

6407

SILVER STAR BIBLE SCHOOL 1996

THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST IN THE PROPHETS

Speaker: Bro. Stephen Palmer

Class #2

The Power of His Word

Reading: Isaiah 55

Dear Brethren and Sisters

This is the after lunch class and, let me tell you what I find! I'm worse on a Sunday night doing a lecture after tea, but what I find is this, if I fight it for the first half hour, I begin to wake up at about 7 o'clock, and then the second half is actually better than the first half. So that's my advice; struggle through it for a while and then you may find that suddenly you eyes begin to open!

In our last class you may remember, we looked at the Spirit of Christ in Isaiah chapter 40, and there was a contrast in Isaiah chapter 40 between flesh which is grass and the Creator 'who fainteth not'. And on the face of it, that doesn't seem like good news to be told that we're grass, that our glory will rapidly fade and wither away. Doesn't sound like it's an encouraging thing to learn, and yet it was the message of John the Baptist in preparing the people for the coming of their God. It was an essential requirement for the people to receive the Lord Jesus Christ, because unless they knew what they needed, they wouldn't recognize the remedy. Unless they understood that flesh is grass, they wouldn't understand the power of the One who had come to save them!

For the good news, the gospel that Isaiah 40 speaks of, is that although flesh is grass, the Word of God abides forever. And that Word of God which has that abiding quality, is the answer to the flesh that is grass. And this is explained for us in 1 Peter chapter 1; let's just have a look again at 1 Peter chapter 1. He opens up for us the understanding of Isaiah chapter 40. In verse 24 of 1 Peter chapter 1, he takes hold of Isaiah chapter 40 verses 6 and 8, 'For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof fadeth away; but the Word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the Word which by the gospel is preached unto you'. So there in verses 24 and 25 is the contrast, the grass which fadeth and falleth away, and the Word of God which endureth forever, and what he's saying is that, in that Word which endureth forever is the good news. This Word, by the good news preached is the answer to the problem of flesh.

Just back up to verse 23 there and see how the two things come together; He says, 'Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever'. The two come together in that the Word of God is a seed, an incorruptible seed, which planted in the hearts of men and women, causes them to be regenerated, not as corruptible plants, (it's not grass seed, it's the seed of the Word which abideth forever) So the product, the product of this seed is eternal life. In verse 23 the expression 'born again' is not there speaking of the woman giving birth, it's speaking of the role of the male in the conception of a child. 'Being begotten again' is the sense; the seed is the work of the Father, to redeem and to change you and I, from creatures subject to the law of sin and death, to new creatures subject to the law of righteousness and to life.

That idea in verse 23 of being 'begotten again' is itself taken from Isaiah's prophecy at chapter 55, and this is a chapter which really has the essence of the gospel message. Isaiah chapter 55, we think that the apostle Peter, is taking our thoughts to verse 10, where he is going to describe the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever, and its relationship to the believer. Verse 10 of Isaiah 55, 'For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my Word be that goeth forth out of my mouth', and there the expression in verse 10, 'maketh it bring forth' is the word to 'beget'. The rain coming down is the cause of the begetting of the growth of the earth, we'll look more closely at that in a little while, in its relationship to Mark's gospel record. For here in this verse is the 'seed' of the parable of the sower, which the Lord develops for us.

But we notice now, what Isaiah 55 is about. It is the spirit of Christ in his teaching to the people; it's an invitation, verse 1, 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters (that of course, is what the Lord Jesus cried with a loud voice in John chapter 7).

We'll go now to John chapter 6 and 7 and compare it with Isaiah chapter 55. The context in John 6 is that the enemies of the Lord were seeking Him, and this word 'seeking' is used quite a bit. It's there in John chapter 6 and verse 26, not the enemies now but the people, not in belief, but out of curiosity were seeking him. Verse 26 says, 'you seek me, not because you saw the miracles, but because ye did eat', and Isaiah 55 had an invitation 'Come ye buy and eat; wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?' You notice what the Lord says in John 6 and verse 27, 'Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life'. The Lord there, is making reference to Isaiah 55 and verse 2; why were they seeking Him for the natural bread miraculously provided that's true? While it wasn't the physical bread they ate that the Lord was concerned about, it was what it was the token of; He was the bread sent down from heaven that if a man eat, he shall live forever. But they couldn't see that; they were seeking purely the natural and why did they labour for that which satisfieth not? Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life'.

