I. **Announce:**
   A. No Children at Risk Mtg today...but Kel has asked for the planning committee if you can jot down your thoughts & evaluations that would be very helpful.
   C. Starting the Book of **Esther Intro** on Wed night!
      1. It shows Gods Sovereignty & His care for His people.
      2. The book of Esther testifies clearly to the “invisible hand of Providence!”
      3. Also, come hear how the nursery rhyme “twinkle, twinkle little star” - the Movie “300” - & the movie “A star is born” all tie into Esther!

II. **Intro:**
   A. Last week we talked about not being able to put new wine into old wine skins.
      1. Well, the new wine Jesus sought to bring them did just that.
      2. We witness this morn the 1st rips in their old, stale, brittle, wine skins of their religion
   B. Strap on your 1st century sandals we’re going to take a walk with Jesus this morning to 4 different locations:
      1. We are heading for the synagogue…but on the way there we must pass through a Field of Grain.
      2. Next, we’ll make it to the Synagogue for Shabbat morning service.
      3. After this we’ll take a walk down to the Lake.
      4. Then later retire up to the Mountains for some much needed R&R!
   D. Did you know that odds against bowling a perfect 300 in the game are about 225,000 to one!
      1. One bowler appropriately collapsed when he qualified to join that brotherhood of 300.
      2. Yet another bowler just couldn’t bring himself to play the final ball of an otherwise perfect game. Instead he silently packed his shoes and ball and walked out - and never again set foot inside a bowling alley!
         a) How do you handle pressure?
   E. Here is an instruction on how to react to hungry pythons, as given to Peace Corpsmen serving in Brazil - “Remember not to run away, the python can run faster. The thing to do is to lie flat
on the ground on your back with your feet together, arms at your side, head well down. The python will then try to push its head under you, experimenting at every possible point. Keep calm (that was underscored). “You must let him swallow your foot. It is quite painless and it will take a long time. If you lose your head and struggle, he will quickly whip his coils around you. If you keep calm and still, he will go on swallowing. Wait patiently until he has swallowed up to about your knee. Then carefully take out your knife and insert it into the distended side of his mouth and with a quick rip slit him up.” [I don’t know I could handle that pressure] :)

F. The pressure in Jesus’ life came from 2 main sources…The Religious establishment and His popularity w/people! [see crush(9) & pressed(10) to fall upon]

1. Are you experiencing crushing pressure in your life today? How do you deal w/ pressure? How should you? How did Jesus deal with His?

G. Jesus fully understands 21st century mankind & all our built up pressures!

1. Paul said, We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed (2 Cor.4:8a) - it carries the idea of “pressure”.
2. Pressed but not squished! - They were under pressure like grapes being squeezed by a winepress.
3. Let’s watch how Jesus handles Himself in the pressure cooker situations, & what specific steps He takes when the pressure rises!

III. JESUS’ COMMON SENSE! (2:23-28)

A. The issue wasn’t eating someone’s else’s grain. - Deut.23:25 When you come into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not use a sickle on your neighbor's standing grain. – The issue was what day they did it!

1. All work was forbidden on this day.
2. “Work” was classified under 39 different headings.
   a) Four of these headings were “Reaping, Threshing, Winnowing, & Preparing a meal.” [explain: pluck, rub, blow, eat]
   (1) They technically broke all 4 of these!

B. This story is taken from 1 Sam.21:1-6. And, Ex.25:23-30 gives the details of this bread.

1. 12 loaves were placed on this golden table in front of the Holy of Holies.
   a) Table= 3’(L) x 1 ½’ (w) x 1 ½’ (h)
2. This was a type of offering to the Lord, then as it was replaced weekly, only the priests were allowed to eat it.

C. The point? - Persons are far more important than rituals. The best way to use sacred things is to use them to help men!

1. Read “The 4th Wise Man” legend. (from Barclay)
2. Again, The best way to use sacred things is to use them to help men!
D. Note the pressure Jesus was facing having…the religious leaders birddogging his every move.

IV. JESUS’ COURAGE! (3:1-6)
A. Other writings let us know he was not born with this, but some illness had taken the strength from him.
   1. We have a few fragments from “The Gospel according to Hebrews” (an Apocryphal N.T. book) [which were never deemed cannon, but were quoted from the early church fathers] It said that this man was a stone mason & that he sought Jesus to heal him, for his livelihood was in his hands & he was ashamed to beg.
B. The law of the day was that you couldn’t give medical attention on the Sabbath unless their life was in danger! [He obviously wasn’t]
C. He asks him to step forward, or arise into the midst (3).
   1. Maybe to try to awaken, one last time, sympathy for this man.
   2. And probably to make sure everyone could see what was about to take place!
D. Their rigidity to keep the law actually led them to abuse it far worse then they even think Jesus did! (Their rigidity led to hate & murder!)
   1. Jesus was able to look behind the law to see how they were intended for our benefit
   2. Their religion was loving ritual; Jesus religion was loving God & loving man.
   3. Jesus was people-centered; the Pharisees were law-centered!
   4. The Pharisees made a huge mistake that many still make today, this idea that you actually can domesticate real faith into humanly attainable standards. (a 1000 x’s NO!)
E. Again note the pressure Jesus was facing having…”the religious leaders plotting to kill Him.”
   1. Let’s see how the common people are responding to Him?

V. JESUS’ COMPASSION! (3:7-12)
A. (7) Jesus never withdrew out of fear! - Nor ran from His problems! - Nor was he afraid to face the music!
   1. Simply…His time was not yet come!!! [There was still much He had to say & do!]
B. (9) There is a job for everyone, even if only holding a little boat for Him!
   1. Oh the pleasure of simply being the door keeper in the house of the Lord; or loosing Jesus’ sandals; or here just holding His little get-away boat?
C. Again note the pressure Jesus was facing having to have…”the motor running & the doors open, for a quick get away!”
VI. JESUS’ CALL! (3:13-19)

A. Well, let’s now look at “3 pressure release valves” Jesus pulls to release the steam from the pressure cooker of life!
   1. Again be asking yourself…How do I deal with pressure? - How should I? - How did Jesus deal with His?

