When you enter the church it looks like Jesus is looking at you, but you can't see His face. If you go from side to side you the likeness of the Lord, but still you can't see His face. It is only when you walk down the aisle and kneel and look up that you can see His face. Only when bowed down looking up does the face of Christ appear. These, and many other stories, motivated me to write a poem on the face of Christ.

**Of all the faces of the human race,
None shine so bright as the Savior's face.
Of all whom we love, of all whom we embrace,
There is none who can take the Master's place.**

**His light alone will lead us home;
His light above will lead in love;
His glory pure will ever endure,
Of His guiding light you can be sure.**

**If you would like to like Him be,
Both now and for eternity,
Be blind to all that is low and base
And gaze instead upon His face.
Be willing however great the price**

To follow the light from the face of Christ.

18. JESUS IS EVERYTHING Based on Rev. 1:5

Toscanini, the world famous conductor, worked his orchestra so hard at rehearsals. Once, after performing Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in concert, the first violinist said to the second violinist, "If he scolds us after that superb performance, I will jump up and push him off his platform." But Toscanini did not scold. He stood silent and then with rapture on his face and a spirit of utter contentment said, "I am nobody, you are nobody-Beethoven is everything."

This is the attitude that John conveys about Jesus right from the start of this Revelation. He is but a servant, and all Christians are servants, but Jesus is everything. He is the Faithful Witness, the first born of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. Many see in this three-fold description of Jesus the perfect fulfillment of the three great roles of Prophet, Priests, and King. If you classify the great men of God in the Old Testament, you discover most all of them fall into one of these three categories. Jesus became the supreme example of each, and, therefore, He is literally everything to us. As Prophet He is the source of God's Word to us; as Priest He is the mediator who alone can offer an acceptable sacrifice to God; His being the first born is proof that His

sacrifice was accepted, and as King He is the Lord and Sovereign over our total life.

The point we need to stress here is that Jesus is all of these things in His humanity. It is as the second Adam that He is a faithful witness. The first Adam was unfaithful and bore witness to man's depravity by his disobedience. Jesus bore witness to our potential perfection by His perfect obedience to the Father while living in the flesh of His manhood. He was the first born from the dead as a man. Other men who were raised from the dead did not conquer death, but were only granted a temporary release from its collections. Jesus rose and conquered death permanently because it had no right to hold Him. He now, as He says in verse 18, has the keys of death and is in control. His reign as King goes even beyond that of earthly rulers. He is King also of the powers and dominions of the unseen world.

The point we are making here is, He is King, not just in His deity, but in His humanity. In His pre-human state before the incarnation, Jesus was equal with the Father and all powerful. He was already the sovereign ruler of the world. The Old Testament makes this clear. Arthur Pink in *Gleanings In The Godhead* gets very close to anger as he describes the weak and pathetic image so many Christians have of God. He says the God of many pulpits and Sunday Schools is an idol, for He falls so far short of the God of Scripture. He writes, "The most dishonoring conceptions of the rule and reign of the Almighty are now held almost everywhere." He goes on to quote I Chron. 29:11-12,

"Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine; Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as Head above all...And Thou reignest over all." Note, he says, that God reigns now and not in some far distant future.

II Chron. 20:6 says, "Dost Thou not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations? In Thy hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand Thee." No power in heaven and on earth or under the earth is superior to the power of God in the Old Testament, or to the Son in the New Testament. Any theology that even hints otherwise is not consistent with the clear revelation of Scripture. The point we are getting at is that Jesus, before the incarnation, was already sovereign. What then is the big deal about emphasizing that Jesus was exalted to the right hand of the Father? He could not get any higher than He was before. That is true as the Son of God, but when He took the throne after His resurrection, He did so as the Son of Man.

The new thing about the New King on the throne is that He is not only deity, He is man. It is the exaltation of man to the throne of the universe that makes Him the most exciting King ever. God has always been on the throne ruling the nations, but now a man is there: The Son of David-the Son of Man. In the ascension Jesus did not just return to the throne as He was before the incarnation. In welcoming Jesus to sit at His right hand, God welcomed humanity into His

family, and opened the door for all who bow to Christ to enter His kingdom and reign with Him.

Jesus is, therefore, indeed, everything to us. He is Prophet, Priest and King in His humanity, and because He is all of these in His humanity, all who follow Jesus can be prophets, priests and kings, which is what John says in verse 6 where the priestly and kingly role of the believer is noted. This three-fold description of Jesus lays emphasis on the three major events in the life of Jesus in terms of fulfilling God's plan of redemption, and openly the door for man to be one with God. The faithful witness stresses the cross; the first born of the dead stresses the resurrection, and the ruler of kings on earth stresses the ascension.

