

Mighty Men

by Carl Armerding

The sermon emphasizes the importance of doing something special for the Lord and being in a state of soul where He can work in our lives, in order to experience His power and faithfulness.

Duration: 49:12

Scripture: Matthew 26:39, Mark 9:1-3, Mark 14:32-34

Topics: "Mighty Men"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the weight of sorrow that Jesus carried in his heart as he faced the cross. The speaker emphasizes the importance of focusing on Jesus during meetings for the remembrance of the Lord Jesus Christ, rather than being distracted by other elements. The speaker also draws parallels between the three men chosen by Jesus in the book of Mark and the joy of leading someone to salvation. The sermon encourages believers to long for the salvation of others and to experience the thrill of witnessing a newborn soul coming to faith in Jesus.

Transcript

To return our hymn books to number one, we have a special treat for you, but we're going to sing together, first of all, number 107, There's a Story. I suppose most of you, when you've been reading your Bibles, three different men, this of course is very evident, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob brought together as a threesome, there they are. Well, you say they were related one to another, and practically contemporaneous, and therefore we understand how they would be mentioned together.

Then we turn to the book of Ezekiel, and we find quite a contrast to that, where God through his servant the prophet says, Though Noah and Daniel and Job were in it, he wouldn't deliver the city, even though these three righteous men were living in it. Remember he said one time that he would spread Sodom and Gomorrah if there were ten people there. But here he brings together three men who lived at different times in the world's history, and yet they had one thing in common, and that is that they were righteous men.

And God in this way brings together these men. When we turn to the history of David, and this is a passage I want to look at in some detail, so I'm going to ask you to turn please to 2 Samuel chapter 23. Notice in the eighth verse of that chapter that we have a reference made to the names of the mighty men whom David had, and then three of them are named here for us.

And each one of these three that are named in the following verses were stood out for some particular military feat that they performed, particularly against the Philistines. You notice there in that eighth verse there was the Taqmanite that sat in the seat chief among the captains, the same as the diner of the Eznite. He lifted up his spear against 800, and he slew at one time.

Evidently he was a loner, because we don't read here that he had any companions in what he did. And we assume that the enemies that he put to death there were the Philistines, because they are mentioned again you'll notice in the next verse. After him was Eliezer the son of Jodah the Ephahite, one of the three mighty men with David when they defied the Philistines that were gathered together to battle, and the men of Israel were gone away.

And he arose and smote the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clave unto the sword, and the Lord brought a great victory that day. And the people returned after him only to spoil. And after him was Shammah the Aegean the Herorite, and the Philistines were gathered together into a troop, where there was a piece of ground full of lentils, or wheat as some translation put it, and the people fled from the Philistines.

But he stood in the midst of the ground, and defended it, and slew the Philistines, and the Lord brought a great victory. Now here you have three men brought together, and their names are given to us, but as far as we can tell they didn't operate together. They were in a class by themselves, and yet the enemies which they fought, or the enemies which they fought, was a common enemy.

It was the Philistines. And as we read the history of Israel, we find that these Philistines were the implacable enemies of God's people. Even though they came, shall we say, down from the same ancestry, they were the descendants of Ham, whereas of course the Israelites were the descendants of Shem, but both Ham and Shem were the sons of Noah.

So that in a sense they were distant. When my youngest brother, who of course is a tent in the family, I'm the first, and this brother said, then you must be distantly related, because I'm the first in the tent. But these people were really distantly related, and these people have actually left their impress, even to this very day, upon a land which is very much in the press reports every day.

I'm referring of course to Israel, which is also known as Palestine, and Palestine comes from the same root as Philistine. Now, these Philistines, as I said, they were descendants of Ham, and evidently they settled in Egypt, and there was a road from Egypt up to Canaan, which was known as the Way of the Philistines. And when God wanted to deliver His people from Egypt, the Bible tells us that He took them not by the Way of the Philistines, although that was near.

In other words, evidently this Way of the Philistines represents something, and they themselves represent a certain class which I believe we find in the professing church today. They're people who have come in by what we might call a shortcut. Some of them get in because their parents were Christians, or some other relative was a Christian, and they think it's the right thing to do to be a member of the church without ever having been born again, never having had the experience of trusting the Lord Jesus Christ as a personal Savior.

