

God's Thinking and Our Thinking

by Dennis Kinlaw

The sermon emphasizes the importance of thinking correctly about God and the dangers of wrong thinking, highlighting the significance of Jesus' revelation of God's nature and character.

Duration: 52:12

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Mark 1:21-22, Mark 8:27-30, Mark 8:33-35, Mark 9:22-25, John 14:6

Topics: "Thinking"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of meeting Christ in order to truly understand oneself. He shares his personal experience of not feeling guilty until he became a Christian and realized his own sinfulness. The speaker also highlights the lack of faith and understanding among the disciples, emphasizing that they had not fully grasped the concept of the cross. Jesus challenges them to think differently and calls for self-denial and taking up one's cross to follow him. The sermon concludes by mentioning the various perspectives on who Jesus was, including his family's belief that he had gone crazy.

Transcript

The first of the Scriptures that I would like for us to look at is in the Gospel according to Mark. It is in the middle of the Gospel of Mark, and it is the pivotal story in the Gospel of Mark. It is found in chapter 8, and it is a familiar story of Peter's confession that he is the Christ.

Let me read for you, beginning with verse 27 of chapter 8 of the Gospel of Mark. Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, Who do people say I am? They replied, Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and still others, one of the prophets.

But what about you? he asked. Who do you say I am? Peter answered, You are the Christ. Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter.

Get behind me, Satan, he said. You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men. Now, I would like to retranslate that, and I believe it is fair to retranslate it on the basis of the Greek.

What Jesus was really saying was, the verb is the verb to think. You do not think the way God thinks, but the way man thinks. I would like to take that as the text major thrust for the evening, and we will come to that same concept in some other passages in the other session.

So Jesus looked at him and said, You don't think the way God thinks, but you think the way men think. Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said, If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.

What good is it for a man to gain the whole world yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels. And he said to them, I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power. Will you pray with me again for a moment? We give you thanks, our Father, for the privilege of being together with those who belong to you in a fellowship like this.

We give you thanks above all for the promise that you gave to us that if we met in your name you would meet with us, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And so now as we turn to your word, we need to have you quicken it to our hearts. We know there is no way that we can think your thoughts unless you quicken us by your Holy Spirit.

Somehow tonight give to us that quickening so we can think thoughts that could not be thought by a mortal, sinful man apart from your grace. And we will give you praise through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Archbishop William Temple of the Anglican Church somewhere in his writing says, if a person's concept of God is wrong, the more religion he gets, the more dangerous he is. The longer I've lived knowing that quotation, the more impact that quotation has had on me because I believe it is right. One of the sorriest stories in all of human history is the story of religion in the world because I suspect as much inhumanity has been done to man in the course of human history in the name of religion as in any other cause and maybe more.

And the reason, of course, is because we have the wrong concept of God. And so William Temple said, if your concept of God is wrong, the more religion you get, the more dangerous you are. Now how necessary it is that we think correctly and we cannot think correctly about God if we do not know who He is, what He is like.

That's the reason the Scriptures have been given to us. And so we have the Old Testament. And in the course of those books in the Old Testament, we come to understand there's only one God, not a whole bunch.

Nor is the universe itself divine. A clear line is drawn between the Creator and the creation and there is only one Creator who created it all, one God alone. Now that was not easy to win, but the Old Testament won that.

It's interesting that the Jews prayed that God would save them from Babylon and they thought salvation, or they prayed for salvation, national salvation. They thought it would be salvation from Babylon, but God

let them go into Babylonian captivity. But while they were in that 70-year captivity, they saw the folly of polytheism.

They saw the folly of paganism. And from the day that the Jews returned to Jerusalem, you have had trouble in human history finding a Jew who was not a monotheist. So that God gave them salvation, but He didn't give it to them the way they expected and it didn't contain what they were looking for, but it was what the world needed.

So the Old Testament lets us know there's one God. It lets us know that He's the sovereign Lord of history. He's the one who started it and He's the one who's going to end it up.

