

Obstacles to Jesus and His Mission

by Jim Cymbala

The main obstacle to Jesus' mission is the egotism and party spirit of His disciples, which causes division and strife.

Duration: 51:22

Scripture: Mark 9:30-34, Mark 10:32-45

Topics: "Obstacles"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of serving and giving in fulfilling God's mission for our lives. He highlights that Jesus came to serve and give his life, not to be served. The preacher encourages believers to actively serve others and give of their time, money, and prayers. He emphasizes that God will use our acts of service and giving to accomplish something tremendous and that at the end of our lives, we will hear the words 'well done, my good and faithful servant.' The preacher also addresses the misconception that God alone is responsible for fulfilling his mission, stating that while God is indeed the ultimate source of power, believers have a role to play in obedience and action.

Transcript

To the book of Mark, second book of the New Testament, the book of Mark. And I want you to turn to Mark chapter 9, and the name of this message is Obstacles to Jesus and His Mission. Obstacles to Jesus and His Mission.

And we're reading in Mark, the ninth chapter, and we're going to start in the 30th verse. From there they went out and began to go through Galilee, and he did not want anyone to know about it. I'm reading from the New American Standard today.

For he was teaching his disciples and telling them, the Son of Man, Him, Jesus, is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him, and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later. But they did not understand this statement, and they were afraid to ask Him. Here's partially the reason why.

They came to Capernaum, and when He was in the house, He began to question them, what were you discussing on the way? But they kept silent, for on the way they had discussed with one another which of them was the greatest. Sitting down, He called the twelve, and He said to them, if anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all, and servant of all. Taking a child, He set him before them, and taking him in His arms, He said to them, whoever receives one child like this in My name, receives Me, and whoever

receives Me does not receive Me, but him who sent Me.

John said to him, Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to prevent him, because he was not following us. But Jesus said, do not hinder him, for there's no one who will perform a miracle in My name, and will be soon afterward able to speak evil of Me. For he who is not against us is, what, for us.

Move ahead to chapter 10, and go to chapter 10 verse 33. Notice the same introductory remarks here. They were on the road, verse 32, chapter 10 verse 32.

They were on the road going to Jerusalem. Now they're really heading there. And Jesus walking on ahead of them, and they were amazed, and those who followed were fearful, and again He took the twelve aside, and began to tell them what was going to happen, saying, Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, and will hand Him over to the Gentiles.

They will mock Him, and spit on Him, and scourge Him, and kill Him, and three days later He will rise again. James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, came up to Jesus saying, Teacher, we want to do, we want you to do for us whatever we asked of you. And He said to them, What do you want Me to do for you? They said to Him, Grant that we may sit one on your right and one on your left in your glory.

But Jesus said to them, Are you do not know what you're asking? Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism which I am baptized? That was speaking, look up here, of the suffering. That was an expression in those days of what He was about to go through. They said to Him, We are able.

And Jesus said to them, The cup that I drink you shall drink, and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized. In other words, they would suffer for their faith. But to sit on My right hand or on My left, this is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.

Hearing this, the ten began to feel indignant with James and John. They started fussing. Calling them to Himself, Jesus said to them, You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and that great men exercise authority over them.

But it's not this way among you. But whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and give His life a ransom for many.

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. Now what's interesting about the two passages that I read, is we're getting a weird juxtaposition of what Jesus is saying, and what the disciples are thinking, and discussing, and preoccupied with. In other words, you talk about not being on the same page.

You talk about being out of sync. Jesus here is facing obstacles among His own disciples. Obstacles to His mission, and to His calling, and to the purpose for which He had come.

Jesus in both of these passages, it's repeated. He's in Mark 9, He's getting ready to go to Jerusalem. So to prepare them, He gathers them together, and He says, men it's time for me to go to Jerusalem, and it's not going to be pretty.

I'm going to be delivered into the hands of men who hate me, and I'm going to be killed. But on the third day, I'm going to rise again. In Mark 10, He's on His way, on the road to Jerusalem, and He takes them aside, and He tells them privately, men, the Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of other men.

He's going to be arrested. It's going to be a mock trial. He's going to be abused.

He's going to be struck, slapped, spit upon, rejected. It's going to be violence. It's going to be blood.

It's going to be sweat. It's going to be tears. But of course, this was why He came.

He was the Lamb of God. He was on a mission. But again, He tells them, tears will only be for the night.

