



The Reverend Dr. David V. Silvernail, Jr.
Mark 3:7-19

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English Standard Version

“The Few and The Many”

The 7th Sermon in a series on The Gospel of Mark entitled
“The King and His Cross”

Mark 3:7-19

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¹³ And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those whom He desired, and they came to Him.¹⁴ And He appointed twelve (whom He also named apostles) so that they might be with Him and He might send them out to preach¹⁵ and have authority to cast out demons.¹⁶ He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter);¹⁷ James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder);¹⁸ Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot,¹⁹ and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Him.”

*Heavenly Father, this is Your Word and we need it. Thank You for giving us the Scriptures and making us Your people. You have brought us to this amazing Gospel to learn more about your Son, Jesus. We ask You this morning to give us the grace to understand. It's hard to admit that we're **broken** and **wounded**; and it's even harder to admit that we need You. So help us to consider what it really means to follow Christ and to hear Your Word. Thank You that today we're learning once again from John Mark, a follower of Jesus, as he brings us the earliest eyewitness account of the life of Christ. Help us to hear it, understand it, believe it, and obey it. And so we pray, speak through the Gospel of Mark this morning, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, help us see Jesus, for in His name we pray, amen and amen.*

INTRODUCTION: *Symphony for a Broken Orchestra*¹

Back in the late Fall of 2017, in a cheerful rehearsal room at Temple University, a few dozen professional musicians inspect the instruments that they'll be playing to debut an audacious piece of music by Pulitzer Prize-winning composer, David Lang. The composition is called "*Symphony for a Broken Orchestra*" and, fittingly, **all of these instruments are broken**.

Over 1,000 damaged instruments had been languishing in what are known as "instrument graveyards" in Philadelphia's school system, which lacked the funds to fix them, having cut their instrumental music budget from \$1.3 million in 2007 to \$50,000 in 2017. And so, two years ago, 400 of these instruments were played in a concert performance by musicians ranging from members of the Philadelphia Orchestra to public school children. The youngest was a 9-year-old cellist; the oldest, an 82-year-old oboist. The goal was to get those **broken** instruments repaired and back to kids.

The room bursts into applause as the composer of the symphony, David Lang, makes his entrance. Lang won a Pulitzer Prize for music composition in 2008 and was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Original Song in 2018. This symphony is a little less glitzy, for sure, but Lang agreed to the project immediately. He said, "I really thought of this whole thing as kind of a **healing exercise**. And from the very beginning, I made everyone here refer to these instruments as '**wounded**' instruments." Cracked cellos. Vandalized violins. Flutes that gasp and leak. Horns with **broken** valves. Lang worked with musicians to catalog 1,500 instruments, searching for ones that were **wounded** in exactly the right way. "I am trying to make the **brokenness** kind of the foreground," he says. "I don't want to avoid the things that are **broken**. I don't want to make these instruments sound like we don't notice how **changed** they are. And so I tried to ask for things that would highlight the fact **that they are changed**."

Because the instruments are so difficult to play, musicians have to play in any way they can. Lang's score demands a unique creativity from musicians whose instruments are unable to play the required notes. "It may take them several **tries** to find a way to get their instruments to deliver that note," Lang explains. "And all of those **tries** are what makes this piece work." Working on this symphony reminds Lang of something fundamental about playing music in a group. "When you play an instrument in a public school, this is the lesson you're learning. I have a **connection** to the person next to me and our connection is based on our **combined ability**

¹ The Introduction has been adapted from the articles, "*The Healing Sound Of A Broken Orchestra*" by Neda Ulaby, 11/30/17, www.npr.org. And "*Symphony for a Broken Orchestra: What, exactly, did it sound like?*" by David Patrick Stearns, 12/3/17, www.inquirer.com. There are several videos about this on YouTube and Vimeo, just search for "Symphony for a Broken Orchestra."

to build something beautiful. And that's something we really need," he says, his voice filling with emotion.

