

Mark 4:1-33

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[0 : 00] Okay, please go ahead and have a seat and join me in the gospel of Mark chapter 4. It's hard to believe it's already 2014.

If you've had your first denial experience yet, I've written the date 2014 and it just felt so weird to do it already.

And you know this time of year, many people, maybe you, make New Year's resolutions. It's a common thing that happens and these resolutions are typically aimed at making us better versions of ourselves.

And I was reminded this past week that people have come and gone from our church and one of their complaints was that the preaching here didn't make them feel good about themselves.

And I was reminded that that's not really the point of why we preach. And the point of why we preach is to make much of Christ. And the gospel properly presented will make you feel rather little about yourself.

[1 : 05] Those things that you can do and accomplish on your own. If you really understand the measure of sin, you will see that your image-bearing ability has been destroyed by it.

That you were dead in that. And those of us who have now placed our faith in Christ have been made alive again, but we still are sick with sin. It's still something we carry around. It's a baggage. It drags us down at times. And so many New Year's resolutions are aimed at changing that part of us.

What we really ought to be devoting ourselves to is becoming more like Christ. Depending more on the regenerative power of the Spirit to conform us into His image this year.

And so I hope with me, that's your plan for 2014. That at the end of 2014, as we come to the first Sunday of 2015, you can look back and say, my life better reflects the gospel.

[2 : 08] I look more like Christ in 2015 than I did at the beginning of 2014. And that is the aim of Mark's gospel. He's trying to make much of Christ.

In fact, he doesn't even mention that he's the one that wrote the gospel of Mark in an attempt to relegate who he is and exalt who Christ is. It's history and tradition that holds that Mark was the one that in fact wrote this gospel.

And he's been driving us all along at this point to see who Jesus is. That He is in fact the Son of God. The Christ. The one who came to bring redemption to the church.

To make us disciples of Jesus Christ. To make much of Him. And so as we look here at chapter 4, I'm going to do kind of an odd thing with it.

I'm going to read to you verse 1-34 to set the context. And we're going to focus this morning on verses 10-12 to talk about why it was that Jesus spoke in parable.

[3 : 11] Before we read together, let me just remind you that last week, the stage that's set for us as he goes into this next set of teaching is that he has returned more than likely to Capernaum, which was kind of his home base in Galilee as he was ministering.

And he encountered, sort of all at the same time, a crowd and his family and the scribes. And we talked a bit about this idea that C.S. Lewis put into play, which is more than likely taken from this text, that you cannot think of Christ as simply a good moral teacher because he doesn't leave that option open for you.

But you either have to think of him as a liar, a lunatic, or as Lord, who he actually says that he is. And there's kind of a two-category system set up here by Mark that you're either going to be one who does not believe that Jesus is the Christ or one who does believe that he is the Christ.

Jesus says in verse 35 of chapter 4, Here are my mothers and my brothers, for whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.

Those who do the will of God are part of the family of God. And we saw that the will of God, the primary will of God, the place in which all other wills for your life are rooted is that we believe that Jesus is in fact the Christ, the Son of God.

[4 : 34] So that continues here for us as he steps away from Capernaum and goes back to the seashore as Capernaum was located along the northwest side of the Sea of Galilee.

And so we'll begin reading in verse 1, chapter 4. Again he began to teach beside the sea. And a very large crowd gathered about him so that he got into a boat and sat in it on the sea. And the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. And he was teaching them many things and parables. And in his teaching he said to them, Listen. A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell among the path.

And the birds came and devoured it. Other seed fell on rocky ground where it did not have much soil. And immediately it sprang up since it had no depth of soil. And when the sun rose, it was scorched.

And since it had no root, it withered away. Other seed fell among thorns. And the thorns grew up and choked it. And it yielded no grain. And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.

[5 : 35] And he said, He who has ears to hear, let him hear. And when he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables. And he said to them, To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God.

