

Our Daily Homily - Mark

by F.B. Meyer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of having faith in God, being on God's plan, and following Jesus to the cross, in order to overcome difficulty and temptation and to have authority over demons.

Scripture: Mark 1:13, Mark 2:22, Mark 3:14, Mark 4:19, Mark 5:35, Mark 6:30, Mark 7:19, Mark 8:12, Mark 9:22-23, Mark 11:22

Topics: "Faith", "Transformation"

Description

F.B. Meyer reflects on the profound contrasts between the first Adam and the last Adam, Jesus Christ, emphasizing how Christ transforms wilderness into gardens and has dominion over creation. He encourages believers to choose between the wild beasts of their lower nature and the angels of their higher calling, urging them to seek a deeper relationship with God. Meyer highlights the importance of faith, love, and the authority given to believers over spiritual adversaries, while also addressing the distractions of cares, riches, and lusts that can choke spiritual growth. He reassures that even in moments of despair, like the death of a loved one, faith in Jesus can bring hope and restoration. Ultimately, Meyer calls for a life of communion with Christ, where believers are empowered to preach and live out their faith with the assurance of God's presence and support.

Transcript

He was with the wild beasts, and the angels ministered unto him - Mark 1:13

In what different circumstances is the last Adam to the first! He began in a garden which the Lord God had planted; but his great Antitype in a wilderness, the thorns of which spoke of that primal sin. But whereas the first Adam transformed the garden into a wilderness, the last will convert all desert places into gardens-whether they be in the heart, or the world around - so that they shall blossom as the rose.

To Adam the beasts came, that he might name them; but at the coming of the last Adam they were wild. "He was with the wild beasts." Yet they were tame to his pure manhood. "He had dominion over the works of God's hands." On his brow the crown of royalty over the inferior races, which man had lost, was already placed. Is it not also true that holy men still have power over the lower creation? Certainly Francis of Assisi had. And in the ages, yet future, the children shall play, unhurt, amid the wild beasts of the forest.

Again it is true of thee, O son of man, that, like thy Lord, thou art between the wild beasts and the angels. On the one side thou touchest the lower, and on the other the higher. At every moment thou art called to

choose between these twain. Thy body calls thee this way, and thy spirit that. Be sure to deny the lower appetites; rule them; be king and lord in the realm of thy soul. Make them crouch around thee, as the lions of Daniel's den. Get thy Lord to master them for thee. Else thou wilt miss the angels of God, who come to encamp around thee, and minister to thee, as one of the heirs of salvation. Was it here that Christ learned to contrast His homelessness with the lairs of the beasts?

New wine must be put into new bottles - Mark 2:22

Ah, our Lord! Thou hast been speaking of the bridegroom and His coming to the Feast. Thou remindest us of the olden comparison of Thy love as better than wine, and of Thy first miracle at Cana of Galilee. May Thy love be poured into our hearts as the fresh juice crushed from the grapes! We have no love of our own to offer Thee: but, oh, pour Thy love into hearts that yearn to love Thee with Thy love. And let it not be only the memory of the love that was, but the living, fresh enjoyment of the love that is ever new. The new wine of Thy love is what we long for, that it may sweep into our hearts as the spring tide along the golden sands, which it frees from their accumulation of debris and waste. Oh for the constraints of Thy love - new, fresh, living!

But the Master says, Children, if you have your request, the new wine may refuse to take on with the old shapes; it will make for itself new channels and forms of manifestations; when others fast, you will feast; when others feast, you will be sad. You will be counted eccentric and peculiar. Men will murmur at you, and find fault. They may even cast you out of their churches and social circles.

There is but one answer: Leave us not to ourselves. Permit us not to follow the promptings and suggestions of our undisciplined wills; but provide for us the new wine-skins also. Show us what Thou wouldst have us be and do; and let the methods in which our hearts' devotion shall express itself be so lovely, so befitting, so helpful to the world, and so full of God, that men may recognize Thy hand, and adore Thee. Let not Thy love be spilled, but stored for the refreshment of others through our lives. Oh, give us love!