400 players marched in — from members of the Philadelphia Orchestra to street musicians — all carrying instruments from the schools. One cello — all polished up for the occasion — had a few dangling strings and was only good for percussion. A trumpet was bandaged with **blue duct tape**. An upright bass had a distant memory of a fingerboard. One French horn was **literally rusty**. "Oh man, this thing is so beat up," said jazz musician Brent White, as he tried out scales on a battered trombone ... which is missing a slide. **[show slide]** White has toured with top-tier jazz groups, but he learned to play music in Philadelphia's schools. "I remember some of the **broken** instruments I had to play in elementary and middle school," White says. "It's coming full circle now."

The beginning was purely percussion with players tapping on their instruments, creating a soft rumble whether tapping on wood or metal flutes. Waves of sound traveled from one section of players to another, then came together with an aggression that suggested the instruments were trying to escape ... maybe from their own infirmary? A single tone emerged. Then another, like an orchestra tuning up. Chords sounded dire, like a dying god from a Wagner opera. Plucked string instruments added to the texture creating a cloud of music that could mean many things to many ears. These unmelodic sounds had a meditative quality. Some listeners closed their eyes (though sleep was not possible). A five-note scale emerged, repeated again and again. And then ... a countermelody! Finally, the brass entered. Their rhythm suggested a determined processional. They will not be stopped. Everything got mellow in harmonic notes that sounded like classical Baroque with the underbrush of a summer night. Soloists popped up, facing their colleagues, and giving them a simple melody to imitate — which they did — as much as their instruments would allow. Then each section began to bow out, until all that remained was the humble squeal of a broken clarinet. The conductor completely stopped ... and just stood with his hands folded before him. One journalist wrote, "I felt as though I'd been some place I'd never been before." There was a surreal spiritual quality to the whole performance.

The day after the symphony's performance, all the instruments were shipped off to be repaired. And so when they returned to school the next Fall, the children in these Philadelphia schools opened the cases of their flutes and violins and found a note explaining how these **wounded** instruments were healed.

It's a true story. Look it up. Please. And as I heard that story ... and then watched the video's, I couldn't help but think of the dedication of the Temple in the Old Testament. There we read, **2 Chronicles 7:6**, "*The priests stood at their posts; the Levites also, with the instruments for music to the LORD that King David had made for giving thanks to the LORD — for His steadfast love endures forever — whenever David offered praises by their ministry; opposite them the priests sounded trumpets, and all Israel stood.*"

And then I thought of our text for today, **Mark 3:7-19**, and realized that parallels between **broken** and **wounded instruments** ... and **broken** and **wounded people** ... are not insignificant. After all, some of you could use a little **blue duct tape**. Some of you are missing parts ... or maybe you have parts that just don't work as well as they used to. Some of you have deep wounds ... and not all wounds can be seen. Some of you have been hurt ... in ways no bandage can cover. And I don't know if you were ever 'vandalized' ... but I do know that more

than one person in this room has been abused. ... And I've often wondered if a few of you were just 'cracked.' ... And when things happen to us, we have to learn how to play our notes, **how to be ourselves**, a little bit differently from now on. And sometimes it takes more than a few tries. I think Jesus would have loved this orchestra. He loved **broken** and **wounded** instruments. Except these instruments were **people**, and they had **names**, and they came to Him one day at the sea of Galilee. And if we read our text carefully, we will see that ...

v. 7-10: SOME ARE HEALED ²

*“Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the sea, and a great crowd followed, from Galilee and Judea ⁸ and Jerusalem and Idumea and from beyond the Jordan and from around Tyre and Sidon. When the great crowd heard all that He was doing, they came to Him. ⁹ And He told His disciples to have a boat ready for Him because of the crowd, lest they crush Him, ¹⁰ for He had **healed** many, so that all who had diseases pressed around Him to touch Him.”*