And there is nothing that takes place in human history that is not within His permitted will because He runs the whole show, sovereign Lord. But now He's not only one God and sovereign Lord of all of history, He is also the Holy One. And you get that reflected in the story of Moses and the Exodus, the giving of the Ten Commandments, and when the Decalogue was given, that moral law was given, it was made very clear that that was an expression of the nature of the one sovereign Lord whom every one of us will one day meet.

So we learn there that there is a God, there's one God. He is all-powerful. Everything is under His control and He is the Holy One.

And He chose a group of people like you and me to tell the world about Him. But then that's not all there is to know about God. And so it was necessary for Christ to come.

And when He came, that's what He wanted to do. He wanted to let us know what His Father was like. And so you get the Gospels telling their stories about Him and giving the messages, the teachings that He gave to us.

I want to use the Gospel of Mark as the basis for what I'm going to talk about tonight. There is a massive amount of material there, so I will have to give it very cryptically as we move through. But let me paint a picture for you or give a scenario that profoundly impresses me in the Gospel of Mark.

When Jesus came, He came as the Son of the Father to introduce, to reveal to us what God is like more fully than the Old Testament. What it tells us, the Gospels assume the Old Testament. It is not a new Gospel and it is not a new revelation.

It is the next step in the revelation that starts with the creation story as we get it in Genesis. Now when He came, He wanted us to know Him. And I think He wanted us to know that He, the triune Godhead, Father, Son and Spirit, that it was safe for us to trust Him, or that it is safe for us to trust Him.

He wants us to know who He is, that it is safe for us to trust Him and that it is even right for us to love Him, that there is something about Him that that is the appropriate response. I was reading something the other day in one of Tom Torrance's books on the mediation of Christ. And he told about being in the Second World War on the battlefield as a chaplain and he was dealing with a soldier that had been wounded.

And he knew that he had but a few minutes to live. And the British kid was in terror as he faced death. And he said, can you tell me what God is like? Who am I going to meet and what is He like? And so he started.

And then the kid looked at him and said, my question is, is He like Jesus? If He is like Jesus, there is a chance for me. Now, that's why he came. He came to answer those kinds of existential questions that ultimately move sometimes somewhere in every human heart.

Now, when he came, how did he reveal himself? It's very beautiful to me that he did it not in propositions but in stories. Now, I've spent a good chunk of my life in intellectual and academic circles. Those are not always the same.

But I've spent a good bit of my life in academic circles where we thought maybe we had a little bit of intellectuality about us. And so we tend to deal in abstractions. We tend to deal in the rational cases.

And we tend to deal in abstract truth, this kind of thing. But when Jesus came, he gave very little of that, much to the disappointment of many of us. He gave very little.

But what did you get are stories. But those stories tell us worlds. Just let me run through for you the stories as they are introduced in the Gospel of Mark.

You will remember he wanted them to know who he was. So the first thing he did was showed up at the River Jordan and looked at John and said, Will you recommend me? It's interesting when the sovereign lord of the universe needs one of us to recommend him, isn't it? It's interesting he went to John the Baptist. I think he was wise.

The most authentic prophetic and the most authentic moral voice in a half a millennium at least. And he looks at a human being and says, Will you speak a good word for me? And God still needs people who will speak good words for him. And that's our role.

When John did, you will remember they came to John and said, Are you the one we're waiting for? Isn't it interesting everybody's waiting? Are you the one we're waiting for? And John said, Oh, no, I'm not the one waiting for. You're waiting for. They said, Then who are you? John said, I'm his voice.

And they said, Well, who is the one we're waiting for? He said, He's out there in the craft. And you will remember that it was the next day. They may have gone back to Jerusalem.

If they did, they missed it. Because it was the next day Jesus showed up and he said, There he is. And he identified him.

And, you know, I don't think many people ever get him identified unless it's a human being somewhere who puts in a word for him. That's our role. But then when he had identified him, you will remember that John tells us that Andrew took one of his friends, may have been John, and said, Jesus, where are you staying? And they spent part of the day with him.

