

20-Great Works of the Pressured Savior

Series on Mark

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We turn now to the Gospel of Mark again and we're in chapter 3. You recall, the last few occasions at the end of chapter 2 and the beginning of chapter 3, there has been an escalation of opposition to Jesus' ministry, particularly from the Pharisees, and a conflict over Sabbath views between Jesus and the Pharisees. So we pick up there at verse 7, read through verse 12. Mark 3:7-12,

7 But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judaea, 8 And from Jerusalem, and from Idumaea, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him. 9 And he spake to his disciples, that a small ship should wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng him. 10 For he had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues. 11 And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God. 12 And he straitly charged them that they should not make him known.

Thus far the reading of sacred Scripture.

Dear boys and girls, the story has often been told of three people who owed the king some centuries ago a lot of money and the king put them all in prison and one day three men came to that prison to set the prisoners free. The one man came and said to the first debtor, "Here is some money. I can pay at least part of the debt you owe to the king and if you can get the rest, they'll set you free." But the man said, "I can't earn any money in prison." So he stayed in prison. The second man went to the second debtor and said, "I've got all the money. I need to set you free, all you've got to do is take a key and open the door." But the man said, "I don't have a key to open the door." So he stayed in prison. The third man came to the third debtor and he said as he opened the door to the prison cell because he had the key, "Please come on out. I've paid all your debt already and I want to take you to my home and I want to make you my son and I want to give you all the privileges that a family member will have." And he did. The debtor was set free and he was so grateful to the man who set him free that he said, "I just want to stay in your house and I want to serve you forever."

Now, of course, that's a picture of the Gospel, isn't it? That's what Jesus Christ has done. He doesn't pay half a debt, he doesn't pay all the debt and then say, "But you have to accept me of your own will and your own strength in order to be saved." But he does everything. He's the meriting Savior, the applying Savior. He has the key, he opens the door and he takes us into his house. He makes us members of his family. Behold how wonderful it is that we are called the sons of God if we are true believers.

Well, today in Mark 3, we want to look at this glorious Gospel so trumpeted by the Reformers in this 500th anniversary year, but also so deeply experienced the hearts of God's people today so that we, too, may understand that salvation is completely accomplished out of free and sovereign grace. Solus Christus, Christ alone, that's the theme behind our text this morning, Mark 3:7-12, the portion I read to you. Mark 3:7-12, we'll have focus on verses 8 and 10, "a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him." And verse 10, "he had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues." Our theme is the "Great Works of the Pressured Savior," and we'll look at three thoughts. The Savior, one, experiencing a great multitude of pressures; number two, receiving a great multitude for great things; and number three, allowing a great multitude to touch him for healing. Great works of the pressured Savior: the great multitude of pressures; the great multitude for great things; a great multitude to touch him for healing.

So as we return again to our series in the Gospel of Mark, I remind you that the dominant theme of Mark spelled out for us in chapter 1, verse 1, "the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Everything Mark does in this Gospel is to unveil more and more about the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and Mark's great theme, each Gospel, you know, has some great distinctive themes, his great theme is to show us Jesus Christ as God's great and mighty worker, the worker of salvation. So everywhere we've been going in the first opening chapters in the Gospel of Mark, we've been learning new things about Jesus in every portion of the word, new truths about this mighty worker.

The last few times, we've looked particularly at Jesus' mighty works that have increasingly brought him into a head-on collision with the Pharisees, the scribes, the Herodians, and even the devils. So as we meet Jesus now in verse 7 of chapter 3, we see the pressures mounting upon him. At every hand, he's being misinterpreted, opposed, hated, none of which were easy for his human nature to bear, after all, he was human as we are. In these six verses before us this morning, we find three causes for these pressures to be ratcheted up and consume Jesus more and more.

Look with me, first, at verse 7. We read, "But," and that "but" is in reaction to the Pharisees and the Herodians seeking to forge plans to destroy him, "But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea," that is, to the sea of Galilee away from the synagogue, away from Capernaum, away from where the Pharisees were congregating to challenge him. The verb "withdraw" here implies pressure to withdraw for reasons of safety. It's actually the same word that's used in Matthew 2:14 when you remember, boys and girls, Joseph and Mary took the young child, Jesus, into Egypt. We read, "He," that's

Joseph, "arose and took the young child and his mother by night and departed," that is withdrew, "into Egypt." Same word. So both in Matthew 2 and Mark 3, these withdrawals are defensive measures because of plots to destroy Jesus.

