

March 11, 2026 – Romans 10:8-17 & Mark 1:35-39

Early in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus begins his public ministry with a series of remarkable events. Everywhere he goes, crowds gather. The sick are brought to him. The demon-possessed cry out at his presence. And with a word, he heals. With a command, he casts out demons. His power is unmistakable.

It's no surprise that these miracles stand out when we read the Gospels. They're dramatic. They're memorable. They capture our imagination. A leper cleansed. A fever instantly gone. A demon fleeing at the command of Christ.

In many ways, that fascination is understandable. Miracles are extraordinary events. They interrupt the normal course of life and force people to stop and notice that something unusual is happening. And because they're so memorable, when you think about the contents of Jesus' ministry, it can feel like it was one long string of supernatural events.

But the miracles of Jesus, as striking as they are, don't actually take up most of his time. In reality, a relatively small amount of his years of earthly ministry were spent healing or casting out demons or other miraculous moments. Much more of his ministry was spent doing something far less remarkable.

He preached. Again and again the Gospels describe Jesus going from town to town and synagogue to synagogue preaching the Word of God. Teaching through parable and sermon about the nature of the kingdom of God. Calling for repentance and sharing the good news of God's love for sinners.

Preaching doesn't always leave the same impression that miracles do. It can seem ordinary and mundane and routine. Words spoken. Words heard. And yet, in our Gospel reading today, Jesus tells us something that forces us to reconsider that disinterest.

Because Mark describes how, after one of those sporadic occasions when Jesus did do a great many miracles, all in one day, the whole city seemed to be searching for him the next morning. They wanted more miracles, more healings, more displays of power. They thought that's why Jesus is here: to be a miracle worker.

But when the disciples find him, Jesus says something unexpected: *“Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.”* He doesn't say, “Let us go so that I may heal more people.” He doesn't say, “Let us go so that I may perform more miracles.” Instead he says, *“Let us go... that I may preach... for that is why I came out.”*

This is why he came. This is the purpose of his mission. The miracles matter, don't get me wrong. They reveal his authority. They confirm his identity. They show compassion for suffering people. But they're not the center of his mission. The center is the proclamation of the Gospel. Jesus came to preach.

And this tells us something important about how God works. Because I think we tend to hope and maybe even expect for God to work through dramatic displays of power. We want the spectacular. The visible. The extraordinary. We imagine that if God is truly at work, it must look impressive.

But again and again Scripture shows us that God works through ordinary means: water and the Word in Holy Baptism, bread and wine with the Word in the Lord's Supper, and the preaching of the Word, Law and Gospel. Just words spoken. A voice heard. It can seem almost too simple. And yet this is precisely the means that God has chosen.

In our reading from Romans, the apostle Paul explains how this works. *“The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart,”* he says, *“that is, the word of faith that we proclaim.”* Then Paul lays out the pattern by which salvation comes to people. *“If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”*

But that leads to an important question: *“How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?”* Faith requires hearing. *“And how are they to hear without someone preaching?”*

*“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”* That's how the ministry of the church works. Someone is sent. They preach. People hear. And through that hearing, faith is created. This is God's divine plan of salvation for us.

Because God doesn't ordinarily create faith through miracles. For every Peter or Paul, who believed because of a miraculous catch of fish or a Damascus road experience, there are a hundred Timothy's, who believed because his mother and grandmother taught him God's Word from his youth.

God doesn't ordinarily create faith through miracles. He creates faith through the preaching of Christ. He creates faith through the Word. The Word carries the promise of the Gospel. The Word announces what Christ has done. The Word tells us that the Son of God took on our flesh. That He bore our sins. That He went to the cross for our salvation. That He rose again in victory over death. That He did all of this for us.

When that Word is preached, the Holy Spirit is at work creating faith, forgiving sins, and giving life. This is why Christ came to preach, because the preaching of the Gospel is how the salvation He won on the cross is delivered to sinners. As Luther writes in the Small Catechism: *“the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel.”* The Word brings Christ and all His saving benefits to those who hear it.

But this also explains something about the mission of the church. The church is the body of Christ in the world, the continuation of His ministry. But that means we have to understand the ministry of Christ before we understand our ministry.

And, as we've established, it's not primarily a ministry of miracles. The church doesn't gather every week to perform spectacular signs. Instead, the church does something that looks remarkably ordinary. We gather together, we listen, we hear the Scriptures, and the Gospel is preached week after week and year after year. The same message is proclaimed again and again: Christ crucified for us.

It may not seem very exciting. It can even feel pretty repetitive. The world might look at this and say, *“Is this really all the church does?”* But in reality something far greater is happening.

When the Gospel is preached, Christ himself is speaking. The same Christ who went from town to town in Galilee proclaiming the kingdom of God is still proclaiming it today, through his church and through the preaching of his Word. Through that Word faith is created, sins are forgiven, and dead hearts are made alive.

This is the hidden power of the Gospel. It doesn't always look dramatic. In fact, it often looks quite ordinary. But it is the very power of God for salvation. What happens week after week in the preaching of the Word is not small or routine. It is not merely a human activity. It is Christ continuing His mission, the mission he described when he said, *“Let us go... that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.”*

He came to preach, and now His church preaches. Not because we have anything new to invent and not because we can perform miracles. But because we have been entrusted with the Word. The Word of Christ. The Word that brings salvation.

So we keep doing this work day after day and week after week. The Word is proclaimed. The Gospel is announced. Christ crucified and risen is preached once again.

Through that Word, God is at work. Creating faith where there was unbelief. Giving hope where there was despair. Bringing life where there was death. It may look ordinary, but it is nothing less than the work of Christ for us. For as the apostle says, *“Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”* Amen.