Jesus was incredibly popular at this point in His ministry. True, the political and religious groups were suspicious of Jesus, seeking every opportunity to catch Him, to make a charge against Him, but the common people heard Him gladly. There never was anything like this in the land of Judea. There'd been preachers before, but none like this one. There'd been people who claimed the powers of miracles, but no one like this one. And they were coming to Him from all over the land: from Galilee to the north and west, from places like Nazareth where Jesus had grown up; from Capernaum and the little towns and villages that surround the Sea of Galilee; but also from down south, from Jerusalem, from across the river Jordan, even the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon — great multitudes, thousands of people. Some have traveled now to Galilee, the northwest shoreline of the Sea of Galilee, several days journey. Some might have taken a week or two to get there, bringing with them folks who were sick, folks who are paralyzed, folks with diseases, folks with leprosy – great multitudes of **broken** and **wounded**, ill and hurting people. And they're pressing in on Jesus; they're trying to get near Him; they want to touch Him. They've heard stories; they've heard or seen the results of what He can do.

Sadly, it's clear from the text that the overwhelming desire of the crowds was not for Jesus' **message** but for His **healing** touch; they were seeking to be relieved of their pain and suffering. In other words, they were more concerned with their **broken** bodies than their **wounded** souls. And yet, in His compassion, Jesus began to **heal** the people coming to Him with diseases and other physical maladies, but that only caused the people to press against Him even more eagerly, hoping to touch Him and be **healed**. In self-defense, Jesus instructed His disciples that they should keep a small boat ready on the shore of the Sea of Galilee should He need to withdraw from them.

We're a lot like those people of Galilee. Our prayer requests tend to focus mostly on our physical problems and those of others we love. Of course, God made us physical beings, and we see throughout Scripture that God is deeply concerned with the well-being of our bodies. The

2 The Exposition of the text is adapted from my sermons “Power to Follow” 4/8/01, “More Compassion of the King” 7/7/13, and “The Apostles of the King” 7/14/13, all preached here at Potomac Hills. **And the sermons**, “The Twelve” by Dr. Derek Thomas, 3/28/04 and “A Surprising Kingdom” by Dr. David Strain, Senior Minister, First Presbyterian Church (PCA), Jackson, MS, 7/22/18, www.fpcjackson.org. **And the books**, *Preaching the Word – Mark: Jesus, Servant and Savior* by Dr. R. Kent Hughes, pages 81-87; *St. Andrews Expository Commentary: Mark* by Dr. R.C. Sproul, pages 57-65; and *New Testament Commentary: The Gospel of Mark* by Dr. William Lane, pages 126-137.

body is not a mere prison for the soul; it is not something to be despised. As Christians, we believe that our bodies will be resurrected and reunited to our souls someday. So, it is good for us to be concerned about the welfare of our bodies.

And yet, we're whole people — body and soul — and we shouldn't seek physical **restoration** without spiritual **renewal**. These things are not independent of each other but are designed to work together. However, there were some in the crowd that had no desire to be **healed**. They were more than content with their **broken** bodies and **wounded** souls. And when they show up, we see that ...

v. 11-12: SOME ARE SILENCED³

Adding to the pressure of the crowd wanting to be **healed**, the demonized showed up, starting at **verse 11**, *“And whenever the unclean spirits saw Him, they fell down before Him and cried out, “You are the Son of God.”*¹² *And He strictly ordered them not to make Him known.”*

The unclean spirits were drawn by a strange fascination to see Jesus, even though they knew He was their conqueror, the hated Son of God. Somehow these sinister, unclean spirits had brought bodily injury, psychological trauma, and immense spiritual harm to their victims. These unclean spirits would cast the bodies of their victims before Jesus, crying out with unearthly voices, *“You are the Son of God”* in futile attempts to render him powerless. This was in accordance with the ancient belief “that knowledge of the precise name or quality of a person confers mastery over him.” In response, Jesus forbids them to speak, and casts them out. Of course, in God's economy, no fallen spirit could possibly have power over the second person of the Trinity, so the demons' shouting of Jesus' identity was pointless. When Jesus heard what the spirits said, He sternly warned them not to make Him known. It was not yet time for His divine identity to be proclaimed abroad, so Jesus silenced them with a single command.