Joy will come in the morning, because on the third day, I will rise again. So Jesus now, after three years of itinerant ministry, Jesus now is about to seal the deal for our salvation. Jesus is about to go to the cross for Jim Simla, and Carlo Volkstaff, and Charles Hammond, and you, and me, all of us.

He's about to lay down His life, pour out His life. Now, this was a consciousness that He must have had since He was a little boy. It's a mystery that He was Son of Man and Son of God.

He was God incarnate, God in the flesh. And I wonder when He was a young boy, when He went to the temple, and they were killing the animal sacrifices, and the priest would take the lamb and slit the lamb's throat, and turn it over, and the blood would come out. I wonder what was going through little Jesus's mind, because that's what He had come for.

We didn't just need a teacher and a miracle worker. How many know, we needed a Savior. We needed somebody who would go the distance for us, and spotless and sinless human sacrifice, divine sacrifice, lay down His life for the sins of the world.

So this is the consciousness of Jesus now at 33 years old. He is now heading to something that's so difficult, that is so excruciating, painful, that even in the garden, He begins to struggle with it. You remember, Father, if it's possible, let this cup pass from me.

We are now in the depths of the deepest things of God, the sacrifice, the atonement that Christ is going to make for our sins. And the men that are walking with Him for three years, where is their head at? Way out. And we learn here from three simple things, the three obstacles that Jesus still has for His mission to be completed.

In other words, God sent His Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that through Him, the world might be saved. And as we're going to learn later, Jesus said at the very end, before He went back to heaven, as the Father has sent me, so send I you. So Jesus is about a mission.

Jesus is about a consciousness that I've come down from heaven for a purpose. Jesus is looking at mankind, seeing their needs, seeing their lostness. He had compassion on the multitude, for they were like sheep without a shepherd.

He looked at Jerusalem even on the eve of His rejection and His trial and His arrest. He looked at Jerusalem and He wept over it. Jesus is on a mission.

Jesus has a purpose to life. Jesus isn't bouncing around day to day, not knowing why He came. Jesus is about helping us and saving us and lifting us.

But as He first tries to explain this to the disciples in Capernaum, in a house that He lived in, it seems, and was rented for Him, He tells them that and they're just dumb. They don't speak. They don't say anything.

And then He says to them, what were you talking about on the road when we were heading here? What were you discussing? And they all just put their heads down and Peter shifts his feet and they all just kind of look away. You know why they didn't answer Him? Because while He's talking and getting ready to go to Jerusalem, they're arguing about which one of the twelve is the greatest. Oh, the patience of Jesus.

Oh, the mercy of Jesus. He's heading to the cross and He's the Son of the Living God. And they, frail, faulty, human, they're all about to deny Him and run from Him and flee and not be with Him when He really needs them.

They're arguing. Imagine the chutzpah. Imagine the deception in their mind.

They're arguing who's the greatest. And that's one of the great obstacles to Jesus and His mission today. That instead of being about our Father's business and instead of thinking the way Jesus thinks, we're wrapped up with our spirit of self-exaltation and our egotism and who's mentioned and who's not.

And why did they pick her to sing? And why did they make Him an usher? And if I do that, will I be recognized? Egotism and pride and wanting to be mentioned and wanting to have been given credit and won a little spotlight, that has always been an obstacle to Jesus and His mission right among His own people. Churches splitting because somebody's pride got injured. People leaving the church because they weren't treated right and people don't know how to treat someone.

You know, there's just a bunch of cliques there and they don't accept me. Just a preoccupation with self. And here they are arguing about which one is the greatest.

They don't know that in a few days they're all going to flee and leave Him and be total failures and flops. And one of them is going to actually betray Him. They're on the road arguing.

No, no, listen. Peter says, I walked on the water. None of you guys ever walked on water.

And James and John says, yeah, but we're closer to Him. We went up there on the Mount of Transfiguration. All of them are arguing about just nonsense.

And Jesus has His face towards us. They're not with the program. He's thinking about the world.

They're thinking about themselves. He's thinking about laying down His life. They're thinking about, I have to be number one.

I just talked to, a few weeks ago, a head of a beautiful drug ministry, helping troubled girls who get involved with drugs and other situations. And he told me that he was in a certain state of the country and there was a fairly well-known evangelist who's on Christian television. And he got to meet this man.