When we come to chapter 7, we find that the momentum in the camp of the enemies of the Lord, is 'gathering'. 'After these things, Jesus walked in Galilee for He would not walk in Jewry because the Jews sought to kill him'. In verse 19, He asks them at the end of verse 19, 'why do you go about (or why do you seek to kill me?' And they answered in verse 20, 'Who seeketh to kill thee?' But in verse 25, then said some of them of Jerusalem, 'Is not this whom they seek to kill?' And in verse 30, 'Then they sought to take Him', so the Lord says in verse 34, 'Ye shall seek me and shall not find me, and where I am thither ye cannot come'. And they puzzled about what He was speaking about, why was He using this word 'seek'? He knew what their plans were; He knew that they were looking for Him so that they might take Him. What was He referring to in verse 36?; they puzzled, what manner of saying is this that He said, 'ye shall seek Me and shall not find Me?' What manner of saying was it? what was the Lord thinking of? He was thinking of Isaiah 55 and verse 6, 'Seek ye the LORD while He may be found; call ye upon Him while He is near'. There would come a time when the LORD would not be found; 'ye shall seek Me and shall not find Me'. The Lord is directing attention to the appeal of the gospel; 'seek Yahweh while He may be found'; the time is short, if you thirst and hunger after righteousness, well, come to the source of that righteousness.

And having caused the people to puzzle over what He actually meant by the use of the word 'seek', in verse 37 it says, 'in the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried saying, 'if any man thirst let him come unto Me and drink', that was why it was the words of Isaiah 55 and verse 1, 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters', you see, the Lord was directing the attention of those who would listen to Isaiah 55. He was leading them up to that point, where He would make a dramatic announcement, 'if any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink'. But what was He offering? What was that meat that would really satisfy? Verse 3 of Isaiah 55, 'Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Behold, I have given Him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people', that's what He was drawing attention to. He was the One through whom that everlasting covenant could be offered to the people. He was the leader that could take them into the kingdom, not just for the Jews but the Gentiles also, for verse 5 says, 'Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that know not thee shall run unto thee because of the LORD thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for He hath glorified thee'.

That was the appeal of the gospel to those who were seeking, not those that were seeking out of curiosity, certainly not those that were seeking Him that they might catch Him. But those that were seeking Him because they thirsted and hungered after righteousness. They knew they were flesh, they desperately wanted that source of life that their soul might live. There was a condition of course, in verse 3 it says this is what you've got to do; you've got to incline your ear and come unto me and hear, and so Isaiah 55 says what they had to do. They had to have the listening ear and then in verse 6 they had to respond to what they'd heard by calling upon Him in the day of opportunity. And in verse 7 they had to change their ways; it wasn't just a matter of hearing and calling upon God. There was a turn around in life required, 'let the wicked

forsake his way, the unrighteous man his thoughts'. The thoughts of verse 7 are the plans, the schemes, the machinations of the wicked mind, the ambitions of this world. These are to be forsaken and the hearer must turn unto Yahweh, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God for He will abundantly pardon. That's what the Lord was directing their minds to, not to everybody. He didn't lay it before them to be trampled upon as pearls before swine; He gave them sufficient, He led the thoughts of those who are really listening to what He said, to the point when they would recognize the spirit of Christ in the prophets being fulfilled before their very eyes.