Before we look at each of these, it is of interest to note that the one thing the Prophet, Priest, and King had in common was that each of them had to be anointed to the office. Christ means Anointed One. Jesus was, in His humanity, anointed to all three of these offices, and, therefore, is the ultimate and everlasting Anointed One. He, and He only, is the Christ. In a catechism of the Eastern Orthodox Church the question is asked, "Why is Jesus called the Anointed?" The answer given is, "Because to his manhood were imparted without measure all the gifts of the Holy Spirit; and so he possesses in the highest degree the knowledge of a prophet; the holiness of a high priest, and the power of a king." Lets look at each separately.

I. THE FAITHFUL WITNESS

The Greek word for witness is martus from which we get the word martyr. A martyr is one who bears witness to his faith even to the point of death. In this sense Jesus was a martyr. He could have escaped the cross, but he went all the way as a faithful witness proclaiming his faith in God. He was convinced God would accept his sacrifice for the sin of the world, raise him from the dead, and save for ever all those who trusted in his death. Jesus bore witness, not only to his own faith and trust in the Father, but he bore witness to the love of the Father for lost men. If we want to know how God really feels about anything, we turn to Jesus, for he alone is a faithful witness. He alone is an infallible guide as to the will and plan of God.

The world has always been filled with voices telling men what is right and wise. Many of these voices have spoken truth but have not lived up to what they spoke. Others lived well but did not speak in accordance with the mercy of Jesus. Jesus alone, of all witnesses in the world, had been faithful and perfectly consistent in both doctrine and deed, in word and walk. He alone has been faithful so that we can trust and follow his example in all he said and did. a witness tells what he has seen and heard and the judge and jury make their decision on the basis of what they feel is the trustworthiness of the witness. John is telling us from the start of this Revelation that Jesus is the source of this revelation, and you can count on it. It is reliable and trustworthy. It comes from Him who is the Faithful Witness.

When Jesus said, "I am the truth," He was just using different words to describe His role as the Faithful Witness. Jesus said to Pilate in John 18:37, "For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth." It was on the cross that Jesus bore the greatest witness and fulfilled His purpose for coming. We now know, because of His witness on Calvary, the truth about sin and salvation. We now know all that we need to know to be saved, because Jesus was the Faithful Witness. Secondly, John says Jesus was-

II. THE FIRST BORN OF THE DEAD.

Jesus is the first man to begin living in the state of everlasting life. He was already eternal as God before the Incarnation, but His manhood was real flesh and blood subject to death. When He rose in His body from the grave that was the beginning of man's entrance into eternal life where death is conquered forever. The first man to be totally saved was Jesus. He is both Savior and saved. The reason we stress the manhood of Christ at this point is because that is the stress of the New Testament. Listen to Paul in I Cor. 15:20-22: "But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive."

Jesus in His manhood has reversed what Adam did. He has regained for man the control of life beyond death. He

now has the keys, and He is Lord of death as well as life. Death no longer has control of the destiny of men, but man in Christ has control of the destiny of death. It is the last enemy to be destroyed, but it will be destroyed. Jesus was the first to conquer death as a man that He might be the leader and Lord of men as a man. As God He always was Lord, but He only became Lord of men as a man when He rose from the dead and ascended to the Father's right hand. Now He is the number one man in the universe. Paul stressed this in Col. 1:18, "He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in everything He might be pre-eminent.

Nobody is first but Jesus. Nobody is number one but Jesus. In this world there are dozens of competitive battles to be number one at something, but for the Christian there is only One who always has that spot locked up, and that is Jesus. It would be good to get the pre-eminence of Christ so ingrained in our minds that we can relate all great claims to Him. Some examples would be:

Jesus is like Ford-He has a better idea.

Jesus is like Coke-He's the real thing.

Jesus is like PanAm-He makes the going great.

Jesus is like Pepsi-He's got a lot to give.

Jesus is like American oil-you expect more from Him and you get it.

Jesus is like Hallmark Cards-He cares enough to send the very best.

Jesus is like tide-He gets the stain others leave behind.

Jesus is like frosted flakes-He is grrrrrrreat.

Keep your mind open for others, and the advertising of this world can even be a means of praising Jesus and making Him pre-eminent in our thinking. Because He is the first born from the dead, we who trust Him will be later born and rise from the womb of the tomb to live forever. As the first-fruits from the grave Jesus transformed the desert of death into a glorious garden from which new and beautiful life can spring. As the first-born son takes over the inheritance, so Jesus as the first born from the dead takes over all that death controlled, and He now, rather than death, determines the destiny of men.

Jesus is, therefore, now, the perfect High Priest, for He does not have to offer sacrifice continually. His resurrection was evidence that His once of all sacrifice on the cross was sufficient for all sin of all men for all time. Now He ever lives to make intercession for us. As a man He is our representative before God, and our Mediator who alone has power to gain our pardon and save us from the consequence of sin which is death. There is only one Mediator between God and man, and it is the Man Christ Jesus. It is also as a man, the Son of David, that He reigns as King of kings. God has made a man co-ruler with Him over this universe. God and man are not only reconciled, they reign together as One.