And the man had heard what this brother does in his life and how they have this beautiful program. And he said, how about expanding that program into our state? I can get you some land. This man has access to a lot of money.

Drives, you know, a car as big as this auditorium. And we can fix you up. We can really do something, you know.

Well, praise God. That sounds good. So, they began to discuss things.

What they would need. How they bring girls in and induct them into the program. They keep them for 18 months or so.

So, the evangelist said, now listen. If I help you, I just want you to know something. I want everybody in the world to know what I'm doing to help these girls.

So, my friend said, well, really our policy is to keep, you know, every other name down and just give all the glory to Jesus. And the man just looked at him and that was the last word he ever said. You can leave now.

Never gave him a dime. In other words, so much of our life is dominated not by seeing people the way Jesus sees them. I'm talking to all of you.

I'm talking to myself. It's about what do I get out of it? What do I get out of it? So, Jesus taught them, do you want to be great? I'll tell you what's great. If you want to be great in my followers, be a servant.

And if you want to be number one of all my followers, be a slave to everybody. Be a doormat to everybody. Just wait on everyone.

Wash everyone's feet. Go get coffee for everybody and just serve them. Then you'll really be great.

Oh, how many know that God's ways are not our ways? See, the world says, if you're great, you give orders. Jesus said, no, if you're great, you take orders. The world says, in a restaurant at the Four Seasons or some La Caravelle in the city, a French restaurant, if you sit at the table and you tell the waiter what you want, you're in charge, you're better than the waiter.

Jesus said, no, with me, the waiter's better than you because he's doing the serving. And this is what's holding the mission of Jesus back today. I want you to consider two leading denominations in America are in zero growth for the last two years.

They're losing members, not gaining them. In America, even since 9-11, more kids in the cities are turning to crack than to Christ. That's a fact.

Gangs are recruiting more kids than churches are. And yet we have the Bible, we have the power of the Holy Spirit, we have these wonderful promises of God. Let's be honest and not talk Bible hyperbole, and let's not talk just faith jingles.

Let's talk honest with one another for a moment, everybody. If God is so great and the Bible is true, which it is, and the power of the Holy Spirit is great, and if the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, how come the body of Christ and the church throughout the country and the world does so little? One of the reasons is that instead of wanting to be servants, we want to be the chief. We want to be served.

We want people to cater to us. And the church growth movement is feeding into this by telling people, you don't have to do anything. Just come and we'll entertain you.

But that's not what a church is about. Church is not about entertaining people. It's about being a Holy Ghost hospital where people can come in who are messed up or born addicted to crack, and they find someone who wants to serve.

You know how many sleepless nights Vincent and Daphne had with that little girl when she was born? You know the times I've been on the phone with them or prayed with them in my office because she was going through convulsions, and she would just, she's beautiful now, but she would just jump. You know, somebody had to walk through that. Somebody had to not be thinking about being exalted.

Someone had to think about being a servant. Because the greatest Christian in this church is probably not somebody on the platform. The greatest Christian in the church is the one who's the biggest servant.

That's the best Christian in the whole church. Not the one who knows the most Bible. You can know a lot of the Bible and still be proud as a peacock.

It's not the one who knows the most of the Bible. It's the one who's the servant and the slave of all. So this was a real obstacle to Jesus and his program.

He's heading to the cross, and they're arguing about who's the greatest, who preaches better. You've reached the end of side one. Here's a guy with a ministry, Pastor Bird, and in Jesus' name, he's releasing people from the bondage of Satan, just like Jesus did.

He went about doing good and healing all of them that were oppressed by the devil. And here's a man somewhere that they had run into, not one of the 12, seemingly not one of the 70. He just somehow had learned about Jesus, had a relationship with Jesus, had faith in the authority of Jesus' name, and he was setting people free.

And John said, when we saw him and we said, come on with us back to the Master, he said, no, I'm not part of your group. I'm doing something else over here. What? You're not following our group? You're not going to be with the 12? Then stop what you're doing.

Don't set any more people free. Let them stay demon-possessed. I'm not making this up.

It's in the Bible. Let them stay possessed by the devil. But don't you do that, John said to Jesus.

We forbid him because he wouldn't follow us. That's the second thing. The first thing that's an obstacle to Jesus is our egotism and spirit of self-exaltation.