But for those outside, everything is in parables. So that they may indeed see but not perceive. And may indeed hear but not understand. Lest they should turn and be forgiven. And he said to them, Do you not understand this parable?

How then will you understand all the parables? The sower sows the word. And these are the ones along the path where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them.

And these are the ones sown on rocky ground. The ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while. Then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away.

And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

[6 : 40] But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold. And he said to them, Is the lamp brought in to be put under a basket or under a bed and not on a stand?

For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest, nor is anything secret except to come to light. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear. And he said to them, Pay attention to what you hear. With the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you. For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.

And he said, The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows. He knows not how. The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear.

But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come. And he said, With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth.

[7 : 49] Yet when it is sown, it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants, and puts out large branches so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade. With many such parables, he spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it.

He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples. He explained everything. Please join me in prayer. Father, we do thank you this morning for your word to us by your scriptures.

And I pray, Father, by your spirit, as we boldly approach your throne, clothed in the righteousness of Christ, that you will have your way with us, that you will shape our hearts, that you will use our frailty in speaking and hearing and understanding to conform us to the image of your Son.

Make us more like Him this morning. And we pray this in His name. Amen. Our religion is a religion of words.

It is the way in which the power of God is communicated to us that the gospel itself, this gospel message, is the power of God unto salvation. Words give meaning and power and give birth to ideas.

[9 : 01] And it is this beautiful idea of the kingdom of God coming that Jesus has been presenting to us. You remember back in chapter 1, verse 15, He says, the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand.

Repent and believe in the gospel. And He does that so often in a very common way in the speaking of parables, which are short stories, allegorical in nature, and they're meant to teach a much greater truth.

That's why Jesus spoke in this way was to teach something greater. So to draw your attention to Mark 4, 10-12, let's read it one more time.

And when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parables. And He said to them, To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything is in parables, so that they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven.

So they asked the question, Jesus, why is it that you speak in parables? We can see that in the parallel version of this story in Matthew 13. They say, why is it that you speak to them in parables?

[10 : 13] And the answer to that in the case that I'll build to you is that it was to veil the truth and to unveil or to reveal the truth. To make the truth very apparent to some and not to others.

Now you recall, as you ponder that, you might think, well how narrow. Wouldn't Jesus have wanted everyone to respond? Wasn't that the point of Him coming? And preaching the gospel?

We've said over and over again that the signs that He was doing was simply designed to validate the message. Isn't the message incredibly important? And yes, it certainly is. But recall that we've also talked about how very narrow Jesus was.

He had an intended point and a purpose and a people that He was coming to redeem. This is why He spoke in parables. We've seen great crowds follow Him.

And I have said to you repeatedly, that these people were not by and large regenerate. These people did not believe that He was who He says He is.

[11 : 17] We see in Acts 1, we see 120 gathered after His death. 120 that were faithful to the cause of Christ that saw who He was, that He was the King of this coming Kingdom.

So Jesus is constantly narrowing and narrowing and narrowing as He speaks. And so He uses the veil and His response to them, He quotes Isaiah chapter 6, verses 8-10.

Isaiah 6, classic text. We all love to hear about the calling of Isaiah, His response to go. Verse 8, And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send?

And who will go for us? And then Isaiah responds, Here am I, send me. And then in verse 9, God says, Go and say to this people, Keep on hearing, but do not understand.

Keep on seeing, but do not perceive. Make the heart of this people dull and their ears heavy and blind their eyes, lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their hearts and turn and be healed.

[12 : 25] Part of Isaiah's very ministry was to preach the coming of the kingdom of God to a people who would not hear it. It's prophesied right here that this would be the case.

And in fact, in the parallel version of the story we have before us in Mark chapter 4, in verse 14 of chapter 13 of Matthew, right before Matthew records his quotation of Isaiah, chapter 6, it's recorded, indeed, in their case, those who are outside of this understanding, the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled.