In this incident, we see a foreshadowing of the final conflict between Christ and the forces of hell. Whenever hell collides with heaven, the inevitable result is silence. Whenever evil appears before God, its mouth is shut. Scripture tells us repeatedly that people appearing before God at the last judgment will place their hands over their mouths in His presence and will keep silent. No sinner has anything to say in the presence of the holy God.

There is tragic irony here, for the demons knew that Jesus was the Son of God, but the rest of the crowds thought only of Him as a miracle-worker whom they could use for their own ends. Putting it all together: the ill, the feverish, the crippled were pushing and grabbing and falling all over Jesus; the demonized were maliciously sizing Him up and were howling His name in verbal combat; the cynical Pharisees were watching His every move, waiting for their chance. And so Jesus really did feel immense pressure, inescapable stress and strain.

For us this means that Jesus was (and is) the unique man who understands us. In broadest terms, He understands the harried, frenetic lives of men and women today. He understands, for example, what Anne Morrow Lindbergh meant when she wrote, “The life I have chosen as wife and mother entrains a whole caravan of complications. ... It involves food and shelter; meals, planning, marketing, bills and making the ends meet in a thousand ways. It involves not only the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick maker, but countless other experts to keep my modern house with its modern “simplifications” (electricity, plumbing, refrigerator, stove, ... dishwasher, radios, car and numerous other ‘labor-saving devices’) functioning properly. It

³ Anne Morrow Lindbergh quote taken from her book [Gift from the Sea](#), pages 25-26.

involves health; doctors, dentists, appointments, medicine ... vitamins, trips to the drugstore. It involves education, spiritual, intellectual, physical; schools, school conferences, car-pools, extra trips for basketball or orchestra practice; tutoring; camps, camp equipment and transportation. It involves clothes, shopping, laundry, cleaning, mending, letting skirts down and sewing buttons on, or finding someone else to do it. It involves friends, my husband's, my children's, my own, and endless arrangements to get together; letters, invitations, telephone calls and transportation hither and yon."

Jesus understands this! And He understands the pressured treadmill on which most of us race day in and day out. He knows what it's like when the traffic light turns green and the car behind you immediately begins to honk. But more specifically, He understands the pressures we feel when we try to reach out to others as He did. He knows that when you really care about others, you open yourself to troubles virtually incomprehensible to those who don't care. He understands that those who stand with Him are assaulted by a demonized culture which is constantly trying to gain mastery over us. He understands the pressures of a life of faith. But that faith has to start somewhere, and for most people who follow Jesus, that starts when ...

v. 13-19: SOME ARE CALLED ⁴

¹³ *And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those whom He desired, and they came to Him.* ¹⁴ *And He appointed twelve (whom He also named apostles) so that they might be with Him and He might send them out to preach* ¹⁵ *and have authority to cast out demons.* ¹⁶ *He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter);* ¹⁷ *James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder);* ¹⁸ *Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot,* ¹⁹ *and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Him."*

Christ would send them out as His emissaries to the world, and as such, they would have special power and authority. After the arrival and indwelling of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, they would become official witnesses and leaders of the new community known as the Church. They were to preach His Word with authority and gather His people into the Church. Some of them would become inspired writers of the New Testament. We don't know the order in which Jesus called out their names. All the lists in the Bible begin with Peter and end with Judas, but in between, the order changes. Today every name on the list has a notable ring to it, even the least known. But when Jesus chose them, **they were all unknowns**. Except for Judas Iscariot, they were all country boys from Galilee. Four of them were fishermen. One was a notorious tax collector. None were famous or rich or noble or well connected. There were no religious leaders among them ... no scribes, no priests, no elders, no Pharisees. They were all relatively poor. As Luke would later write, "**they were uneducated, common men.**" There was nothing in them that deserved recognition. There was nothing in them that meant they deserved being chosen as an Apostle. For the most part, they were unworthy men, seriously **broken**, and deeply **wounded**.