The second thing is a party spirit. Our group, our race, our denomination, our church, our Brooklyn Tabernacle. It's a cursive thing.

Now, Galatians says, chapter 5, that one of the works of the flesh is factions or a party spirit, as the better translations have it. Now, when I was a kid and I heard somebody, the pastor of the church say, you know, one of the great sins is a party spirit. It's listed with murder, adultery, fornication, idolatry.

Says it's a work of the flesh. A party spirit is a work of the flesh. Human nature apart from God.

Listed with adultery, fornicating, having sexual activity outside of the marriage relationship. Right listed among them. Cursing, wrath, doubt, all these things.

It is this party spirit. Now, when I heard that, I thought it meant like having a lot of parties. You know, like a guy had a party spirit, it meant every night he went, let's party, come on, come on, let's, let's.

And little hats and blowing the little things out of your mouth. And, you know, I thought when I was a kid, you know, drinking, getting drunk and sensual music and sensual dancing. And, you know, just that has nothing to do with that.

It has to do with John. And what he said, it has to do with 1 Corinthians, where Paul says, you are so carnal. One says, I'm a Paul.

One says, no, I belong to Cephas, Peter's party. I'm a Peter man. No, no, I'm Paul's man.

Another would say, no, I'm Apollos. He can out preach both of them. I follow Apollos.

And Paul said, are you not carnal? Christ died for you. You belong to Christ. You don't belong to a party.

I'm a Baptist. I was born a Baptist, going to die a Baptist. No, I'm Church of God in Christ.

No, I'm, I'm, I'm, I'm a Pentecostal. I'm a charismatic. No, no, I'm a Lutheran.

I was born a Lutheran, going to die a Lutheran. And none of these things exist to God. And they make him sick when he hears them.

Makes him sick when he hears them. Because he's only got one body and we're all in it. It's made up of all the Christians in the world.

Come on, let's affirm that. Come on, let's affirm that. That God only has one body and we're in it.

But listen, listen how twisted that can get. John, because of this party spirit. What? You won't join our group? Then stop casting out demons.

Well, take the logical implications of that. Let the people not be set free if you're not going to do it our way. If you're not going to walk our way, praise God.

If you let those people stay possessed, it sounds sick. But it's sicker than that. Think of all the fighting that's going on today.

Not to see Jesus exalted. To have some cursive denomination or church's name lifted up. Think about churches don't pray for other churches because of this stinking party spirit.

I don't pray for another church. No, it's my group. My race.

My whiteness. My blackness. I want to assert my blackness.

You don't do it the way we do it. So, I'm not only not going to pray for you and love you like a brother. I'm going to root against you.

And if I hear bad things, I'll believe it. And if I hear good things, I'll try to dilute it. And it's the truth.

You don't have to say amen, it's the truth. You know, we're a non-denominational Christian church. The teaching here is that we're just trying to be biblical Christians.

If it's in the Bible, we believe it. If it's not in the Bible, we pass. And we're just Christians.

And everyone who's been born again and washed in the blood is my brother and my sister. How many say amen? But you know what? I go places and I get invited places where I speak for large groups. And they're my brothers and sisters.

But they don't understand how hurtful it is and how narrow it shows their thinking when they talk to you. And they're so used to saying that they don't even know what the implications of it are. They'll say, you know what? We're really happy to have you here with us.

We Nazarenes, we Baptists, we Assemblies of God or we whatever, Church of God in Christ, National Baptist Association, whatever. We're doing this and we're doing that. And they don't even know that their we doesn't even exist.

Because God doesn't recognize one party in the whole world. He has only one church and we're in it. And we have to root for each other and pray that His name gets exalted and not the name of our church or the name of our party.

There's competition between churches. There's competition between denominations. Think of all the duplication of monies of missionaries because the church is so divided.

Think of all the duplication of people not working together. Don't even talk to each other. And I have had the you've heard me say this.

I've had the experience of like I'll get back to this again. I was just out to L.A. for two days this past week to speak for my friend Sonny Argonzoni who has a ministry called Victory Outreach. It's a wonderful thing that they're doing to their effort to reach people out of the worst situations that gutter drug addicts, gang members, gang bangers.

Now if I went up to somebody in a different group and said, you know I was just out in L.A. and I was with my friend Sonny Argonzoni and you should see what God is doing through his ministry. I've had this happen. They'll look at me and I saw this and God did that and they'll go, why are you telling me? He's not one of us.

