



Bible Study
2014-2015

Heart of a Servant

The Gospel of Mark

LESSON 13

The University of Virginia Library has published wonderful information on the history of music in America. Concerning the background of what we call today “negro spirituals” they write, “From 1788, when the First African Church in Savannah, Georgia, became the earliest independent African-American congregation in the country, worship services incorporated the spirituals. In addition to singing traditional Protestant hymns, African-American churches embraced this other form of song, described by slaves as “spiritual himes” to distinguish them from the Biblical songs of the European tradition.”

The spirituals are powerful songs that have inspired many for centuries. One of the most well-known spirituals is “Nobody Knows The Trouble I’ve Seen.” The lyrics are sung one verse at a time followed by an affirming “Oh yes, Lord” echo and a chorus interspersed throughout. Here are most of the lyrics.

Select verses:

Sometimes I’m up, sometimes I’m down
Sometimes I’m almost to the ground
Now you may think that I don’t know
But I’ve had my troubles here below
One day when I was walkin’ along
The sky opened up and love come down...

Chorus:

Nobody knows the trouble I’ve seen
Nobody knows but Jesus
Nobody knows the trouble I’ve seen
Glory hallelujah!

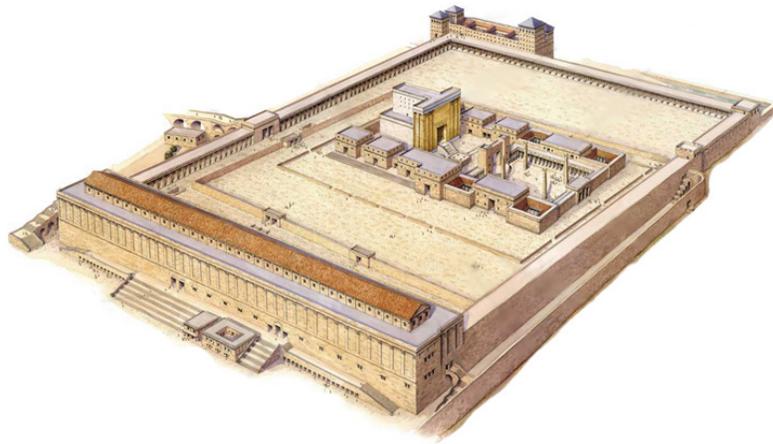
There is something to be said when a person is going through times of great trouble and yet they remain confident that Jesus sees all, knows all, and can sing from their heart “Glory hallelujah!” in response. In Mark 13 Jesus prophesies of darker times than the wicked days of slavery. The disciples are given many details about the signs that would accompany the end times before His second coming including what He calls the great tribulation. And though these days will be filled with universal trouble, there will still be those who praise “Glory hallelujah!” even though it will cost them their lives.

“Satan so hates the genuine praise of Christ but his fiery darts of discouragement are not effective against us when we respond in praise.”

~ William Thrasher

Read Mark 13:1-2

It seems a strange place to begin our chapter, yet the glory that bursts from the disciples' pride over the temple's breathtaking construction became the launching pad for Jesus' prophetic predictions of the near and distant future. Nearly everyone would have agreed in Jesus' day that the temple was beyond impressive with its marble pillars, gold overlays, and limestone blocks that weighed more than 160 tons each. (There are many reproductions you can find on the web but here is a sample diagram of what Herod's temple looked like to further illustrate.)



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1. There may be some of us that attend presently, or did in the past, a very ornamental or architecturally beautiful church. It may be that you have visited a place of worship where your eyes were dazzled by luminous stained glass windows, intricate carvings with details etched in polished woodwork, or the stone and ironworks were nearly museum-like in artistry. Our God deserves all the best that can possibly be offered to Him, but neither the created work nor its artist are ever to block, distract, or detract from the worship of God.
 - a. Read Deuteronomy 27:4-6. As the children of Israel crossed over the Jordan heading into the promised land, they were to take large stones and do three things to them. List them here.
 - b. The stones were whitewashed in order to more clearly display the words that God wanted on them. No tool was to be used by any carver on the Lord's altar of worship. Why do you think these two things were important to the Lord?