You see, Jesus knew that he had a lot of work to do before he would be crucified. He knew that his hour of intense suffering had not yet come and so he withdraws with his disciples. It's a wise judicious move to avoid unnecessarily provoking the religious leaders as well as to allow Jesus to focus more on his positive ministry of teaching and healing and casting out demons. You see, Jesus knows that he's never going to march to the Pharisees' drumbeat and they will continue to mortally oppose him. So he withdraws. He wants to follow his Father's heavenly plan and time table and he knows that the time of that final confrontation with the Pharisees and the demons still lays a few years in the future and he wants to build a broader base of support, too, throughout all of Israel with respect to his own identity as God's Messiah. So as long as he's in the synagogue in direct confrontation with the religious leaders, the focus is on their opposition so he decides to withdraw not out of cowardice but out of principled commitment to do what he knows is the will of God, and yet it's a pressure. It's a pressure that makes him withdraw.

Then number 2, if you follow to the end of the text, we read that he felt pressure from unclean spirits, that is, the devils who when they saw him, verse 11, says, "fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God. And he straitly charged them," verse 12, "that they should not make him known." Now that can be confusing at first when we read that because why did these devils cry out from diseased and demon-possessed people like this? And why wouldn't Jesus confirm what they're saying? And wouldn't it be good if people were confessing to each other? Even the demons, the unclean spirits, are testifying of his deity.

Well, there's more theology involved, more depth packed into these words than first meets the eye. You see, the idea of naming someone in Bible times was very significant because the names reflected supposedly who they are. That's particularly true, of course, of Jesus. So the devils were hoping on the one hand that by identifying and naming Jesus, they might somehow obtain some control over him and strip him of some of his power. On the other hand, their cry was a cry of despair for they knew Jesus was their destroyer, not their Savior. But Jesus refuses to allow them to continue their futile attack against him. He clamps down on the devils because he knows their cry is not the cry of faith and nothing that is not the cry of faith pleases him, only faith pleases him. So this is not a cry of joy and loyalty to himself but it's really a cry of bitterness, a cry of antagonism, a cry that is adding to Jesus' pressures and a cry that sought to destroy his influence because it's suggesting that there's some kind of association between these two conflicting powers, Jesus and the devils.

So Jesus while he's under this great duress, gives the devils an authoritative directive that his ministry not be emblazoned abroad, so he sternly rebukes them. He tells them they should not confess his identity. The disclosure of his deity is a task for him to do when and where he deems fitting, not a task for the devils to do. They're violating his method of self-revelation which combined both elements of veiled-ness as well as elements of

disclosure. Sometimes he hid his deity. Sometimes he let it come into the open. Sometimes he declared it but it's for him to do, not for the unclean spirits to know and to do. So all their shouting is futile and it's contrary to the coming of his kingdom, and so he wants them to know that no evil power can have power over himself because he's the Son of God and so he rebukes them and charges them, commands them to be silent.

He silences the demons. You see, Jesus is the bearer of the Holy Spirit, can silence evil spirits with one word from his mouth. He's powerful. He's all-powerful. The evil spirits, of course, could not help but recognize the antithesis between the two spirits, the power of the Spirit of Christ silencing their own evil spirits and they're helpless now, helpless before Jesus' words of rebuke. But in this incident, what we can learn here is not just that Jesus had more pressure, that too, but what we see, really, is a foreshadowing of the final conflict between Christ and the forces of hell, and when hell collides with heaven, the inevitable result is always silence. Wherever evil appears before God, evil's mouth is shut. So Scripture tells us repeatedly, doesn't it, that people appearing before God at the last judgment day like you and me, if we're not saved, we will place our hands over our mouths in the presence of God and keep silence. No sinner ever has anything to say in the presence of a holy just God. In the book of Job we read that we won't have one answer upon a thousand questions.

So Jesus' command his rebuke and his silencing of the demons is a precursor of the cross of Calvary but also of the great judgment day to come. But then, thirdly, we read the pressures mounting on Jesus not only because of the unclean spirits and their open challenges and not only because of the Pharisees and their increasing antagonism, but also because he, himself, is so pressed by the increasing crowds, the people thronging him, in fact, in verse 9 we read, it's a rather curious and kind of surprising thing that he says to his disciples, "Go out and get a small ship and get the ship ready, close to land, because the people are thronging over each other and they're wanting me to touch them and to heal them and it's overwhelming me, so that I can escape if it becomes overbearing." Verse 9, "he spake to his disciples, that a small ship should wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng him."