That it is, in fact, fulfilled in this day of Jesus that says, and then he quotes from Isaiah chapter 6. This is a prophecy that people, some would understand, and that some would not, which is why he spoke in parables, to veil the truth.

Paul gives us a little bit of insight into this in 1 Corinthians chapter 2. In verse 8, he writes, none of the rulers of this age understood this. He's talking about the secret, hidden wisdom of God in verse 7.

None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. If they had understood who Jesus was, they wouldn't have put him to death. And it was

necessary that he be put to death so that the remission of sins might extend and expand to all of mankind.

[13 : 55] And then he quotes also from Isaiah chapter 64, verse 4, but as it is written, what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love Him.

Paul goes on to write in verse 10 of chapter 2, that these are things that have been revealed to those who are in Christ by the Spirit of God. Verse 11, for who knows a person's thoughts except the Spirit of that person which is in him.

So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. And so Paul for us kind of brings these two ideas together that this was something that must happen, that some would not believe in order that the redemptive purposes of Christ might be completed so that we can believe by the power of His Spirit.

Now it's interesting as Jesus is talking to this group of people, because it's those around Him with the twelve if you'll notice in chapter 4, verse 10. So not just the apostles but some others that were gathered with Him who have been given the secret of the kingdom of God.

It's important that we note that they didn't still seem to quite get it. There was some understanding bearing in their hearts, but yet, if you look in verse 33 of chapter 4, with many such parables He spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it.

[15 : 23] He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to His own disciples He explained everything. Explanation was necessary for them. And look later in chapter 4, verse 40 and 41.

After Jesus calms the storm, He says to them, Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith? And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, Who then is this that even the wind and the sea obey Him?

They still didn't quite grasp who Jesus was. The light was coming to bear in their hearts, but they still had yet to entirely wrap their mind around it.

And let that be an encouragement to us this morning as we are about to launch into a study of a number of parables which can be confounding at times. We'll take a break from that, go back to some narrative, and we're going to pick right back up into many more parables in the Gospel of Mark.

And they're difficult to understand at times. By the Spirit and the Scriptures, we come to understand what it is they mean as we have a greater degree of revelation than these disciples would have had.

[16 : 35] But let it encourage you that you don't have to quite get it all to have the Spirit of God working in you and bringing to bear the truth. So he taught him parables to veil the truth.

But he also taught him parables to reveal the truth. Here in chapter 4, this is not the first account we see of him speaking in parables. In fact, his response to the Pharisees, the scribes that challenged him back at the end of chapter 3 were parables.

This idea of a strong man being in his house and to plunder his house. You must come in and bind the strong man. He was speaking of who he is, that he is in fact God and he has the power to bind Satan and therefore come and take from the kingdom of Satan those who are his.

It's also not the first time that parables are used generally. Jesus isn't the first to use parables to teach truth in this way. Back in 2 Samuel, chapter 12 in the Old Testament, God brings David to conviction of his sin with Bathsheba and Uriah through the prophet Nathan through a parable.

Listen to this. 2 Samuel 12 beginning in verse 1. And the Lord sent Nathan to David. He came to him and said to him, there were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor.

[17 : 56] The rich man had very many flocks and herds, but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb which he had bought. And he brought it up and it grew up with him and with his children. He used to eat of his morsel and drink from his cup and lie in his arms and it was like a daughter to him.

Now there came a traveler to the rich man and he was unwilling to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the guest who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him.

Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man in the story. And he said to Nathan, as the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die and he shall restore the lamb for full because

he did this thing and because he had no pity.

Nathan said to David, you are the man. This was how God, by the prophet Nathan and the enlightening of the Spirit, convicted David of his great sin.

And then we see so many laments in the Psalms and repentance for what he had done. So, Jesus spoke in parables. God had used parables before. Jesus speaks in parables both to veil and to reveal the truth.

[19 : 06] And he sets up for us again another dichotomy, two groups of people that everyone in this world falls into. You fall into one of these two categories.

