

The Ministry of the Master  
March 14, 2010

**Luke 3:23** says, "Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age." In Judaism, the Jewish religion, a man could not become a high priest until he arrived at the age of 30. So it's very important that you see that Jesus is 30 years old when He begins His ministry. In Catholicism, when a pope is elected, he is an old man; but at the age of 30, Jesus began His ministry.

I personally believe that everybody has a ministry. I don't believe everybody is supposed to stand behind a pulpit or pastor a church, but I do believe everybody has a ministry to serve Jesus. You will never find your purpose until you find Jesus, but when you start seeking what God wants you to do, God will begin to unravel the mystery of your calling and everybody is called. The Bible says your calling is irrevocable. God will never revoke your calling.

When looking at the ministry of Jesus, I want to first of all look at **His character**, His integrity; and in ministry today, we need integrity. We need to be squeaky clean. AMEN? Not only do we need to have character, but we need to have **content**. You can be squeaky clean and not say anything.

Sometimes I'll listen to a pastor and can't figure out what he is saying. If the gospel cannot be preached around the world, it's not the gospel. I thank God for all of His blessings, but can you imagine taking this gospel that is being preached today in America to a third-world country and telling them that if they get saved, they are going to get a new Cadillac?

Let me tell you what Americans are. We're consumers. Here is what that means. What can you do for me? So we're coming to God with, "What can you do for me?" No, no, no. We go to a holy God, a righteous God, and say, "What can I do for YOU?" So we're looking at the **character** and the **content** of the ministry of Jesus Christ.

**(1) Prayer Was His Priority.** Prayer was the priority of the ministry of Jesus Christ. **Luke 5:16** says, "So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed." We look upon prayer as boring. I have pastored 40 years now, and I know that prayer is not a priority in the church. When a prayer meeting is called, you will be very fortunate if 10% of the church comes out to pray. So I know that prayer is not a priority, but if we are going to be like Jesus, prayer has to become a priority.

Jesus was the Son of God. He was God in human flesh. So why would God have to pray? Because He also was human, and the humanness of Jesus had to pray. He had to seek His Father's help. Jesus never made a decision without prayer. In the gospels, you will see **Jesus pictured in prayer 25 times**. As a Christian, how much of a priority is prayer in YOUR life? Prayer has to become a priority.

It seems like, when Americans are prospering, we don't pray much. Not only don't we pray much, but we don't praise much. We're not even thankful for what we have, but just maybe if it is all taken away, maybe if we don't have as much, maybe we will pray much!

I heard a man on television last night say that home foreclosures are not over, that more are on the way. Not only will foreclosures continue, but business foreclosures are coming. The value of our dollar is becoming less and less, and that man predicted that in 10 years our dollar will be worth nothing. Our dollar isn't worth much right now. So maybe, just maybe, when we don't have as much as we do now we will pray much.

**When Jesus chose His apostles, He prayed all night long.** Surely, He knew whom He was going to choose, but He went to His Father and prayed all night long. **Before Jesus faced the cross, He goes into the Garden of Gethsemane;** and the Bible says in **Luke 22:44**, "And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly."

In looking at the ministry of Jesus, we see **the priority of prayer**. At the beginning of His ministry He is praying, and at the end of His ministry He is praying. He is hanging on a cross, bleeding from His wounds, and the Bible says while He is on the cross, He is praying. He prayed this prayer in **Luke 23:34**. "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

Some of you have forgotten what the grudge you are carrying is about, but you are still carrying that grudge. Here Jesus is dying innocently, and our Savior prays while on that cross.

It says in **1 Thessalonians 5:17** that we are instructed by the Apostle Paul and the leadership of the Holy Spirit to "**Pray without ceasing.**" Most don't do it because they think it's impossible. Well, I'm here today to tell you that it means you can pray in the shower. You can pray while driving your car. You don't have to be at an altar. You can be anywhere at any time and pray.