You see, these are by far the biggest crowds Jesus has had yet. People are coming from all sides and our text actually lists where they come from. It's kind of interesting. Really they're coming from two groups. One group comes from the area of Capernaum where he had been ministering and they had witnessed the great things he had done, verse 7 says, and they surrounded him; and another group comes all the way from Judea, the southern part of Palestine, from the capital city of Jerusalem and for Idumea, which refers to a section on the east of Palestine, and then even from the east of the Jordan as well as all the way into the northwest section of Palestine from the cities of Tyre and Sidon.

So basically from all over Israel they come and Jesus is overwhelmed. You know, if you've ever been in the midst of thousands of people clamoring for your attention or clamoring for your words, clamoring for your touch, clamoring for healing, sick people, plague people, there's a lot of pressure here, pressure from all sides. The watching Pharisees are criticizing him sorely, the taunting devils who are antagonizing him

severely, and the pressing multitudes who want him badly. Well, how do you handle pressure when it seems to hem you in from every side? Do you panic? Do you lash out? Do you get angry? And when it's negative pressure, do you just kind of curl up into a ball and go and hide under your blanket, boys and girls? You know, Jesus' response is amazing and for the rest of this sermon, I want to look at this response with you, that in and from Christ we can learn how to respond to pressure also much more maturely than we do and become more useful in his kingdom when we are under great pressure as well.

So that leads us to our second thought, receiving a great multitude for great things. That's the first thing we read about, that Jesus comes under all this pressure and he did great things despite all the pressure for the great multitude that came to him, a multitude that had heard, verse 8 says, what great things he did. The great things of God cannot be withheld from people. They cannot be contained. They spread like wildfire. All over Palestine, as far down as the borders of the Gentiles to the south, the north, multitudes gather with him, around him, as he withdraws to the sea, and despite all the pressure, Jesus exercises his compassionate and powerful ministry to this vast wave, this vast crowd of human need.

Look at verses 10 and 11, "For he had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues." And in the original Greek if you were to translate it literally, it would say they were falling in upon him. It's almost like they were climbing over each other, just surrounding him and falling in upon him. The very words show the pressure he's under and show that these maladies they had are not just psychosomatic diseases, they're real degenerative physical plagues that could be seen with the eyes and they need this mighty healer worker. They're literally climbing over one another that he might even touch them.

Now this is typical of the Gospel of Mark. Mark is always stressing the connection between the healing virtue of Christ and the touch of Christ. We saw it back in chapter 1, didn't we? Remember Jesus was in the presence of a leper, he stretched out his hand and the Bible says he touched him. Soon in Mark 5, God willing, we'll be looking at that spiritually rich story of the Gentile women who said in Mark 5, "If I may but touch his clothes, I shall be whole." So there's a connection here established by God through Mark that speaks of the essence of healing. You see, unlike modern so-called healings from the Pentecostals where it's suggested that the healing power is in the minister's own hand and he can do what he wants and heal people, God is making it plain throughout the Gospel of Mark and here in our text that the healing always comes from Jesus' hand, not man's hand. Whether he would stretch forth his hand, symbolizing that virtue and power was going forth from him to touch needy bodies, or whether they would reach out and touch him, either way the virtue, the healing power is Solus Christus, Christ alone.

So it's important here to understand that what Mark is doing is reinforcing this; is he's establishing Jesus as the Almighty Deliverer from sin, from its consequences, from its sickness, from the devil himself, and that, after all, is the purpose for why he came into the world, isn't it? Why is he named Jesus? Jesus, Jehovah saves? Because he shall save his people from their sins. The Gospel is summarized in this statement, "This is a faithful

saying and worthy of all acceptance," 1 Timothy 1:15, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." So one of the primary purposes why Jesus did all these miraculous healings is to give object lessons to the people of the almighty power of himself as the Son of God. The point is this, you see: if he can deal with the fruit of sin in human bodies and heal people, can he not deal with its invisible root in the souls of men and heal their souls, and do the invisible transactions inside of people and make them new creations?