You can see how encouraging these titles of Jesus would be to Christians all through history who had to face persecution for His sake. What He is makes any price worth paying to follow Him faithfully. All the powers of earth and hell are nothing compared to Him who is everything. So

wonderful is the theology of the titles John has given us that He does an unusual thing in the next phrase. He starts a doxology. Usually you save the doxology for the end, but John is saying things about Jesus so profound and marvelous that he cannot refrain from a doxology at the beginning. What Jesus is demands praise. There is no way we can honestly grasp who Jesus is and not have a heart that praises Him. John directs his praise to Jesus first as-

TO HIM WHO LOVES US. The KJV has the wrong tense which all of the modern versions have corrected. It is not to Him who loved us-past tense, but to Him who loves us now-present tense. This is a now book and it is from Jesus who is always the contemporary of all His people in every period of history. His love is not a once for all act. He did not just love us on the cross when He died for us. He loves us now and continuously. His love is rooted in the past, but the fruit of that past action of love is perpetual, and we must always think of Jesus as our present Lord and not just as a past hero of history.

Theodore Ferris in *The Image Of God* taught his students this lesson by telling them to suppose they were at a rehearsal of a play. As they watched the play they are impressed and desire to meet the author. They asked someone where the author is, and no one seems to know. They go off to the wings of the stage expecting to see him, but he is not there. They check back stage, but still no sign of him. Finally, they check the seats in the auditorium thinking he must be there as a spectator. When that fails to produce the author they

conclude he is not present. People look for God and Jesus the same way, and often conclude that the author of the play called history is just not present. The problem is, they are looking in the wrong place. If you want to find the author, you look on the stage, for he is not an observer only. He has written himself into the play, and is a major actor on the stage. The greatest love story is not over, but goes on running to the end of history, and the star of the play, the greatest lover in all of history, is Jesus Christ.

The love of Jesus for His Bride, the Church, is a romance beyond anything man has ever produced on stage or screen. No TV series can boast a running of almost 2000 years with constant growth. The love of Jesus is always present to His Bride. It is the warmth she needs in a cold world; the light she needs in a dark world; the joy she needs in a sad world. John was the one whom Jesus loved in a special way. John laid his head on the breast of Jesus. Now John is in exile on an island, and has gone through a time of tribulation he says in verse 9. But John does not speak of Christ's love as past. He does not say that he remembers the good old days. John refers to Jesus as the One who loves us. No matter how rough the way and tough life gets on this earth, Jesus is the One who loves us. The song, "Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so," has for its basis this text right here. Every generation can sing it, for Jesus is the ever contemporary lover of the church, and to the church He is, and ever will be, everything.

19. WHO IN THE WORLD IS KING? Based on Rev. 1:5

Queen Victoria of England often expressed her wish that Christ would return before she died so that she could cast her crown at His feet. When she did die, her son Edward VII ascended to the throne as king. He had been a rather wild man in his younger years. A man by the name of John Knox McEwen was concerned about the king enough to write him a letter asking him if his majesty was born again in Christ. He received a gracious reply in which the king said he was the first man in all of England to express any concern for his soul, and he gave a simple testimony of how he had, like his mother, surrendered his heart and life to the King of kings. John McEwen was 70 years old, and at 93 he was still telling others of his letter from the king.

John the Apostle is also in his 90's as he tells us about his letter, not from the king who bowed to the King of kings, but from the King of kings before whom he bowed. John says in verse 5 that Jesus is the ruler of kings on the earth.

The Hapsburg family once ruled half of Europe. Today, only one Hapsburg still rules over the tiny land of Leichenstein. It is a 61 square mile country, and is the 4th smallest in the world. Jesus, however, has gone from a carpenter who didn't even own a plot of ground to be buried in to the ruler of kings on earth. You talk about a success story. There is not another to match this one. We can think of ourselves more highly than we ought, but we can never exalt Jesus beyond what he is worthy. We too often do not

exalt Him to the place He should rightly have in our minds and hearts.

If a hunter got out of a car and asked you to do something, you would not respond with the same enthusiasm as you would if a ruler or dignitary asked you for service. The higher the authority the more we respond, and that is why it is important to stress the Lordship and Kingship of Christ. It is easy to see why the world does not acknowledge Jesus as King. Jesus is a total mystery to the world, and His success story is beyond their comprehension. Helen Kramer expressed it so well in her play titled For Heaven's Sake. Two well dressed business men with attache cases meet in a bar. One has just been handed a track with the title Carry Christ Into Your Work. He looks at it and sings this song of bewilderment.

"He was a flop at 33! His whole career was one of failure and of loss, But the thing that so distressful Is He could have been successful, But instead of climbing up, He climbed a cross!

**He was a flop at 33! He jumped from carpentry to preaching to the mob. He never was adjusted So He spent His whole life busted,
And He never got promoted on the job!**

**He never saved a single cent,
And Dun and Broadstreet wouldn't list Him on their list,
He could not establish credit And you might as well be dead**

At 33 as have your credit not exist!