And here it's stated in verse 11, to you, this is one group, to you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God. And another group are those who are outside.

This morning, you're in one of those two places. Everyone in this earth is in one of those two places. Has been given the secret of the kingdom of God or is outside. And so we have to ask the question, what then is the secret of the kingdom of God?

We should know this. If we want to find where we are, categorically speaking, in one of these two groups, are we those who have been given the secret of the kingdom of God or those who are outside?

Do we have the key that unlocks the parables? Or should they be confounding to us? Should we never understand what is meant by all of these parables about the coming kingdom? The secret of the kingdom of God is the person, Jesus Christ.

[20 : 13] Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1, verse 30, And because of God, you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness, righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

So those who have been given the secret of the kingdom of God are those who believe that Jesus is who He says that He is, that He is the Christ.

And the others, those who are outside, are those who do not. Turn with me to the parallel version of this text. Matthew chapter 13. Matthew chapter 13. We see a more expanded version of the account beginning in verse 10.

Then the disciples came and said to Him, Why do you speak to them in parables? There's the question. Why do you speak to them in parables? And He answered them, To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.

There's our two categories. Then verse 12. For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.

[21 : 40] This is why I speak to them in parables. Because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. Now verse 12 is interesting because in Mark chapter 4, it's recorded in a different spot.

In Mark chapter 4, it's in verse 25. As he concludes the lamp under a basket parable as it's headed in probably most of our Bibles.

It's recorded in a different place and we'll look more at why that is in the coming weeks. But here we see it's added to this account. For to the one who has, more will be given, and he who will have an abundance.

But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. What is he talking about? Has what? What is it that we are to have in order to receive more?

An abundance of more. And what is it that someone doesn't have, and even what they have is taken away? And what I would say to you is that thing that Jesus is referring to here is faith.

[22 : 44] For the one who has faith, the one who believes that Jesus is the Christ, will be given more faith, an abundance of faith, saving faith that will persevere to the end when all the things that we hope in will become a reality.

The ability to see the kingdom of God coming to bear, to experience it to be true in our own hearts. But for the one who does not have faith, even what he has.

Now, remember who he's speaking to primarily in these settings. These would have been Jews.

Those who had the promises of God, who had what is called now our modern Old Testament.

They had all of this teaching. They had Moses. And the prophets who spoke of the Christ. And yet, even this, this understanding that they have is taken away.

I can remind you in Ephesians 2, verse 8, it says, For by grace you have been saved through faith. And that this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God.

[23 : 50] We need the Spirit of God to work in our hearts to bring about faith in God. And these are the people who believe, who can understand, who are given the secrets of the kingdom.

Now, the rest of the text in Matthew chapter 13, we see a longer quotation of Isaiah chapter 6. Indeed, in their case, the promise of Isaiah is fulfilled that says, you will indeed hear but never understand.

You will indeed see but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull and with their ears they can barely hear and their eyes have closed. Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn and I would heal them.

And then verse 16, but blessed are your eyes for they see and your ears for they hear for truly I say to you many prophets and righteous people long to see what you see and did not see it and to hear what you hear and did not hear it.

They longed to see the Christ. They knew that in some way the promises of God would be fulfilled. They had some hint of this Messiah and what he was going to look like as they prophesied about him but they did not get to behold him.

[25 : 08] They longed to hear this coming message of the kingdom of God. The gospel preached in its entirety in the personal work of Christ and yet they did not hear it.

How blessed are we to be ones who have received the secrets of the kingdom. We have received Christ. We have seen and heard this great truth.

There are many Jews today strict adherents to Old Testament apostate Judaism that are still longing and looking for the Messiah.

And they do so with an unclear understanding of who the Messiah is. I found an article by a rabbi I'm sure I should quote but I forgot to write down his name and I lost the article.

And he gave four reasons why Jesus Christ is not the Messiah. It is predicted in Ezekiel chapter 37 that he would build the third temple. This is yet to happen.