That's the point and we've just seen that from the last chapter, remember, with the man that was paralyzed and let down. He said, first of all, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee," and the Pharisees murmured, and he said, "But what's easier for me, to heal the body or to heal the soul? Well, that you might know, I have power to do both. Take up your bed," he says, "and walk." You see, through the miraculous healings, Jesus is saying, "I not only deal with the consequences of sin, I can eradicate sin itself. I'm the Almighty Healer Worker of body and of soul." That is, after all, the Gospel. The Gospel is that you and I are sinners and our souls are a ugly and deformed as those bodies that were there by the shores of Galilee 2,000 years ago with all their deformities, and as Jesus by his almighty power healed those plagues and cast out the demons, so today he is able to cleanse you of your sin, to break the power of sin that binds you, and to deliver you from the grasp of the devil who is taking you captive at his own will. So behind the physical healings, behind the crowds, behind the climbing up on each other, we see this vivid truth coming full force in our face, Jesus Christ is the Almighty Deliverer from sin, its consequences, the devil himself.

So there is a rich spiritual application here. Actually, from verse 8 and then again from verse 10, two things. First, Jesus still draws and receives a great multitude of sinners to do great things for them, that's what verse 8 says, and second, that Jesus allows a great multitude of sinners to come into contact with him for their spiritual healing, that's what verse 10 says. I want to look at both of these in special depth, some depth with you, because they're special truths.

So first, then, let's focus on 8B. The crowd came to Jesus because "they heard what great things he did." Isn't that an interesting statement? Have you ever come to Jesus because of the great things you read in the Gospels that he has done? People come to Jesus for a variety of reasons, don't they? Some, no doubt, in this crowd came because they were spiritually hungry, which is wonderful. Others were motivated by mercenary issues. Some came only for physical healing. Some came just to listen, perhaps like Zacchaeus out of curiosity. Others came to criticize him. But certainly there were also those, praise be to God, who came to be delivered by him from not only physical suffering but spiritual suffering. They all, however, all of them, all the comers had heard what great things, what great things he had done. That's the key, you see. Jesus was doing all these things so that he would get the reputation, "This is a man, this is the Son of God who does great things for sinners."

That's the Gospel still today. Still today, sinners come to Jesus for a variety of reasons. Some for positive reasons. Some for negative reasons. Some for mercenary reasons.

Some for mixed reasons. But generally speaking, sinners who come to Jesus come because they've heard that he does great things for sinners, for great sinners. Maybe you've come to God's house this morning not out of former custom, maybe you've come this morning because you've heard that Jesus does great things for sinners. Many of you have heard that all your life, that Jesus is a great Savior, a great healer/worker who is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him. And sometimes you believe it, sometimes you don't act like you believe it, sometimes you don't know if you believe it, sometimes perhaps to some degree you believe it. You've got relatives, you've got friends who testify to you it's true and you don't doubt that, you see the reality in their lives, you've witnessed how Jesus has delivered them from their sins, how they've become different people, how he's done great things for them, how they now hate sin and love the Lord Jesus, and you know deep within you that conversion is real and necessary. Maybe you saw it in a mother or father or child, perhaps you even feel a certain desire to be saved. Maybe you've often sighed, maybe even this morning on sermons, you've said something like this, "O Lord, please, please convert me. Convert me now, today. I'm tired of being spiritually diseased, unforgiven. I long to be made right with you. I long to touch the hem of Christ's garments and be healed. Son of David, have mercy on me. Heal me. Heal my soul." And yet you don't feel healed. Well, my friend, believing as much as you do, you need to ask grace to believe even more and don't linger on the borders of the Gospel, as it were, standing, as it were, between historical and saving faith, but cast all your faith, cast all that you are, cast all your sins upon Jesus only. Never be content with just hearing the content of the Gospel. Never be content with just understanding it a bit in your mind. Don't let Jesus alone until he saves also you.