2. Answer these simple questions without feeling the need to expound.

a. Have you ever gone to listen to a special Christian musician perform, or a Christian band in concert, or some type of well-known worship leader?

b. Name two or three pastors, Bible teachers, or women that you enjoy listening to the most when they teach or share about the Lord.

c. Name two or three of your favorite Christian authors.

d. Write out Isaiah 42:8.

e. Whether a magnificent structure, an angelic singing voice, an expert in Greek and Hebrew, or an incredible Bible teacher, the Lord wants our hearts to worship Him, not the work of other men's hands, nor their gifts/talents He has given them. What might be a warning sign that a person is more enamored and impressed with a person or place rather than the Lord?

c. One sure way to prevent this kind of deception is by having an intimate knowledge of the Lord. The closer you are to Him, the more familiar you are with His character and His Word, and the more you learn to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit, the easier it will be to identify a “counterfeit” or misrepresentative. In the end times those with false fronts will use several means to try and prove that they represent the Lord: they rise in power or influence and have visible “signs and wonders” that seem to authenticate them. Look up Revelation 13:13-14. Write what happens in those two verses in your own words.

4. We see that the deception will be great because the signs and wonders done with Satanic power will be great.

a. Write out the words of John 12:37 here.

b. Look up Acts 2:43 and 5:12, Romans 15:19, and Hebrews 2:4. What did Jesus do in the past, as well as today by the Holy Spirit, through believers?

c. Jesus did miraculous signs and wonders which moved some to believe in Him. The apostles in the past and believers today are given gifts by the Holy Spirit which demonstrate miraculous power. Yet, Satan has been and always will be a counterfeiter. Paul knew this and was afraid for the Corinthians because of their possibly receiving people that brought in another Jesus, a different spirit (or attitude), or another gospel. Read 2 Corinthians 11:1-4 and 12-15. How would you possibly know if a person brought you a different Jesus, a different attitude or spirit, or a different gospel?

Additional Study References: Since this is primarily a devotional study of Mark, we will not be going into all of the different prophecies concerning the end times, the rapture, and the Great Tribulation. Here are some cross-references for those of you who would like to dig deeper into these subjects: Daniel 9:24-27 and 12:1-11; Isaiah 13:6-13; Joel 2:1-11, 31-32, 3:14-15; and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:10.

6. In Mark 13:7-13, Jesus speaks of His people being beaten in unimaginable places, arrested for inconceivable reasons, betrayed by the most unlikely people, and hated for irrational reasons. They've also heard of natural disasters and global upheaval in war, yet Jesus says "do not be troubled" and "do not worry" (vs.7, 11). Even though just reading this may stir exactly that in your heart!

a. Fill in the blanks from Mark 13 to discover why Jesus could say this.

"But _____ you hear..." Vs. 7

"But _____ out...." Vs. 9

"But _____ they arrest...and deliver you up..." Vs. 11

"So _____ you see..." Vs. 14

"But take heed; _____ I have told you _____ things beforehand." Vs. 23

b. In addition to these, write down what Jesus says in each of these verses.

1) John 13:19

2) John 16:1

3) Matthew 24:25

- c. In 2 Peter 3:17, Peter calls the believers who loved the Lord and knew the scriptures about prophetic events beforehand “steadfast.” Looking over Mark 13:23 and Jesus’ words in part “b” above, besides being steadfast, what else should knowing these troubling events before they occur produce in us?
- d. After prophetic words from Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4, what did he say we should do with the words of God given to us beforehand from verse 18?
7. Pull together John 14:1, 18, 27 and 29. Out of Jesus’ words, write out a prayer of heartfelt thankfulness to Jesus for His promises, assurance, and love.

*“I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”
~ John 15:15 NIV*

9. It should bring us great comfort to know that Jesus understands our tribulations in life and in our soul. For us to know Jesus' character and His Word more intimately, suffering and trials are our greatest opportunities. The valley of our weeping opens a doorway to hope (Hosea 2:15) where Jesus comes and wants to draw closer to us. Satan knows about this golden opportunity and will do whatever he can to turn a heart away from the Lord.
- a. One very persuasive way Satan attacks people when they experience pain and suffering is to sow seeds of DOUBT in a person's thoughts. Doubt can attack the character of God in a multitude of ways.
 - 1) What issue did Job have doubts about from Job 23:3, 9?

