

# Hidden In Plain Sight

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     Scriptures this morning are from 2 Corinthians 4, verses 5 through 12, and Mark 2, 23 through 3, 6. For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, let light shine out of darkness, made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard-pressed on every side, but not crushed, perplexed but not in despair, persecuted but not abandoned, struck down but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.

For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body. So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you. And then Mark. One Sabbath, Jesus was going through the grain fields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick up some heads of grain. The Pharisees said to him, look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath? He answered, have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered into the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. He also gave some to his companions. And then he said to them, the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Lord, the Son of Man is Lord, even on the Sabbath. Another time Jesus went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse

Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, stand up in front of everyone. Then Jesus asked them, which is lawful on the Sabbath, to do good or to do evil, to save life or kill? But they remained silent. He looked around at them in anger and deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, stretch out your hand. He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

So friends, let's pray together. Loving and gracious God, we do give you thanks for this moment as you move mightily among us. And as we have come to you today with our hearts open, your spirit moving so powerfully and gently among us, Lord, pour into each of us anew.

[ 3 : 0 9 ]     Stoke the fire within. Let us go into the world and let it shine through in your name. In Jesus' most precious name we pray. Amen. All right, everybody. So we're going to do a little exercise, right? Not physical exercise. Don't panic.

Okay. However, here's what I want you to do. You can either get out your phone or get out a pen. And what I want you to do is this. I want you to think of 10 people you know, but not living in your own house. 10 people you know, but not living in your own house. Okay. I'll give you a minute.

10 people you know, but not living in your own house. He said, you can write them with your phone. You can write them down on your bulletin. However you want to do it. 10 people, you know, don't overthink it. Just 10 people, you know, I was joking with Carl and Elizabeth earlier. I said, it's not a test. Now all of a sudden, everybody's working so hard. You can tell.

How are we doing? We getting there? Getting there? Okay. All right. Here's why I wanted you to do that. I want you to look at that list of names. Okay. Cause I'm going to share some information with you.

And I want you to keep this in mind as you look at that list of names. So out of that 10, it's a pretty scary thought, but it's hard to know these numbers and not think of them in our own lives.

[ 4 : 40 ] Okay. Because there was just a survey done in March by Gallup. Okay. Gallup poll done in March. Gallup poll said only three out of every 10 people in the U S three out of every 10 people in the U S go to religious services regularly.

Three out of every 10. Okay. Half. That means five out of that 10 go seldom or never. Okay.

Okay. So that other two is kind of in the middle. Three go regularly and notice that's not every week. Okay. But go regularly.

And five out of that 10 go seldom or never. Now what's even scarier, and this date is a little bit older.

This is nine out of 10 people in the U S nine out of 10 believe Jesus was a historical figure. In other words, they believed he existed, but only six out of 10 believe him to be the son of God.

[ 5 : 57 ] Okay. Because remember one doesn't always mean the other. So nine out of 10 believe that Jesus existed, but only six out of 10 believe him to be the son of God.

Now, the reason why I wanted us to confront that reality is because if I just came in here and drop those numbers as statistics, we tend to think of them as this great nameless, faceless crowd out there in the great somewhere.

But I want you to look at those 10 names in front of you. Because who do you think we are talking about? We're not talking about nameless, faceless crowd out there in the great somewhere.

We're talking about our coworkers, our neighbors, people we might watch a game with once in a while.

Those numbers didn't come from nowhere. Those are real people. And it's important we get that. Because when we think about the stories that we read today, the challenge for us becomes, well, why is that the case?

[ 7 : 12 ] And for some of these folks, you may know why it's the case. Maybe they've had some religious trauma in their backgrounds. Maybe they were raised in households that were not believing households.

Maybe they've never actually been exposed to the truth of Jesus Christ. All of that is possible. But, I'm about to ask you an uncomfortable question.

What do you think they see when they encounter you? Because you are the church going folks.

I'm checking. You are the church going folks, yeah? Okay. Okay. So, what do you think they see when they encounter you?

And that is our big conundrum. Because if our non-believing friends, our non-believing neighbors, our non-believing relatives, whoever's on your list, if they look at us and know we claim to be the people of Jesus and then still want nothing to do with Jesus, that's a pretty harsh indictment.

[ 8 : 50 ] So, what's the missing link? What's the piece where the disconnect lies? Our stories today actually call some of that out.

And so, I'm hoping you'll want to follow along with me. So, grab your Bible and get to Mark chapter 3. Grab your Bible and get to Mark chapter 3. We're going to start at verse 1.

You heard Carol read the story, right? There's two stories. One goes into chapter 2, starts at verse 23. Right? Mark chapter 2, starting at verse 23.

Now, what we got going on here is two stories where you can see why people who aren't church people don't like church people. Okay?

So, the first one. Jesus and his disciples are moving through some grain fields and they're hungry. And it doesn't say that everybody in the group was just ripping off everything they could grab.