My dad used to always say to us as children, "Don't ever let go of God. Cling to him. Plead with him. Go to him now. Repent now. Believe in him now. Live now." You see, that's the message of this great multitude coming to Jesus for great things now. But secondly, notice this great multitude could not stay away from Jesus. That's interesting too, isn't it? They didn't wait for Jesus to come to them, he became an absolute must for them. Their soul, their body was so needy, so needy they had to go now. They had to be healed now. Nor did they stop with Jesus' disciples, did you notice that? They needed someone greater who could do greater things than the disciples. And you see, that's exactly a spiritual parallel how a sinner as he comes under the convictions of the Holy Spirit of sin and sees his spiritual disease and his need for salvation, that's exactly what happens. You know, no minister can give it to them, no mature child of God, no godly believer. Oh yes, they may give you good advice and that's great and we need advice, God knows, and you may have impressions as they talk and convictions and console, but you need Jesus and you know that in the depths of your being. You need to touch him with the touch of faith. You need to receive the healing word from his mouth. You need to say, "Give me Jesus else I die!"

You see, my friend, you don't really need to stay away from Jesus. You don't need to stop with his disciples. You've got to understand that Jesus is in the business of saving sinners, sinners who are just like you. Just throw yourself down, go all the way to him. Don't hold back. He can save you as well as any other sinner. Say to him, "Lord, if thou hast done great things, great things for the great multitudes of sinners with great diseases, thou

canst do it for me too." Don't say, "Why not me? Or why me? Why would he do it to me?" Say, "Why not me? I'm a sinner. I'm a perfect candidate for his salvation. I'm nothing but a wretched sinner. Here I am, Lord, nothing but a sinner, but thou art in the business of saving sinners. Lord, save me now. Son of David, save me now."

You see, the way to come to God is like the Psalmist in Psalm 25. I just love this verse. Jonathan Edwards does a whole wonderful sermon on it. It's an astonishing sermon and you should read it. "For thy name's sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great." Don't pardon my iniquity because I'm not quite as bad as my neighbor, pardon my iniquity because I'm great. Make a trophy of free grace out of me, O God. In that sermon, what Edwards does is he takes every objection for not being saved. I'm too old. I'm too hard-hearted. I've sinned to much. He says, "That makes you just a great sinner and if you're a great sinner, you're a perfect candidate for Jesus."

A great multitude our text says. Came them with their great need to a great Jesus who did great things. For who? For great sinners. My friend, you can't go on, you can't go on and truly live if you don't know Jesus Christ. You're like a walking corpse spiritually. The seeds of spiritual death are already in you and if you're not saved, they're soon going to bring you down to hell, and if Jesus Christ does not draw you so that you come into contact with him, no matter how successful you may be or will be, no matter how religious or moral you may be or will be, no matter how rich or popular or gifted you may be or will be, if you're not born again, you're simply carrying out within you a diseased heart, a bad heart, a bad record that will lead to your eternal ruin.

So he comes and he invites you just as you are, as a great sinner, to come to him just as he is, a great Savior. Come with all your sickness. Come with all your sin. Come with all your unworthiness. Come to him with all your need, feeling your need, knowing he alone can save you as prophet, priest and king. Do you struggle with your wretched unbelief? Bring it to Jesus. He can give you faith. Do you struggle with your hard-heartedness? Come to Jesus. He can break your heart, give you a new heart. Do you feel diseased within and without, everywhere wicked, truly depraved, a monster of lust and pride and selfishness? Bring it all to Jesus. He can make you clean every whit, the Bible says.

You see, no matter how bad your case is, remember Jesus has dealt with many cases just like yours, even worse. He saved Manasseh. He saved Paul, the persecutor. He saved Adam who plunged the whole human race into sin. He can save you. Come with the multitude this morning, the great multitude, and ask him to show you the great things that he does for great sinners just like you. Turn your face, turn your soul, turn your prayers, turn your cries, turn your need toward him, not toward yourself, not toward someone else, and receive his great salvation as a great sinner falling upon great grace in Jesus Christ, for by grace you are saved.

Then notice, too, thirdly, that these people came to Jesus for great things and that's how we should respond to the Gospel offer. We come to Jesus for great things. People around us can give us small things in life but we need the great things. We come to Jesus for conviction of sin, for a sense of need. We come to Jesus for faith. We come to him for

justification, for adoption, for sanctification, for assurance of faith, for perseverance to the end. We come to him for these great things that we may hate sin more and love him more and love his word more, his worship, his Sabbath, his people, his means of grace. All that speaks of him. We come to him for the great things of learning more about him, about his person, about his nature, about his offices, about his states, about his names, about his wonderful double substitutionary obedience, obeying the law for me, paying the penalty of sin for me. These are great things of God. We come for great things. We come to know him in great ways, to know his constant intercessions at the right hand of God for sinners like me. We come to know him as one who is going to be coming again in the clouds, to be married to his bride forever in the celestial city. We come to him for the great things of experiential Christianity. To know him in each of his three persons savingly, daily, eternally. To know him through his word and through prayer. To commune with him vitally and experientially.