Simon Peter is the key figure. He was the leader of the group and often spoke for the disciples. **Andrew** is Peter's brother and is rarely mentioned. The only thing we know about him is that he brought Peter to Jesus. In fact, the few times we see Andrew in the Gospels, he's bringing someone to Jesus.

⁴ For more information on the Apostles, a good introduction is [Twelve Ordinary Men](#) by Dr. John MacArthur.

James and John are brothers, both fishermen. James never appears apart from his brother John. Jesus called them “*Sons of Thunder.*” These were the guys who, when Jesus was turned away from a Samaritan village, told Jesus to call down fire from Heaven and burn the place to the ground.

Which leads us to believe that **James** was a sort of a passionate, aggressive guy. He’s one of the first to be martyred. Herod captured both Peter and James in **Acts 12**. Peter he put in jail, but he chopped off James’ head, obviously considering James to have been the bigger problem.

John was an uncompromising man who loved Christ. He lived longer than any of the other Apostles, and at the end of His life, after the rest of the New Testament was written, he sat down and penned the Gospel of John (arguably the greatest letter ever written), three epistles, and the book of Revelation. He wrote extensively about the love of Christ because he’d experienced it firsthand. When no eyewitnesses of Jesus were left to tell His story, John did.

Philip is only mentioned a few times in the gospels. And it’s usually not very flattering. Most of the time he’s missing the point of whatever Jesus is teaching. It appears that he has limited ability, inadequate faith, and an imperfect understanding of Jesus’ power and grace.

Bartholomew is listed elsewhere as **Nathanael**. And in **John 1**, we see that He was a man of simple faith and little doubts. He was a student of Scripture, a searcher of truth, and seeker of God. And yet, this is the same Nathanael who replied when first told about Christ, “*Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?*” It’s pretty clear that Nathaniel was prejudiced and biased against those who came from the small country villages. To put it in our language, he didn’t like rednecks, and if you were from Nazareth, you qualified. At the same time, when Jesus first saw him in **John 1:47**, the text says, “*Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!”*” Nathanael Bartholomew appears to be that kind of person where you knew where you stood, good or bad. He called ‘em as he saw ‘em, straight and to the point.

Thomas is the disciple who will be forever remembered as having to be convinced of Jesus’ resurrection. The few times Jesus talks to Thomas, He’s trying to comfort him, strengthen him, and encourage him. Thomas was a pessimist and easily depressed, which probably accounts for his doubting the resurrection.

Matthew we’ve already met. He’s Levi the tax-collector. A professional extortionist, his calling was a complete surprise, because everyone knew that he was a notorious sinner. But the wonderful thing about Matthew is that more than anyone else, he knew he was a big sinner and so repentance came easy to him.

James the son of Alphaeus, we know virtually nothing about. The only thing we know about him is his name. That’s it! The book of James was written by James the brother of Jesus, not this guy. It’s not known if this James ever wrote anything, and nothing he ever said, asked, or did is recorded in the Bible. Just a nameless, faceless, ordinary guy.

Thaddeus is called **Jude, Judas the son of James, and Judas – not Iscariot** on the other lists. He only appears once in the Bible, in **John 14**, and there he asks Jesus a question because he doesn’t understand what Jesus is trying to teach. That’s all we know about him. Although it’s possible he wrote the book of **Jude**, but we just don’t know for sure.

Simon the Zealot was a political nationalist who hated the Romans and hated everyone who worked with the Romans ... meaning people like Matthew. The Zealots are the guys who

fought the Romans wherever and whenever they could. They were hot-headed patriots who saw the coming Messiah as a conquering King who would lead them against the Romans. The Zealots were wiped out at Masada when they committed mass suicide rather than be captured by the Romans. Simon was not a meek, mild-mannered guy.