[26 : 14] Isaiah chapter 43 that he would gather all Jews back to the land of Israel. Isaiah chapter 2 verse 4 that he would usher in an era of world peace and end all hatred, oppression, suffering, and disease.

Zechariah 14.9 that he would spread universal knowledge of the God of Israel which will unite humanity as one. And this is the Messiah that they are waiting for.

They're waiting for a Messiah to come that will accomplish this in the here and now. And until they can see that happen they are not willing to believe that Jesus was the Christ. But yet, Jesus is in fact accomplishing all these things.

And they will finally and fully be accomplished. The kingdom of God is at hand. He reigns even now doing this very work.

But in this way, in the fulfillment of these prophecies, Jesus has veiled truth and revealed truth. Just think of the way that Jesus came into this world.

[27 : 21] He fulfilled prophecy in the way He came. But He came not as the king they expected. As they focused in on these particular prophecies of the Messiah. Not as the one who would ride in on a horse, a valiant steed that would be like Saul, a head taller than everyone else and would come and conquer Rome and restore things.

But He came instead as a humble baby. Veiled. Born to a humble, young, teenage girl in a stable, in a very obscure part of the world.

This Jesus that is said to be from Nazareth and we have to qualify that it's Nazareth of Galilee because no one knew where Nazareth was. Talk about the county that it was located in so you could get where it was on a map.

He came in obscure, humble, the son of a carpenter and He served the world in humility. They missed this because Jesus veiled that truth in order to reveal that truth to some of us lowly, lowly people.

Last night I was playing with the boys on the floor and they got a bunch of Hot Wheels monster trucks for Christmas which is a very cool thing that Hot Wheels has done for boys everywhere.

[28 : 43] And Judah, there's eight of them and Judah had carefully lined them up, neat little rows all facing the same direction and didn't want that game messed with. He had his little trucks lined up and he was just laying on the floor like this looking at them.

And so I was laying on the floor with him and we were talking about their color and counting them trying to redeem whatever the game was for some future knowledge and I counted them to eight

and Caveman said, he was sitting cross-legged next to us and said, no daddy, there are seven. I said, Caveman, your dad's a good counter, there are eight. And he said, no, there are seven. And I went, okay, watch. And I counted them again. I put my finger on each one, counted them, eight. Here's the evidence, look, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. And he kind of gave me this look when I got to eight like, I think he's got me. But he refused to believe that there were eight. I took his finger, made him, I held his finger and I touched each one to convince him that there were eight and he got sad that he was wrong that there were eight and not seven. And so what he wanted to do was take one away so there would be seven in the pile. And so I had to distract Judah so he wouldn't get mad that we messed up his line of trucks and took one. [29 : 58] So we had seven left in the pile. And is this not, this made me think, is this not what the world does with Jesus Christ? There's so much evidence on the table.

It would seem that we should by human terms be able to convince somebody that Jesus is the Christ. Particularly the Jews. Right? Those who were actually waiting for the Messiah just want to show them the Scriptures and point to the One, to Jesus Christ, to magnify Him and that they would get that.

But they can't until the Spirit works a work in their life. They can't. It's impossible. These are things that are revealed to us by the Spirit.

Now I know that sometimes that causes a little bit of an anxiety because we really, really, really want to believe that our God is this great, big, benevolent God and loves the world. And you know what?

He does. He does. The fact that He has redeemed even one of us is a great expression of His love. Not to mention untold millions.

[31 : 06] Millions. Billions. I don't know. An unmeasurable number. A multitude, the Scriptures say, will be in heaven praising our God. Right? None of us deserve this.

When you begin to feel in some way that as God is calling people to Himself, that He's being unfair, that it's not right, how could a loving God exclude people from the kingdom?

How could He veil truth to some and reveal it to others? This makes no sense to me. Stop making so much of man. We are a created thing. Right?