We must come to him for the great things he can do in our families, to save every one of our children, so that we can say in truth that all our children are taught of the Lord. We come to him to do great things in the church, in this church, and churches throughout this city, and this nation, and this world, filling the land with the knowledge of the Lord from sea to sea. We come to him in this 500th anniversary of the Reformation to say, "Lord, do the great things again. Come again. Rend the heavens and come down and revive thy church, O God, and do great things. O God of ages past, O God of Reformation grace, O God of my salvation, do great things."

And the fourth thing we notice about this great multitude coming for great things is that they came to Jesus from a long distance and they left everything else behind. Oh sure, some were from the neighborhood but like the woman of Samaria who left her waterpot when she met Jesus, so they left their farms and businesses, many of them. They let nothing hinder them from coming to Jesus. Their healing was a matter of life and of death. They heard great things and they said, "We're diseased. We must go to the great miracle worker."

So it is, you see, with the sin-weary soul. "Oh, my father experienced it. My cousin did. My friend did. I see the change. I'm a sinner too, I need to go. I need to go to that same Savior." What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, the whole world and lose his own soul? You have nothing. You have nothing. Spurgeon said it so well, he said the unconverted person has nothing but a coffin on his back and will soon have grave dust in his mouth no matter how much he acquires in this world. They need Jesus. Come and throw yourself unconditionally. Confess your specific sins no matter how embarrassed you are. Confess who you are no matter how bad you are. Come just as you are no matter what the cost. Throw your entire self at the foot of the cross. Hear the poet's cry, "Come, needy and guilty, come, loathsome and bare." You can't come too filthy. Come just as you are. Martin Luther put it so well, he said salvation is going lost at the feet of Jesus.

Finally, notice that all of those who came to Jesus for healing were healed. Not one of them, good news, don't you think, was rejected. One after another they came, one after another they touched, one after another they were healed. So the crowd became more

pressing. The healing of one encouraged the next one to come forward. That's the way it ought to be, you see. When we see what Jesus has done for others, we ought to be all the more excited to come to him ourselves. If he can do it for them, he can do it for me. And everything about Jesus invites you to come. Even his name, Lord Jesus Christ. His name Jesus means to save sinners. His name Lord invites you because it means he's almighty to do this great work of salvation. His name Christ invites you because it means anointed. He's a prophet to teach you, the priest to sacrifice for you, and the king to guide you. Everything about Jesus shouts like a megaphone to you, "Cast yourself at my feet, sinner. I will do everything. I'm the third man coming for the third debtor in the prison cell. I've done it all. I open the cell. I'll take you home. I'll treat you as a son."

So will you go with me now? Will you go with me now to Jesus at the sea remembering he came for sinners? That his specialty. That's his business. That's his glory. He came for it, he suffered for it, he died for it, he lives for it. He loves to bring sinners to himself. Will you come now? Will you come now to the sea, to the sea of his word? Will you still halt between two opinions or will you not come at all?

Shall I tell my Master on the great day of judgment with tears running down my face that I brought you thousands of sermons and thousands of invitations over decades to come to Jesus in my Master's name, but you've never come to him for the great things that he can do for your soul? Shall I tell him on that day that you would never repent before him? You would never believe on him? You would never surrender all to him? Shall I tell him on that day that somehow your theology was so warped that you stayed away from him by reasoning within yourself that you couldn't come? Somehow you twisted it up so much that you made it his fault that you weren't saved in your own mind or that he wasn't willing somehow and that you were, as if you were more willing than he, instead of the truth that he's more willing than you to save you? Shall I tell him on that day that you would not have him to be your Savior and your Lord? That you would not surrender to him? Then you will have to hear those awful words that he will now no longer have you. Oh, to hear from his mouth on that day, "Since you would not have me when I offer myself to you thousands of times, I will not now have you. Depart from me, sinner, into the land of utter darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Jesus actually did more than allow and draw sinners to come to him. Our text says he also allowed them to touch him and he healed them. It's really like a double invitation in this text. Verse 8 is a wonderful invitation, the great multitude heard he did great things and they came, and then in verse 10, they pressed upon him for to touch him and they were healed. What a beautiful beautiful picture. People clamoring to touch him. Tripping over each other, as it were, to reach him, and then being instantly healed. This is another invitation, this picture, this object lesson, an invitation to touch him in and through his word, in and through the means of grace, through prayer to be touched by his mighty power and be healed.