He appointed twelve - Mark 3:14

This is the threefold work of the Church, and of each disciple.

That we might be with Him. - The Master dearly loves our company. Let us seek it more. Not necessarily praying, or praising, or learning-but just being quietly with Him. It was said of a holy man, Mons de Rentz, that his union and converse with God were so wonderful, that after he had spent several hours therein, he found himself in the end as if he had only then begun it, except only that he had then yet more desire to continue it. And at length he arrived to that height that it seemed as though he never ended it at all; being wholly and constantly in inward recollection and application to God. After whose example let us press, that we may enjoy like near approach to God, and our lives be suitably ordered for His glory.

That He might send them forth to preach. - He cannot come forth from the secret chamber of eternity to preach, as once He was wont to do; and therefore He is ever raising up voices, witnesses, lips which He teaches how to speak, and touches with His live coal. Has He not sent you forth, if not by lip, yet by life to bear witness to His love? Like the seraphim, if you have two pair of wings for reverent modesty, you have at least one pair for flight. Oh, breathe the prayer, Send me.

That they might have authority over demons. The power of Satan is strong; it mastered Adam, but it met more than its match in the Christ-nature. If that nature is regnant in you, you, too, will have power over all the power of the enemy. Nothing shall by any means hurt you, and you will be able to deliver others who have long been held captive.

Cares; . . . riches; . . . lusts - Mark 4:19

There is enough nutriment in the land for the thorns alone or for the wheat alone, but not for both; and so there is a brief struggle for mastery, in which the sturdy weed prevails against the slender wheat, and chokes it. Nourishment which should go to its support is drained away from it; and though it does not actually expire, it leads a struggling existence, and becomes unfruitful. What are these weeds?

For the poor man - Cares. - The Greek word for care is Division. Cares divide our heart, and distract it in many different directions. What shall we eat? What shall we drink? Wherewithal shall we be clothed? How shall we meet our rent and other expenses? It is almost impossible to settle to our prayer, or Bible-study, or Christian work, or to the culture of the soul-life, while questions like these intrude. What shall the poor man do to prevent the word becoming unfruitful? He must take his cares to his Father, and by one act deposit them in His safe-keeping. And thereafter, as a care tries to break in on the peace of his heart, he must treat it as a positive temptation, handing it over to God.

For the prosperous man - Riches. - They will distract as much as anxiety does. How much they amount to! Oh, the endless figurings in the brain - how to keep, or invest, or increase. The case for him is to look on all he has as a stewardship for God, deducting only a moderate percentage for himself.

For us all - Lusts. - Strong and inordinate desires for what may be right in itself, but which we follow with extravagant zest. What is right in itself may become wrong if we put it in God's place, and allow it to monopolize us unduly. Oh, Great Husbandman, root up the thorns by Thy Holy Spirit!

Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the master any further? - Mark 5:35

What hopelessness! They had watched the sweet flower fade, till no color was left on the pale cheek, and the merry voice was still; and then they thought of the Galilean Teacher: "Why cost Him time and trouble? His visit will be useless now! It was very kind of Him to be willing to come! But it is now of no use! Very kind; but no use."

We go to God in comparatively small trials, and think He can help us. But there are times when we say: It is no use troubling further; we must just bear our trial as well as we can, God Himself cannot help us. Can He give back that twin-soul? Can He restore the love that has died out? Can He undo this unhappy marriage? Can He deliver from that lifelong paralysis? Life is extinct; hope is dead; the light has dipped below the horizon. It is no use to trouble God or man. We have no alternative but to suffer till eternity explain the mysteries of time.