Judas Iscariot will become infamous for his betrayal of Jesus. Think about this. He accepted this call from Christ, but some reason the Lord Jesus Christ, the power of His Word, and the Gospel of His Grace meant nothing. And He never produced fruit that lasts.

And when we read of the years they walked with Jesus, you will quickly see that these men **lacked** spiritual understanding, they **lacked** humility, they **lacked** faith, they **lacked** commitment. There is no way, at face value, that these guys are going to amount to much. They were unworthy men, seriously **broken**, and deeply **wounded**. These guys would not get along. They wouldn't understand each other. They don't want to work together. They had little in common. And yet Jesus **called** them. And they went on to form the nucleus of a band of brothers that conquered the world with grace. And when we get to Heaven this ordinary group of guys will find their names engraved on the twelve foundations of the New Jerusalem, as seen in **Revelation 21**. How did this happen? It happened because they only common bond they had was Jesus.

When God calls ordinary men and women to follow Him, His call is **always** effectual, it **always** changes people, it **always** brings grace, and it doesn't depend on the knowledge, skills, or abilities of those people. Let me close with one last story of the **broken** and **wounded** getting **healed** and becoming whole by grace.

CONCLUSION: *I Couldn't Come To Church*

At the age of 36, she was a recently tenured professor in the Center for Women's Study at Syracuse University. She and her lesbian partner were members of a Unitarian Universalist Church, where Rosaria was the coordinator of the gay and lesbian advocacy group. Up to this point in her life, she said that the only Christians she knew were "intellectually impaired." They were the kind of "people who sent me hate mail; or people who carried signs at gay pride marches that read 'God Hates Fags.'" But her negative image of Christians would radically change when she met a local pastor named Ken and his wife Floy. Eventually that friendship led to her conversion to Christ, but here's how she described that first encounter with authentic Christians ...

I remember being conscious of my butch haircut and the gay and pro-choice bumper stickers on my car ... I remember awkwardly greeting my hosts at the door and pulling out of my bag two gifts — a bottle of good red wine and a box of strong tea ... I wanted to get to know these people, but not at the expense of compromising my moral standards. My lesbian identity and *culture* and its values mattered a lot to me. I came to my culture and its values through life experience but also through much research and deep thinking. I liked Ken and Floy immediately because they seemed sensitive to that ...

During our meal I remember holding my breath and waiting to be punched in the stomach with something grossly offensive. I believed at this time that God was dead and that if he ever was alive, the fact of poverty, violence, racism, sexism, homophobia, and war was proof that he didn't care about his creation But Ken's God seemed alive, three-dimensional, and wise, if firm. And Ken and Floy were anything but intellectually impaired.

Ken and Floy did something at the meal that has a long Christian history [They] invited the stranger in — not to scapegoat me, but to listen and to learn and to dialogue ... We didn't debate worldview They were willing to walk the long journey to me in Christian compassion. During our meal, they did not share the gospel with me. After our meal, they did not invite me to church. Because of these glaring omissions to the Christian script as I had come to know it, when the evening ended and Ken said he wanted to stay in touch, I knew that it was safe to accept his open hand.

Since this beginning, the journey on which the Lord has taken me has been a great adventure, and this simple meal in a simple home ... was the first leg of this journey. Before I ever stepped foot in a church, I spent two years meeting with Ken and Floy and on and off “studying’ scripture and my heart [Ken] knew at the time that **I couldn't come to church** — it would have been too threatening, too weird, too much. So, Ken was willing to bring the church to me.