Now praise be to God, many of you have been touched and you've touched him by the grace of God, and you've been healed. You've been touched and did touch him in this very house of prayer under the word of Almighty God, and you'll never forget some of

the sermons, some of the touching power of Christ through his Spirit, and how he drew you to touch him and to commune with him and to embrace him. Some of you remember times when that touching experience happened in your home as you read the word of God, or maybe as you had some spiritually edifying conversation with another believer and your heart burned within you and you embraced the Savior, you touched and were touched. Or as you drove to work perhaps some morning meditating upon him and his superlative grace and you had to pull the car off to the side of the road, you were overwhelmed with such a Savior for such a great sinner. You were touched and the effects prove in your life that it wasn't just emotionalism because you did learn to hate the things you loved before and vice versa, and you did learn to have a new life, a new joy, a new sense of purpose and fulfillment, a new hatred for sin, a new love for God and his glorious attributes, a new longing to know more and more of Jesus Christ experientially in your own soul, a new zeal for the Spirit's work in your soul, a new passion to live entirely in God and for God and by God and unto God, in and through Jesus Christ. And many of your spiritual diseases were healed and even now you long for the day when the last of indwelling sin, disease within you, would be taken away and you'd be perfectly healed forever where you will not only touch Jesus and be touched by him from time to time but you'll be embraced by him and love him and be married to him forever.

Praise be to God, it's all grace when you can say that you've been touched and have touched the Lord Jesus Christ. You know it's nothing of you, it's all grace, and you long for more of it. You long to have it be more steady, more profound. But on the other hand, oh, some of you are so close to the kingdom of God. Every time you actually walk into this worship place, you're close to the kingdom of God and yet you remain just diseased. You have eyes but you do not see God. Your heart throbs at times but not with love to him. Your knees bow, yes, you pray but not in earnest prayer in your prayer. Your hands reach out for things but not for Jesus. You strive to touch more of what this world covets after than to touch the Savior of your soul and be healed. You're still plagued in your soul. Your diseases still fester in private like a sick person in the emergency room who doesn't want to see the doctor. Your soul is diseased but you hang back from fleeing to the close-at-hand physician Savior who can give you everything you need.

It's time. It's time. It's time for you to give up the battle. It's time for you like this great multitude to just say, "I can't go on without Jesus." It's time for you to enter this sanctuary, as it were, almost tripping over one another in your eagerness to touch the Savior, to know his healing power. Your need of healing is great. Don't hold back. The heavenly physician is present in every sermon. He walks among the golden candlesticks. He walks among the pews. He says, "I'm the Son of God. I'm willing to be your Savior. I baptize you, boys and girls. I've declared with my Triune name I'm willing to be your God. Come to me just as you are."

Why do you hold back? Why do you neglect wonderful opportunities to fly to him? Opportunities that could change your eternal destiny by his grace from hell to heaven, from the absence of his favor to basking in that favor? Why do you continue on willing to be spiritually blind and maimed and then speak about your wounds and your bruises and

your putrefying sores as if they were badges of honor instead of taking yourself and them to the heavenly physician for eternal healing?

He's there. He says, "Stretch forth thy hand. Touch me. I will heal you of your pride, your sluggishness and I will give you grace to stretch forth your hand. I'll heal you of your unbelief, your selfishness, your hard-heartedness, your envy, your covetousness, your every spiritual disease. I'll heal you with one word, with one look, with one touch and you'll be made a new creation."

So what does keep you back? Is it your indifference, that you don't really care about what will happen to your never-dying soul? Is it your insensibility, that you feel nothing of the magnitude of your sin and your dangerous state for eternity? Is it your ignorance? Your sinful willful ignorance that you do not truly understand the good news of the Gospel that is designed for the greatest of sinners? Is it your inability that holds you back and you haven't seen that your inability behind it lies your unwillingness to flee to Christ to touch him and he's able to save you from that wretched unwillingness which makes your inability your own fault? Is it your love for sin, your love for being diseased that keeps you from Jesus? What insanity that is to love the very sin and disease that will cast you into the eternal pit.