But Jesus knows the way out. He says in His sweet undertone, "Fear not! only believe." He has the keys of death. He never would have let things come to this awful pass by His delay unless He had known that, even if the worse came to the worst, all would end well. He has purposely delayed till this, that He might have the better opportunity of showing you what God can do. Fear not! the hand of the Almighty Saviour has yours within its grasp. He will not let you stumble as you go down this dark staircase by His side. Only believe: have faith in Him. All may seem very mysterious now, but you will come to see that it was the

wisest and best after all. You shall yet clasp to your heart the lost one, arrayed in resurrection beauty.

(They) told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught - Mark 6:30

Talking things over with Jesus! It is a precious secret! When one has been out in the world, it is delightful to talk over what has happened in the seclusion of the home. We have read of a wife who reserved one room in the house, which no one was permitted to enter but her husband and herself; and there they interchanged their mutual confidences. So it is a blessed habit to talk over everything with Jesus, and to review the events of the past beneath the light of His loving eyes.

"We have had much success, Master," we cry; "the cities were moved; the devils were subject; the crowds followed us everywhere." Ah, children, He seems to say, Those who cry "Hosanna" to-day will cry "Crucify" to-morrow: the real work of God is not done amid congratulating crowds, but in the heart's depths, and in the ante-chamber. See that ye dwell not on the excitement of the outward reception, lest you attribute your success to something in yourselves, and pride yourselves upon it, and become unsuitable for My use. All success comes from above.

"We have been greatly persecuted, and our mission seems to have been a failure, Master," we cry at another time. "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Care not for it, the same wise Counsellor replies: I at least am satisfied; I will see to it that your reward is according to your faithfulness, if not to your success; and there shall be a remnant of good soil that shall repay one hundredfold.

Thus His loving words extract the poison from success, and rally us from despondency. Oh, Christian workers, get into the secret of His presence, that He may correct, criticise, or encourage as He please.

This he said, making all meats clean - Mark 7:19

This is a remarkable rendering of the Revisers, which has the support of their profound scholarship; and inaugurates an era in the history of the Levitical institutions. Before this hour arrived men were clean if they ate certain kinds of food, and unclean if they ate others. But from this moment, the Evangelist tells us, these outward distinctions were abolished. Henceforth all meats were to be viewed by the followers of Jesus as equally clean. There is, however, need that we should remember two or three things in respect to food.

(1) That every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it can be received with thanksgiving. The act of thanksgiving is the test for the fitness and unfitness of food, as the ancient sign was supposed to be when made by the knight over a glass of wine offered by a stranger. Do not touch what you cannot thank God for.

(2) Take care to eat for the need as the body rather than for its pleasure. - There are a great many dainties and luxuries heaped on our tables which we take simply for the pleasure of eating. It is here that we are assailed with temptation, and need to be on our guard. The fact of food being pleasant eating is not in itself sufficient to justify our taking it. It may clog our digestion, and impair our power for thought and prayer and service.

(3) Be moderate in the amount you eat.-Quite as many over-eat as over-drink. We should always have the girded loin. The majority of the diseases of modern life have been traced to the habit of eating to excess. We are told by eminent authorities that we ought not to rise from table with the sense of having eaten to

the full. Let your moderation in this also be known to all men.

He sighed deeply in his spirit - Mark 8:12

This Evangelist twice over calls attention to the Lord's sighs - in Mark 7:34, and here. A sigh is one of the most touching and significant tokens of excessive grief! When Nature is too deeply overwrought to remember her necessary inspirations, and has to compensate for their omission by one deep-drawn breath, we sigh, we sigh deeply in our spirit.

Looking up to heaven, He sighed. - As the deaf mute stood before Him - an image of all the closed hearts around Him; of all the inarticulate unexpressed desires; of all the sin and sorrow of mankind - the sensitive heart of Jesus responded with a deep-drawn sigh. But there was simultaneously a heavenward look, which mingled infinite hope in it. If the sigh spoke of His tender sympathy, the look declared His close union with God, by virtue of which He was competent to meet the direst need. Whenever you sigh, look up to heaven. Heaven's light turns tears to jewels!