**He spent His time with fisher folk,
When there were more important contacts to be made.
He would contemplate on flowers And ignore the cocktail
hours.
Its no wonder that He never made the grade!**

**Now you and I have never flopped,
And yet our names are never dropped
The way that they've been dropping His since He's been
dead!
We've fought our way to the top.
We're both established as successful men of worth,
So the thing that puzzles me,
Is why that flop at 33
Is called the most successful man to live on earth?"**

It is easy to see why Jesus is a mystery to the world. But it is hard to grasp why even Christians sometimes ignore or deny the Kingship of their Lord. Many commentators just skip over these words of verse 5 like they are a mere minor matter of no great significance. John says that Jesus is three things here. He is the Faithful Witness, the first born from the dead, and the Ruler of kings on the earth. The first two are handled quite well by most commentators, but the third one is so radical and shocking in all of its implications that men are afraid to look at it honestly. Many just skip over it in embarrassment. The Living Bible robs it of its force by saying, "He is far greater than any king in all the earth."

That is a weak translation, for John says, "He is the ruler of the kings of earth."

Hal Lindsay in There's A New World Coming says, yes, He is what John says He is, ruler of the kings of the earth, but He is not now exercising His authority. In other words, He is a ruler who is not ruling. That is like saying somebody is the king of comedy, but he is just not telling any jokes now. It is absolutely amazing how many different ways men try to find to avoid the truth of the present Lordship of Jesus Christ in history. The big question the book of Revelation answers is the question, who in the world is in charge? Who is in control? Is history run by evil forces or good? Will light triumph, or darkness? John says right from the start that Jesus is Lord and King, and only those who submit to His Lordship will come through as victorious winners.

After His resurrection Jesus said it as plain as human language can say it: "All power in heaven and on earth is given unto Me." All we have to decide is whether Jesus just exaggerated, or did He really mean it? I believe He said what He meant and He meant what He said. When He ascended in His glorified humanity to the right hand of God He became the supreme ruler of men. He is not going to be the ruler of kings on earth, He is now the Kings of kings. The fact that His Lordship will be clearly manifested to the nations in the future is no reason to deny the present reign of Christ. The fact that so many do, however, is the reason I reject all man made systems of interpretation as absolute guides. All of them have values, but none of them are

absolute and infallible. Those who lock themselves into any one system are forced to do too many foolish things with the Word of God.

For example, the reason why so many refuse to see and rejoice in the present Lordship of Christ in history is because, if they do, it will support a postmillennial emphasis. The postmills stress that Jesus is Lord of history and that He will work through His church to take the Gospel into all the world and win this world out of darkness into light. Many of the greatest theologians of American history were postmills. The first president of Bethel was postmill, and Augustus Strong, whose Systematic Theology has been the standard text in Baptist schools and seminaries all over the land, was postmill.

When the two world wars of this century shook man's faith in the progress of history the Postmill view was forsaken by a great many Christians who became premills. The big mistake of the premills, however, was in assuming that everything in the Post-mill system had to all wrong. The fact is, they had an emphasis that is so Biblical that to deny it is to close your eyes to the light of the Word. They emphasized the present Lordship of Christ in history that gave the church encouragement and strength to keep fighting for victory with assurance that whatever the cost and however great the odds, they would be victorious. This positive Biblical attitude is far more beneficial to the church than the negative pessimistic attitude that evil is supreme in the world, and the forces of darkness are overwhelming everything, and,

therefore, about all we can do is hope the ship doesn't sink for us before the Lord finally comes to rapture us out of this hopeless mess. This kind of theology has left many Christians paralyzed. They become indifferent to missions and any effort to change the world, for why fight a losing battle?

This is not the theology of the book of Revelation. I am not a Post-mill, but when they emphasize what is a Biblical truth, then that is the fountain I drink at. Why should we care which system is the best? What we should care about is what is the Bible saying, and the system that brings more light out of any verse is the system I will follow on that verse. On this verse 5 many of the pre-mills, which we will be following most of the time, have really missed the boat. Part of the problem is the self tendency to ignore all other Christians of history and interpret this book in the light of your own limited concern.

Can you imagine how important this revelation of the present Lordship of Christ in history meant to the first Christians who received it? They had to bow to Caesar, or in many cases die. John is saying here that Jesus is Caesar's king. Do not fear Caesar, and bow to no one less than the supreme ruler of men-Jesus Christ. What an encouragement to those who had to die in the battle of light against darkness. It is so much easier to die when you are assured you are under the supreme authority. In verse 18 Jesus tells John to fear not. He says, "I have the keys of death and hades." In other words, as King of kings, there is no force on earth you need to fear, for I am Master of all, and whatever they do to

you will not take you out of my control. That may not be a crucial issue for us, but it has meant everything to millions of Christians who have faced persecution down through the centuries.

