

Mark - the Sympathy & Authority of Our Lord

by J. Glyn Owen

Jesus' sympathy and authority are demonstrated in his ministry in Capernaum, where he shows compassion to his servants, the worshippers in a dead spiritual community, and the pagan mixed community with their mental and physical needs.

Duration: 45:09

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Mark 1:21-24, Mark 1:29-34

Topics: "Authority"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on a busy day in the life of Jesus and the scene that unfolds as crowds gather at Peter's home. People bring their sick friends and loved ones to Jesus, hoping to hear his word or receive his touch. The speaker emphasizes the stark contrast between the historical context of Jesus' ministry and our own lives, urging listeners to examine their own actions and seek righteousness. The passage from Mark 1:21-24 is mentioned, highlighting Jesus' authority in both intellectual and moral realms.

Transcript

Now I know you will pray especially for my tongue today as we turn to the ministry of the Word. I would like you to turn with me to Mark chapter 1 verses 21 to 24, the passage that was read earlier on. We'll not read it again.

What we want to do this morning is not so much to take the details of what we have in this very wonderful passage of God's Word, but we want to get hold of some of the threads and some of the principles enunciated here. And by the grace of God, we want to meditate upon them to our profit. The ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ has already begun.

He has called his first four disciples, and Mark now proceeds to fill in with other details relating to this part of his early ministry as God-man here upon earth. Now there are three things I would like you to notice. The first is by way of presenting the background for the second two.

You may find it useful to have these signposts ahead of time. We're going to look first of all at the sphere of his ministry, then the scope of his sympathy, and then lastly the scale of his authority. Our theme this morning is the sympathy and authority of our Lord.

Now just to background, look for a moment at the sphere of his ministry. Where is he? What's he doing? Well, we have the picture very clearly there at the beginning of the passage. It is the Sabbath day, and loyal to every command of his heavenly Father, our Lord Jesus will spend the Sabbath as he spends every other day to the glory of God and to the well-being of man.

Now we find that he is at this particular point in time in the city of Capernaum. Capernaum is located on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee in a region that used to be known as Zebulun and Naphtali. It was a seat of a tax collector, and it was a Roman military post.

What is more important as far as we are concerned now, it has become Jesus' home. The family have apparently moved from Nazareth and have become domiciled in this little seaside town, or not so little, this seaside town of Capernaum. So much so that the Revised Standard Version translates the first verse of chapter 2 in this way.

When he, that is Jesus, returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. And that really is the correct translation. Jesus was at home, and his home now was in Capernaum.

Here then, in the seaside town of Capernaum, we find a setting for everything that happens in these incidents in the passage before us today. But now, in Capernaum, we go first of all into the synagogue. Much of what is recorded in our text took place in the synagogue on the Sabbath day.

The synagogue was a teaching institution primarily. I know that there were Jews who spoke of it as a place of worship, and that was right, though others of them referred to the temple in Jerusalem as the center of worship. And they spoke of the synagogue as the center of teaching and distinguished between the two.

Now, Christianly, we can't do that, but the Jews did that. In the synagogue, the service was a very simple one. They read the scrolls of Scripture.

They prayed. And someone would take hold of the scroll, which had been read for the day, and would expound the word as best he could. They had no resident minister.

They had a character who is referred to in the King James Version as the minister in one place, though that is wrongly so. He was just the attendant. He was the person who opened the doors and shut the doors, and who gave out the scroll and suggested that this person or that should read the scriptures for the particular day.

In point of fact, the synagogue was probably the most influential institution in the whole life of the Jews. Every child was taken to the synagogue. All the families came together.

The temple in Jerusalem was miles and miles away from Galilee, and folk could not go down there, save on very rare occasions. And so wherever you have ten male Jews, you have a synagogue. And into the synagogue, every God-fearing Jew would not only come himself, but he would bring his family likewise.

Now that's the setting. But then there is another, and let me refer to it briefly so that we get the whole background to what we have to look at today. The third setting is inside and outside the home of Simon and Andrew and Simon's family.

Simon and Andrew had originally lived elsewhere, too. We're told that in John's gospel they had lived in Bethsaida. And they likewise have moved to this seaside, lakeside home in Capernaum.

And they've now become domiciled here. The home apparently belongs to Peter. Now the scene then moves from the synagogue, first of all inside the home of Simon, Peter, and Andrew, his brother, and Simon's family, and then later on in the day right outside the house, when a whole multitude come together.