I'd be interested in what they're doing. They're not one of us. It's like a lady one time said to me, Pastor Sybil, I'd like to help you, but I'm a Baptist.

And I was taught Baptist money for Baptist projects. She didn't think that was evil and I don't want her to give money against her will. But God will supply another way.

But imagine that and no picking on Baptist. It could be any name. Or how about the black ministers who don't talk to you because you're white? Or the white ministers who don't talk to black ministers because they're black.

Or the fact that it's Sunday morning at 11 o'clock, it's the most prejudiced hour of the whole week. People do drugs together, go to prison together, play ball together, ride the subways together, work in offices together, die together at 9-11, but not at 11 o'clock on Sunday morning. Everybody divides and then we tell the world that God is love.

It's a wonder anybody gets saved. It's a wonder anybody gets saved. It's so far removed from what Jesus had in mind that it's ridiculous and we're so used to it that we're not even shocked by it anymore.

But this party spirit is a real obstacle to Jesus. Imagine, John said, we forbid that boy. We said, son, don't you be casting out any more demons.

Let those people just be tormented the rest of their lives if you're not going to follow us. Isn't that amazing? It's an evil thing. It's an evil thing.

A party spirit is an evil thing. Do I get a witness here? It's not a neutral thing. It's an evil thing.

It's an evil thing. Downplaying what anything else, anyone else does. I don't want that in me.

I want to be a kingdom person. How many want to be kingdom people today that wherever Jesus's name is being lifted up, we can say, hallelujah, praise the Lord. Wherever somebody's getting saved, hallelujah.

We don't agree exactly on some doctrinal matters, but we agree on Jesus. Praise God. Our unity is in Jesus.

Never going to be on doctrine. We're never going to get every detail together. Lastly, obstacle number one, a spirit of self-exaltation and egotism.

Instead of wanting to be a servant like Jesus, we want to be chief. We want to be served. We don't want to get dirty.

We don't want to go in the ditches. We want to stay nice and neat, clean, and entertain me and preach for me, but serving and that's not my piece of cake. Number two, a party spirit, a cursed party spirit that doesn't root for other people who are brothers and sisters in Christ, but actually has a wall up between them.

And you know what? Some of you sitting here, you were raised with that. You were brought, you took it in with your mother's milk. You were raised in churches that, that, you know, ministers, ministers feed this.

You know, God raised up our church to take the city. I was somewhere down south in a major city and the pastor told me, well, praise God. God's raised us up, brother Jim, to take this city for Christ.

And I wanted to say to him, but I didn't know him well enough. Well, that's funny because God's got all these other pastors in the city. What are they supposed to do if you're going to take the city for Christ? They're just wasting their time.

How many know today we need each other? Come on, wave your hand at me. We need each other. We have to pray for every single church in New York City, in New York City.

And if members leave our church because God led them to another good church that preaches the gospel, we pray for them and we rejoice over it because it's not about Brooklyn Tabernacle. Let that name perish. It's about Jesus and his kingdom.

How many say amen? Amen. Amen. Lastly, Jesus is now actually on the road to Jerusalem.

So now the pressure is starting to bear on him. Gentlemen, you can play. And he says to them in more detail, it's time.

It's time. Get ready, men. I'm going to lay down my life now.

I'm going to lay down my life. I want there to be a Brooklyn Tabernacle congregation one day, people redeemed by the blood of my life, my body. You know, if I didn't read this in the Bible, I couldn't believe it.

After he lays all of that out, James and John run up to him. Jesus, we want you to do whatever we ask of you. They're going to now do the third obstacle, which is abuse prayer for selfish motives.

Jesus, would you do whatever we ask first? We know everything's possible with you. You're Jesus. Look how you can believe in the power of Jesus to be twisted in your thinking.

See, some people think if you believe in the supernatural that God answers prayer, everything is right. That's wrong. It's revealed in this little incident.

Jesus, we want you to do whatever we ask. What would you want me to do for you? When you come into your kingdom, James wants to sit on your right, and I want to sit on your left. When you're in your kingdom and you're standing there and everybody is praising you, we want to be right there with you so we can just wave to our parents and everybody and say, Hi, Mom.

Hi, Dad. Hi, Peter. Hey, Peter, you're down there.