Ellicott in his commentary says, "The disposition to dwell on the future and more visibly recognized reign of Christ hereafter, has tended to obscure the truth of His present reign." The wise Christian does not pick one of the two and ignore the other. He prefers to live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God, and not every other word. And so He emphasizes both reigns, and could not care less which system is being supported. Paul said that Jesus must reign till all enemies are put under his feet. He is reigning now, therefore, but not all are submissive to His Lordship. That is why history is a battleground of light and darkness. Nevertheless, the king of light is the Supreme and Sovereign Ruler, and when it is all over, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that He is indeed what the Bible claims that He has been all along-the Lord or Ruler of kings on earth.

You do not have to know much about history to know that Jesus Christ has been the greatest influence in history. There has never been a ruler that has ever been anything but a loyal, or rebellious, servant of Jesus. The kings and rulers of the world date all their documents by the date of the birth of their Sovereign-the Lord Jesus. Napoleon wrote, "An extra ordinary power of influencing and commanding men has been given to Alexander, Charlemagne, and myself. But

with us, the presence has been necessary, the eye, the voice, the hands. Whereas Jesus Christ has influenced and commanded His subjects without visible bodily presence for 1800 years." Napoleon admitted in his writings that Jesus was the greatest ruler ever. What ruler has ever lived with such world wide power, and with such a vast army of soldiers willing to die for Him?

Charlotte Kruger spoke her allegiance in poetry:

**Beautiful Savior, Thou art my King,
Sharon's sweet Rose and the Lily of spring,
Star of the morning, fairest of fair,
Light of this world in its gloom and despair.**

The world is full of beautiful poetry that acknowledges Jesus Christ as King, but the danger is that we will, as Christians, limit His kingship to being the head of the church. John gets into that in depth later on, but here in verse 5 the stress is on the fact that Jesus is the Ruler of the Kings on earth. He does not limit it to godly kings, but makes it a universal statement. It is so easy to spiritualize this idea and rob it of its literal meaning and impact. Terese Lindsay wrote-

**He built no kingdom, yet a King from youth
He reigned, is reigning yet; they call His realm
The kingdom of the truth.**

This is true. Jesus is the King of truth, and also the King of love, hope, light, and any number of other virtues, but none of these cover what John is saying when he says, "Jesus is the Ruler of Kings on earth." What John is saying is that Jesus is right now the King of kings. We don't have to wait until the future for Jesus to be Lord, for He is Lord now. It is foolish to reject this clear revelation of the New Testament just because we have the hope of a visible reign of Christ in the future. So many Christians feel obligated to ignore the present reign of Christ because they are looking to a future reign. This is to ignore a major New Testament emphasis. What did Peter emphasize on the day of Pentecost in his great sermon? He stressed the fact that in the resurrection and ascension Jesus ascended to the promised throne of David, and that He was right then the reigning King.

Acts 2:30 says of David, "Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants upon his throne, he foresaw and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ...." Peter clearly proclaims that Jesus has ascended to the throne of David, and he concludes his sermon in verse 36, "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." Peter did not say, He will make Him Lord and Christ, but He has made Him Lord and Christ. He is right now, and was from His ascension, Lord of all.

The Apostle Paul also makes clear that the future reign of Jesus is no reason to reject or ignore His present reign. He

stresses both the future and the present Lordship of Christ in Eph. 1:19-21. "And what is the immeasurable greatness of His power in us who believe, according to the working of His great might which He accomplished in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and made Him sit at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come."

Peter, Paul, and John all say Jesus is King of kings now, and in the future there will be a visible manifestation of what is already a reality. Commentators who stress one or the other only, not only fail to be Biblically balanced, they distort the truth by saying half the truth is the whole truth. Since most systems of interpretation do this, I reject them as adequate guides in all understanding of this book, and choose to listen to the Biblical text, and get all the light possible from it without concern as to which system it supports or hinders. The goal is to get light and not to bolster any system of men who tend to ignore the light that does not fit their system.

This truth of the present reign of Christ can transform our motivation and make us optimists no matter how powerful the forces of evil. Jesus is a King who does not conquer the world by force, but by the power of the Gospel and the Holy Spirit. The New Testament tells us that members of Herod's and Caesar's household were active in the early church. In more modern times we can look at Stalin, that godless and ruthless ruler who was responsible for the murder of millions, and see that even evil at its worse

cannot keep the power of Christ from working. His daughter, Svetlana, who escaped to America wrote in her book *Twenty Letters To A Friend*, "I was brought up in a family where there was never any talk of God. But when I became a grown person, I found that it is impossible to exist without God in one's heart." The kingdom of Christ was present even in that life surrounded by darkness.

The universe is foolproof. Many fools come onto the stage of history and say in their heart there is no God. They start wars to try and take control of history out of the hands of the Lord of history, but in the long run we always see history crush these tyrants, and like Satan, the first rebel against the King, they fall. In spite of all the godless rulers of history, nearly a third of the human race closes their prayer in the name of Jesus; a name that right now is already a name above every name.

