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Christ's Powerful Ministry Summarized

Mark 3:7-19

Throughout Jesus' ministry, he was surrounded daily by huge crowds... crushing him, invading his personal space, demanding ministry from him—especially healing. Most of these people had, it seems, far less interest in his preaching and doctrine than they did in getting healed or getting their stomachs full.

Jesus knew their hearts better than they did. He knew that a mob is fickle, and that nothing of lasting consequence happens by unruly crowds. A short time later, the crowd dissipates and soon throngs after another fad. Jesus personally thinned out such a crowd in John 6, right after the Feeding of the Five Thousand. They came back for another feeding, and Jesus urged them to lift their eyes upward to heaven and inward to their souls:

John 6:26-29 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. ²⁷ Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. ... ²⁸ Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" ²⁹ Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."

Jesus wanted them to eat a different kind of bread... to feed on his atoning work, his body and blood given in death for the forgiveness of their sins. So he turned up the heat and taught them this shocking statement:

John 6:51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

By the end of the day, the huge, self-focused, worldly-minded crowd had been thinned down:

John 6:60 On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?"

As we come this morning to Mark 3:7-19, we come to a remarkably efficient summary of Jesus' earthly ministry. We have a huge crowd there, desperate only for physical healing... not really aware of what their true needs were, the salvation of their souls. They represent the vast mission field of the world, the teeming millions of lost people who need forgiveness more than they need any earthly thing – more than they need physical healing, more than they need material prosperity, more than they need any sensual pleasure or earthly blessing. Forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God. Teeming multitudes, crowds and crowds of people pressing in on Jesus, crushing him, wanting healing and (for the most part) nothing more.

Then we have the terrorized demons who fall down before Jesus and scream right theology from infinitely wicked hearts – screaming at Jesus, “You are the Son of God!!” and Jesus forbidding them to speak those holy words. They are the hidden enemies, the servants of Satan, from whose dark kingdom these teeming millions will be rescued.

Third, we have the Twelve Apostles, chosen by Christ to lead the worldwide advance of his Kingdom... twelve ordinary men, who changed the future course of the world by the power of God, by the simple ministry of the preached word

This chapter captures these basic elements... and it is going on even to this day

This is how the Kingdom of Christ has spread from a small upper room in one city—Jerusalem and moved out to the ends of the earth.

By the time this ministry will have finished its work on earth, there will be a multitude greater than anyone can count from every tribe, people, language, and nation standing around his throne

I. The Mission Field: Crushing Crowds Needing Healing

Mark 3:7-10 Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake, and a large crowd from Galilee followed. ⁸ When they heard all he was doing, many people came to him from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, and the regions across the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon. ⁹ Because of the crowd he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him, to keep the people from crowding him. ¹⁰ For he had healed many, so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him.

A. Jesus Withdrew to the Sea with His Disciples

1. Why? Because of the determination of his enemies to KILL him
2. Jesus had flouted the iron-clad grip of the Pharisees in their legalism over the Sabbath
 - a. He had allowed his disciples to pick heads of grain on the Sabbath and eat them, then had made this stunning claim

Mark 2:28 the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.

Only Almighty God could say that!

- b. Then, the next Sabbath, Jesus had healed a man with a shriveled hand in the synagogue in front of men who were determined to catch him and accuse him... and he had defended it with a clear question

Mark 3:4 "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?"

After healing the man, this was the reaction of his enemies:

Mark 3:6 Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

3. For this reason, Jesus WITHDREW to the Sea of Galilee with his disciples
 - a. It was not yet his time to be arrested and put to trial
 - b. He worked a strategic retreat, getting away from them, temporarily taking the heat from under the pot
- B. A Huge Crowd Followed
 1. By this time, Jesus' reputation as a healer had spread far and wide
 2. We've already seen this openly asserted

Mark 1:28 News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

Mark 1:32-34 That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. ³³ The whole town gathered at the door, ³⁴ and Jesus healed many who had various diseases.

3. After healing a leper, he commanded him not to tell anyone; but the man disobeyed and spread the word everywhere... look at the result

Mark 1:45 Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.

4. Back home in Capernaum, the word spread again; Crowds thronged so large that the four men couldn't get their paralyzed friend to Jesus

Mark 2:2 So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them.

They had to destroy the roof to get the paralyzed man in front of Jesus

When Jesus healed him, the reaction was again stunned amazement and a spreading of the word everywhere:

Mark 2:13 Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them.