B. 3 ways to pounce Pressure: Get Alone; Get Praying; Get Help.

C. Get Alone (13)
   D. He got away by Himself! (Does it say that?)
      1. Lk.6:12 Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself.

E. Interesting, the Son of Man came to save man, but at times needed to get away from man! :)

F. Yep, step one is to get off the treadmill of life & sit!
   1. These times are essential to our whole-being & our well-being.
   2. As Vance Havner you to say, “If we don’t follow Christ’s example to come apart, we may indeed, just come apart!”
   3. Allow Him to become irresistible again to you!
   4. Allow silence into your cluttered-loud-world! – Go park in the park; sit in a church sanctuary; find a hiking path up on the Plateau; get up early before the family; stay awake when everyone else is asleep. Find/make your silence.
   5. Every day we need at least a few minutes, as well as extended times on a regular basis. [So, Get Alone!]

G. Get Praying (Lk.6:12)

H. Prayer drives us to Himself! – Prayer doesn’t pull God toward my will, but helps me to align w/ His will!

I. Sir George Adam Smith tells how he and his guide were climbing the Weisshorn in the Swiss Alps. It was stormy and they were making their climb on the sheltered side of the peak. When they reached the summit, they were filled with the exhilaration. Sir George forgot about the fierce winds, leaped up and was nearly blown over the edge to the glacier below! The guide grabbed hold of him and exclaimed: “On your knees, sir! You are safe here only on your knees!”

J. [So, Get Alone & Get Praying]

K. Get Help (14-19)

L. Jesus wasn’t afraid to share His responsibilities!
   1. Like Moses father–in-law Jethro’s advice given in Exodus 18.
2. Like Paul's to Timothy, And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

3. We also need other men & women to share the load.

M. [So, Get Alone & Get Praying & Get Help]

N. **2 questions are answered here:** How Jesus would make His message **permanent**? & How He would make His message **duplicatable**?

1. He chose men whose heart He could write His message on, & who would go out from his presence to carry it abroad!

O. By *worldly standards*...these men had no qualifications at all!

1. Not wealth, no special positions, no special education, not trained theologians, not high ranking churchmen, they were **12 ordinary men**!
2. 12 ordinary men that were appointed, actually He *made them* (lit.)
3. What they had going for them was: [1] they were **attracted to Jesus** & [2] they had **courage** to show they were on His side!
4. These guys had all sorts of faults...but they *loved Jesus* & they *weren't afraid to tell the world about Him*...That sounds like the definition of a Christian!!!

P. **We are called to 2 purposes:** [1] to be with Him & [2] to be sent out by Him.

1. To be w/Him – Have you found Him as the *Irresistible* Savior?
2. To be sent out by Him - You have to be *won* in order to *win* others!

Q. **We are equipped for 2 purposes:** [1] to Preach & [2] to have Power!

1. Preach – Jesus gave them something to say!
2. Power – because they kept company with Him, his power was in their lives!

R. **Illustration:** *There are 2 ways of handling pressure:*

   **One** is illustrated by a *bathysphere*, the miniature submarine used to explore the ocean in places so deep that the *water pressure* would *crush* a conventional submarine like an aluminum can. Bathyspheres compensate with *plate steel several inches thick*, which keeps the water out but also makes them heavy and hard to maneuver. Inside they're cramped. When these craft descend to the ocean floor, however, they find they're not alone. When their lights are turned on and you look through the tiny, thick plate glass windows, what do you see? *Fish!*

   *These fish* cope with *extreme pressure in an entirely different way.* They don't build thick skins: they remain supple and free. They *compensate* for the *outside pressure* through *equal and opposite pressure* *inside themselves*. Christians, likewise, don't have to be hard and thick
skinned - as long as they appropriate God's power within to equal the pressure without.

S. Pressed out of measure and pressed to all length,
   Pressed so intently, it seems beyond strength,
   Pressed in the body, and pressed in the soul,
   Pressed in the mind till the dark surges roll,
   Pressure by foes, and a pressure by friends,
   Pressure on pressure till life nearly ends.
   Pressed into knowing no helper but God,
   Pressed into loving the staff and the rod,
   Pressed into liberty where nothing clings,
   Pressed into faith for impossible things,
   Pressed into living a life in the Lord,
   Pressed into living a Christ-life outpoured.

The Disciplines of Life, by V. Raymond Edman, (Minneapolis: World Wide Publ., 1948), p. 16.

4 pictures:

T. Picture a Tea Bag
   1. When you place a tea bag in hot water, it doesn't change. But the hot water reveals what was already in the tea bag.

U. “People are like teabags; you never know how strong they are until they’re put in hot water.”
   1. We think of the scent given off when a Rose Petal is stepped on & crushed.

V. Picture a Rose Petal
   1. We think of the scent given off when a Rose Petal is stepped on & crushed.

W. Picture a lump of Coal
   1. We think of Coal being under tremendous pressure being formed into Diamond.
      And this is done in a very dark place.
      a) Most natural diamonds are formed at high temperature and pressure at depths of 87-120 miles in the earth mantle.
   2. Every pressure that comes your way in your home life, in college, in your employment, will make you either bitter or better! [The struggle is just part of the journey!]

X. Picture a water-saturated sponge.
   1. If we push down with our finger even slightly, water runs out onto the table. We immediately know what fills the interior pockets of the sponge.