

A Savior Worthy of Your Total Trust— Mark 3:7-12

Introduction, outline

- Scripture reading: Mark 3:1-12; Romans 1:16-17; 1 Timothy 3:16; 2 Corinthians 3:18.
- Teaching text: Mark 3:7-12 (NASB1995)

7 Jesus withdrew to the sea with His disciples; and a great multitude from Galilee followed; and *also* from Judea, 8 and from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and beyond the Jordan, and the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon, a great number of people heard of all that He was doing and came to Him. 9 And He told His disciples that a boat should stand ready for Him because of the crowd, so that they would not crowd Him; 10 for He had healed many, with the result that all those who had afflictions pressed around Him in order to touch Him. 11 Whenever the unclean spirits saw Him, they would fall down before Him and shout, “You are the Son of God!” 12 And He earnestly warned them not to tell who He was.

- A brief summary of Jesus three-year earthly ministry - 1st year: obscurity; 2nd year: popularity; 3rd year: opposition. The time now is the 2nd year. Jesus has performed many miracles and thus become very popular, causing conflict with the religious leaders, for His teaching directly overthrows their self-righteous religious tradition. The conflict with the religious leaders are seen in every passage in 2:1-3:6.
- As the conflict escalates rapidly and the cross comes near, Jesus changes His ministry focus from public proclamation to private discipleship. This passage today is a periodic summary for His previous ministry before the strategic shift.
- Outline:

Title: A Savior Worthy of Your Total Trust

1. The Savior’s Wise Leading (v7a)
2. The Crowd’s Misguided Following (vv7b-8)
3. The Savior’s Thoughtful Planning (v9)
4. The Savior’s Divine Power (vv10-11)
5. The Savior’s Key Identity (v12)

The Savior’s Wise Leading (v7a)

- “withdrew to the sea”: Jesus leads and the disciples follow. The reason for withdrawal is that the Pharisees have begun to plan how they might kill Jesus (v6). According to Matthew, it is exactly because of Jesus’ awareness of their plot that He decided to withdraw and avoid direct conflict temporarily.

Is this cowardness? Fear of death? Absolutely not. Jesus is seeking His Father’s will and His timing. The Gospel of John says “His hour had not yet come” repeatedly. The only explanation

for His action plan is the Father's timing. Sometimes direct conflict is necessary and Jesus won't back down, but it has to be avoided in other times.

【Application】 Christians also need to discern proper timing, seeking God's will and acting wisely. Not all errors are to be confronted immediately. Sometimes we may think we are fighting for God, while in fact we're merely being impatient, not taking the time to seek God's will, not humble, not submissive, walking in the flesh and not in the Spirit. Only when we become so familiar with the whole Bible can we know God's will better.

The Crowd's Misguided Following (vv7b-8)

- “a great multitude”: The Greek is a combination of two words which both mean many people. At least thousands, if not tens of thousands. Not only is the number great, but they also come from all the places. The places named in verse 8 cover a radius of several hundred miles from east, south and north, even beyond where the Jews live.
- “heard of all that He was doing”: This is why they follow Jesus. Jesus did all these things in order to prove His message. His miracles are to serve His message. Miracles prove that Jesus is God, so you must obey His message. The crowd totally got it reversed.

The crowd follows Jesus out of two motives: 1. Seeking excitement; 2. Wanting to be healed. It's either curiosity or selfishness, neither recognizes Jesus as Lord. They may look similar to the disciples, both being described as “following Jesus,” but what they are really following is their own lust and not Jesus' teaching.

How many followers of Jesus today also want merely healing or excitement?

At the same time, Jesus also has some true disciples at this time. The word “disciple” comes from the verb “to learn”. Disciples are learners. Being disciples of Jesus means to learn from Jesus. These follow Jesus not out for excitement or healing, but to learn His teaching and His life.

The Savior's Thoughtful Planning (v9)

- “so that they would not crowd Him”: The Greek for “crowd” means literally to press or to compress. The people following Jesus are so many that Jesus is concerned that the crowd might crush Him. Have you heard about “crowd accidents”? Crushing and trampling people to death often occur in high-density crowds.
- “a boat should stand ready”: This is Jesus' escape plan. The frantic crowd with the sick desperately pushing in for healing could easily lose control. If that happens, Jesus could jump immediately into the boat and get away from the crowd.