The sphere of his ministry. Now come to the second point that I want to mention this morning, and where we really begin what I feel is the message of this passage to us as we gather here in Knox this morning. I want you to notice the scope of our Lord's sympathy.

Let's examine this matter from from the other side. We start almost at the end. The first thing I want you to notice is that our Lord had genuine sympathy for his own disciples, his servants, in their domestic problems.

Now you have that recorded and made quite clear in verses 29 to 31. You just check it up. Jesus goes into the home of Simon, Peter, and there was a problem there.

It was a physical problem, and it was quite acute at the moment when Jesus arrived. And the principle I want you to notice is this. Our Lord Jesus is concerned and is sympathetically concerned for the kind of thing that was taking place in the home of his disciple, of his servant.

Now we cannot dogmatize about dating and things like that in the New Testament, but we have already seen that earlier on, as is recorded in John chapter 1, these disciples had been called to be, shall we say, Christian. To cease to be merely Jewish disciples of John the Baptist, and they had been called to be Christian. But recently Simon, Peter, and Andrew, James, and John had received and obeyed a second call that we were considering last Lord's Day morning.

This was something different. This was a call to leave their families, to leave their boats and fishing trade, to leave the family business, in the case of two of them, and leave their aged father with a hired servant. Now you see, on the face of it, this could appear as if our Lord Jesus Christ was a little bit harsh and a little bit careless of what goes on with the rest of the family.

And I've no doubt that the devil would have majored on that and would have raised many questions in the hearts of those that were left behind. Who is this person who calls away our young man, calls them to leave everything and go after him? Who's going to care for us? One cannot help wondering, for example, how Peter's wife and her mother accepted this decision of their impetuous Peter. Probably they thought it was a major disaster for the family that Peter is called to leave the boats and the fishes and the fishing trade and to go itinerating after this Jesus of Nazareth who is supposed to be the Messiah.

I guess they may well have comforted themselves with the fact that, well, Peter's been a fisherman for a long time, and if the worst comes to the worst, we can still send him back to the boat and to the fishes and he can catch a few fish and help us make ends meet. Their domestic situation, however, was aggravated on this particular occasion, because Peter's mother-in-law, his wife's mother, was desperately ill. Luke distinguishes between a high fever and a low fever.

And the language that Luke uses to describe this is that of a high fever. In other words, it wasn't that she was just ailing, it was really that she was very ill. She can't cope.

She may well have been on the borders of unconsciousness. And, uh, to crown everything, did we ever discover that Peter was a little impetuous, especially at this period in his life? Peter, dare we say, perhaps a little careless of what was going on in the home, went to the synagogue that morning. And not only did he go to the synagogue, but to show the kind of thoughtless person he was at this stage, he brought three people home for lunch.

Now, you see the situation they've left. The mother-in-law is desperately ill with this high fever on her bed. Simon goes to the synagogue.

Well, that's all right, but he brings three visitors home for the Sabbath meal. Now, no sooner has Jesus and the other two arrived with Peter and Andrew than they're told of the desperate situation in the home. Mother is ill, very ill.

What I want you to know is this. It may well appear that Simon was thoughtless. Perhaps you'd like to use a stronger word, I don't know.

But one thing I am absolutely certain, and I want you to see it this morning, his Lord was never thoughtless. Jesus was as careful as his disciple was careless. He hears the news, and his sympathy is not simply expressed in the way in which he received it, nor in any words he uttered when the news was given him, but rather we're told, and Luke again comes to our rescue, he says he not only went to the patient on her bed, but he, like a physician, bent over the bed and probably put his arms around her and lifted her up.

And with a word of his lips, authoritative and significant, he healed the woman. Now I want this to get across to servants of God today, and to would-be servants of God. There are many, many people whom our Lord is calling to serve him, and one of the niggling fears that keep men back is this, but if I have to leave my salaried position, does my Lord help? Is he concerned? A thousand times yes.

What rejoicing there was in that home as the sick woman shook off her sickness like the shackles of a prisoner and hastened to help her daughter in preparing the midday meal. Can you imagine, can you imagine the talk of those two women as they cooked that Sabbath meal that day? Never did they talk quite like that. You see, everything has to be revised now.