And Andrew went and got his brother Peter, Simon. So that was three of his disciples. Then you will remember Jesus saw Philip and spoke to him.

And he said, Follow me. And Philip said, I have a friend. Let me get him.

And he went and got Nathanael. And before Jesus left the banks of the Jordan, he had at least five, maybe six of his apostolic band. And then he moved north to Capernaum.

And then Mark begins to tell the story of Jesus' own ministry. The Sabbath came. Jesus went into the synagogue.

They gave him the text. And he stood up and began to read and he began to teach. Now, I don't know about you, but I like the fact that the first thing he did was teach, not preach.

Now, I've spent most of my life preaching. But I hate for people to preach to me. The greatest tensions I've ever had in my marriage has been when Elsie took the preacher role.

And I suspect I'm not the only person here. And I suspect it works the other way. But what I love is that he taught before he preached because there's a brain in everybody's head.

And everybody needs some information before he's pushed to make a decision. And everybody deserves to know some things before he's pushed to make a commitment. And so Jesus taught.

Now, one of the wonderful things is what happened while he was teaching. Now, some of you have heard me say this. You're going to hear some of my old lines, many of you, so be patient with me.

I'm doing this under assignment. You'll remember that at some point in that teaching as he was teaching, Peter nudged Andy and said, Andy, did you ever hear a preacher preach like that? And Andy said, man, Peter, I never heard a preacher preach like that. And Peter said, Andy, what's so different about him? And Andy said, he makes sense.

How long since you heard a preacher that made sense? And he did make sense because they said he speaks as one who has a fire at him. And I think everybody in the world is looking for truth. You remember the day came in the Gospel of John where he said, I am the truth.

And so as he taught, they said, this makes sense. Suddenly in the midst of that sermon, there was a disturbance and the demoniac became a problem. And Jesus turned to the demoniac, rebuked the devil that was in him.

The devil was cast out and the man was perfectly whole. Well, no problem. I suspect at that point Andy nudged Peter and said, Peter, did you see that? Peter said, I sure did.

Andy said, well, Peter, he took the devil right out of that guy. I think Peter looked back at Andy and said, Andy, you think he could take the evil out of me? Let's invite him home for lunch because everybody's looking sometime, somewhere for somebody who can do something about the evil that's in the human heart. Now, there are some people that haven't lived long enough to find out the evil in their own heart.

But somewhere, sometime, every human being made in the image of God will find an evil within him that needs an answer and a deliverer. You remember he went home with him and he found that Peter's mother-in-law was sick. And he turned and said, where is she? And he went and laid his hands on her and he healed her.

And she was perfectly well. Somebody told the neighbors and they told their neighbors and they found everybody that was sick in the whole countryside and brought them in and Jesus healed them all. Isn't that an interesting progression? He's truth.

He is the master, the deliverer from evil, the master of the demonic. He is the master of the body. Is this one way of Mark saying, yes, this is the creator himself, the one who made us in the beginning? If he

made us in the beginning, he can remedy what's wrong with us.

So he healed her and healed all the others. Now, there was a big crowd, of course, that gathered and the multitude was there. People began coming in great hosts.

And I love this in the Gospel of Mark. Jesus said, boys, let's skip out. Now, if I had the crowds coming to hear me, I'd like that.

Jesus had the crowds coming and he said, let's go. And so they disappeared. Why? Because he wanted to give people time to think.

And so he disappeared. You know what the subject of conversation was. Everybody was talking about this guy and what he had done.

And you will remember when the word came that he was back, they said he's back, nobody had to ask who he was because he was the subject of conversation. But on the way back, you will remember he met a leper. And the leper came to him, knelt in front of him so close that he had to look up to see him.

And Jesus had to look down to see him. And you know that lepers were not supposed to get that close to you. And then to everybody's horror around him, Jesus laid his hand on the leper's head.