We're up here. We know you can do this, Jesus, because with you, all things are possible. You see how you can even pray and not be on the same page? So instead of praying, instead of walking up to him and saying, Jesus, are you really going to have to do this and go through this in Jerusalem? Could we pray for you? Could we pray that the Father would strengthen you? Could we wash your feet one last time? You've always washed ours.

Could we wash your feet once? Would you like a little something to eat? Could we get you a glass of water? You think at this critical hour, they're thinking about what Jesus needs. Jesus, would you unveil what you're going to do on the cross so that we'll be ready to be what you want us to be? No. They're abusing prayer for selfish motives.

Think how many times we pray and it's just about, I need this, Lord, and I need that with no thought of his mission, no thought of the work that God is doing on the earth, no thought of what people are going through, no thought of sacrifice, no thought of the power of the Holy Spirit that we need to do what the Lord wants us to do. Just give me, give me, give me. Help me, help me, help me.

Signing off now, Lord. Good night. Bye.

Even abusing prayer, this is a real obstacle to the work of the kingdom on the earth right now. People who even pray. See, the first one is way out there, arguing who's the greatest.

Then the second one is that party spirit. But here, they even believe and know that Jesus can do anything, but they're doing what James says not to do. You ask and don't receive because you ask amiss, wanting to consume it on your own selfish desire.

Jesus will not give you whatever you ask. You have to ask according to God's will. But trust me, He's got so many great things according to His will that it would blow our minds if we would submit ourselves and say, Lord, I want to ask on the same page with you.

I don't want to ask for myself. I want to ask to be used. Now, Jesus went to the cross and Jesus died.

And Jesus was mocked and Jesus was spit upon. And Jesus had every obscenity yelled at Him. And Jesus had every embarrassing thing that you could imagine happened to Him on that cross for you and I. And then He rose from the dead.

And when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut, where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, Peace be with you. And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. And the disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

So Jesus said to them, Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, I also send you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said, Receive the Holy Spirit.

That was John 20. When Jesus went through what He had told them, they didn't understand it the first pass. They didn't understand it the second time around on the road to Jerusalem.

But after He rose from the dead and had gone through all of that, so much so that He could show them the nail prints in His beautiful blessed hands and the spear mark in His side. He said to them, like He says to us today, Just like the Father sent me, I'm sending you on a mission. Brothers and sisters, listen.

Christians are supposed to be on a mission. I know this is strange to some of your ears, but according to the Bible, the churches are on a mission. We as individuals are on a mission.

Jesus said, as the Father sent me into the world to bring salvation and blessing, of course, in a unique way that only He could do. He gave His life. But He said, in the same way, I send you.

You're going to have a short period of time. You're only going to live 70, 80, if you're fortunate, 90 years. You're only going to have a short period of time.

But while you're there, you're on a mission. And just like I was conscious that the Father has sent me to accomplish certain things, I'm sending you so that you'll be conscious that you're there for a reason. You're representing me.

And if you're a servant like I am, and if you trust me, I'll use your life so that you can be a blessing to people and set them free from darkness and sin and every kind of filthy thing. So don't think of yourself because I haven't thought of myself. I laid down my life.

The mission can only be accomplished by two things, serving and giving. For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve others and to give His life. The mission that God has for us, brothers and sisters, is not going to happen while we're sitting watching television.

It's going to happen as we serve others and as we give of ourselves, give of our money, give of our time, give of our prayers, give, give, give, serve, serve, serve. And God will take it and do something tremendous. And at the end of our lives, listen, at the end of our lives, we're going to hear, well done, my good and faithful servant.

Because as the Father sent me, I sent you and you obeyed it. And brothers and sisters, listen, forget all the talk that you hear. Well, Pastor, God's got to do it.

You know, what's the sense of getting worked up, Pastor Cimbala? God's got to do it. I totally agree with you, but I disagree with you. You're saying a false statement there.

You're saying an incomplete sentence. I was just in Los Angeles telling Pastor Bookstaff and Ingrid last night, we had dinner together with my mother-in-law and Carol. I was out in Los Angeles with my friend, Sonny Argonzonis.

I was preaching last Tuesday night and I know the church prayed here and I was three hours behind time. But boy, when I got up to preach, I could feel God helping me. I was the right person at the right time.

God gave me the right message. And I'm telling you, God did some things. No one I know is being used more by God to help people than Sonny Argonzoni right now.