They may have had some harsh notions of Jesus of Nazareth taking their Simon away, but here he comes into the house and he takes control of the dismal situation, and he brings mother out of her bed, and she stands on her two feet, and she's able to join her daughter in cooking the meal. He cares. He cares.

Servants of God, those of you who've left everything to follow him, take this to heart this morning. Our Lord Jesus has never changed. He has sympathy in his heart for your domestic needs, and it applies, of course, to every child of God.

Sympathy for his servants in their domestic problems. But now the scope of his sympathy is not confined to his servants. Look again.

The scope of his gracious sympathy extends further to the worshipers who congregate in a dead spiritual community. I don't know how else to describe it. I'm going back to verses 21 to 28.

The synagogue in Capernaum may not be in any worse spiritual plight than its neighboring institutions in Capernaum or any other town. I'm not suggesting that. But the fact remains that it was a scene of spiritual

darkness and spiritual death.

Yet, my friends, Jesus went into that place of dismal darkness and death because he cared for the people that met there every Sabbath day. It was his sympathy that drew him there, that sent him there. Now let us note two things, and we have to be rather quickly here, but let's just notice two things about the life, the religious life of the synagogue in the day of our Lord.

Two things I want to mention. One, its religion was without any certainty. Without any certainty.

This is made most explicit by the reaction of the congregation in that synagogue to the preaching of Jesus. You remember their reaction? It's put like this. Verse 22, they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes.

Now it's not just simply that he had authority, but he was such a complete contrast, you see, to the people that normally spoke and normally taught there. They were struck by the complete contrast between Jesus and the scribes. Now I know it may not be fair to summarize the method of the scribes in this way, and yet I know of no better in the space of a few moments.

The best they could do by way of giving a clear cut answer to the questions of men was this. They quoted the authorities. One authority would say this and another authority would say that, and this is really how they did it.

This is what the authorities say. Now against that kind of background, Jesus comes in and he says, I say unto you, the king of the kingdom, the son of God, God incarnate, walks into the synagogue, and where they've been so dismally doubtful and uncertain of everything, here comes for the first time a clarity of understanding and a certitude. Not only that, but the religion of the synagogue knew very little of genuine sanctity.

There was in their midst on that occasion a man who is described biblically as a man with an unclean spirit. Apparently the regular worshippers were not aware of the tragedy, let alone of the possibility of his being delivered. No one was shocked by it, but the point is no one saw the man as in any desperate need.

It may have been a very precious thing to have a man like this in a community that was really there to care for him, recognized his need, and would be prepared to do something to help, but that's not what we have here. He was quite at home. He was one of them.

He does not seem to have felt in the least uncomfortable because of his uncleanness until, until Jesus came. You see, if you're among a people who are holy, you and I should always feel a little bit uncomfortable before we can become comfortable. And had this place been a holy place where God the Holy One was known and understood and his word was proclaimed in all its glory and his spirit was present, there would have been a of the incongruity of a man with an unclean spirit in the clean house of the Holy One of Israel.

But there wasn't. They had no sanctity, no purity, none of the pungent properties of moral salt that made his sins sting within his soul. For what I want you to notice is this.

Jesus' sympathy went out to the people who attempted to worship in that synagogue and to the man himself. And then thirdly, our Lord's sympathy reached out as far as the pagan mixed community of the entire town with their mental and their physical needs, verses 32 to 34. Now let us not treat this as

commonplace.

It's really a manifestation of divine compassion in its most glorious form. A Sabbath day, that Sabbath day in Capernaum has been a very busy one for Jesus. We haven't got all the facts recorded by Mark.

I don't need to go into the details. Suffice it to make that general statement. It had been a busy, taxing day physically, mentally, spiritually.

What's he going to do at the end of the day? Well, I guess he was fellowshiping with the disciples in Peter's home. But suddenly the crowds begin to gather and you see a bewildering scene. You see people carrying folk who were unable to walk and others leading their friends and holding them by the arm or otherwise bringing folk to this home where they knew that Jesus was because they wanted the sick to hear his word or to feel his touch.

Probably some of them had been in the synagogue in the morning and they saw this man healed or Jesus healed the man who had an unclean spirit. Possibly some of them have now heard that he is in town and they just want to be sure that their sick and their needy have the opportunity of seeing him and hearing him and perhaps knowing his touch. And here they come.

A wonderful scene and yet it's tragic. They felt that this one person may, if he so desires, do something for them and the problems in their homes. They couldn't carry any burden between six in the morning and six at night, but once it was sundown, here they come and they bring their problems with them to Jesus.

