

Deliverance From Ignorance

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Deliverance

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This morning, I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to two very specific places. We're going to begin in the gospel of Mark 13 but toward the end of the message we're going to find ourselves in 1 Peter 4, but primarily today we're going to be in Mark 13 and if you're a guest or a visitor with us, or maybe for some reason you haven't had the opportunity to be with us in some while, we are walking through, we are navigating the gospel of Mark with a very unique emphasis or, shall I say, a very strategic theme, more than just the chronology of the life, the ministry, the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, more than just the biographies of the specific individuals whose lives were forever changed not just by his words but in some cases by his touch, we're seeing that from the very first chapter through the last, that Jesus Christ is pictured as the one who is our deliverer.

Now when we talk about the word "deliverance," it rightly so somewhat conjures up within us just somewhat of a strange emotional response but by definition deliverance means to be set free, it means to have whatever is holding you back released. It can also mean to find yourself in a position or a place that is very undesirable and to be taken out of that undesirable and placed into that which is desirable. As we've walked through the gospel of Mark, a multitude of different people from multiple strata of life, yet it doesn't matter what their economic level was, it doesn't matter what their influence in the community was, anybody who is able and willing is able to be delivered by Jesus Christ and today in Mark 13, much like last week, we find ourselves in a very intriguing passage of scripture. Mark 13 is all about what we know as the Second Coming, the end days. For those of you who love theological terms, this is about eschatology, this is about when everything is going to wrap up. And so more than just the deliverance of an individual or a specific situation, we see here in these verses that God desires to deliver us all oftentimes from an erroneous way of thinking or maybe an erroneous perspective.

Today, I want to talk about being delivered from ignorance. Now we use that word and when we hear it, we often think that means a lack of knowledge or a lack of education and that's not what it means. In fact, in ignorance means not having the proper knowledge or not having the proper information. Before we go to Mark 13, allow me to categorize something. You can have multiple advanced degrees and still be ignorant, and you cannot have any formal education in the world and be and have the wisdom of the ages. So today

when we talk about ignorance, don't think about education, don't think about secular aptitude or proficiency here. We're talking about the information or the knowledge that is placed in the right compartment at the right time for the right reason.

So Mark today, beginning in verse 28. Jesus continues an audience with Peter, James, John and Andrew. They've been asking two very strategic questions: when will these things be, the tearing down of the temple, and what will be the sign of your coming? He's talked about wars and rumors of wars, he's talked about all kinds of things occurring, and now in verse 28 he tells a parable. Now what's interesting about this parable is the majority of the time in the gospels, there are 32 parables that Jesus speaks, he speaks the parable and then he explains it either at the request or just because he so desires to do so. You'll notice there's no explanation for the parable and the reason is it didn't need an explanation. They'd already asked the question. This parable wasn't some new truth Jesus was teaching that they would have to grasp later, he was actually answering their questions with a parable.

Beginning in verse 28, he says,

28 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near: 29 So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors. 30 Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done. 31 Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. 32 But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. 33 Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.

Notice that last verse: you know not when. Yet today, we need to make sure that we do not possess ignorance in regards to not just the specifics of this parable but as we navigate the world the Lord has allowed us to walk therein.

So the first question and, by the way, we're just going to ask a series of very simple questions today that we need to ask is the "who"? Who is this parable speaking of? Now you may be thinking I've got the words mixed up. You might be thinking that we should begin with the "what," what is this fig tree, when in actuality we need to address who is the fig tree because as you walk through your Old Testament, you will discover that whether it's the prophet Jeremiah, Micah, Hosea, or a multitude of other places, almost unanimously every time a fig tree is mentioned, utilized, or put in an illustration, it's in reference to whom we know as Israel. Almost every single time and so when Jesus says when you see the fig tree begin to blossom, when you begin to see the leaves on the fig tree, you know the time is near. You do remember that two chapters earlier in chapter 11, Jesus comes into that city of Jerusalem, takes a fig tree, remember what he does to it? He curses it and he tells them that there will no longer be any fruit therein, and now at the Olivet Discourse, at the teaching of the end of days he says but that fig tree will one day blossom again. So who he's speaking of is whom we know as the entity of Israel.