[ 9 : 54 ] It says that some of them, because they were hungry, started to pull off heads of grain as they were walking through because they wanted something to eat. And the church folks said, now why are they doing that on a Sunday?

Why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath? In our language, that would be, why are they doing that on a Sunday? Okay? And Jesus has to break it down for them.

It says, you know, think back. Think back to the stories that matter to us. Think back to the scriptures. And what we see is our king, the greatest king that we've encountered to that point.

He had a time when he was hungry and he went and took things that were set aside for God. But it was okay because of the need he had. That's the point of Jesus' answer.

Because he wants people to remember that. Then we go into chapter three. Chapter three, the story here is even more compelling, at least to me. All right?

[ 11 : 09 ] So, we go to church. Okay? We go to church. And in church, there's a man with a shriveled hand. He's got a problem.

And so, he shows up. And so, Jesus, when he sees the man with the shriveled hand, he tells him, stand up. And so, the church folks start to get upset.

He's not about to do this on a Sunday and in church, no less. That's what they're thinking. Okay? And so, Jesus, being Jesus, says, so, you know, this Sunday thing seems to matter to all of you.

But, you know, on a Sunday, is it okay to kill or do good to people? Which of these is okay to do on a Sunday? And they don't know the answer to that.

And here's the piece I want you to focus on. All right? So, go to verse four with me and you're going to hear what I was just saying. Then Jesus asked them, which is lawful on a Sabbath, to do good or do evil, to save life or to kill, but they remained silent.

[ 12 : 38 ] He looked around at them in anger and deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts. There's the rub.

I want to go back to the question I was asking. when our non-believing friends look at us, church folks, do they see people who are more concerned with technicalities and rules than basic care for people's needs?

are we saying that the things that matter to us are these things that are all sort of insider language to us?

But when people show up in front of us hungry, when people show up in front of us hurting, when people show up in front of us with questions, we're more worried about the technical than the spiritual.

Because who wants to be a part of a church like that? I want you to think about Jesus' commandments.

[ 14 : 06 ] When Jesus talks about how we're supposed to behave, Jesus leads with, love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and all your mind.

And love your neighbor as yourself. On the night he gives himself up for us, he tells the disciples, love one another as I have loved you.

When Jesus is giving orders to us, the first word is almost always love. Now, don't get me wrong, because Jesus does not throw out the rules.

People kind of trip on that, as if one means you don't do the other. Remember what Jesus said about the rules. I have not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it.

He says, not one iota, not one might, not one cross T or dotted I will pass away from the law. it's the same guy.

[ 15 : 30 ] So why then do we seem to have this disconnect? That's probably the biggest challenge that the modern church is up against.

Christ. And it's not new. We're talking about people who are 2,000 years old. It's not a new problem. But the question is, what are we going to do differently?

Because if we're not going to do something different, if we're not going to think about this differently, or if we're not going to at least name it and confront it, then we have to realize where this trend is going to take us.

Remember, already half the people on your list, already half of them. And you'll notice something I didn't ask you.

Because this one might just be a little too hard to face. I asked you to name 10 people not in your own house. because I'm willing to bet most of us probably know somebody in our own house who belongs on that list.

[ 16 : 56 ] And that is hard to face. But here's the thing, church. This is not a no-hope bad news message.

I want you to hear the peace in Corinthians. because this is why they connect to each other. Because if we're going to connect this idea of how people get it wrong, I mean, we want to love the Lord.

We want to get out here and do it right. And we want to be Jesus people in the world. Okay? That's great. That's what we're supposed to do. But I think the challenge here is what's the message we're sending when we're Jesus people in the world?

is it that there's rules to be followed or is it that there's a God who is so full of love, so full of grace, so full of mercy that he has gotten to me, yes, even me, and my sins, and my crazy, and all my problems, and he has gotten me over my humps, he has shown me I can be forgiven, and I know that my future is secure in him.

which message are you sending? I want you to really think about that. Which message are you sending?

[ 18 : 17 ] Because that's the rub. If people look at you and what they see is a rule book, who's going to want to come sit next to you?

On a Sunday. But if they look at you and see someone whose life has been transformed, if they look at you and see someone who has hope that doesn't make any sense in the face of all they're going through, if they look at you and they see people who are difference makers in the world, in other words, when this person was hurting, I saw you go and take care of them.

When this person was struggling, I saw you willing to pray for them. When I saw people who were hungry, I saw you dig and take money out of your wallet that you claimed not to have and gave it to them and then go without because you wanted to make sure they had something.

Which message are you sending? because which one do you think looks a little more like Jesus?

He looked around at them in anger and deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts because Jesus says, you know, the rule book people would tell this guy, come back tomorrow because tomorrow is Monday.

[ 19 : 48 ] I can take care of you on Monday when he's standing here right now. do you really think that's how God treats you?

When you're in the hospital, when you're in need, when you're struggling, God says, well, it's Sunday. is that the message?