How was this power to come upon them? Isaiah 55 verses 10 and 11 describes for us the Word of God which is going to accomplish that purpose, so that those who are listening, those who have ears to hear might receive that which they seek after. You notice in verse 10, it is the Word of God that is going to accomplish it; it is the begetter of the new man. Verse 11, 'It shall not return unto Me void, it shall accomplish that which I please', and this is an important point for us to ponder on. Sometimes you may be like me, we fret over some of the things that have to be done in the truth, because we feel it's up to us really, when it comes down to it! and how we're going to accomplish what seems so difficult, with let us say, to convince an interested friend, or to bring up our children in the right way, or to solve a problem in our family or ecclesial life. And we can fret in it to a point where we may actually be missing the point of Isaiah 55. It is the Word of God, brethren and sisters, which is actually working, and what we are to be are vehicles or vessels of that Word. It isn't actually going to be us that's going to convince somebody in the right way, it's going to be the Word of God. And what we have to do is minister the Word, and when you think of it like that, it takes some of the pressure off. I think of that when we are preaching in Wales, where we get very little response to lectures and so on. Then, all of a sudden, along comes the American seminar, and it's amazing, all of a sudden, thirty people want to come and hear the Word of God! And we thought we had to have jazzy lecture titles; that we had to have super-duper colour presentations in order to excite and interest people. Some new angle, something very exciting and different, some swish presentation, some professional television sort of thing; and we tried that of course, spent huge amounts of money on it, and we get one or two people turning up. And you say, 'come and read the bible effectively', and you think, 'are you serious? that's the title? and all of a sudden 30 people come from 10,000 leaflets. 30 people, Welsh people not Americans, I mean, it works! It works in Wales, and everything they should do they do; when the notes say they'll be particularly impressed by this point; like take this chap, an unemployed Welshman, working class, down-to-earth, no pretences of education, we took him home and he says, 'that's amazing; do you know, those words that the Lord spoke on the cross, they're in Psalm 22'. And that's exactly what the note said they'd say, and it seems to me that we haven't trusted what Isaiah 55 is saying! that the Word of God needs to be presented before people and it will accomplish its work!

That's no excuse for us not to do our part and not to be willing servants, but it does change the focus a bit, from presenting something which is actually the creation of man, in the hope that it will attract people eventually to open their bibles, to a invitation to 'come and open your bible'. And I think that people in Britain are astonished to think that

it would work! It's revolutionary but it ought not to be revolutionary; we are the people of the book, and it's a blessing from God that we have such encouragement; to us it is a tremendous thing that after a year of seminars, one sequence of seminars, we still have 2 men coming to a weekly bible class in the home of one of our brethren.

That's never happened with our campaigns or special efforts; it just struck me that in Isaiah 55, there's some confidence, you know, and it's the same I believe with our children. Of course, we've got to start young; we can't really hope to achieve very much if we start in when it's too late, as far as the formation of their characters is concerned. When we start young, and we just lay the Word of God before our children as we do the daily readings, we can have a confidence, brethren and sisters, that the Word of God will accomplish God's purpose. That's all we need to do, to share the Word of God with our children; it's not really a question of drumming it into their heads. It's not really a question of teaching them the facts, so that they can, say pass the Sunday School exam. It's a question of helping them to hear what the Word says so that they are listening to the voice of God. It's a great difference I believe, in the way of doing things, when we think of it like that, because our youngsters may know all the facts, and yet they haven't been listening to what God says!

So in that sense, everyone of us has to discover the Word for himself or for herself. To open and read and listen, and if I may be allowed one antidote; it did impress me last week while I was in Trinidad visiting three little ecclesias, how powerful the bible readings were, in the lives of very poor families, with tremendous spiritual richness. When I went to do the readings with one young group, the grandfather had been in the truth a year, the mother for a year, and the children of varying ages through teenage; we spent an hour and a half doing the readings, they said a minimum of half an hour per reading, and the youngsters were alive throughout it all, and what impressed me was, as we did the reading and sort of explained it (didn't have to actually, because they knew). I thought I'd give them some background on the Samuel reading; I didn't need to give them any background! the two 11 year old girls were giving me the background, but you see, the reading wasn't finished when we did that, or when we understood the basic events of the chapter. Then, what they wanted was to know how that applied now? What are the lessons here? and in one household we spent almost half an hour on that, where perhaps in my own home we might have spent five minutes in applying the lesson or just getting the jest of what the lesson was, in that household we spent half an hour. And everyone from the youngest in the truth to the oldest, would volunteer applications of these principles, because they were listening to what the Word of God was saying to them, in their own circumstances. And that impressed me no end, more than anything else I found, that the daily bible readings were such a central part, it was the food day by day. And the reason it's so powerful is for verse 11, 'So shall my Word be; it shall not return unto Me void; it shall accomplish that which I please; it shall prosper in the thing whereto I send it'. It's not a matter of us converting others, it's the Word of God, so sometimes there are obstacles in that, in that we present our own thoughts as a barrier between the Word of God and those who will hear it. That's why we must be very careful that our exposition is sound, that we rightly divide the Word of truth. It's not a matter of saying, 'O, you read it for yourself!', we've got to help one