He sighed deeply. - The obdurate and impenetrable hardness of the Pharisees; their willful misinterpretation of His words and mission; their pride and bigotry - wrung the Lord's heart with bitterness. He turned sorrowfully away. There was no possibility of furnishing help, since on their side there was no desire for it, or belief in Him. Perhaps such sighs still break from His heart, as He views mankind; but through them He is doing His best to bring about the time when all sorrow and sighing shall flee away forever.

The Son of God, in doing good, would look to heaven and sigh; but His sighs were followed by the touch and word of power. Let us not be content with the sigh of sympathy and regret.

If thou canst...and Jesus said unto him, if thou canst! - Mark 9:22,23

Yes, there was an if in this sad case. But the father put it in the wrong place. He put it against Christ's power, "If Thou canst do anything." But it was really on the side of his own ability to believe. If only he believed, all else would be easily possible. Even though his faith were small, it would suffice; the tiniest seed can appropriate the chemical products of the soil, and transmute them into digestible products; the narrowest channel will suffice for the passage of the waters of the whole ocean if you give time enough. Let us not worry about the greatness or smallness of our faith; the main point is as to whether it is directed toward the living Saviour.

There are many issues to which these words may be applied. If Jesus can save me from the power of sin! No; if thou canst believe, He can. If Jesus can deliver out of a mesh of temptation and perplexity! No; if thou canst believe, He will. If Jesus can revive His work mightily to the upbuilding of His Church and the ingathering of the lost! No; if thou canst believe for it.

Dost thou want that faith? It may be had thus. Look away from difficulty and temptation to Jesus; consider Him; feed thy faith on its native food of promise; familiarize thyself with fellowship with the promises; study what He has done for others: thus thou wilt believe. For every thought of thy little faith take ten thoughts of His faithfulness.

"All things are possible to God,

To Christ the power of God in man;

To me, when I am all subdued,
When I in Christ am formed again,
And witness from my sins set free,
All things are possible to me."

And Jesus was going before them - Mark 10:32

The radiant vision of the Transfiguration was deliberately forsaken, as the Lord took the way of the cross, going to Jerusalem to die. The shadow of His awful exodus had already fallen upon the little group. Behold that resolute figure - the wan face lit up with the fire of an invincible resolve-going in front, climbing the difficult ascent. The apostles cannot keep step with His eager steps, and they fear as an instinctive dread of coming events casts its chilling mantle around them. There was something in their Master they could not understand.

Such moments come to all lives, when Jesus leads us to the cross. How often He asks for a deeper consecration; a more complete crossing of natural inclination for the sake of His Gospel; an intenser purpose. At His bidding we must tear ourselves away from ambitions which had fascinated, and dreams which had allured. We must no longer live on the lower level, however pleasant to flesh and blood, but gird ourselves to go up to Jerusalem.

At such moments He always goes before us. We may not see Him until we begin to follow in the direction of His voice; but so soon as we set ourselves to obey, we become aware of His prevenient grace. He is just in front. He never puts forth His own sheep without going before them. He never asks us to tread a path which has not been trodden by His footsteps. Happy are they who follow Him!

In the first effort to follow Jesus, there may be amazement and not a little fear. The unaccustomed path, the strange look on His face, the shadow of the cross - all dissuade us. But as He dilates on the joy set before Him and us, we learn to think lightly of the difficulties in comparison with the goal.

Jesus answering saith unto them, have faith in God - Mark 11:22

The margin of the R. V. suggests that this command might be rendered, Have the faith of God. As long as I live I shall remember this text in connection with my first meeting with Hudson Taylor. He was to preach for me on a Sunday morning, now years ago, and gave out this as his text. But he said that he had always interpreted it as dealing rather with God's faith to us than ours to Him; so that it ran thus: Reckon an God's faithfulness.