No one in the world that I know of, no one that I know of is being used more by God. And their people come from the gang gangs and the drug addicts and mostly, you know, predominantly Chicanos, some black, some white. But they're facing this whole LA, this whole California thing, this whole LA thing with gangs.

The other day, a guy went into a supermarket, Joey, bald guy. He had shaved off his hair and he went in, young guy, with his wife. And two gang guys were there and he didn't know he was on their turf.

And they looked at him and he didn't flash a certain sign to them and they didn't like the way he looked at them. They went outside, got a gun when he came out. They shot him to death.

That's all it takes. Not only the Crips and the Bloods, but the 19th Street Gang and all these other gangs. Just insanity.

And Sonny and his people go in and have churches in the middle of these barrios and places where nobody else would even go. And most of the Church of Jesus Christ says, let somebody else talk to them. You know, we're not interested.

It's too dangerous. And you see some sites out there with these victory outreach passes. I was in the elevator going up after I checked into my hotel room.

The convention had already begun, but I was jet lagged. So I wanted to just go and rest. A guy walked in with a cowboy hat on, right? Tattoos all up and down both his arms.

And I thought, this guy looks like, this guy looks hard. This guy looks like he's just been out of prison. Like yesterday.

And I'm standing next to him, just have my head down. We didn't say anything. Another guy with him.

And right before the door is closed to go up, two other guys get on and they look at this guy next to me with the cowboy hat on, the tattoos. And they go, Pastor Albert, how are you, Pastor? How are you? And I went, he's a pastor? What's up with this? He's a pastor? Looks like he just got out of the slammer. And he had been in the slammer, but that's the way they do it.

Just get a hold of Jesus and go. So that night, next night, Tuesday night, I got in on Monday. The place has nine, 10,000 people, whatever.

His son and his lovely wife. We hugged, we met. He's from Brooklyn, Sonny.

They have centers all over the world. Amsterdam, Germany, Italy, foreign Australia. I mean, but down where it's the worst.

So Sonny says to me, we got a treat before you preach. I hope you don't mind this. We're going to do one of your wife's song.

I said, who said we put together, we don't have choirs very much, but we put together a special choir because we, because she wrote the song. So right before they introduced me, after the announcements and the offering, they, Sonny and I come off the stage in this arena and we sit in the front and they start playing some music and 400 women walk up on the platform. Ranging from 18 years old to 50.

Neither a gangbanger. They made them all wear some black outfit that they could throw together. They didn't have much money.

They had, they must've given them 400 kerchiefs that they got. So they all, that was their uniform, black, whatever. And then this kerchief, some of them were cards, tattoos everywhere, muscles rippling in some of their arms.

I wouldn't want to arm wrestle about a hundred of them. And the music began and they began to sing, go forth, go forth his name to proclaim. It's a song that my wife wrote because a certain denomination had asked her for their end of their convention a couple of years ago.

They said, we want a mission song for our missionaries. Would you write a missionary song? And I happened to be there when she said, Jim, what does this sound like to you? Does this bear witness with you? And I said, Carol, that's a beautiful song. And they, they, they sang at some choir of a couple of hundred voices.

I understand in Indianapolis, in the Hoosier Dome, but I'll tell you why God gave Carol that song. He gave it for those girls to sing because when they lifted their hands, I saw the tears. I was in the front row.

I saw the tears rolling out of them and they took a little break in the song. And three of them gave a 30 second testimony of where God, one was had been a hooker. The other one was just messed up on heroin.

Could see the scars still in her arm. Well, you could, you could, you could look at this and say, look what Jesus did. I mean, I, when they started singing it and they got to the finale and lifted their hands, I totally lost it.

I said, God, how am I going to preach tonight? I just started to weep convulsively for joy of the grace of God. How many know God can change anybody, the worst, the lowest. And listen, if you're visiting here today and you're saying, oh, this is something just for the inner city, inner city, my foot, there's problems everywhere.

There's messed up people everywhere. Love these child, horrible things that are happening. They're not happening in the inner city.

They're happening in suburbia and salt Lake city, Colorado Springs. So you could say, and look at those girls and you could say, my, what did God do? But did God do that? Yes, he did. But guess what? Every

one of those girls, someone had to talk to them.

Someone had a risk going up to them. Someone had to have a street meeting. Somebody had to pray for them.