Humble yourself under the Creator who is working out His redemptive purposes in this way. Who is expressing His very being to us in this manner. What should this kind of truth do for us?

Those of us who are part of this, who have been given the secret of the kingdom of God, it should cause us to praise Him. Because we did nothing of our own to know this thing.

[32 : 03] Right? I cannot boast in any way that I have deciphered magically the parables. Right? We say to you, I have found the key. I have deciphered it. I know now what the kingdom of God is all about.

I can't. It has been revealed to me by the Spirit of God. I was dead. I was cut off because of my sinfulness. God made me alive together with Him.

Right? This should be the joy of our hearts. That He has accomplished this for us. And I will tell you that there are many harsh reactions to the doctrines that we teach, but there are harsh reactions to things that should not be a reality.

That those of us who believe that God is sovereign in all things, that calls those whom He intends to call and doesn't those whom He doesn't, would make us cold and callous to the Gospel.

This should not be true of us. This truth is the great motivation to share your faith. That God is working in people's lives. That He is going into them and changing their hearts.

[33 : 09] No amount of logic. I consider myself a fairly logical person. No degree of logic on my part can convince somebody to come to Christ. But the Spirit can do it with the simple words of a fool.

That is an incredible reality. This should be true of us. Let me show you this context. Let me just broaden your eyes and your mind a little bit. We see this insertion in Mark 4.

Talking about those who have been given the secret of the kingdom were found in one of these two categories. We believe that Jesus is the Christ or we do not. But what is He saying in this context here at the beginning of chapter 4?

There should be some outworking of our faith. We can't just be counted in the crowd that follows Jesus around.

But that we must actually be devoted to Him. There must be some degree of sacrifice and pursuit of who He is. Let me just show you.

[34 : 12] He talks about the parable of the sower. The good soil. Verse 8. The good soil produced grain growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.

Later in His explanation of that in verse 20 He uses the term fruit. This good soil bears fruit. He talks about lamps not being intended to be hidden but to shine.

He's speaking in the negative but in the positive. Lamps shine. Lamps give light. I think some of our lamps are turned down so low that they barely flicker.

There's a little flame which gives little to no light in this world but lamps are meant to light a room.

We see the parable of the seed growing.

It does in fact sprout and grow. And the parable of the mustard seed grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants.

[35 : 19] You see that there must be some outworking of our faith and here is what we see Jesus teaching to us in the parables that we're going to cover in the coming weeks.

You want to know which category you lie in as one who's been given the secrets of the kingdom of God? One who has actually recognized believed in your heart that Jesus is the Christ? There will be evidence in your life of that reality.

You will knowing that Jesus brought this truth to bear in you desire to share that truth and see it come to bear in others. We as a church must be theological.

We are really wasting our time if we're not. If we don't come together and root through and parse out and figure out all of the deep things of God that he has to say to us in our scriptures why are we getting together?

But we also must be missional. This should be a great motivation to us getting out and going and sharing and moving and healing.

[36 : 26] Bringing redemption to this world as we come to better understand our own redemption. These two things must carry together. If Christ Family Church errs in 2013 we err to being theological.

We err to being theological. And that does not mean that we should stop being theological. and start being more missional. That just means that we should continue to be theological. Find better ways to be theological. Press deeper into the things of God so that we'll be more missional.

So that's my challenge to you this morning. Which category do you lie in? If you don't think that you've ever come to really understand that Jesus is the Christ that can change this morning.

Ask that God would do a work in your heart. Respond in faith to the gospel call to repent and believe. If you find yourself in this category I can guarantee that all of us need to work out our faith in a greater degree as we drag along the baggage of the sickness of sin.

We're all being made more perfect. We're all being moved in a further Christward direction. I've been accused of being an idealist and I think that anybody who's a Christian who's not an idealist is pitiful.

[37 : 40] It's shameful. We're supposed to be like Christ who is ideal. Keep pressing to that high goal of being like Him in 2014.

Let's pray together. Let's pray together.