As the leper said, Master, if you will, you can make me clean. And Jesus said, I will be clean. And I'm sure all those that were around, you know that was a violation of Jewish law because now he was defiled, Jesus, if he were a human being, an ordinary one.

And he needed somebody to cleanse him. But here is the one. I've often, some of you have heard me say, I suspect he took Peter's bare naked arm in his hand after he took it off that leper's head.

And while Peter had convulsions, he said, Peter, you don't think there's anything in that leper that can defile me, do you? There's something in me that has cleansed him. Now he's teaching him who he is. Now isn't it interesting? He's the truth.

He's the master of evil, the deliverer, one who can deliver from all evil. Lord's prayer request. He is the master of the body.

He created it. And what I love is this story because you know what I think he said to that leper? I think he said to him, Now son, you can go home and have supper with your family. You can sleep in the same bed with your wife tonight.

You can go back to work tomorrow. And on Saturday you can go back to synagogue. And I don't know anything our society in this country needs anymore that can send a man home to his wife and send some wives home to their husbands and send some parents home to their children and send some children home to their parents and restore some of the broken relationships that we've got in our society.

Now here is the one who can restore broken relationships. And then the next story is the story of, do you remember the man who was lured through the roof? And when he gets down to eye level, Jesus looks at him and says, Son, your sins are forgiven you. I think one of those four guys who lured him said, How did religion get into this? And a Pharisee over against the wall nudged one next to him with some apoplexy and said, What did he say? And the Pharisee who got nudged said, I thought he said his sins were forgiven.

And the Pharisee who did the original nudging said, Yeah, that's what I thought he said. Who does he think he is? Nobody can forgive sins but God and God alone. Now I wonder if Jesus didn't turn and catch him with a big wink and say, That's right boys, you're catching on.

Because what he was doing was telling them who he was, the son of the Father, and telling them who the eternal God is, the sovereign God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The one God, the God of Israel, the God who made the world, the God who made you and me. All of these stories are given to reveal who God is.

And you know the wonderful thing is, one of the things I love about the Gospel of Mark is that in every one of these stories the question is implicitly there. Who is he that he can do these things? You will remember that on occasion it became very explicit in the story of the storm when he stopped the wind. Master of nature.

He created nature. And he's master of it. He stopped the wind, stopped the storm.

And you will remember these disciples said, What manner of person is this that even the winds and the sea obey him? Others it's not quite that explicit. You will remember in the first story they said, Who is he that he speaks with such authority? And who is he that he has control over the demonic? And in others it's simply implicitly there. But the question is, who is he? Now the thing I love about the Gospel of Mark and the longer I live, the more incredibly magnificent the document is and the way it's put together.

In my younger years, I was taught that the Gospel of Mark was really just a bunch of stories that were unrelated to each other. It was like a woman whose beads, the string broke and they rolled across the floor and they were all different shapes and nobody knew quite how to put them together again in exactly the right way. That's what I was taught in my younger years.

I'm convinced now that the Gospel of Mark is one of the most carefully executed pieces of literature and one of the most careful theological arguments ever made by the human mind. And I think there's a divine hand in that. But you will notice that these stories are told about him.

Then the stories have within them this implicit question. It's interesting that in Mark, everybody in Mark had an answer as to who he was because his family watched him and said, he's gone crazy. We have to go take him home.

There were no mental institutions, so you took mad people home. You will remember the temple said, we know who he is. He's got the devil in him.

He's got Beelzebub in him. Herod said, I know who he is. He's John the Baptist.

Come back to haunt me for cutting his head off. You remember the people in Nazareth said, we know who he is. He's Joseph's boy.

He's nobody. Don't pay any attention to him. He's a masked Wilmore.

It's interesting. The only people in the Gospel of Mark who knew who he was were the devils. And on every occasion they identified him.

And he rebuked them and said, keep still. You will remember they said, we know who you are. You're the Holy One of God.