1. We must be sure that we are on God's plan. - There is a prepared path for us, along which God has stored up all necessary supplies. But if we want those supplies, we must find and follow it. Along the track which He has marked out between this and Home, our Father has erected cairns full of provisions; but we must let His route prevail over our own notions and wishes, if we are to enjoy His preparations.

2. We must be prepared to wait on Him. - For these things He will be inquired of. Though He knows what we need, He expects our humble request, that we may be perpetually reminded of our entire dependence on Him. He sometimes appears to tarry to draw out our faith and prayer. But He will never utterly fail.

3. We must walk worthily of Him. - God shows Himself strong only on behalf of those whose heart is perfect toward Him. By His enabling grace we must put away the old manner of life, and be renewed in the spirit of our mind, that we may be such whom the great God shall delight to honor. Let such trust Him to the hilt; they will find Him faithful. He will never put us into positions of peril and responsibility, and leave us to take our chance.

He is not the God of the dead, but of the living - Mark 12:27

Since God spoke of Himself as the God of the patriarchs, centuries after they had been borne to their graves, it stood to reason that they were yet living; and on this ground our Lord met the allegation that there is no life beyond death.

Death is not a state or condition, but an act. We speak of the dead; but in point of fact there are none such. We should speak of those who have died. They were living up to the moment of death; but they were living quite as much afterward. Death is like birth, an act, a transition, a passage into a freer life. Never think of a death as a state, but as resembling a bridge which, for a moment, casts its shadow on the express train, which flashes beneath, but does not stay.

All our dear ones are living. - As vividly, as keenly, as intensely as ever: with all the love and faith and intelligence with which we were wont to associate their beloved personality. It may be that they think of us as only half alive, compared with their own intense and vivid experience of the life which draws its breath from the manifested presence of God. Oh, do not fear that they will cease to recognize, know, or love you! Always it remains true, "Without us they cannot be made perfect."

Those who live on either side of death may meet in God. - Those who are present in the body, and those who are absent from it, meet in proportion as they approach God. When we come near Him in thought, and prayer, and love, we are come to the spirits of the just made perfect. God is the glorious centre of all the lines that radiate into all worlds. "Ye are come to God, the Judge of all . . . and to the spirits of the just made perfect."

Ye know not when the master of the house cometh - Mark 13:35

No, we know not. It is better that we should not know. But He must be very near. Even has passed; the beams of His presence had just died off the world, and the after-glow was still lingering in the ministry of the apostles in the early Church. Midnight has passed; it reached its deepest darkness in the middle ages, when only a few holy souls shone like stars in the surrounding gloom. Cock-crow has passed; Wickliffe and Luther, and others, heralded the morning. And now the morning is upon us; nay, it is shining more and more unto the perfect day. He must be near, even at the doors. Be ready, O virgin souls, to go forth to meet Him!

But may not these words be interpreted in yet another way? Jesus comes to us in the evening twilight, when the joy of our life seems slowly waning. He comes to us in the deep night of depression, bereavement, and anguish. He comes to us in the hope and expectancy of each new dawn, when we gird ourselves to fresh toils and endeavors. He comes to us in the morning, and satisfies us with His mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all the day. Only let us watch for His coming, with ears attent to His lightest footfall, His softest whisper. Then, when He shows Himself through the lattice, or softly whispers, "Come away," we shall arise and go forth with Him to the beds of lilies and the gardens of myrrh.

Are we quite sure that we belong to His house? "Whose house are we," says the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews. But there are conditions: we must be born into it by regeneration; we must walk as becometh saints; we must hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end. Christ is Lord over this house, and His will is law (Heb 3:1-9).