When Elizabeth II of England was crowned at her coronation at Westminster Abbey these words were spoken as she received her crown: "Receive the orb set under the cross, and remember that the whole world is subject to the power and empire of Christ our Redeemer." The sun never use to set on the English Empire, but like many of the past empires, it too has now been diminished from its glory. Only the kingdom of Christ shines with its original glory, for His Kingship never fades or diminishes. He has been; He will be, and He is now the Ruler of kings on the earth. Dr. Robert Mounce, who was my professor at Bethel, wrote a commentary on Revelation and he writes, "Although there

will be a outbreak of satanic activity in the last days, history remains under the sovereign control of God. Redemption has already been won by the Lamb, who conquered through death..." To hear and heed this truth is to know the secret of optimism in a dark world.

Rita Snowden expresses the whole of the message I am conveying in her poem Through Open Windows.

**Life can never be dull again
When once we've thrown our windows open wide
And seen the mighty world that lies outside,
And whispered to ourselves this wondrous thing,
We're wanted for the business of the King.**

Who in the world is the King? The Lord Jesus Christ is right now the King of the world. We are not waiting for a king, for we have a King, And how we live reveals just how much we really believe it.

20. WORTHY IS THE LAMB Based on Rev. 5:1-14

Colonel John Howard was ordered to retreat in the Revolutionary War. But as he did, the British started to charge, and he decided to surprise them. He ordered his men to attack. They did and won a smashing victory for which he

received great honor. But General Morgan reminded him, had his plan failed he would have been shot for disobeying orders. His decision could have led to disgrace rather than honor. Opposites can be so close, and in the case of Jesus as the Lamb of God, these opposites comes together as one. The disgrace of the cross became the basis for Jesus to be honored, not only for all history, but for all eternity. A song we will never cease to sing is the song, Worthy Is The Lamb Who Was Slain. Every joy and every pleasure of the eternal kingdom will be ours because of his sacrifice for us.

After ten billion years we might forget every aspect of the history of earth and time, but we will never forget this song. Rev. 5 is the worthy chapter of the book. Out of 7 uses of the word in Revelation, 4 of them are here in this chapter, and they all refer to Jesus as the Lamb of God who died for the salvation of a lost world. This song of heaven exalts Jesus in a way no other does, for it is not just the redeemed humanity that praises His worthiness, but the angels, and all the beings of creation. We are focusing on verse 12 which is the angelic chorus portion of this grand universal musical.

**The whole creation joined in one,
To bless the sacred Name,
Of Him that sits upon the throne,
And to adore the Lamb.**

I think the church has underestimated the roll of angels in the whole plan of God. This text tells us they are together as a multitude beyond number praising the worthiness of the

Lamb just as loud, if not louder, than the redeemed. I fear we have underestimated the cosmic consequences of the cross. We are told that angels cannot know what it is to be redeemed by the Savior, and there is no doubt truth to this, for they were never lost. But Christians have gone to far in separating the angels from the joy of salvation. They know and feel more than we realize. They are the ones who rejoice over every sinner who repents. They are the ones who sing of the Lamb being worthy of 7 things: Power, wealth, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, and praise. Seven being used all through the book for completeness and totality. In other words, there is nothing imaginable for which Jesus is not worthy of honor.

The angels actually know more about what Jesus deserved and merits for His sacrifice than do the redeemed. We tend to want to make salvation man-centered, but the fact is, the Bible expands the picture to include all of creation, and the angels are deeply affected by this. It is superficial, therefore, to put the angels down as does Anna Grannis in her poem:

**There's a song the angels can never share
While the endless ages roll;
The song of one who has been redeemed,
The song of a ransomed soul:
Shall we sing it together, thou and I,
With the wondering angels standing by?
Shall we sing it there in the courts above-
The heaven gained through redeeming love?**

Our text tells us it is not so. The angels are not just standing by. They are singing just as loud as the saints. They understand that Jesus deserves every honor that heaven is capable of bestowing. To be worthy is to deserve what you get. We are not worthy of the least of His favors. We are saved totally by His grace. But Jesus is exalted as King of Kings and Lord of Lords because He earned that honor. He deserves it, and every knee will bow to Jesus because He is worthy. Aristotle said three hundred years before Christ, "Dignity does not consist in possessing honors, but in deserving them." The whole point of heaven's praise is that the Lamb of God deserves all the honors He receives. The greatest rewards in heaven will be given to Jesus, for He alone deserves them. We can't consider all 7 of His honors but I want to select three to focus on that all began with the letter W. Worthy is the Lamb to receive Worship, Wealth, and Wisdom. These represent all of which He is worthy. The first is the word praise which is the same as worship.

I. HE IS WORTHY OF WORSHIP.

We need to grasp this basic truth that praise or worship is not to be founded on the worthiness of our circumstances alone. When all is well and we flourish under showers of blessing, we naturally praise our Lord with hearts full of thanksgiving. But we can easily let this lead us to conclude that our blessings are what makes Jesus worthy of worship. The fact is, He is just as worthy when we are up to our knees in mud, because the showers of blessings have become a cloud burst of calamity.