There are times when God will wake us up and speak to us because He wants us to pray.

Don't forsake that. In **Luke 18:1** Jesus tells us, "Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart." If you pray one time and it doesn't come to pass, pray again. You should always pray and not give up. Why? Because **the priority of our Master is prayer.**

When looking at the ministry of Jesus, **(2) People Were His Passion**. He loved people. It says in **Matthew 9:36**, "But when Jesus saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd." A church has to have a shepherd. There has to be a spiritual leader in the church.

Please be careful of people who try to become leeches. You will try to help them, but they will not help themselves; and if you're not careful, you will become hardened. Then the next one will come along, and you won't want to help them. You cannot lose your passion for people. I'm in the people business. People will hurt you, fail you, and disappoint you, but you can't lose your passion for people. Jesus loves people. **He loves you and me!**

It says in **Matthew 14:14**, "And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude." He didn't see a mass of people. He saw them as individuals. "And He was moved with compassion for them and healed the sick."

The word "moved" in the Greek means Jesus felt what they felt. He felt the loneliness of the leper. He felt the pain of the lame. Inwardly He felt their pain, and He was moved with compassion.

In **Galatians 2:20** Paul said, "Jesus loved me and gave Himself for me." In **Titus 2:14** Titus tells us that, "Jesus gave Himself for us that He might redeem us."

My wife and I go out usually once a month and help small churches. When you go into an established church and try to help them, sometimes they don't realize certain things. A lot of churches are just families: aunts, uncles, cousins; and I will be honest with you. They don't want anybody else coming in, but for churches to grow, you have to have visitors; and a lot of times if you are not family, you are not welcome.

Let me tell you something. The number one fear in America is speaking in public. Do you know what little churches do when one visitor shows up? They can spot them right away because they don't look like the rest of them, but they will make them stand up and introduce themselves. So when they stand up, they will slap a tag on them that says

they are a visitor. That's why people don't go back. We want everyone who comes to Maranatha to feel welcome, because I am trying to reach everybody I can reach.

When looking at the ministry of Jesus, **(3) Preaching Was His Purpose**. He preached with authority. Today, preaching basically is boring. In **Luke 4:43** it says, **"Jesus said to them, 'I must preach the kingdom of God.'"** When you're in a kingdom, there is a King. We are not in a democracy. We're in a theocracy, and our King gives us orders. AMEN? Our King tells us what to do.

Jesus goes on to say, **"I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also."** That is what we are trying to do. As a church, we have missionaries all over the world that we support. We are trying to use every fishing pole we can. **"I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent."** He came to preach.

Jesus said in **Mark 1:15**, **"Repent, and believe in the gospel."** He hasn't yet died on the cross, but He is preaching **"repent, and believe in the gospel."** The gospel is the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Jesus. Do you believe that? Because of His death, His burial, and His resurrection, you and I can be saved. AMEN?

Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins; and repentance is when you change your mind and change your direction. You were going that way, but now you're going with the King; and when you go with the King, you walk in holiness. AMEN? Holiness is not a bad word, but we hardly hear it spoken of in the church world; but **without holiness, no man will see the Lord**. Christ said, **"Be ye holy as I am holy."**

Clean living is needed in the church. People live all kinds of ways and claim Christ. It's no wonder the world won't come to church. They don't see Christians living any differently than they do.

Jesus preached his first recorded sermon in the Gospel of Luke, and in **Luke 4:18** He said, **"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me."** Do you mean to tell me that Jesus had to be anointed? Yes, and if HE had to be anointed, WE have to be anointed! The anointing is the key.

Isaiah says that, when you're anointed, "the anointing will destroy the yoke and lift the burden." The first thing Jesus said was, **"I am anointed to preach the gospel to the poor."** The poor refers to those that are destitute of wealth, wealth in the area of spirituality. The poor refers to those who are **destitute of wealth, position, influence,**

**and honor.** The poor means those who are **lowly, needy, lacking, and helpless.** I've got my hand up!

When you think you can do it on your own, you're not needy. The Laodicean church needed nothing, and when you're lost, you are at the bottom of the pole; but Jesus came proclaiming help to the helpless, hope to the hopeless, and life to the lifeless. He came to tell folk that He came to give life, and not just life, but life more abundantly. I like having abundant life in Jesus.