But Jesus said, let her alone - Mark 14:6

The lovers of Jesus are often misunderstood. Those who judge only by a utilitarian standard refuse to acknowledge the worth of their deeds. You might as well despise the electric light because it makes no register on a gas-meter. But when the voices of criticism and jealousy are highest, Jesus steps in and casts the shield of His love around the trembling, disconcerted soul, saying, Let him alone. So He speaks still:

To Satan. - The adversary stands near to resist and tempt. As Judas criticised Mary, so the Evil One seems at times to pour a perpetual stream of chilling criticism on all we say and do; or he meets us at every turn with some evil suggestion. But Jesus is on the watch, and He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to bear; but when heart and flesh fail, He will step in and say, Let him (or her) alone.

To sorrow. - We must pass through the fire, and be subjected to the lapidary's wheel; we must drink of His cup, and be baptized with His baptism; we must bear our cross after Him. But He is always on the alert. And whenever the feeble flesh is at an end of its power of endurance, He will step in and say, Let be - it is enough.

To human unkindness. - Some of us are called to suffer most from our fellows; our foes belong to our own household; our brother Cain hates us. It is hard to bear. To have one's motives misunderstood and maligned; to lose one's good name; to be an outcast - all this is hard. But God has planted a hedge about us, and none may pass through it, except He permit. Even Satan recognizes this, as we learn from the Book of Job.

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? - Mark 15:34

This was the darkest hour of the Saviour's human life. Lover and friend stood away from Him; and those for whom His blood was being shed covered Him with contumely and abuse. Let us consider:

His quotation of Scripture. - He is quoting the first verse of Psalm 22, which is truly known as the Psalm of the Cross. It may be that He recited to Himself that wonderful elegy, in which David was to anticipate so minutely the sufferings of his Lord. What meaning there was for those dying lips in Psa 22:7 : "All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn "; in Psa 22:13 : "They gape upon Me"; in Psa 22:14 : "All My bones are out of joint"; in Psa 22:17 : "I may tell all My bones"; or in Psa 22:18 : "They part My garments and cast lots." What sacred feet trod those well-worn steps!

His vicarious sufferings. - There is no possible way of understanding, or interpreting, these words, except by believing that He was suffering for sins not His own; that He was being made sin for us; that He was bearing away the sin of the world. It is not for a moment conceivable that the Father could have ever seemed to forsake His well-beloved Son, unless He had stood as the Representative of a guilty race, and during those hours of midday midnight had become the propitiation for the sins of the world.

His perfect example of the way of Faith. - In doing the Father's will, He yielded up His life even to the death of the cross. But amid it all He said, "My God, My God." He still held to the Father with His two hands. And His faith conquered. The clouds broke; the clear heaven appeared; He died with a serene faith. "My God" was exchanged for "Father, into Thy hands."

The Lord working with them - Mark 16:20

This was the secret of the successes of the early Church. Theirs was the simple commission to preach; but wherever they did so, the Lord confirmed their word with signs following. In Jerusalem, Samaria, Antioch, Rome, and to the uttermost end of the world, wherever these simple men stood up and made their proclamation, their invisible Lord was present, and His Spirit bore witness.

Nothing less than this will account for the marvellous successes of those early preachers. He who sat at the right hand of God in the attitude of majestic rest was always beside them in the intensity of the most untiring work. What was done by them on earth was wrought by Himself. His right hand and His holy arm got Him the victory.

This blessed partnership has never been repealed. Jesus has never withdrawn from the compact; and if we could only dare to count and reckon on Him, we would find that He was cooperating in church, and Sunday-school, and mission-station. There are a few rules to be observed, however, before we can count upon Him thus:

- (1) We must be clean in heart and life. He cannot identify Himself with those who are consciously delinquent.
- (2) We must not seek our own glory, but God's, and the pure blessing of men.
- (3) We must use the Word of God as our sword, our lever, our balm, our cordial, our charm.
- (4) We must be in loving harmony with those who name His name, as He cannot countenance seclusion or uncharitable feeling.
- (5) We must by faith claim and reckon upon Him - speaking to Him as to the message before it is delivered, relying on Him during its delivery, and conferring with Him about its effect. Not anxious or elated, but at rest.

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