5. At Levi's house, a huge crowd of tax collectors gathered, and many of them became believers
6. By the time we get to today's account, the news about Jesus as a healer had spread far and wide, and even larger crowds came

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C. The Diversity of the Crowd

1. From Galilee... his hometown
2. From Judea and Jerusalem... the southern part of Israel, Jews, no doubt, hearing what Jesus was doing and wanting to come
3. Idumea, the regions across the Jordan, and around Tyre and Sidon: mixed crowd; almost certainly many Gentiles included; the region of Idumea was southwest of Judea and basically made up of Edomites... it was the Greek name for Edom, the descendants of Esau, Jacob's reprobate brother; Tyre and Sidon were merchant cities, port cities north of Galilee, on the Mediterranean shore—predominantly Gentile

D. The Size of the Crowds: HUGE... the text calls it a "great multitude"

E. The Urgency of the Crowds: people were crushing Jesus, pressing in on him

1. Jesus liked to heal by touch

2. Sometimes people would be healed just by touching his garments... like the woman with the bleeding problem will in Mark 5... and again in Mark 6:

Mark 6:56 And wherever he went-- into villages, towns or countryside-- they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed.

3. So these people threatened to crush Jesus with their urgent needs

F. The Motive of the Crowd: Healing

1. What moved them to seek Jesus and find him was their desperate need for healing
2. When you are hurting, sick, dying, disabled, crippled, blind, leprous, paralyzed... or a loved one is... nothing else matters
3. Remember the elements of Jesus' healing ministry
 - successful... universal... effortless... instantaneous...
 - personal... free... varied
4. Their urgency depended on rudeness... born from desperation

Mark 3:10 For he had healed many, so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him.

They were falling on him or falling down in front of him, pleading with him, pulling on his garments

5. Their pressing him was so forceful that it was impossible to do anything normal... to eat, to rest, to speak

G. Jesus' Priority: Preaching

1. His disciples were there for more than healing... they hungered for the word of God
2. And this was most certainly Jesus' priority as well

3. All the healings were temporary... the real need was spiritual, the forgiveness of sins
4. The preaching of the Word of the Kingdom was the essential healing needed by all these sinners... though their felt needs made them desperate, Jesus knew their true need was the ministry of the Word
5. So Jesus commanded his disciples to make a boat ready for him:

Mark 3:9 Because of the crowd he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him, to keep the people from crowding him.

6. Sitting out on a boat on the lake gave Jesus the twin benefit of keeping the crushing crowds at bay and also facilitating preaching; the acoustics on the water were excellent... he could be easily heard by many more people
7. We will see this again in the next chapter

II. The Enemies: Seething Demons Needing Restraining

Mark 3:11-12 Whenever the evil spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God." ¹² But he gave them strict orders not to tell who he was.

A. Again, the Demons

1. This has already been a big theme in Mark's Gospel... and it will continue to be
2. Demons are spiritual beings... fallen angels
3. Called here "unclean spirits"... filthy, vile, polluted... morally dark
4. This is strong evidence of the deity of Christ and the power of his kingdom
5. Not only did Jesus rule over the physical realm—every disease and sickness among the people—he also ruled over the supernatural realm, for every demon was terrified of him and subject to him

B. The Terror of Demons

1. They fell down before him, clearly acknowledging his power over them all
2. They have no recourse but to beg for his mercy in many cases
3. They were terrified that he would torture them in the pit (Tartarus, “the abyss”) before the appointed time of their final condemnation in the Lake of Fire

Luke 8:31 *And they begged him repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss.*

2 Peter 2:4 *For if God didn't spare the angels who sinned, but threw them down into Tartarus and delivered them to be kept in chains of darkness until judgment*

4. They CRIED OUT before him, shouting, yelling, screaming ... they are unruly, churning rebels, no peace, no serenity, nothing but seething rage

C. Again... the Right Theology of Demons

1. They shouted out “You are the Son of God”
2. They have no doubt whatsoever about his identity
3. Earlier, the demon in the synagogue of Capernaum had said

Mark 1:24 *I know who you are-- the Holy One of God!*

Later the demoniac of the Gadarenes... the LEGION of demons:

Mark 5:7 *He shouted at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Swear to God that you won't torture me!"*

4. Right theology! BUT The shouting and their begging show their terror

James 2:19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe -- and tremble!

D. Jesus Silences Them:

Mark 3:12 But he gave them strict orders not to tell who he was.

"Strict orders" ... gagged... silenced... as Jesus did to the demon in Capernaum: "*Be quiet!!!*"

1. Why? He doesn't want demons as his representatives
2. That would be the role of the Twelve Apostles... they would be SENT OUT TO PREACH

III. The Messengers: Ordinary Men Appointed

Mark 3:13-15 Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. ¹⁴ He appointed twelve--designating them apostles--that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach ¹⁵ and to have authority to drive out demons.

A. This is Jesus' Long-Range Plan

1. While demons were forbidden from speaking his name and his kingdom, these twelve apostles would lead the way
2. They would be the foundation of the church of Jesus Christ throughout all generations

Ephesians 2:20-21 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.

B. Sovereignly Called and Appointed by Jesus

1. He went up on a mountainside... why? As usual, to get away from the huge throngs so he could PRAY

2. Luke 6 tells us he spent all night in prayer before choosing these men

Luke 6:12-13 One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. ¹³ When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles

3. Then, after conferring with his Father, he chose the men he wanted... he summoned them by name to come to him

John 10:3 the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

John 10:27 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

4. These men could not take it upon themselves to be chosen or designated for this role

John 15:16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit-- fruit that will last.