And he healed many who were sick with various diseases and he cast out demons. Now, my friends, let's get this picture of the sympathy of our Lord. I don't know where you come in this morning.

I don't, I don't know, but he does. He has sympathy for the problems of his servants. He has sympathy for the worshippers in a dead, barren, bleak spiritual community.

He cares. He has sympathy for a man with an unclean spirit that has come to church and no one else can do anything for him. Jesus cares for that man in the synagogue.

And he has sympathy for all the neighbors and all the township who are prepared to bring their needy ones to him. His heart is bigger than their need. That's what I want to say.

Our Savior is a Savior whose heart encompasses your need and your problem today. The sphere of his ministry, the scope of his sympathy. But I'm glad that these two things are wedded here so that I can proceed to my last main point, the scale of his authority.

What's the use of sympathy if you have no authority to teach and to heal and to do what is necessary? Many of us have sympathy. Haven't you felt it many a time, Christian, when you visited people in their problems and you could do nothing but sit down and say, well, I'm terribly sorry for your situation. I wish I could do something, but I want you to know I sympathize with you.

We think about you, we pray for you, but we've no authority. Our Lord's authority is as great as his sympathy. This is where our salvation lay.

And these people felt, these people long ago described in this scene in Mark chapter 1, they felt that he had a rightful, actual, unimpeded power to act as he deemed wise. Now, look at the picture, very briefly. One, our Lord's authority in the realm of the mental and the intellectual.

I go to the synagogue. Two needs combine there, intellectual and moral. The authority of Jesus related, first of all, to the sphere of the mental and the intellectual.

In other words, as we've indicated already, but I want to make it explicit now, he brought intellectual light that banished the darkness of doubt and uncertainty. He taught them as one having authority. Now, whereas any male adult could be called upon to read and expound the sacred scrolls in the synagogue, there were, as we have indicated, there were those who were especially called and trained to do this teaching.

They were the scribes, the successors of Ezra in the Old Testament. Now, they were trained for this. Their special sphere was the five books of Moses and especially the law, the Ten Commandments.

And when they had taught the people the Ten Commandments and the laws of the Lord, then they gave them various indications as to how these should be carried out in individual life and in various circumstances, in life situations. And then what they did was this. They got the people to memorize all this.

And so there grew up in the church what we speak of as the oral tradition. In other words, people in the synagogue would repeat over and over and over and over again what the authorities believe as to the way in which we should interpret, shall we say, the fifth or the sixth commandment. And they memorized all these things and the oral tradition was passed down from generation to generation.

But you see what they were doing? They were perpetuating uncertainty. It was a very good thing. We are very grateful that they did that because we can learn so much from the oral tradition.

But at the same time, what they are perpetuating is an uncertainty. Nothing was certain until the incarnate Son of God came in. And he who was eternally with the Father and was God as the Father is God, now incarnate, came into this scene of intellectual uncertainty and doubt.

And because he was the truth incarnate, he could dissipate the doubts of the human mind, and he did. He spoke as one who really knew, knew God, knew men, knew the nature of the problem of man, and knew the way out. He had a word of salvation.

The significance of this is far, far reaching. There is no final answer to the uncertainties and problems of mankind, save in the incarnate Son of God. Some of the most cultured people in this world today are the most uncertain about the things that really matter.

But our Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, has come to reveal what the human mind cannot in and of itself understand or unravel. He is the truth. He says, I say unto you.

But I want you to notice that Jesus' authority entered into another realm, too. His authority also entered the realm of the moral. Important as it was that Jesus' authority should cover the intellectual need to know, the need of the mind, the need to understand the will and the purpose of God, and the meaning of life and of destiny, that was not all the need of the hour we read of here, neither does it comprise the entire need of men today.

It was also of primary importance that he should be able to liberate men from all kinds of enslavement which is evil. Oh, my good friends, let us see that he can do just that. He has authority to liberate man from the evil spirit that has cornered him and captured him, and he can make the foulest clean.

With what authority, they said in verse 27, with what authority he commands the unclean spirits, and they obey him? You see, what happened here is this. Jesus brought liberty to the man who was enslaved by what is described as an unholy, an unclean spirit, or better still, by demons. Now, the man's condition is a tragic one.