His worthiness does not hinge on our well-being. That is a great aid in helping us praise, but we need to see Jesus as worthy and richly deserving of praise even when we are going through terrible days. Sammy Tippit, founder and president of God's Love In Action, and international evangelistic ministry, tells of his discovery of this truth in his book, Worthy Of Worship. He was leaving for Romania where he had preached before and saw many come to Christ. The night before his flight he had an accident in which he totaled his car. No one was injured, but he had to board the plane with a heavy heart, for he was leaving his family without transportation. He felt down and lonely. The next day he joined two friends in Budapest and boarded a train for Romania. When they arrived at the border, soldiers came aboard and said, "Mr. Tippit, please take your luggage and come with us." He tried to ask what was happening, but got no response. The train pulled out with his two friends looking out the window. He felt so bad the tears began to well up in his eyes. He was tired and lonely, and felt God-forsaken. But in that dark moment the Holy Spirit brought to his mind the song, Great Is Thy Faithfulness. He began to sing it. Great is thy faithfulness, morning by morning new mercies I see. All I have needed thy hand hath provided. Great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me."

The guards looked at him like he was crazy. It didn't make sense to him either, for his feelings were not in conformity with those words. He had to make a choice: Do I follow my subjective feelings, or the objective revelation of God? He decided to praise the Lord for who He was, and not

focus on the mess he was in. He began to sing praise songs, and had a private worship service. His feelings began to lighten, and a sense of peace and joy replaced his sense of defeat. His crisis did end, and he was on his way, but he learned a vital lesson for life. Jesus is worthy of praise, not just in good times, but always. When we practice this truth we will find our bad times are easier to endure. Paul and Silas were praising the Lord at midnight in a dungeon locked in stocks. It is not the environment that is likely to produce praises, but the never changing reality that Christ is worthy, regardless of the setting, made them sing to him who is ever worthy of our praise.

Tippits experience again illustrates the point. He was in a small village in a mountainous part of Germany. He went jogging even though a fresh foot of snow had fallen. For the first half hour it was complete drudgery, for he kept his eyes on the ground. He was getting exhausted as each step became more difficult. Then he looked up and saw a view that was magnificent as the mountains and trees sparkled in the sunlight. It was awesome, and he decided to slow down and look at the splendid scenery. His run was now and immense delight, and he enjoyed renewed vitality because of where he placed his focus. Again, the lesson is, look to Jesus and get your eyes on the glory. If you look at the hard road and the heavy load life can be a burden. But get your focus on the brightness of His glorious whiteness, and the unchanging worthiness of his praise, and the burdens grow lighter, and this world becomes brighter.

The basic issue in worship is not, is the choir worthy, is the soloist worthy, is the organist or pianist worthy, is the pastor worthy-the issue is, is Jesus worthy? And if He is, then we can worship and praise Him regardless of all other short comings. They are aids to worship, but if the aids fail to achieve the goal appointing us to Jesus, then we have an obligation to look beyond the aids to Him who is worthy, and let His worthiness alone be our aid to praise.

The point is, there is never an excuse to fail in worship. No human defect, or flaw in the circumstances, can rob us of our joy in praise if we look to Jesus. There is no end to what is not worthy of praise in even the best efforts of men to glorify God. If the works of men are your focus, you will be a complainer and a disturber of the peace. But if your focus is on the works of Christ, you will be an never ending praiser and distributor of peace. You have a choice in life as to where you will put your focus. If you choose to focus on what is bad in the body, you will be dominated by negatives, for the body has endless defects. But if you chose to focus on what is good in the Head, you will dominated by positives, for the Head has endless perfections. It's a matter of, heads you win and tails you lose, for the body is often not worthy, but the Head is never not worthy of worship and praise. Next, we note of the Lamb of God that-

II. HE IS WORTHY OF WEALTH.

In other words, if anybody in history is worthy of being rich forever, it is Jesus. There are a lot of people who are

rich who do not deserve to be. They have acquired their wealth at the expense of the health and well being of others. By drugs or pornography, or even by murder, there are those who are millionaires. Their status as rich will be very temporary, however, for they are not worthy.

Others have produced products that are of great value to life, and they became wealthy in a way that is deserving. Firestone made a tire that race track drivers trusted with their lives. From 1920 to 1966 every winner of the Indianapolis 500 came in on Firestone tires. People made him a rich man because they said it's worth the price for his product, and so he is worthy of wealth.(How times change!)

When the doctor has the skill to save your life you are grateful, and you pay your bill feeling they are worthy of wealth, for they have restored you to health. There are many who receive riches who are deserving of them. How much more the Great Physician who has found a way to heal all our diseases forever? He alone has the cure for that which robs us of health and wealth, and our relationship to God. Sin robs us of our identity as children of God. Sin is a plague that is so devastating it makes all the other plagues of history look like acne in comparison. Find a cure for sin, and you have the greatest hero of history, for he will be the benefactor of all mankind, and the entire creation of God.