Summarize the promise of Psalm 139:1-3 in response.

- 2) What doubt did Satan hiss into Eve's ears in Genesis 3:1?

What does Psalm 119:160 say?

- 3) Satan will try and make you question God's goodness in light of a hurting world and suffering that he has brought at times. What does Psalm 25:8, 86:15, and 119:68 all say is true?

When you are tempted to doubt what God is doing, what He said, or who He is, what can you do?

- b. Again, it is imperative that the Christian be MOST affected by the Word of God rather than our feelings and experiences in life. What encouragement and truth does Jesus give us in John 16:33?

- c. Read Mark 13:24-27 again. We are given a picture of the world literally crumbling apart. The creation that was meant to give light now turns to darkness and reflectors of light become eclipsed. Just at this moment of ultimate darkness on earth, God's divine light appears. The clouds that made life ominous become vehicles to announce the glorious arrival of the Son of God. Where else in scripture do you remember that darkness preceded light?

- d. Of all of the dark places on the earth, scripture describes the human heart as the darkest. Write out 2 Corinthians 4:6 here.

- e. If the Lord can take the darkest heart, filled with caverns of filth and nebulous sin, and illuminate it with the glory and radiance of Jesus with just one command, then do not despair over those you may be praying for. Remember where you came from or where you COULD have gone if not for saving grace. Write down the initials of those who need the light of Jesus' face to shine within their dark heart and take a few minutes to bring these precious souls to Jesus.

11. Read Ephesians 2:13-17. The Holy Spirit is still working in this way today.

- a. How does true unity come about (vs 13) and what happens to division (enmity) between people when they all come to the cross?

- b. Reflecting back on your answer for 10c. regarding the divisions and separations in your life, write out a prayer applying the truth from Ephesians 2:13-17 to your circumstances. Remember that Jesus' heart is that we would be one (John 17). Be encouraged that He has been praying along these lines for any division or separation you may be experiencing right now.

“Satan always hates Christian fellowship; it is his policy to keep Christians apart. Anything which can divide saints from one another he delights in. Since union is strength, he does his best to promote separation.”
~ C. H. Spurgeon

Read Mark 13:28-37

12. In previous studies we learned how Jesus likened Israel to the fig tree. After He has addressed the signs to look for concerning these three separate events (the temple's destruction, the sign of His coming, and the end of the age), He uses a parable about the nation to indicate which generation will actually be the eyewitness to the prophecy's fulfillment. In 1948, when Israel returned to the land and became a nation, Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones being resurrected was fulfilled (Ezekiel 37). Another picture is this fig tree that begins to thrive and blossom.
- a. Fill in the blanks from Ecclesiastes 3:1 and note the words you write specifically.

To _____ there is a _____,
a time for every _____ under heaven.

b. Everything created is subject to a graciously divine timetable of God's called "seasons." Each of these seasons are pregnant with divine purposes. We may think of temperature changes, allergies, school schedules, and other attributes that come with our standard calendar year, but Jesus gives us a far different list of purposes in Ecclesiastes 3:2-8. Which ones stick out to you the most? Briefly explain why.

c. What is the promise and truth given to us from Ecclesiastes 3:11?

d. Notice back in Mark 13:31 that there is even a "season" for heaven and earth's existence. Seeing that God's Word is permanent, unchanging, non-seasonal, and absolutely secure in its permanency, what kind of comfort or joy do you get from this truth? Write out why you are thankful to Jesus for making this comment.

13. 1 Corinthians 13:12 says that we are only observant of future prophetic events through dark lenses or dim reflections. We only know things partially, but it's a season that will change. When heaven and earth pass away and we are united with the Lord in heaven, the glory will be incomparable to the sufferings we have had on earth (Romans 8:18). We will no longer have this corruptible decaying body, but a whole new body that is glorious, spiritual, and fashioned for heaven (1 Corinthians 15:42-49). Now we love Jesus Whom we have not seen, but then we will see Him as He is, face-to-face (1 John 3:2, Revelation 22:4).

a. In light of these (and many more) promises, Jesus has a word which He repeats in Mark 13:32-37 that we are to be doing today, tomorrow, and every day until we are in heaven with Him. What is this word?