another. It is to give due diligence to the Word of God, to allow it to open up itself before us; and perhaps we found that as we study together, that the record speaks to us and it's not really the brother who's talking from the platform. All of a sudden, something clicks in our mind! We say, 'Gee, look, it fits! and we see it; it doesn't matter who told it to us; when we go away it's not bro. so-and-so's point; but have you seen what it says? and look at this! And then we know that we're on the same wave length. One brother described it as the 'Spirit's nervous system'; you can feel the 'buzz' when you see the point!

Let's see then how this is applied in Mark's gospel record. Notice in verse 10, 'The Word of God is the rain that comes down', and it gives seed to the sower. Now in the parable of the sower, the sower soweth the Word. So the seed is the Word as well; the rain is the Word, 'so shall My Word be that cometh forth out of My mouth'; but the seed is also the Word, so how can that be? Of course, the Lord Jesus Christ was the Sower; and into the Sower the Word of God came down from heaven. It filled Him, He was full of the Word; He was the Word made flesh. So full was the Sower of the Word, that He had seed to sow that could grow to make bread for the eater. So in that verse, we believe the Lord Jesus Christ is the Sower referred to, who is full of the rain that has distilled down from heaven, the Word of His Father. And through the Sower that Word is dispersed into different sorts of soil. And in one sort of soil, it grows up to be fruitful. So that's what Mark chapter 4 is telling us.

I just briefly want to introduce the gospel record of Mark, just to see where we are in the scheme of things. We looked at the early verses when we looked at Malachi and Isaiah 40, the preparation of the work and the call of the gospel that was involved, and the Lord comes with power, power to call disciples, to teach with authority, to heal and cleanse, indeed, the power to forgive. And this power is going to be used to make a new start, new wine in new bottles, new clothe is required, a new foundation and a new household. That's what we believe was the force of the record in Mark, as it takes us through that selection of incidents which builds up a picture of the work of the Son of God. And the way in which this power is going to make a new beginning is through the Word; so we have a section from chapter 4 to chapter 5, which describes for us, the power of the Word of God. Now, let me just complete the scheme to give you an overall impression of what we believe Mark is telling us. That Word of God then, is going to redeem Israel from uncleanness and death, through a wilderness journey, the stranger the Gentile, is also to be included. The way of the cross is the way in which that redemption is to be accomplished, as the Lord makes His way from Galilee to Jerusalem, the tenure of His ministry changes. And the excitement and bustle of the Galilean section of the ministry, suddenly begins to fade, as the Lord sets His face like a flint, towards the suffering at Jerusalem. He's going to come to His Father's house, 'and who may abide the day of His coming?' He's going to signify the cleansing process, the leprous house is to be destroyed and a new house is to be created, through the Passover Lamb and High Priest. Now that's what we believe Mark is sketching out for us in that selection of events.

Now, just in case you've gone to sleep, I was going to show some pretty pictures, for