You look at the story, verses 23 and 24. His condition is described as being in the grip of this unclean spirit. The statement implies the actual reality of demon possession.

Now, modern man does not accept this. And those who pay respect to the scriptures generally say that, well, that's the Bible's way of describing those who are physically sick. They attribute physical illness to spiritual powers.

Now, I want you to notice that that is simply not true. It's pathetic that people could say things like that in a context like this, and some great expositors say that. You know, it's just not true.

When we came into the home of Peter and his mother-in-law, the New Testament doesn't say that she had an evil spirit. It says that she had a fever. It calls physical sickness by physical terms, and Luke does it even more so, and more accurately so.

Not only is physical sickness distinguished from demon possession in scripture, as in the case of Peter's wife's mother, who had a fever, not a spirit, but even mental illness is clearly distinguished in scripture from demon possession. Let me give you one verse. Take a look at it when you go home.

It's Matthew 4, 24. It reads like this. His fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought to him all that was sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them.

Now, I've no time to go into the divisions there, but if you want to pursue it, you will see that the Bible distinguishes between things that are to be distinguished. There's a precise distinction made there. Now, what then do we have here? Well, according to the inspired record, we have the case of demon possession, and we have it today.

And this demon was able to impart something quite different to this man with an unclean spirit, for, in the first place, he had an uncanny knowledge. There is knowledge that sometimes comes from evil spirits and not from the Holy Spirit. Look at the picture.

This man was not only aware of his general incompatibility with Jesus, as indicated in these words, what have you to do with us, he asks. Now, that's a very pregnant statement. What have you got to do with us? What are you doing here? This is no place for you.

We are unclean. You're different. What have you to do with us? There's no compatibility.

He recognized that Jesus was different. Not only that, also, he knew our Lord's origin. He could have had this in a natural way, of course.

He knew that he was Jesus of Nazareth. Neither was this all that he knew. He recognized our Lord's supernatural power.

And he asked him this question, have you come to destroy us? Now, this is significant. This man in the grip of an evil spirit had a power, an uncanny knowledge. Seeing Jesus come in, he says, are you come to

destroy us? Has the moment of our judgment come? You have authority in your hands.

You can deal finally and fatally with us. Not only that, he even knew his holiness and his divine sonship. Who are you? He says, I know who you are.

You're the Holy One of God. This knowledge of the facts concerning our Lord's person is something which is quite extraordinary at this point in time. Simon Peter has not confessed him as Messiah yet.

The disciples haven't gone so far yet. But here is a man who is in the grip of an evil spirit who knows beforehand the truth about Jesus. And it comes not from God, but from evil.

Jesus said to Simon Peter later on, blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah, flesh and blood has not revealed it to you what you've said about me. But this, no words, no words of that order were spoken here. The knowledge came from an evil source, supernatural, but evil.

Secondly, his confession of such an accurate creed in relation to the person of our Lord was unacceptable. Thirdly, I find this tremendously challenging. Jesus brushed it on one side and didn't take any notice of him and he didn't tell the congregation, look this man, this man in the grip of an evil spirit, he knows me.

Listen to him. Listen what he's telling. Jesus said nothing of the kind.

Why? He wouldn't receive it because of the source from which it came. Jesus is not dependent upon the testimony of demons nor of men in their possession. He will have his testimony borne to him by a holy man and a holy woman and a holy church.

And he's not concerned for the testimony of the unclean. I wonder whether that's the reason why so little is happening in the church of the 20th century, because we as Christians and as churches are too unclean for our witness to be accepted. But the Lord cured the man.

Jesus' authority in this realm seems to have been expressed in two acts. He first of all rebuked the man and the word means that Jesus stopped him speaking. He stopped him.

He had said so much, he'd gone so far and at that point Jesus said to him, be muzzled. The word for muzzling means that literally Jesus shut his mouth and he couldn't speak. But then when he did that, he liberated the man from the evil spirit that was gripping him.

He liberated him. He freed him. He set the captive free.

Men and women, if we never meet again as we meet this morning, let there be no one under the roof of Knox who doesn't know this. Jesus Christ can make you free. If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.

What is your crippling sin? Are you dabbling with... Oh no, I shall not go on that tack. Are you dabbling with spirits? Are you dabbling with evil? Are you dabbling with this, that and the other? Are you a slave? Here is the one and only deliverer of slaves and he can set you free today. Don't be put off by the beauty of this edifice.