I think we can use these Philistines as an illustration of such, and we find that wherever they get into control of a certain group of Christians, they prove to be a thorn in their side. I suppose most of the trouble in the professing church today is due to the presence and power of those who have never experienced

what the Bible calls regeneration, and these Philistines are apt type of that. They gave the people of God plenty of trouble, and as I said, they've left their stamp upon that country to this very day.

And it may be that those who call themselves Palestinians today might be included in that group, although Philistia itself is at what we call the southwest corner of the land of Israel, or the Holy Land. But here they are, and these three men distinguish themselves in fighting against these and winning victories over them. But there's another group of three men in this same chapter.

Now, you've got your Bible open there. Let me just look at verse 13 with you. And three of the thirty chiefs went down and came to David in the harvest time unto the cave of Adullah.

And the troop of the Philistines pitched in the valley of Rephiah, and David was then in an hold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem. And David longed and said, O that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate. And the three mighty men break through the holt of the Philistines and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate, and took it and brought it to David.

Nevertheless, he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the Lord, and he said, Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this. It is not that the blood of the men that have went in jeopardy of their lives, therefore he would not drink it. These things did these three mighty men.

Notice how these men are distinguished in the class by themselves. We don't even have their names. They're not operating separately like the other three that we're looking at earlier in the chapter.

They're working together, and they're doing something not only in fighting against the Philistines, spectacular as that can be, but they do something to minister to the heart of David. David longed and said. He didn't command.

He didn't say, I want you three men to break through there and get me some of that water. No, he just simply expressed a longing and a desire. And I like to think that in this they might represent what you and I could do for our blessed Lord and Savior.

Last Lord's Day morning, we gathered here to remember him and his death. One dear brother rose to speak on the 53rd chapter of Isaiah and called our attention to the wounds of our Lord Jesus. He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised again for our iniquities.

I was so moved by it, friends, that I'm not ashamed to confess to you that I was overcome with emotion. Yes, I have tested myself again and again in this way. You know, there's such a thing that even preachers are backslidden.

Whenever I suspect that this is true of me, I read one of those passages like the 53rd chapter of Isaiah or the 69th Psalm or one of the closing chapters of one of the four Gospels. And if I can read about the sufferings of the Lord Jesus and not be moved in my heart, I know that Carl Ammerding is backslidden. I get down on my knees and pray that once again my heart may be tender toward these terrible sufferings of his, and that I might also be responsive to the longing of his heart when he said, This do in remembrance of me.

I like to think that these three men that are mentioned here, unnamed men, might well represent such. And that brings me now to what I really want to talk about tonight, and this is in the Gospel of Mark. So please

turn with me to chapter 5 of Mark's Gospel, where again we have three men brought to our attention, Peter and James and John.

I've often wondered why these three men were selected, were not told anything that they did, anything spectacular, but we do know this, that all three of these men gave their lives as martyrs to the Lord Jesus Christ. We have the revelation in 20th chapter of John that Peter was to die by crucifixion. Another was going to lead him, but he didn't want to go.

And tradition has it that he was crucified with his head down, because he didn't want to be crucified like the Lord. And John and James, who desired a place at the Lord's right hand and on his left, were told that they were going to be baptized with the baptism that he was baptized with. They were going to drink the cup that he drank.

And while some think that John did not suffer martyrdom on the basis of that text and scriptures, I shall point out a little later on, I believe all three of these men suffered martyrdom for Christ's sake. But here we have a story beginning at Mark 5 and verse 21, and I think I only need to refresh your memories on this story. It's the story of a ruler of a synagogue.

His name was Jairus. And he had a little girl who was very sick and she was dying, and he fell down at the Lord's feet and he said, If you'll only come and put your hands on her, I know she'll live. The Lord says, I'll go.

And while he's going, another one steps in and receives a blessing on the way. A woman who had been suffering for some 12 years with an issue of blood. And she said to herself, If I only touch the hem of his garment, I know.