You're the Son of God. And there are three years of these stories. And after three years of these stories, Jesus turned and looked at the twelve and said, who do you think I am? I love the fact he didn't ask them the first week.

As the years have passed, I've loved more and more the fact that he wouldn't let the subject come up. And people would call him by a Messianic title and he'd respond with a non-Messianic title. He spoke of himself as the Son of Man because he wanted the data there.

And when the data was there, he looked them in the face and said, who do you think I am? And Peter looked and said, we know who you are. You're the Christ. Now you remember one of the other Gospels said, flesh and blood didn't reveal it to you.

And we need to remember that. If you're going to know him, it will take a divine act to open your eyes to see him. But God is ready to do that act for anybody who is willing to receive it.

But Peter said, we know who you are. You're the Christ. Now as the years have passed, that has become a bit richer to me than it once was.

Because once I thought, yes, that's right. Israel was looking for the Messiah. From the day God made His promise to Abraham, made it to Isaac and to Jacob, made it to Moses, made it to the different prophets, made it to David.

As these prophecies were stacked up, Israel said, we have a Messiah who is coming. And so when Peter said, we know who you are. You're the Christ, he was saying you're the one Israel has been looking for.

But you know, I've come to believe he meant more than that when he said that. I think he remembered the way Jesus taught, the way He delivered the demoniacs, the way He healed His mother-in-law, the way He had restored that leper to his family and his society, the way He had forgiven that guy's sin and restored his relationship to God. Do you remember when Mark tells the stories until two tumble into each other? And one of those you'll remember is Jairus, whose daughter is at the point of death.

And Jesus says, which way do we go? And suddenly He stops in the crowd and says, somebody touch Me. And Peter said, Master, what's wrong with you? They're crawling all over you. No, He said, somebody touch Me in faith.

And here was a woman who had had, how long had she had the disease? Her hemorrhaging. She had spent everything she had on doctors. There were none of them that could help her.

She had reached the end of all known human resources. And she said, if I can get to Him, I think maybe He can help me. But I'm not worthy to take His attention.

If I just touch His garment, I'll be free. And she fell at His feet and He said, Daughter, your faith has made you whole. Do you remember at that point Jairus turned and said, Master, thank you for being willing to go.

But there's no point in going now. Well, Jesus said, what do you mean? He said, because my daughter is dead. And Jesus said, what do you mean there's no point in going? I love the way Mark runs those two stories into each other.

Because one of them is despair. A woman who's had this kind of problem all these years. And the other one is hopelessness.

What do you do when your daughter's dead? And Jesus said, you don't need to worry about despair if I'm around. And you don't need to worry about hopelessness if I'm here. I think Peter remembered those stories and when he looked at Him and said, we know who You are, I think he would say, and Lord, You're not just the one Israel's looking for, You're the one everybody we know's looking for.

And You're the one we're looking for. You're the one we've been waiting for. What a high moment.

What a magnificent moment in human history when God has made Himself known to human beings. Made Himself known to us. And some of us have recognized Him so we know who He is.

And Jesus says, good, now you know who I am. He said, now we're headed for Jerusalem. They were six months away from the cross.

When we get to Jerusalem, I will be seized, I will be rejected, I will be seized, I will be mercilessly treated, I will be hanged on a cross, I will be crucified, I will die, but on the third day I will rise. Now, there's an amazing change in the Gospel of Mark at that point. And the stories change.

Because the interesting thing is that up to that point, every story has been about Jesus. And from that point on, until they get to Jerusalem, every story with the exception of the story of Bartimaeus and the rich ruler, every story all the way until they get to the edge of Jerusalem is about the disciples. And there's a sense in which the first seven and a half chapters tell you who He is, and the next two and a half chapters tell you who you and I are, or who the disciples were.

And do you know, I think you have to meet Christ before you find out who you are. And I think you have to meet Christ and know Him in grace before you ever find out how devious the human heart is. I can bear witness at least for myself to this.