Now oftentimes people have a little push back and say, "Well, why can it be Israel? Why is it so focused on Israel? I mean, after all, I mean, there is an Israel of today." We'll speak about that in just a moment. But we can hardly say that as a collective entity they are in the "will of God." We can hardly say that what we know as righteous holy living is emblematic of who they are. And so at times like this, some people push back and go, "This parable really can't be about Israel because it's talking about the end of days, it's talking about the Lord coming back," and we see almost an apostasy type mentality even though it exists concurrently today.

Let me address those issues. When is the last time the prophecies of God in relation to Israel were dependent on their holiness and proper response? I mean, think about it. When they go into captivity, the year is 586, Nebuchadnezzar comes in, Babylon ransacks the place, takes them all to a foreign place, foreign language, only preserves those that were of the purest blood, eliminates the rest. Remember what Daniel said? Remember what Jeremiah said? Seventy years and then you're going back home. He didn't say if you get it together then you can go back home. He said 70 years have been set aside for this.

Then you deal with the rest of the prophetic statements but, you know, we've even sung it this morning. When we sing Christmas songs, "O come, O come, Emmanuel, to whom Israel." When we sing all these famous songs of the season, notice whom it mentions. Who is the recipient of Emmanuel? Who is the recipient of the King? It's Israel. Now think about Israel in Jesus' day. Were they a walking, holy establishment? Much the opposite. Remember what Jesus tells the Pharisees? He says, "Your converts are twice the children of hell as you." I don't think I would call that a holy place and a holy people. So when we deal with what we know as the First Coming, the entity of Israel was of primary concern because the Lord said so. Here in verse 28, he says, "learn the parable of the fig tree."

So let's deal with ignorance for just a moment. This whole passage deals with the last days. This whole passage deals with how the Lord is going to wrap everything up and contrary to what we're fed a steady diet of, it absolutely has nothing to do with Washington, New York, China, the United Nations, or anybody else you want to fill in the blank. It has everything to do with Israel. You see, that is the entity by which Jesus said, "You need to watch." If you want to know what's happening in the world, all you've got to do is look at a little spot on the other side of the globe that's about the size of Rhode Island. Now do you see why some of the smartest people in the world miss it? Because they're too busy listening to the loudest voices or the most frequent voices. You see, to be delivered from ignorance means to listen to the right voice.

But the next verse or the latter half of verse 28 and 29 deals with the "what." What does Jesus say will occur? He says this fig tree, "When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near: So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors." If you were not with us last week, we addressed the fact that when Jesus uses the personal pronoun of "you," it's not

specifically just these four individuals, he's speaking collectively to humanity. When you see this, what does he say? You know it is nigh when it begins to come forth again.

As I mentioned earlier, Jesus two chapters previously "cursed" that fig tree. What we know in Luke 19, Jesus came, he wept over Jerusalem because he said, "You know not what will befall you." When Jesus breathed his last breath, that famous veil was torn and the earth quaked, but it would be within about 30-40 years that all of the Jewish inhabitants of Jerusalem would no longer be there, that structure that was so sacred and so holy would no longer be standing. In fact, we often formally call it the great dispersion. For 1,900 years, the Jewish people to whom Emmanuel came would be vagrants at best and nomads at worst, seeking a place of refuge, seeking a place of homeland. For 1,900 years, the Jewish people would not have not just a place to call their own but would you agree with me probably the most vehemently hated people on the planet. Do you find it intriguing that the one group of people the world keeps trying to get rid of are not ridden yet? Every time we turn around, in fact, Jesus says they'll begin to bud. You see, you and I have the privilege of observing and seeing something that many people for many years hoped to but never did. Most of us do not know a time period where what we know as Israel did not formally exist.

Now some of you may remember as a child or in your younger days but for the majority of us it has just been, but it hasn't always been that. 1,900 years vagrants, nomads, and then in 1917, a man by the name of Balfour makes this incredible declaration that they can go back to their homeland after 1,900 years. Well, that didn't necessarily go as hoped and desired but World War II ended and whom we know as the Jewish people, Adolf Hitler and the Nazis did everything they knew to do to eradicate them off planet earth. Over 6 million of them were gassed, tortured and killed and yet three years after World War II without any help from anybody, they become an independent, sovereign, land-owning people? I've got news for some of you uber-Baptists out there. You know what an uber-Baptist is? An uber-Baptist says God worked in miracles in days past but not days present. No, if I can't explain it, he doesn't do it. That's an uber-Baptist. If you don't believe in miracles, all you have to do is look at Israel. How do you explain that a group that lost 6 ½ million people at the hands of the Nazis without any help from anybody else win independence all on their own? How do you explain that? How do you explain that in 1967 when everybody that surrounded them came against them and nobody came to help, they win not only their homeland but Jerusalem, the city? How do you explain that? I can explain it: Jesus said there's coming a day where the fig tree is going to bloom again. There's going to come a day that it's going to begin to blossom and when you see it, what does he say in verse 29? It is nigh, even at the doors.