Somebody had to tell them about Jesus. Somebody had to take a step of faith and say, you know what? God can change you. You can say God did it, but God had to use somebody to do it.

You don't have a 400 voice choir by just saying, Presto. No, somebody had to say, it doesn't matter about me. It matters about Jesus.

Somebody had to say, it doesn't matter what party. I'm not coming in the name of a party. I'm coming in the name of the Lord to you.

And someone had to pray, not asking for selfish things. Someone had to pray and say, oh, Jesus changed her. And you know what? God affirmed to me, just so you that come here regularly, you know, God affirmed to me a couple of things during that meeting.

I think he made me a blessing later on, but I got a blessing from that service. You know what? That's what I want to be around all my life. I don't want to be around fancy people.

If God sends them, that's fine. I don't want to meet President Bush. In a few weeks, Attorney General Ashcroft is going to be here for one of the services.

That's wonderful. He's a believer. I pray for him.

He's a good brother in the Lord. I thank God that I can meet the Attorney General, but that's not what gives me joy. I want to be around people that are hopeless so that I can tell them Jesus loves you.

Jesus loves you. Listen, how many feel the same way? How many want to invest your life doing something different than just the same old, same old? Let's lift up our hands. God, we ask you today to take away the obstacles that keep us on a different page from you.

We understand what you're about today. You're about saving. You're about serving.

You're about giving. You're about seeing lives transformed. And Lord, we ask you to forgive us for our egotism and self-exaltation and bloated egos, Lord, and self-concepts that we have.

Always thinking about me. How do I look? Are they honoring me? Oh, God, take that out of our lives. Rip it out like weeds out of our heart, Lord.

We ask you to keep us from a party spirit. Save us from any denomination or church spirit or any racial spirit or ethnic spirit or island spirit. We don't care what we are.

We only want the name of Jesus to be proclaimed and honored and glorified. And Lord, when we pray, help us to graduate beyond just praying for what I need and what I want and what will make me feel better. Help me to pray for others and lay down my life, Lord.

Let me lay down my life so somebody could be changed because of me. So that when I die and I see you, I won't come empty-handed, but there'll be somebody with me, Lord, that I love, that I prayed for, the money I gave or something, Lord. Use something in my limited little life.

Use something, Lord, and make it great for you with every eye closed. How long is it going to be for some of you? Same old, same old, week after week. Don't witness to anyone.

Don't invite anyone to church. Don't hardly talk to anyone. Don't give very much.

Just live in the circle of your own self-existence. Always thinking about you and your family. When in the world can God shake you and get us beyond that little circle? He's got a whole big world that you can touch.

Yes, you can. Don't say you haven't been to Bible school. Don't say you're 70 years old.

God can do anything when somebody yields to him. When somebody sings, Lord, have your way. Lord, have your way.

With all my heart, I will obey. That's all God needs. Doesn't need a master.

You don't need a master's in divinity. You don't need a degree. Jesus used fishermen and weak ones at that.

Flops and failures. But he got them to a place where they stopped thinking about themselves. Got free of a party spirit.

They started praying for something bigger than their own lives. Oh God, let this sermon get in my heart, Lord. I'm preaching it, but God, I want to live it.

I want to live it, Lord. I want to live it. As long as you give me breath, I want to live it, Lord.

If you're here today and say, Pastor Cimbala, God's talking to me. I want a new kind of existence to begin for me today. And some of you who are visiting today, God wants you to go back to your area and go against, go against the grain, go against the flow.

The flow is me, myself, and I. Go against it for the glory of God. God could use you in a great way. But if you're here today and say, Pastor, I'm with you.

I am with you. I feel the way you feel. I have the same hunger, same thirst.

I want God to use me for his glory. I don't want to live for myself. I want to live for others.

I want to lay down my life. I can't lay it down like Jesus on a cross, but I want to lay down my time, myself, what I am, so that God can do great things through me for others. Someone's got to do it.

The fields are ripe to harvest, but the labors are few. Everyone's just worried about their own selves, but there are so few who want to go out into the fields. If you're here today, whether you're a brand new Christian or someone who feels called to a ministry that you're not fulfilling yet, would you get up from out of your seat? And we'll just close with a word of prayer up here in the front.

I don't care if five of you come or 500 of you come. Just come as we sing. Come on, let's sing.

Everyone else.

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