And y'all know there's a whole bunch of other rules that can apply, but this is the example we're working with. And when we put it like that, we see how ridiculous it sounds.

But we got to confront the fact that this is what the world may be getting from us. And that brings us back to the Corinthians piece.

Because what you hear the apostle Paul say in Corinthians, this idea, I want you to hear this again.

[ 21 : 04 ] For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord. Lord, and our serves ourselves as servants for Jesus' sake.

For God who said that light shine out of darkness made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.

But we have this treasure in clay jars to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.

We are hard-pressed on every side, but not crushed. Perplexed, but not in despair.

We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.

[ 22 : 14 ] Treasure in jars of clay. The reason why that example is so powerful is because they had different kinds of pottery, but most of the time you go back and archaeologists have uncovered that they had this sort of cheap stuff that was clay they would make, and that was the cheapest kind, and it would break a lot.

It would crack a lot. And so it wasn't valued very much. And if you wanted to carry something around or if you had something valuable you didn't put it in a clay jar because you knew it could break and be exposed and easily stolen.

But the point is exactly that. Because what God is trying to show our brothers and sisters through us and see and that's the key through us is when we got problems, when we're overwhelmed, when we're tired, when we're frustrated with the state of the world, what's the message we send?

do we show people a hope that's bigger than the world? Do we show people a peace that surpasses all understanding?

That doesn't mean you don't have feelings but you have peace because their circumstances are not the source of your peace. You have hope because your hope is not resting in someone mythical who's going to come and save the day, but a savior that you know and have in your own heart.

[ 24 : 02 ] You are the treasure hidden in plain sight. I think sometimes we have forgotten that.

That we are the way God reaches the people on your list. That because they see in you a God who makes a difference.

Because that's what we were praying about. That's what we've been singing about. They see in us a God who makes a difference. difference. And if God has made a difference for you, is that the message you are sending to the world?

Because if it isn't, if it isn't, think about the impact you're having.

Think about how you are representing that God you claim has made a difference if that's not the message you're sending to the world.

[ 25 : 32 ] Because then we can't wonder about those numbers. We shouldn't be surprised that folks feel how they feel about the church.

That's the difference. You see, friends, we are a people of hope. Which is why even in the face of all this seemingly bad news, I still have hope.

Because the work isn't about us. Remember who's doing the work. That Jesus is revealed in us. It's still his work.

And it's still him. And think of the encouraging word it is to remember that I don't have to be perfect. I don't have to be almighty.

I don't have to know all the answers. Because I know who does. And it is he who carries me. It is he who saves me.

[ 26 : 37 ] and if you want answers, if you want peace, if you need hope, let me introduce you to the one who made a difference for me.

Amen and amen. Loving God, thank you for the gift it is to know that you are still at work, that you use us. you're broken, you're imperfect, you're still sinning, you're still confused, children, to be your vessel to reach those who are lost.

Lord God, shine through each of us in a fresh way. Shine through each of us in a new way. Let your light come so bright through us into this world that people will realize, no, that can't be them, it must be God.

That I don't know what's happening, but I know I want that more than what I'm dealing with right now. Because that is who you are.

And that is who you commissioned us to be. Let us be your people in this world so that people will look to your people who claim your name and see hope, see help, see truth, see peace.

[ 28 : 08 ] Because that is who you are. You are the way. You have spoken and taught us the truth. And you have given us life more abundant.

Let that be our message to the world. Amen. Amen. Indeed, we are the light of the world.

Jesus tells us we are to be salt and light. Difference making people because God has made a difference in us. As you seek to think about how you will live your faith this week, I draw your attention to a couple things in your bulletin.

First, Sandy's got a feeding hope meal coming up on the 12th. So just read the insert in there about what she needs and how you can support it. DJ's also got a call in there, especially if you have a garden that's been producing well.

He's looking for some vegetables as well as other ways you can support the Thursday night dinners at Niagara Falls. I would also draw everyone's attention to the summer worship schedule, which is just a fancy way of saying we're going to not do the 11 o'clock service between now and September starting on June 16th.

[ 29 : 19 ] Okay? So that said, that really doesn't affect anybody here, but you want to spread that word around if you have folk who may not be here or may not check social media, those sorts of things, folks who worship at 11.

Okay? We also have all the stuff coming up over our summer calendar. Pay attention to that as we start to collect things and need things. Your bulletin is a resource. Please use it. That said, let's receive our benediction.

Lord, we know that we are not worthy. We know that we are sometimes broken, but in our brokenness, you can shine through if our message to the world is look at what my God does for me.

Look at how my God helps me. Look at how my God has helped me through these things. Let us go into the world bearing witness to who you are.

Let the world see the treasure in these broken vessels. now in the name of God, our King and Creator, and in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and our Redeemer, and in the name of the Holy Spirit, our Counselor and our Sustainer.

[ 30 : 36 ] May God bless us now as we leave to love and serve God and all God's children and all God's people said, Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.