And she did, and her faith was rewarded in the fact that she was made whole and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague. Then the Lord Jesus turned around and says, Who touched me? And the disciples said, Oh Lord, you see this big crowd around you? Why, lots of people are touching you. He said, But I know that virtue went out of me.

And the scripture tells us that he looked around about not to see who, but he looked around about to see her that had touched him. And he immediately commends her for her faith. But he had no sooner said this when there came a few from the ruler of the synagogue's house and said, Don't trouble the master any further.

Your daughter is dead. The Lord Jesus looked at the father and says, Don't be afraid. Only believe.

The maid is not dead, but asleep. And the Lord used the word here for sleep, which the apostle Paul uses in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, where evidently he's not talking about physical death at all. He says, Let us not sleep as do others.

For they that sleep sleep in the night, and they that are drunken are drunken in the night. Evidently he's referring to a spiritual condition. But of course to the people in the house of Jairus, this girl was really dead.

And the Lord Jesus takes with him three men. You get that referred to in verse 37 of that chapter. Mark 5, verse 37.

And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter and James and John the brother of Jairus. Now, as I said, I wondered why these three were selected. Can it be that they, like the three we were reading about in 2 Samuel 23, had done something special for the Lord? May I address myself not only to the men in the audience, but to the ladies as well.

Has it ever occurred to you that you might do something for the Lord that would satisfy the longing of his heart? In such a fashion that he would bring you in to see something that he doesn't allow others to see? And what is this something that he wants them to see? He wants them to see that he has power to give life. And Paul tells us in the first chapter of Romans that our blessed Lord was marked out as the Son of God by the resurrection of the dead. And the old Scofield Bible puts it correctly in the margin, I believe, of such as were dead.

In other words, when the Lord raised people from the dead, he was giving evidence that he was the Son of God. And this is the thing that the Lord Jesus wanted these three choice disciples of his to see. He wanted them to see the proof that he was exactly what he claimed to be, exactly what they also believed him to be, that he was the Son of God.

And this, dear friends, to me is exciting to think that the Lord would today give you and me proof of this fact. Sometimes, you know, we think all the proof we have is in the written page of the Word, that we have no objective proofs that our Lord is what he claimed to be. But every time you and I have the joy of seeing a soul pass from death to life, we have what is illustrated in the fifth chapter of Mark.

And the wonderful thing it is to manifest it, isn't it? As one who ministered to many sick people and those who were right on the brink of eternity, for ten years, I was honorary chaplain of a Methodist sanatorium in the city of Albuquerque, New Mexico. In those ten years, I think I saw more people die than perhaps all of you in this room have ever seen die, because they were dying every week. And in the course of ten years, it mounted up not only three different occasions that I wish I weren't there, and those three happened to be atheists.

I hope I never have to witness the deathbed of another atheist when I think of how these unbelievers in God left this life to go into eternity without hope. And one of them, mind you, had been an ordained minister and renounced his faith, became an apostate, and cursed me when I came into his room with my Bible. He told me to get the soul so out of there, and knowing that he was not physically able to expel me, I said, I'll go when I get ready.

And I stayed right with it, hoping that there might be just one last ray of hope, that this man might yet trust the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior. But, for the most part, my experience in that work was glorious. Sad at times, oh yes, sad to see the father of a family taken, mother left with a lot of young children to bring up.

That was sad. But, oh, to think that here was the soul passing from death unto life, when you brought him the gospel of God's grace, and now as he goes through the article of physical death, you go right into the presence of the living Lord. You know, it's tremendous, it's exciting.

And it's one of those things that just keeps one buoyed up. Sometimes people wonder why you can keep at it so long. Well, this is it.

To use a common expression, it's like a shot in the arm. You know, this is what some of our assemblies need, don't they? They sure do. And all the wonderful things.

Then, of course, I could have used another illustration as well. Those of us who are fathers, who stood by as our loved ones were bringing their children into the world, what a wonderful sight it is to see a newborn baby, to hear its first cry, take it up in your arms and hold it to yourself. This is my own flesh and blood.

Though the experience of leading the soul into salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, this is equally thrilling, isn't it? Yes, it is. And this, I believe, is illustrated for us in the fifth chapter of this book of Mark. And the Lord Jesus choosing these three men, who evidently were in that state of soul where the Lord wanted them to have an experience like that, evidently they had done something for him, which led him to pick these three out to see what he was going to do.