I never really felt very guilty until I became a Christian. I was a good guy. I was a member of the church.

I was baptized to communion regularly. My father made me go to church four times every Sunday. I had a great record.

Guilt didn't bother me. I was so much better than anybody else around. And then I found Christ.

And when I found Christ, I began to find out I was a sinner. I began to find out the sinfulness and the deviousness of my own heart. I've felt incredibly more guilt since finding Christ and knowing grace than I ever knew before.

So at this point, we began to find out who the disciples are. Now remember, they've spent almost three years with Jesus Himself. You can't get a better teacher than that.

They've eaten with Him. They've slept with Him. They've walked with Him.

They know Him. He knows them. And they believe in Him.

They've left their homes. Peter has apparently left a wife at home. They've left their family.

They've left their jobs. Peter on occasion can say, We've left everything to follow You. And Jesus didn't call him a liar.

These are not sinners in the world sense of the term. These are people who know who the Christ is. And if you know who He is, you're a believer.

They are believers. But you can be a believer and know grace in your heart and know the forgiveness of sins and still have a heart that has duplicity in it. And so Peter looks at him and it's interesting, in one breath he says, We know who You are.

You are the Christ. And in the next breath, Peter says, Come here, Lord. And takes Him aside and says, What you're saying isn't true.

He rebukes the Christ because the Christ says, I'm going to Jerusalem to suffer and to die. And Jesus turns and looks at him and says, Peter, you don't think the way God thinks. You think the way a man thinks.

Now what does it mean to have the mind of Christ? These next few stories let you know what isn't the mind of Christ. Because you will remember that the next thing is the transfiguration story. And when they're coming down from the mountain where they have heard Jesus talking with Moses and Elijah.

Now let me say, if it was faith in chapter 8 when they said, We believe You're the Christ. When Moses and Elijah and Jesus finished that conversation on the top of the mountain, at least for three of the disciples, I think it was pretty firm knowledge. They knew that He was the Christ.

And as they're coming down, Jesus says, Don't tell anybody until I rise from the dead. And they nudge each other and say, What does that mean? They get to the foot of the hill and there are nine disciples there in a big crowd. And there's a distraught father and a son who has a serious problem.

And Jesus says, What's the problem? And the father says, Your disciples went through this country a few months ago, healing the sick and casting out devils. And my son, I thought if I could get him to your disciples, they could deliver him and set him free. But he said, Apparently, whatever power they had, they've lost.

And Jesus looked at the best the world had to offer and said, How long do I have to put up with you, O short-of-faith generation? You know, I suspect that's as good a picture of the Christian church through Christian history as you can find anywhere in the literature of the world. We've got a great history, but we talk most about the power in the past. And Jesus says, Bring the kid to me.

And he set him free. Because whatever had been given them, they'd never learned how to keep it. You will remember, they go on their way toward Jerusalem.

And as they go, Jesus says, When I get to Jerusalem, and he repeats the story of the cross. And you will remember, Mark says, But they didn't understand. They could not think the cross.

They could not think the cross. You will remember that they get to the end of the day, and Jesus said, I noticed you had a very animated discussion. What was it that was so, that caused such interest among you? And they with some embarrassment, hesitated, and he said, I know what you were talking about.

You were arguing about who was to be the greatest among you. Now he's talking about the cross, and they're talking about the political structure, and the pyramid. And Jesus said, My kingdom is a pyramid, but it's not like this.

It's like this. And the best positions are at the bottom. And you won't have much competition as you try to go down.

My kingdom isn't made like the kingdoms of the world. And you think the way the world does. You want to move up where there are fewer and fewer, and you're in a better and better position to look down on us.

He said, My kingdom is this way. You ought to remember, John looked at him. I love this.

And he said, Well, Master, we did one good thing today. And he said, Good. What was that? He said, We found a fellow casting out devils in your name, and we forbade him because he's not a United Methodist, or a graduate of Asbury Seminary, or a member of the Holiness Movement, or a Baptist, or whatever you are.