Do you not realize that while you rest in your indifference, your insensibility, your ignorance, that God is angry with the wicked every day? Angry with every person that stays away from his Son? You don't realize that? You think that coming to Jesus will be presumptuous? It's the worst thing you can do to stay away from him. It's the height of unbelief and folly and rejection of God. It's the greatest sin in the world, the mother sin of all sins, the sin of unbelief.

What will your family, your money, your gifts, your vocation, your popularity, your fame, mean on the judgment day if you're consigned to the abyss of hell because you refuse to believe the Gospel? You refuse to touch the Son of God? You may be indifferent now but you won't be indifferent one day on your deathbed. Then you will wish you had given up the entire world to find Christ but it will be too late on the judgment day. Please, please, please think about this. You will have no more opportunity to respond favorably to God's proffered salvation in Jesus Christ and you won't have one answer to a thousand questions.

Don't you care about your own never-dying soul? Don't you care? Why would you put your heart into the things of this world, this poor, perishing, temporary world for 70, 80, 90 years, if you live that long? It's less than a drop in the bucket compared to the never-ending eternity. It doesn't make any sense. Today, today if you will hear his voice, come with the multitude. Come for healing. Come and touch. Harden not your heart. Today is the accepted time. Today is a day of salvation.

So face all your excuses, the whole gamut of them. Face them honestly. Face them with integrity. You may say, "I've sinned too much in all my yesterdays to be saved." Or you may say, "I'll start seeking the Lord tomorrow but not quite yet." Those are just excuses

too. The word yesterday has slain its thousands. The word tomorrow has slain its tens of thousands. Remember today's unbelief or rather tomorrow's faith is today's unbelief. The road to hell is paved with good intentions. Today you're alive, today the Gospel still comes to you, today you're still invited, still invited to come to the amazing Savior. It's not quite yet too late. Some of you on the brink of eternity, you know it, your age tells you that and you're still holding back. Could there be anything more foolish than that?

O God, have mercy on every unconverted person in this building this morning. Oh, that you would follow the advice of Isaac Watts quoted by Charles Spurgeon, "The guilty, weak and helpless worm, on thy kind arms I fall. Be thou my strength and righteousness, my Jesus and my all."

I close this sermon this morning with the way Spurgeon, I read the last paragraph of Spurgeon's sermon. Here it is, "But still, people will not understand us. A young man once said to me, 'I want to know what I must do to be saved.' I reminded him of that verse of Isaac Watts. He said, 'Sir, I have no ability to fall.' ;Oh,' said I, 'you do not understand me. I do not mean a fall which needs any strength in you—I mean a fall caused by the absence of all strength.' To believe the Gospel is to tumble down into Christ's arms because I cannot stand uprightly, to faint into the arms of Christ, that is faith. Just give up your doing. Give up depending upon anything that you are, or do, or ever hope to be—and depend upon the complete merits, and finished work and precious blood of Jesus Christ. If you do this you are saved. Anything of your own doing spoils it all. You must not have a jot or a tittle of your own! You must give up relying upon your prayers, your tears, your Baptism, your repentance—and even your faith itself! Your reliance is to be on nothing but that which is in Christ Jesus. Those dear hands of Christ, those blessed feet are ensigns of His love—look to them! That bleeding, murdered Person is the grand display of the heart of the ever-blessed God. Look to Him! Look to the Savior's pangs, the Savior's griefs, the Savior's groans. These are punishments for human sin. This is God's wrath spending itself on Christ instead of spending itself on you. Believe in Jesus, and it is certain that He thus suffered for you. Trust in Him to save you, and you are saved! God grant you the privilege of faith, and the boon of salvation. Amen."

Great God of heaven, we ask thy blessing upon this double invitation, this pleading through thy word through the great multitude who came to thee for great things and touched thee. Lord, please, please grant that grace to every unconverted person in this building this morning and let all of our excuses vanish before the power and the freeness and the beauty and the glory and the joy and the life of the Gospel, and do bless thy people this morning as well. Let them leave this house saying, "It's all grace. It's all grace. It's all amazing grace. Praise God for the Gospel." In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.