May I challenge you with this word tonight, my dear brother and sister in Christ, you who perhaps are saying to yourself, oh, I wish we could see some real addition to our assembly, somebody touching the Lord Jesus Christ, to hear the first cry of a newborn's pillow. Yes, it's simply yours. But I think there are certain prerequisites, and I think the passage which I read for you in 2 Samuel 23 might give us just a little clue, a little hint as to what that prerequisite might be.

But now please turn to chapter 9 of this same book of Mark, the ninth chapter of Mark's gospel, and here we read, He that the Lord Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that there be some of them that stand here which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power. And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter and James and John, and leadeth them up into a high mountain apart by themselves, and he was transfigured before them. You know, it would be difficult for me even to define this, except that the scripture here says in verse 3, it tells us what this transfiguration must have been like.

It says, His raiment, that's the clothing he wore, became shining, exceeding white as snow, as no foreign earth can whiten. And I'm sure that his face must have glowed well. And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus, and so on.

What a wonderful sight. You know, Peter refers to this in his second epistle. He said, We have not, I believe, cunningly devised Satan.

He said, We have had a real experience. We were eyewitnesses of his majesty. Oh, they say they were eyewitnesses of his power in chapter 5, but now they get another vision.

They were eyewitnesses of his majesty. I think I have a little illustration of that. When their majesties King George and Queen Elizabeth, years ago now of course, visited Canada, my wife was a Canadian, and our children didn't know just which way to lean at times, whether to lean toward their father's American side or their mother's Canadian side.

And one of my daughters was a very patriotic American. She didn't know that she was interested in royalty at all. But when the King and Queen came to London, Ontario, where we were staying with my father and mother-in-law, the King and Queen were driving through the streets of London, Ontario, and of course we went down to see them.

And my daughter, who was a very strong American, came along with us. Well, of course, the King and Queen didn't take long in passing us, and we turned and came home. But where was Louise? I don't know.

But finally she showed up after about a half an hour, I guess. She ran up to her mother. She says, Oh, mummy, what do you know? I saw her three times.

Imagine, I died in the war. Thank you. I saw the Queen three times.

She followed her to various places in London, Ontario, where she knew they were going. She did a three-time look at Her Majesty. Friends, in this word of God, you and I did a look at His Majesty.

And this is something which we must not forget, because the ministry in which you and I are is really a royal ministry. When our Lord Jesus Christ commissioned His own in the 28th chapter of Matthew, remember it says, All power is given unto me in heaven and earth. Go ye there, and make disciples of all nations.

In the Apostle Paul, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, it's true, he starts out by calling himself an apostle, which of course he was. Then in the third chapter, he descends to the very depths of humility when he says he's less than the least of all saints. But in the last chapter, he just can't hold back when he says, I'm an ambassador.

It's true, an ambassador in bonds, but he's an ambassador in everything. And remember this is one thing he impressed upon the Corinthians, when he says, We then as ambassadors for Christ beseech you, in Christ's stead be you reconciled to God. All my brethren in the ministry, beloved, this is a royal ministry.

This is a royal ministry. There's a dignity about it, which of course we cannot demonstrate because we're just vessels, earthen vessels, but the one whom we serve is great, he's great. And these disciples are given a wonderful privilege here in seeing him in his glory.

He was transfigured before them. And then certain things are included in this story which show that they hardly appreciated that, but it's so human that I have to refer to it. You notice it says here in verse 5, Mark 9 verse 5, And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it's good for us to be here.

You would have said, you would have expected him to say, Your Majesty, but instead of that he just said, Master, it's good for us to be here. Let us make here three tabernacles, one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias. He had not caught what he reveals in his second epistle.

He had something to learn about the dignity of the person that was transfigured before them. And God is teaching him that in the next verses when it says, verse 7, And there was a cloud that overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved son. Here he is.

And suddenly when they looked around about, they saw no man anymore save Jesus only with themselves. Beloved, he's in a class by himself. He's unique.