That is what the song is all about. The Lamb who was slain was that hero, and He is, therefore, worthy of wealth. The richest person in eternity will be Jesus, and rightly so,

for he did what no other could do. Isaac Watts expressed it in his hymn-

**Not all the blood of beasts
On Jewish altars slain,
Could give the guilty conscience peace,
Or wash away the stain.
But Christ, the heavenly Lamb,
Takes all our sins away.
A sacrifice of nobler name,
And richer blood than they.**

Nobody will ever walk down the golden streets of the New Jerusalem and complain, "How come the Lord Jesus has a palace the size of the Mall of America, and the rest of us only get these 50 room mansions?" No one will ever envy the fact that Jesus will be the richest being in the universe with more jewels on the doorknob of His palace than are in all the crown jewels of Europe. There will be no envy of the luxury beyond our wildest dreams, but rather a sincere song of praise acknowledging that He, and He alone is worthy of such wealth. We will love the lavish luxury of our Lord, for we know there is no way we can adequately reward Him for what He has done for us. Thank God the Father that He has a way of richly rewarding His son even in a context where all will be rich forever.

Have you ever thought of it: If you have trusted Jesus as your Savior, you can tell people that you have an older brother who is richer than the richest men in the world.

There are billionaires, but I haven't heard of any trillionaires yet. But even trillionaires are not in the class with our older brother in the family of God. If Jesus gets the wealth He deserves, then He inherits all the riches of God, and as King of Kings and Lord of Lords possesses the wealth of the universe. We are talking about figures so astronomical that in comparison the combined wealth of all the nations of the world is equivalent to the value of the mineral deposits under your little finger nail.

That is why heaven is so full of the songs of praise. That is all you can give to the man who literally has everything. There is nothing we can add to the wealth of Jesus. All we can offer Him is the sacrifice of praise. That is why we will enjoy the angels in all creation in singing forever-worthy is the Lamb to receive wealth. Next we see-

III. HE IS WORTHY OF WISDOM.

Solomon was the wisest man in history, but that was due to God's grace, and not his worthiness. He became very unworthy of God's favor and suffered judgment. But a greater than Solomon is here as the theme of heaven's song. Jesus was the wisest man in history, and will be for all eternity, and He deserves it. He earned His degree in the school of hard knocks, and is worthy to have the very mind of God knowing all that can be known, and having the wisdom to use that knowledge for the good of all, and the glory of the Father.

No one else in all the universe was worthy to open the scroll of heaven and see the future. The spotless angels who never fell were not worthy. The geniuses of history who were already in heaven were not worthy. Only one being existed worthy of sharing the very mind of God. He only had the wisdom to look beyond the moment and obey God at any cost. This is where all others have fallen short of being worthy. Lucifer could not see the glory of the long-run. He wanted the glory of the moment, and so in folly he fell from grace. Adam and Eve could not see the glory of obedience to God, even when they did not understand. They grasped for the glory of the moment and they fell. It is the story of all God's creatures, but Jesus came on the stage of history and was offered fame and fortune and power if He would bow to Satan, but He had the wisdom to say no to the glory of the moment so that He and we might enjoy the glory of forever. Nobody else ever had that kind of wisdom. His ability to see the long-run, and the long range picture, is what made Jesus the wisest man to ever live, and thus worthy of wisdom forever.

If that is heaven's estimate of Jesus, then we need to enter into that estimate on earth and recognize Jesus is worthy of our best. He is worthy of our best thinking and planning, and worthy of excellence in all that we do. We are to love Him with all of our mind, and give heed to Paul who says, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." We are to be wise and not foolish. We are to live and think and create on a level of excellence that conveys this conviction-worthy is the Lamb to receive wisdom. He does

not receive it from God the Father, but He only receives it from us when we are conscience of His worthiness and present ourselves, body, mind, and spirit, as living sacrifices for His glory.

He is worthy of our best now and for all eternity, because He alone had the wisdom to figure out how to turn filthy ragged sinners into white robed saints. J. W. Ham tells of his wonder at visiting a paper mill where he saw a huge pile of dirty rags thrown into a vat and made into pulp. Then chemicals were added, and this stuff was rolled out into pure white paper for people to write messages of love on, and send to loved ones. Man is deserving of honor and reward for the wisdom of this process that benefits us all. How much more the Lamb of God whose wisdom devised a way to turn the filthy rags of our righteousness into the white robes of redemption, making us acceptable in the presence of God?

**Wise are we who will not wait
To in His praise participate,
But right now on this present date
Join all heaven to celebrate.**

Let us never cease to sing, worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive worship, wealth, and wisdom, and every other honor conceivable. As part of the Bride of the Lamb, this is our song now and forever-worthy is the Lamb.