【Ponder】 Does this surprise you? That Jesus, being fully God, should be concerned about this kind of thing? “Why should I fear the crowd? Don’t you know I can appeal to my Father at once and He will send twelve legions of angels to rescue me?” That’s not what he says, but, “Get me a boat!” When the Father’s will is not for Him to use His divine power, He uses His perfect wisdom to make careful plans for His human need.

【Application】 Positively, serve the Lord with wisdom and careful planning. Evaluate the situation, identify potential dangers, and plan accordingly. Be down-to-earth. Negatively, don't be too unrealistic or idealistic. Don't neglect practical realistic concerns under a pretense of strong faith. Don't judge it as unspiritual or lacking faith to make careful practical plans. Of course, our faith is not ultimately in our own planning, but in God using our work to accomplish His work.

The Savior’s Divine Power (vv10-11)

- “for He had healed many”: The healings in the gospels often have no direct connection to one’s faith. There is no description here regarding the faith of any healed person. The main purpose of healing is not to teach us how to get healed, but to demonstrate Jesus’ identity, and also to show God’s love and mercy to people.
- “all those who had afflictions pressed around Him in order to touch Him”: They pressed in on Jesus like hungry wolves, without any basic politeness. Jesus likely is preaching the gospel (cf 1:14-15). No one says: “Maybe I should wait for Jesus’ instruction.” They are not at all interested in the eternal truth Jesus teaches. All they want is to get rid of their afflictions in this life.

If you were Jesus, would you heal them? Matthew says He “healed them all.” What a merciful Savior! But here’s the thing: With every grace and mercy received, comes a greater moral responsibility, the responsibility to repent as Jesus commands and to follow Him in your life. Otherwise, it will only bring a more severe judgment.

【Comparison】 The faith to recognize Jesus as Lord and Savior vs the faith to recognize Jesus as super-healer. Only the former can save.

- “Whenever the unclean spirits saw Him, they would fall down before Him”: The verb is not just a simple quick look, but to look closely, to gaze, to observe. Demon-possessed men come before Jesus, gaze at Him from head to toe. The unclean spirits see His deity through the flesh, the holy and glorious image they’ve known since thousands of years ago. Suddenly, they realize who Jesus is, and they cannot hold up but fall down before Him with great fear, “Oh! You are the Son of God!”

Their falling down is not out of worship, but extreme fear that they can’t help it.

Philippians 2:9-11 “9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, **10** so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, **11** and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

- “You are the Son of God!”: The beginning of Mark says this is the “beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (1:1), however, only the unclean spirits recognized Him as such throughout the entire book (cf. 5:7), until when He breathed His last on the cross and a Roman centurion said: “Truly this man was the Son of God!” (15:39). Mark’s point is clear: The identity of Jesus as Son of God cannot be understood apart from the cross.

The Savior’s Key Identity (v12)

- “And He earnestly warned them not to tell who He was”: Jesus doesn’t need any testimony from unclean spirits (cf. 1:25, 34). In addition, Matthew says Jesus also warned the people who were healed not to tell who He was. Similar commands are also seen in 1:44; 5:43; 7:36; 8:30. This is because the cross has not been revealed yet.

Mark 9:9 “.....not to relate to anyone what they had seen, until the Son of Man rose from the dead.”

After the resurrection, it’s time to proclaim! The cross is the key to Jesus’ identity! Without the message of the cross, the remaining testimony, no matter how true, is incomplete. The testimony of miracles is important, but no matter how many miracles one sees, if he does not understand the cross, he cannot understand what the Son of God means. Testimonies without the cross can only mislead people!

【Application】 How do you apply this truth in your personal evangelism and when you give your testimony? Think about it.

Application summary:

Some elements of Jesus’ life we should imitate, others we cannot; but what I see from this passage is a Savior worthy of our total trust. He acts with perfect wisdom and precise timing; He is full of grace and mercy to sinners; and most of all, He has accomplished the work of redemption on the cross. He will never forsake anyone who comes to Him with true repentant faith.