I'm guessing that, by now, you have figured out the woman who wrote that was Rosaria Butterfield. Her testimony is quite well-known, and you can read it in her book, The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert. And many of you know, but many may not, that Rosaria attended our church for a while when her husband, Kent, who's a pastor, was between calls and working a secular job. She used to sit **right there** ... she was going through the adoption process with some of her kids at the time ... Rosaria and Kent came to us quite **wounded**, needing to **heal** from a failed church plant. Few people knew. And, at the time, only a few of us knew her story ... the majority of the church had no idea. Hers is a story of how God **heals broken** and **wounded** instruments.

God still **heals broken** and **wounded** instruments. Jesus loved **broken** violins named Tom, and cracked cellos named Sarah, that bass missing a few strings named Gail, and a badly out-of-tune keyboard named Eli. But the great glory of God's call is that being **broken** and **wounded** is the opportunity for God to demonstrate His power. Our ordinariness makes room for His extraordinariness. The Apostle Paul made this clear in **2 Corinthians 4:7** when he said, *“But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.”* We are the jars of clay ... frail, fragile people ... **broken, wounded** instruments. But we contain treasure ... the Gospel of God's Grace as it's found in Jesus Christ. The Gospel is committed to **broken** and **wounded** people so that the power and strength that comes forth will be seen as God's and not our own.

An awareness of our own sin and **weakness** brings us closer to Christ and makes us more dependent upon Christ. Again, Paul brings this out even more clearly in **2 Corinthians 12:9-10** when he says, *“Each time He [God] said, **“My grace is all you need. My power works best in your weakness.”** So now I am glad to boast about my **weaknesses**, so that the power of Christ may work through me. Since I know it is all for Christ's good, I am quite content with my **weaknesses** and with insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. **For when I am weak, then I am strong.**”* We need to embrace this great truth, for the ordinary people God has used have always lived with the reality **that they are clay**. And when they met Christ, they became conscious of all their sins and **weaknesses**. But rather than focus on those sins and **weaknesses**, they turned away from them and relied on God. And it was out of this dependence on God that His great power was seen. Remember, the Apostles were **broken** and **wounded** men ...

unworthy and undeserving. But God chooses to show His grace to the unworthy so grace will be seen **as grace**. It's precisely because we're unworthy **that grace is grace**.

We need to embrace this great truth, for the ordinary people God has used have always lived with the reality **that they are clay**. And when we met Christ, we became conscious of all our sins and **weaknesses**. But rather than focus on how **broken** and **wounded** we are, we turned away from ourselves and rely on God. And it is out of this dependence on God that His great power is seen. And it's in that dependence that we can trust God and preach the Gospel. After all, you've been called. Think about that. You need to pray.

Take a moment to do that, and then I'll close.

*Our Lord and our God, thank You that You have spoken to us by Your Son. Open our eyes that we might see our sin and then see our Savior. Thank You that You have given us a King, Your Son, our Savior. Thank You for giving us a picture of what it means to be a Christian. There are a number of us right now who probably don't even realize we're being called because our lives seem to be such a mess, but it could be You're trying to teach us that Your strength is made perfect in **weakness**. It could be you're trying to get us to see just how **broken** and **wounded** we really are, so that we'll see how much we really need You. So, Father, I pray the people here who realize they're being sought by You ... would answer Your call. Father, forgive us for our lack of faith, forgive us for being afraid to admit our sins and shortcomings, forgive us for how we're sometimes proud of being **broken** and **wounded**, and work in each of us this year as we live with Mark, a follower of Jesus, as we hear what he hears, given to him by eyewitnesses of Christ. Thank You for this story of amazing grace. Thank You for the glimpses we get of Jesus in His grace towards sinners like us. Give us, we pray, the faith to believe that we can do and be whatever Jesus asks us to do and be. Teach us to respond with a greater trust in You, and in Your Word, and in this Gospel, to draw us ever closer to Your Son, our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever. Amen.*

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Acts 9:13-15

*“But Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man [Paul], how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name.” But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he [Paul] is a **chosen instrument of Mine** to carry My name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.”*