We want to get down to the real issues of sin and if there is sin that enslaves you, I want you to know that freedom this morning. Jesus comes down to the nitty-gritty and the dirt of the human heart and he wants

you to be free. And he can do it, he can do it.

He had authority in the intellectual and the moral realms and last of all, we see the scope of our Lord's authority extending beyond the mental and the intellectual, beyond the moral to the physical. Now, I don't need to say any more about this. It's so evident, you can take it with you.

All kinds of people were brought to him with all kinds of physical ailments and as far as he was concerned, there were no failures. There were no failures. He had authority in every realm.

He healed them. Now, this is how Jesus made his friends and his foes. It's a strange thing, isn't it? How did he make his friends and confirm them in their little faith, if we may so speak? Well, by just manifesting his sympathy and his authority.

And in a sense, this is what we've got throughout all the remainder of Mark. It's Jesus with his sympathy and his authority moving into ever new situations, just revealing who he was and he makes friends. He wins disciples, every one of whom, if tradition is right, died for him.

But let me say at the same time, even as he made his friends, this is exactly how he made his foes. There are those who do not want his sympathy and do not want his authority. There are those who do not want to be disturbed.

They feel that they have something to say and they must say it in their own way and they have an assumed authority and an assumed air in church and in state and they want the Son of God to keep at bay. Don't bring your authority in here. The 20th century is no different from the first, as he made enemies by going into the synagogue and by teaching with authority, so he makes enemies when he comes into some of our churches with his authority.

This is how Jesus makes friend and foes, by the manifestation of his sympathy and his authority. And, my friends, this is how he calls upon us to represent him. Now this is where the shoe pinches, you see.

Are you a Christian this morning? Do you belong to this congregation or to some other? Are you a part of the body of Christ? Let me ask, my friend, if it is true that Jesus is the same yesterday and today and forever, is the sympathy and the heart of the Master percolating through into this world through you and through me? Are we dead ends? Now let us be sure about this. Jesus did not trifle with sin, though he was very, very gracious towards sinners. There are some people who want you to compromise with their sins and to give a blessing to iniquity.

No, you can't do that. Jesus never did that. But he loved the sinner and he was sympathetic and he wanted to redeem the sinner and extricate him from his prison cell.

He wants to do that today. And he wants us to be the channels of sympathy. And this is what his bride was meant to be.

This is what the body of Christ is meant to be. But wait a moment. My last word is this.

I'm not sure that I know exactly how to put it. And I don't know of anybody else who can with an air of finality. But I suggest to you that if we are really the Church of Jesus Christ, something of his own authority by the spirit that he sent and the word that he has given and his presence that is assured, something of the authority of the Savior should be living on.

I'm not going to try to define it. I'm not sure that I know how. But I know of one thing, that when people come into our church services, if they don't know Jesus Christ as Savior, there ought to be a sense of the authority of the divine in the place.

And if people know that you're a member of Knox Church or of the Church of Jesus Christ, by your attitude in coming, by the way you sing, by the way you pray, by the way you do everything, there should be something of the reign of God over us that is evident to people and also of his sympathy flowing through us. My friend, where are we? Oh, we need the grace of God today, whatever our situation. There is someone here who is unclean.

Come to the fount where sin is washed away. Come to the Savior who liberates the captive still. Come to him now, where you are.

But I guess that most of us are professing Christians. But the fact is this, that these aspects of our Lord's sympathy and authority, we've lost by the wayside. And we've only lost it because of sin.

And therefore, we need to make acknowledgement and confession of our condition as we are today on this lovely morning in this lovely church before the glistening white and glorious throne of our holy God. Let us pray. Heavenly Father, let your word pierce every armor that we as your people in rebellion or others who may not as yet be committed followers of yours.

Let your word and your spirit pierce the armor in all of us and in each of us. That as we look at this kind of scene from the realities of the historical situation in which our Lord lived, as we see this, may we sense the dichotomy, the difference, the chasm between us and that situation. To the point that we shall put things right that are wrong and seek with all our hearts to do the things that we ought and to avoid the entanglements which are evil.

Be with anyone who is coming here this morning with a problem. Anyone who has come into the house of the Lord and knows a sense of separation from yourself, draw such a person to the Lord Jesus and through the Lord Jesus Christ to yourself and make this the beginning of days and of eternal life to such. In Jesus name we pray.

Amen.

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