When looking at the ministry of Jesus, **(4) Power Was His Popularity.** Look at **Mark 3:8 [NLT].** "The news about His miracles had spread far and wide, and vast numbers of people came to see Him." They came to see His miracles.

Look at another scripture. **John 6:2 [NLT].** "A huge crowd kept following Jesus wherever He went, because they saw His miraculous signs as He healed the sick." He loosed the lepers. He cured the crippled. He gave sight to the blind. He opened deaf ears. He raised the dead, and great crowds came.

If you will read about the early part of His ministry, great crowds flocked to see His miracles, but all of a sudden something shifted. **People were coming for the miracles and not the message,** and the message began to thin out the crowd. Most came for the loaves and the fishes. If you're coming only for the loaves and the fishes, you're going to experience disappointment along the way.

In the Gospel of John it says the crowd gathered, and they were coming to see His miracles; but then Jesus said, "**Unless you drink My blood**" (**John 6:53**). I can tell many of you don't read the Word. He said, "**Unless you drink My blood, you are not My disciples.**"

You have to remember that a Jew will only eat meat that is kosher. That means the Rabbi has to cut it a certain way, and all the blood is drained out of that meat. So here is Jesus telling this crowd that has gathered to see His signs and wonders that "unless you drink My blood;" and **Verse 60** says that "**many left Him for His hard saying.**" What was His hard saying? His message! That's why Christians take communion.

**Verse 60** says that many left Him because of His hard saying. Then Jesus turns to His disciples in **Verse 67** and says, "**Do you also want to go away (leave Me)?**" Then in **Verse 68** Peter says, "**Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.**"

If you are a consumer Christian, if you are only following Jesus for the loaves and the fishes and not for the message, you're missing it.

In looking at the ministry of Jesus, **(5) Pursuit Was His Plan.** It says in **Luke 19:10**, **"He came to seek."** I didn't find HIM. He found ME. **"For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."** He pursued us. He left the glories of Heaven to come to this sin-cursed world to find you and me. AMEN?

Why did He do that? **2 Peter 3:9** tells us why. **"The Lord is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."**

Lastly, **(6) Pardon Was His Practice.** In **Mark 2**, word got out that Jesus was in the house, and the house was packed. There were four unnamed men who brought their friend to that meeting, and when they got there, they couldn't get in because of the crowd. So they climbed up on the roof, ripped up the roof, and lowered their paralyzed friend down into the presence of Jesus.

This man was lying on a cot, and you would think the first thing the Savior would have done was get him up, but that isn't what happened. **Mark 2:5** says, **"When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven you.'"**

I kind of think this man was looking for more than a cure. I think he was looking for an identity. I want to identify with Jesus! I like it when Jesus calls me son. If He calls me son, I now know whom my Daddy is! So, Jesus looked at this man lying on a cot and said, "Son, your sins are forgiven you." This young man didn't even ask Jesus for forgiveness, but the Lord gave it out.

**Jesus forgives the fallen.** I don't know whether you know this or not, but everybody here has sinned. Jesus saves sinners. That is what He is out to do.

In **John 8**, a woman caught in adultery is brought before Jesus. I have a question. Where was the man? He should have been dragged in there too. He should have been stoned first. It says this woman was caught in the very act of adultery, and this is what Jesus tells her after He runs off all the hypocrites. **Verse 11: "Neither do I condemn you; go, and sin no more."** He pardons prodigals.

Look at **1 John 1:9**. **"If we confess our sins."** Jesus practices pardoning people, and a pardon is of no value if you don't receive it. **"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and**

just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. That's the blood.