And we don't have to say most unique, which I believe is really ungrammatical. There's no such thing as most unique, because anything that's unique is incomparable. It's in a class by itself.

And our blessed Lord is unique. One of the pleasures I get out of reading the scripture in other languages, and give me an illustration of this. For example, in John 3, 16, where our Lord Jesus Christ in our English translation is called the only begotten Son.

In French, son fils unique, his unique son. He's in a class by himself. And this is something that Peter didn't realize here when he was putting the Lord on a level.

It's true he mentioned it first. One for thee, one for Moses, one for Elias. But beloved, no matter how great the servant of Christ may be, and Moses and Elias were great servants, but they were not in this class.

Dear friends, oh may you and I who know and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, remember that he's not only the lowly Jesus who died upon the cross, but he's the King of kings and Lord of lords. And this will give a dignity to our service. It'll preserve us from doing things that are ignoble, or expressing ourselves in the ignoble terms when we talk about him, ever remembering the dignity that belongs to him as the unique Son of God.

But there's one more time that these three men are brought together. This same Gospel of Mark, chapter 14. The 14th chapter of Mark's Gospel.

We'll read here. We ought to read from verse 32 on, please. Mark 14, verse 32.

And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, Sit ye here while I pray. And he taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy, and said unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death. Carry ye here, and watch.

What is that? They saw him in his glorious power to raise the dead. They saw him in his glorious amount of transfiguration. But now they see him in the throes of sorrow as he anticipates the cross.

This is a sight, of course, which we could never have repeated. We praise God we never will have it repeated. But it's something which I believe the Holy Spirit of God would bring before us, beloved, every time we come together to really remember the Lord.

As we were reminded last Lord's Day of his wounds, yes, we use the language of Jeremiah the prophet and apply it to the Lord Jesus, Behold and see if there be any sorrow like in my soul. There have been various speculations as to what the Lord was really sorrowing about. Was he sorrowing for himself? I doubt it.

It is true that he did shrink from that cup when he said, O Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done. But I can see the weight of sorrow, I believe, in the Savior's heart as he realizes that it took all of this to bring you and me back to a God of grace.

O beloved, to be spectator of a scene like that is a special privilege. That's a special privilege. And to me, this enhances the value of our meetings for the remembrance of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we can give a full hour at least to this very subject.

We don't come together to listen to a sermon or to a beautiful solo, however beautifully and wonderfully it may be rendered. We're there to be occupied with one blessed person and his dying love upon the cross of Calvary. What a sight.

And we find when we get home to glory, we'll still be reminded of the same thing, because in the fifth chapter of Revelation, when the prophet there heard the voice, he turned around and saw him, the lamb that had been slain. God will never let us forget what it cost the Son of God to redeem us. And I trust that having looked at these three occasions here this evening in the Gospel of Mark, that more of us will be filled with a desire, especially as we come together to remember the Lord, to really be honored by getting a vision of himself as these disciples did.

Not only a vision of himself and his mighty power to pass souls from death into life. That's wonderful. To see him in his glory, and this also is very uplifting, isn't it? It's transcendent.

But to see him in his song. This is it that has moved our hearts. And like those three men of whom we're reading in 2 Samuel 23, it might move us to respond not to a command, but to a desire.

This, too, in remembrance of me. In closing, let us turn to hymn number 183. 183.

I am thine, O Lord. I heard thy voice, and it told thy love to me. But I long to rise in the arms of faith, and be closer drawn to thee.

Number 183. Let us rise to sing it. Blessed Lord Jesus, we bow in thy holy presence with worship, praise, and adoration.

To think that thou, the King of Glory, shouldst condescend to invite the likes of us, not only to witness thy power to raise the dead and to cause souls to pass into that death and to life, nor yet even to that majestic transcendent scene when thou wast transfigured before thy own, and they were eyewitnesses of thy majesty. But, O Lord, the most sacred sight of all, to see thee in the throes of sin, for those for whom thou hast come to give thyself. O precious Lord, we pray that by thy Holy Spirit this may often be brought before our hearts, that these hearts of ours may respond again in loving devotion to thyself.

To this we ask, O Lord, as we hear thou head and heart in thy holy presence, to receive now the divine benediction of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

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