Isn't that incredible? That's John the Beloved. We're finding out who we are. That's the story of Christian history, isn't it? If that's the story of the impotent disciples, then this is it, too.

Most of the church has lived in a pre-Pentecost experience and a post-Caesarea Philippi experience. Much of the church hasn't even gotten to Caesarea Philippi. But you remember Jesus turns to him and says, Don't rebuke him.

Those that, if they're not against us, they're for us. And if you offend one of these little ones, better to have a millstone hung around your neck than to offend one of these little ones. You've got to become like a little child to be a member of my kingdom.

And the next day, the parents came and said, We've got our children. Will you bless them? And the disciples said, He doesn't have time for children. Are you going to tell me that Mark didn't know what he was doing when he stacked these stories up one on top of each other? And you'll remember then it was that James and John came and said, Master, we have a request.

It's unbelievable, isn't it? Sort of strange your credulity when I begin to spell it out. They came and said, We have a request. And he said, What's this, boys? And they said, We'd like the right hand and the left in your kingdom.

He said, You really don't think the way I think, do you? You don't think the way my father thinks. My father settled those things, but that's not what you're supposed to be after. You're supposed to be after something else.

And you remember, the interesting thing is the ten were very upset because they wanted the right hand and the left. You know what I think of when I think of that? A Methodist conference in the millennium where a pastor of a big church with a great salary and a wonderful parsonage and a lot of good leadership comes to the bishop and says, You know, I was praying the other day. And the Lord said, You know that mission down in the middle of the city in the slum section? Among those people of another race? He tells me, I'm supposed to go down there and I want a chance.

It'll take the millennium for that to happen, won't it? So here these stories are stacked up and we're finding out who the believing disciples are. And you come to the last week and you get the capstone on it. While he agonizes, they sleep.

And when the chips are down, when the chips are down, Peter, his desk, denies him three times. Now I ran across something the other day I'd never read before. And I was real glad to find it.

Wait a minute, I had read it before and I'd forgotten it. I had it underlined. Don't have a vaguest memory of reading it before.

But there is a passage in Jürgen Moltmann's *The Crucified God* in which he says that what happened to Peter and the disciples on Thursday night when Peter denied him and all of them fled was not a failure of courage. I've preached that all my life. And I've preached that Pentecost will cure you.

That's the best way to cure you of your lack of courage. To put courage inside you, to stick your neck out, this kind of thing. Jürgen Moltmann says it wasn't a failure of courage.

That what it was was a collapse of theology. Because you see, Peter and the disciples were convinced that the Christ was going to reign, not die. And when they saw him arrested and when they saw him submitting to it, they said this is not the Christ.

Because they knew that every knee would bow and every tongue would confess to the Christ. And he'd straighten out the enemies of the Jews. And the unbelievers.

And so Moltmann says it is a crisis in theology. Now what's Moltmann saying? He's saying they didn't think the way Christ thought. They didn't think the way God thinks.

And do you know I'm convinced that a lot of our failures are not crises of courage or even crises of integrity. They're because we believe wrong, we think wrong. Our heads are on crooked.

We've got false understanding of what is right and what is best and what we should do and what we should be. And so you get these stories to let us know these disciples and their wrong thinking. Now what was it that was so wrong about their thinking? It was the fact they could not believe that the cross was the way to go.

Now let me piggyback on John Oswald's sermon this afternoon. They could not believe in a God who would sacrifice Himself. You see, somehow or other we believe that God can save people by power.

You know, He can zap us. For a long time I thought God could sit on His throne in heaven and save the world if He wanted to. But if He did, if He could, I've got an argument with Him as to what He let Jesus go through.

Because you see, what is being said in these things that Jesus is saying when He's talking about the cross is that not even God can save without self-sacrifice. Do you know what is the watermark or the key mark, the key evidence of religion across human history? Sacrifice. Anywhere you find religion, practically in human history except a few sophisticated modern Christian heresies, when you get to the heart of it, you'll find sacrifice.