Now again, let me remind you: whom we know as the Jewish people of today are very rarely faith-abiding Torah-worshiping people. In fact, if you were to go to Israel or you were to meet those of a Jewish faith here in our own land, the overwhelming majority of them are secular. That's what they call themselves, secular Jews. There are some that will call themselves Zionists, meaning it's about the dirt, it's about the land, but it's not about the Messiah. There are a few that are interested in matters of faith but the majority not so much.

Again in this parable, Jesus didn't mention their allegiance, their holiness, their faithfulness, he just said there's coming a time where that which went dormant, that which was "cursed" is going to return. Now the question I'm assuming most of us are interested in is the "when." Notice what it says in verse 30, "Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done." This passage, verse 30, probably goes in my list of probably the top 10 Bible verses that have been misused for personal agendas in the Bible. We love to take this passage and say, "Oh, this generation and that generation. Oh, the time has come for this and for that." I want you to notice the last statement of verse 30, "till all these things." Now I don't mean to insult your intelligence but you do know what the word "all" means. It means all. It doesn't mean some. It doesn't mean most. It doesn't mean the majority. It means all of these things. And last week if you were with us, we talked about this incredible event Jesus speaks about called the abomination of desolation, this event where the temple that is now not standing will one day be standing and that the Antichrist that's not yet ruling but one day will, will go into that temple, he will declare that he is God. He will control everybody, the entire world simply by the power and the mark of who he is.

That being said, I know too long for too many reasons and for too many folks, we've looked back at 1948, looked back at 1967 and said, "Well, the Old Testament, a generation can mean 40 years, it can mean 70 years, it can mean 100 years," and we fall into this really bad trap of setting dates. In fact, some of you may remember this, one of my favorite illustrations. In 1988, there was a book written called "88 Reasons Jesus is Coming Back in 1988." Y'all may have bought that book and then hopefully you gave it away like to the trash because the next year when Jesus didn't come back, the same author wrote a book called "89 Reasons Jesus is Coming Back in 1989." Yeah, that was at the half-price bookstore but nonetheless, we have that bad tendency do we not and why? Because we look at these dates that the fig tree began to bloom and we start putting these measurable dates on them such as 30 years, 40 years, 70 years, 100 years. There's a lot of different mathematics in the Old Testament regarding a generation but the thing I want you to focus on is when he says "all these things." Jesus has spoken of wars and rumors of wars, he's spoken of pestilence and disease, he has spoken of the abomination of desolation. Here's what Jesus is saying, in a nutshell he says, when you see that character whom the Bible calls the Antichrist, when he walks into the temple and he declares that he's God, now you can start the watch at that point.

What does that mean for you and I? We don't need a stopwatch. We don't have to worry about 30 years, 40 years, is the Gregorian calendar right, is it not right, should it be this year or that year? He says when all these things which leads to the next question, the "how." Look in verse 31, "Heaven and earth shall pass away: my words shall not pass away." This is one of those verses that most of us know it by memory, we may not have known where it was located, more importantly the context in which it is spoken. Heaven and earth will pass away: my words will not pass away. Why is this important not just for Mark 13 but the issue of ignorance? Because every prophecy in the Old Testament regarding what we know as the Christmas story, the First Coming, happened exactly as the Bible said, not according to the pundits or the politicians or those pushing their

agenda. Remember, where was Jesus born? In Jerusalem? No. Bethlehem. The Bible said he would be born in Bethlehem. A small prophet by the name of Micah told us that. And yet it wasn't a major metropolis of the day, it wasn't the movers and shakers but that's what the Bible said. The Bible told us he would come out of Egypt. The Bible even speaks specifically that he would be raised in Nazareth. The Bible speaks about the way in which he would die, they would gamble over his clothes, they would pierce his hands, pierce his feet. The Bible speaks to all of these things in absolute specific.