5. His choice was most certainly based on his knowledge of them, of their hearts, and of what they would become
6. Out of all the crowd, he knew them

John 1:47-48 When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." ⁴⁸ "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you."

John 2:23-25 Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name. ²⁴ But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men. ²⁵ He did not need man's testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man

They were all of them sinners... all of them very ordinary men... chosen because they were nothing special

But through the power of the Spirit, they would turn the world upside down for Christ!

C. Twelve

1. It is no accident that there were twelve
2. The number would call to mind the twelve patriarchs of Israel... the heads of the tribes that made up the nation
3. This was to be a New Israel... a nation of believers

D. Designated “Apostles”

1. Apostle means “sent ones”... sent out with a mission
2. He would commission them to GO OUT into all the world

John 20:21 As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."

Mark 16:15-16 He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. ¹⁶ Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

E. Two Phases

Mark 3:14-15 He appointed twelve-- designating them apostles--that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach ¹⁵ and to have authority to drive out demons.

1. “Be with him”

First... they were to live with him, walk with him, observe him, learn from him... they would eat with him, suffer persecution with him, listen to how he interacted with others—with the rich and poor, with the powerful and the weak, with women and children, with Pharisees and Sadducees, with tax collectors and lepers and Roman centurions and synagogue rulers

They would learn by example... and they would imitate him

Their eyewitness would be essential to the gospel record

John 15:27 And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.

Luke 1:1-2 Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us,² just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word.

1 John 1:1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched-- this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.

These ordinary men would be changed by being with the Son of God

2. Sent out to preach and with authority to drive out demons; by these means Christ would build his kingdom

F. Their Names

Mark 3:16-19 These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter);¹⁷ James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means Sons of Thunder);¹⁸ Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot¹⁹ and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

1. Simon (Peter) always named first... the natural-born leader; impetuous, speaks first, thinks later, would have to be deeply humbled of his pride, then God would use him as the preacher on the great day of Pentecost
2. James and John, brothers, sons of Zebedee... called “Sons of Thunder” because of their boldness in wanting to call down fire on a city in Samaria that refused to allow Jesus to come in
 - a. James would be the first of the Twelve to be martyred
 - b. John would write five books of the New Testament, including the Gospel of John and the Book of Revelation; transformed to being the apostle of love, since his writings focus so powerfully on love for Christ and for each other

These three were the leaders of all the Twelve... the inner circle;
 chosen to see Jesus' glory on the Mount of Transfiguration;
 chosen to watch and pray with him in Gethsemane

3. Andrew: Peter's brother, known for constantly bringing people to Jesus
4. Philip: from Bethsaida, the same hometown as Peter and Andrew; the one who said "Show us the Father and it will be enough for us" (John 14:8)
5. Bartholomew: led to follow Jesus under the influence of Philip (John 1:45)... most likely he was also the one called Nathanael... whom Jesus said was a true Israelite in whom was no guile
6. Matthew (Levi) was the former tax collector who wrote the Gospel of Matthew
7. Thomas (called the Twin) was most famous for being so-called "doubting Thomas"
8. James son of Alphaeus... very little known about him
9. Thaddaeus... also very little known about him either
10. Simon the Zealot... nationalist, freedom fighter, desired to see Israel liberated from Rome... if he had not been saved by Christ, he would have had no problem assassinating a traitor like Matthew, the tax collector... but the gospel made them brothers
11. Judas Iscariot, always identified as the traitor

No surprise to Jesus!!

John 6:70-71 Then Jesus replied, "Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!" ⁷¹(He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him.)

Amazing that Christ could change the world with such men! But he did!!

If God can use them, he can use each of us!

IV. Lessons

A. Huge Crowds Seeking Felt Needs Melted Away

1. These urgent physical needs did not result every time in eternal followers of Christ
2. Many received the healing they sought and went home

B. BUT The Account of these Miracles is a Solid Basis for Our Faith in Christ as the Son of God

John 20:30-31 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. ³¹ But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

This is the evidence that demands your verdict... the proof that Jesus is the Son of God!

Do you believe in him? Have you received the true healing Jesus alone can give?

Luke 5:31-32 "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ³² I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

C. Celebrate Jesus' Absolute Power over Demons!

Ephesians 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

Ephesians 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

D. Delight in the Twelve Ordinary Men

1. If Jesus can use them, he can use each one of us to be “fishers of men!”

2. After Christ's resurrection and ascension to heaven, after the power of the Holy Spirit came on Peter and John, they healed a lame beggar in the temple, then boldly preached the gospel:

Acts 4:12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

Acts 4:13 When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.

The quick summary of Jesus' astonishing ministry is so tantalizing... heaven will reveal the WHOLE ministry of Jesus in every detail!

John 21:25 Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written