those who are still awake, to feel invigorated ! What Mark has done is, to take us from the wilderness of Judeah where the Lord was tested, from the dry and barren place where He was put to the test, to Galilee. I've never been to the Land of Israel, but I'm told by I think, by most brethren and sisters who've been to the Land, that of all the places they've been to there, it is Galilee where they'd have liked to have stayed. Galilee has a special quality about it, a peacefulness, a tranquility and a clarity which comes into the mind when contemplating the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so in Mark chapter 4, this is where we are! 'He began again to teach by the seaside'. That sea which contained fish of all sorts, Galilee of the nations, what an appropriate place for the gospel message to be spelled out, that the disciples might be fishers of men. So that's where we are, we can have a mental picture of the Lord by the side of the sea of Galilee, full of fish of different sorts. And then He teaches them the parable of the sower, and in the spirit of Isaiah 55, which said, 'incline your ear, and come unto Me; hear and your soul shall live', the Lord begins in chapter 4 and verse 3 where He says, 'Hearken; behold there went out a sower to sow, that it might give seed to the sower and bread to the eater'. Hearken! adopt the spirit of Isaiah 55; incline your ear and hear! and this goes through the chapter doesn't it? in verse 23, the Lord says, 'If any man have ears to hear, let him hear!' And in verse 24 He says, 'Take heed what ye hear: and in verse 33 it says, 'And with many such parables spake He the word unto them, as they were able to hear it'. The stress then, is upon the hearing ear. Can we hear what the scriptures are teaching us in Mark chapter 4, as the Word is being ministered by the sower? Four types of soil; one, the seed actually doesn't take root, the fowls of the air come and devour it immediately. Those are they who never received the gospel; they hear it and show no interest in it. Some falls on stony ground; there is an immediate receiving of the Word, an enthusiastic response to the Word, but when times of testing come, there is no root therefore the plant withers; it's just like grass in that case, isn't it? It withers and fades, immediately they are offended. Mark uses a word more than any other New Testament writer, the word 'eutheos'; of the 80 occurrences of this word in the New Testament, half of them, 40 of 80 are in Mark's gospel record. The word 'eutheos' is translated 'straightway' 'immediately', 'forthwith' and 'anon'. When the Lord did something straightway it happened; when He said something, straightway they were healed. Immediately, you've got this tremendous build-up in chapter 1 especially; it's an interesting exercise for the concordance to just go and note those words.

Particularly interesting in chapter 4, because the word 'immediately' is used in verse 15 and verse 17, over the first two types of soil. Verse 15, 'And these are they by the way side, where the Word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts'. So they hear the gospel and as soon as they realize its implications, as soon as they realize there's a choice now! there's a turning away from the world implied in hearing, they drop it as fast as they can; it's too hot to handle! IMMEDIATELY they turn away. Verse 16, 'These are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the Word, immediately receive it with gladness; and have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the Word's sake, immediately they are offended'. So that's one sort of response; we may have those who are baptised with real enthusiasm and we're all so thrilled and delighted by the response, but illness or

trial of other sorts rapidly takes them away from the truth.

The next two types of soil are characterized by the absence of this word 'immediately'. This is where we need to hear here what the Lord is saying. Verse 18, 'These are they which are sown among thorns such as hear the Word and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the Word, and it becometh unfruitful'. There was no 'immediately' in that process; this should warn us. The cares of this world do not come upon us suddenly; the deceitfulness of riches don't explode in our lives; the lusts of other things enter in quietly; they creep in. We don't recognize them, our lives suddenly, no, it's not suddenly, gradually are choked, and before we realize it, our lives may be full of those things which make us unfruitful in the sight of God, or we wouldn't be here, brethren and sisters, if we were the sort that 'immediately' dropped our interest in the Word. But the last two types of soil we need to heed carefully! and ask ourselves where the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches and the lusts of other things, figure in our lives.

Verse 20, 'And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the Word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred. And He said unto them' (and we'll just stop there in verse 20). Verse 20, no 'immediately', no 'straightway'; isn't that true? The fruits of the Spirit don't just happen like that; that's a source of great disappointment to us! we might feel in our frustration, well, I haven't changed! I'm not really any better! But it is a gradual process, and that's developed for us in the next parable which the Lord takes up in verse 26.

'So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how', and isn't that based on Isaiah 55 as well? The seed is sown, it grows up, the farmer doesn't know how; all the farmer can do is sow the seed. It is the rain from heaven, the power of God, which causes the growth. It is the Word of God which will accomplish that which I please, says God. It's not the farmer; he doesn't make his crops grow; it's God who makes his crops grow, so what we have to do, brethren and sisters, is not fret over our lack of progress, and wonder how we can imagine ourselves better, by some mental effort. If I look in the mirror and think this, then my character is going to change; it's not the way it is! No amount of discussion, man to man, or whatever, is really going to change us deep down; it may solve the problem in our minds at the moment. What is going to change us is the Word of God in our hearts, and sometimes we've heard it in the past, study of God's word has been spoken of as if it were a negative thing. As if somehow this was an academic exercise which is divorced from the true things of the gospel which are to do with living the truth; as if there was a study over there, and a practice over there, and of course, it could be made like that by men; it could be made like that! But the Word of God is the power, so unless we are taking in that Word, unless we are listening to the voice of the living God, we're not going to be changed deep down. That's the importance, brethren and sisters, of personal bible study, and it doesn't matter if somebody else has found the point. It doesn't matter if everybody knows that; that's not what it's about! It's not surprising one another with some thing new. Oh! look what I found, because that would nullify what we're about. It is

actually quite a different thing altogether. It's listening to what God says; it's seeing the point; it's understanding the mind of God, so that slowly but surely, the mind of Christ is formed within us.