Why is this critical? Because today we are being told a whole lot of information about how the world is going to end that has nothing to do with the Bible. Now I'm about to "go there" and you may thank me later. We're being told that if we don't change our ways, the planet is just going to burn up and we're going to fry. You do know in the '70s we were told the opposite, that we were going to freeze. We've been told for decades that if we don't control this or fix that, the world is going to end in a nuclear holocaust. How many more false narratives must we deal with before we lose our ignorance? Because I've got news for you, I've read the last chapter. I've read the last book. Do you know how it all wraps up? It's not hot, it's not cold and it's not a big blast. It wraps up when Jesus Christ splits the skies and he says, "I'm back."

That's how it wraps up but yet how ignorant are we when we get so much information because here's what happens and even the pastors are guilty of this. "Well, I know the Bible says this but when you look at it from this..." You didn't do that with the First Coming so why would we do it with the Second Coming? Everything is very specific which leads to the "where." Notice what verse 32 says, "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." Everything that Jesus has been describing in Mark 13 is happening on planet earth.

Why is this critical? Because when you get to the prophetic passages, when you get to the book of Revelation, there is this consistent kind of going in between that which is in the heavens, that which is in the earth. I mean, after all, the lion of the tribe of Judah is on the throne. He opens the book sealed with seven seals, those famous judgments that take place. The Bible speaks about an hour, a day, a time specific where the angels who hold back the river Euphrates will let loose and it will be dry and the kings of the earth will go and invade whom we know as Israel. All of those prophetic statements, notice, day, hour, all of these things happen on what we know as planet earth. In other words, what Jesus is saying is when what we know as Israel begins to bud again, things are getting near. When you see all these things, you can start the clock. But note that we're not talking about the heavens, we're talking about that which is happening among humanity.

It leads to the last question, it's the most important question, it's "why." Why is this important? Why is this critical? Why is this necessary for us? Notice what he says in verse 33, "Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is." Basically what Jesus is saying here is you need to be on go, in spite of what may or may not be happening around you, in spite of what may or may not be with what we know as Israel, he said it doesn't matter what the day, what the time, you need to always be on go.

Now let me encourage you to turn over to 1 Peter 4 for just a moment. Now here's the good news. I told you earlier we're going to end in 1 Peter so here we go. 1 Peter 4:7 begins with my favorite word in the Bible, some of you veterans know what it is. "But." I love verse 7 of 1 Peter 4, it says, "But the end of all things is at hand." Now that's interesting because not only does Jesus give us this parable 2,000 years ago, the Lord inspires what we know as 1 Peter 2,000 years ago, how is it that 2,000 years has passed and things are still at hand? You realize the Lord would give Peter the same message that says this, that a day with the Lord is if a thousand years, a thousand years as if a day. The Bible even says that in the last days there will be mockers who will rise up saying, "Oh, he's not coming back. You missed it. You misunderstood." But if a thousand years as a day and a day as a thousand years, it's been roughly 2,000 years which means the weekend's not even over yet. It hasn't been that long, but the end of all things is at hand. In other words, when we talk about these events regarding the Second Coming, when we talk about these events of all the cataclysmic things, understand it's been at hand for a long long time from our perspective.

Notice what 1 Peter 4:7 says, what shall we do? Be sober or be alert. Now we know what sobriety means. If you are sober, listen to this, it means you have no undue influence from anything else. Isn't that what it means? You're uninhibited. In other words, there's nothing that is tainting your senses. There is nothing that is numbing your responses. You see, anytime that we begin to lose our sobriety, our sense become deadened, our perception is not good, and other things can influence us to do things. How many people, and I'm not asking you to raise your hand, how many people would say that some of the dumbest, stupidest things you've ever done in life is when all your senses were not necessarily perfect? Please do not confess. This is not the time.

Be sober. Do you know what he's saying in 1 Peter? The end of things is at hand. Don't let anything else influence you but what the Bible says. Don't let anything numb your senses to what the Bible has said. He says be sober, be alert. It's not about the latest greatest theory, it's not about who's got the most airwaves or the most bandwidth. Most people missed the First Coming and most people are going to miss the Second. You do recognize that Jesus was incarnated in a stable on a hillside with a bunch of sheep. He wasn't born in the middle of downtown Jerusalem. At the same perspective, we understand.