How many millions of altars and how many millions of sacrifices? Animal sacrifices? Other sacrifices? Human sacrifices? The story of religion across human history is a story of sacrifice in which people

sacrifice to their God. Just read the Old Testament. But it's not a place in all the literature of the world, in all the religion of the world, where you have an instance where a God sacrifices Himself for His people.

And what Jesus was saying, there's no other way. The wages of sin is death. And your dying is not going to undo a thing you've done wrong.

But if there's any hope for you, deity Himself is going to have to let death enter into Him and evil enter into Him. And so He says, I must go to the cross. But that won't be the end.

That will be the beginning. But they said, that's not right. That's not right.

God shouldn't die. He mustn't die. And then when they saw Him arrested and Him submitting, their world collapsed.

And in the moment when they ought to have been saying, there's a way through, there is hope for the vilest, foulest sinner on the face of the earth and He's making the way through for us. They gave up and fled. And what they thought was the great tragedy was the basis of all eternal hope.

And so Jesus said, you don't think the way I think. You don't think the way my Father thinks. But the interesting thing is that when Jesus talked about this, it's interesting He never talked about it for Himself alone.

You remember in chapter 12 of John when the Greeks came and said to His disciples, we'd like to see Jesus. They came to Jesus and Jesus was in a great agony and He said, except the corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone. But if it dies, it will bear much fruit.

He was speaking about the cross for Himself. But the interesting thing is He was speaking about the cross for you and for me too. And He was saying, if my life is to bear fruit, there's no way for me except through a cross.

And He was saying, if you want your life to be fruitful, there's no way except through a cross. So the disciples who run from a cross are running into sterility, irrelevance, fruitlessness. What does it mean to think like God thinks? You've got to realize that the essence of it is the element of self-sacrifice is the way to fruitfulness, the way to usefulness, the way to life, life, life.

Now, that's what I wanted to deal with tonight. I'd like to push that farther in the morning. I wish I knew how to bring this home, the way it needs to be brought home to me, to every one of us.

But let me see if I can just say this in closing. The greatest day in any person's life is when a person comes to the place where through grace he can give himself totally and pour his life out or her life out for something beyond himself or herself. There's a sense in which it may be that the greatest attribute of God is expressed in this, that God himself is willing to give his life for something other than himself.

And it's that God who says to you and me, I want you to follow me. Let me put it this way in closing. I'm fascinated with how career-oriented we are.

I've worked with college young people and seminary young people for 30 years. You know the characteristics of university and college and seminary students in our day? They think of careers instead of opportunities to spend themselves. And we indoctrinate them in that.

We indoctrinate them in that. You deserve certain things. You want to get well-trained so you can move up the ladder.

You want to take care of your family, love your neighbor as yourself. That means you need to take care of yourself. We've got a massive way of strengthening self-interest in Christian young people in America.

And it is endemic to the evangelical church in this country. Let me illustrate it this way. I guess the place where it came home to me most poignantly, Elsie and I oftentimes have the privilege of having college young people in our homes.

And that's the joy of being in education. They're the fun part in the whole thing, students. And you get your heart wrapped around them.

You want to see the best for them. You want them to know the best. Once or twice I have found myself asking, didn't do it often enough, but looking at a kid and say, what are you going to do with your life? And have the kid spell out his career goals.

Then I'd say, if you did with your life what would please your father and mother the most, what would you do with your life? Do you know what I usually got on that? A funny look. And then the kid would turn and say, well, you know, if I were to do the thing that would please my mother or my father the most, I'd probably go into, and invariably a profession was named. Law? Education? Business? Do you know the one thing I never had a kid say to me? If I were to do the thing that would please my father and mother the most, I'd lay down my life for the redemption of the world the way God's son laid his down.

Our children don't think the way God thinks, and we parents don't either. And most of us who are in the ministry don't think the way God thinks.

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