Now, that's not separate from 'living the truth'; it ought not to be. We learn about the gentleness of Christ and in learning of it, become a little more gentle in our own ways, for if we have been with Jesus, others will see that we've been with Jesus. It's a matter of getting so far into the Word, that we are with Christ, we are actually at the seashore there with Him, hearing what He has to say, taking to heart, and thereby taking the power of God into our thoughts. 'Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price'. That Word of God as we have seen, was seed to the sower, what about bread to the eater?

When we come into Mark chapter 6, we find the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000. The seed has been sown, and here in the enacted power of the miracle, bread is going to be given to the eater, to those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. And do you notice in verse 36 what the disciples say? 'Send them away, that they might go into the country round about and into the villages and buy themselves bread; for they have nothing to eat. And He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat; and they say unto Him, shall we go and buy 200 pennyworth of bread and give them to eat?' They didn't have enough money to buy enough bread to feed all those people; but what the Lord was going to teach them, is that you could have bread which was free; 'Come buy wine and milk without money and without price'. He that had no money was the appeal of Isaiah 55 verse 1, and the disciples say, 'where are we going to get bread from, we have no money?' That's exactly the point that the Lord wanted them to realize! He saith unto them, 'How many loaves have ye, go and see? And when they knew they say five and two fishes. So He commanded them to sit down upon the green grass, and He fed them'. Verse 42 says, 'And they did all eat, and were filled', and what was the Lord trying to show them? **THAT HE WAS THE ONE WHO WAS FULFILLING ISAIAH CHAPTER 55**, the One to whom those who were penniless could have that bread which would sustain them unto everlasting life. Of course, the disciples had trouble understanding it at that time.

When Jesus said to them in chapter 8 and verse 17, 'Why reason ye because ye have no bread; perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened? Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember? When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say to Him, twelve. And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven. And He said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?' They hadn't heard the spirit of Isaiah 55; they hadn't listened; they hadn't sought Him in the sense of the spirit of Christ in Isaiah 55. They would come to learn and understand, but that's what the Lord was really directing their minds to; it would give seed to the sower and bread to the eater. And so they took up twelve baskets full of fragments (we haven't finished yet!)

In Mark chapter 7, the Lord goes into the borders of Tyre and Sidon; He now goes into Gentile territory. Up to Isaiah 55 and verse 5 it indicated as much, that this gospel, this good news, was not going to be limited to the Jewish nation, but through them the hope of Israel was going to come to the Gentiles. 'Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee', and in Tyre and Sidon He could not be hid. And at verse 25 it says, 'A certain woman whose young daughter had an unclean spirit heard of Him', she was a woman with a listening ear and she came and fell at His feet. She sought Him in a time when He could be found! 'The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation', (the home territory of Jezebel); she was a Gentile through and through, but 'she besought Him that He would cast forth the demon out of her daughter. And Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled; for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs'. So here, the Sower was going to give bread to the eater, causes her to consider the spirit of the prophecy. She answered and said unto Him, 'Yes Lord, yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs'; they took up 12 baskets full of crumbs, what for? So that through the hope of Israel, the Gentiles might also be fed. And He said unto her, 'For this saying, go thy way; the demon hast gone out of thy daughter'.

What Mark has given us in the selection of incidents in the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, is the fulfillment of this prophecy, and of course, of many others, but especially now, we're thinking of Isaiah chapter 55. But that Word which should come down from heaven, would in the hands of the Sower, bring forth bread to the eater, both Jew and Gentile. It was the power to accomplish that which God pleases 'and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I send it'. Maybe then, with an understanding of these things, we'll have that open ear to listen day by day, dear brethren and sisters, to the Word of the living God.