Be sober, be alert, what does it say to do? Watch. That's interesting. We're going to talk more about this next week because Jesus talks about being a watchman but in brief today, that which or those who watched had the role of being on the perimeter of the city to inform those who inhabited the city about those who wanted to do harm to the city. And we're going to talk more about this next week but can I give you just this one very simplistic illustration in regards to being delivered from ignorance? If the role of the watchman was to warn of an invasion or to warn of someone who was coming to do harm, their role was to also give comfort to those who were in the city when everything was okay. What does that mean for us? When it says be sober and watch, that means the next time you hear a news story that tells you something contrary to scripture, you can be at peace because it's not coming. In other words, when we hear these stories, when we

hear this information, when somebody forwards you an article and says, "Oh my goodness, the fifth seal just opened up!" You can be on that wall and say, "Ain't nobody coming. Peace. It's okay."

Be sober. Be alert. Watch. What's that last word? Pray. You know, it's interesting the Bible is filled with a lot of prayers. Whether it's the book of Numbers and the Nazarite prayer that's been put to music so beautifully in recent days, whether it's what we know as the Lord's Prayer or the high priestly prayer of Jesus, or the Apostle Paul saying that he prayed for the Corinthians and others on a regular basis, what I think is interesting in light of today's message is the last prayer of the Bible. You say, "The last prayer, what's the last prayer?" It's the last verse. Do you know what the last verse of your Bible says? "Even so, come Lord Jesus." Even so, come Lord Jesus.

So when we look at this passage, what Jesus was trying to communicate to Peter, James, John and Andrew as well as ourselves is, we need to remove ignorance. It's not about the latest greatest story. It's not about who can speak the loudest and the longest. But it's about what does the Bible say? The Bible teaches us the end of all things has been and is at hand for a long time so what should we do? Be sober. Watch. And pray. And maybe today, the best thing that we can do when it comes to the subject matter is to remove the false information and knowledge and converse with the one who initiated, sustains and one day is going to wrap it all up.

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. Maybe today you're that individual and maybe you didn't mean it consciously, maybe you just kind of fell into the mentality or the trap of just hearing the loudest voice, maybe today the Spirit of God took the word of God and made it very clear in your life about the direction, where you're headed and where you're going to end up. You know, all the things that we discussed this morning, for those who reject the person of Jesus Christ it's not a pretty picture. The Bible says in Romans 10 though, that whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved and maybe today is that day. We talked about watch and pray, maybe today that's your prayer, maybe today that's your conversation with the Lord, just this cry of, "God, I have a sin problem and I need Jesus Christ to fix it." If you're that person this morning, can I implore you to have that conversation. You don't have to have it necessarily out loud, you don't have to necessarily say the same words that I or somebody else would say. This is your heart's cry. Maybe that prayer would go something like this, "God, today I recognize that I have fallen into ignorance and, God, I recognize that I've listened to the wrong voices and I've subscribed to the wrong theories and the wrong philosophies but, God, today I believe, I believe what the Bible says. The Bible says that I have sinned and fallen short of your glory. The Bible says that the wages or the result of my sin is death. But the Bible also says that while I was yet a sinner, Christ died for me. So today, God, I recognize that I have a sin problem that only Jesus can solve. God, today I believe, I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he was that Emmanuel who came on my behalf. God, I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he lived a sinless life, rejecting all temptation for myself. And God, I believe that that day when as we mentioned today that was prophesied hundreds of years in advance, where they nailed him to that cross, where they beat him and they mocked him, they made fun of him, God, he did that because he

loves me. God, today I believe that three days later when Jesus Christ rose from the grave, he actually made it feasible and possible for my sin to be forgiven and my soul to be saved. God, today I don't have all the answers to all the issues, the struggles and the problems of this world but there is one thing I know according to your word, that I have a sin problem that only Jesus can fix. I'm asking you to forgive me. I'm asking you to save me. In the best way I know how, I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed and our eyes still closed, maybe you're that person today, you had that heart cry, that conversation with the Lord. In a moment, I'm going to pray for us, I'm just going to invite you when I say amen and we stand and sing just to step out and step forward. We've got a whole team of folks, they'd love to hear your story, they'd love to celebrate with you, they'd love to pray with you, they'd love to pray for you, but maybe today you say, "Pastor, I had that conversation with the Lord years ago, decades ago," maybe today is not about stepping out and stepping forward, maybe today is about stepping out of here in the full confidence in the word of God not just regarding your soul, not just regarding your one day heaven experience but in all matters of faith including the events of the heavenlies.

Heavenly Father, today as we come to this time of decision, may we simply trust what your word has said. Whether that's a decision for salvation, whether that's a decision to repent of sin, or whether that's a decision to walk in the confidence of your word, help us today, O God, to simply respond to what your word has spoken to us. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.