

A STUDY OF
Mark



© 2024 Fellowship Bible Church of Northwest Arkansas

Scriptures taken from NIV unless otherwise noted THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION ©, NIV ©, Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. © Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Curriculum may be copied and used for personal and ministry purposes, as long as content remains unchanged.

All artwork is provided by local artists in connection with Fellowship Bible Church of Northwest Arkansas.

content

- 18** The King's Introduction
- 24** The King's Authority to Forgive Sins
- 30** The King's Power Over Disease and Death
- 36** The King's Provision
- 42** The King's Deity
- 48** The King's True Identity
- 54** The King's Glory
- 60** The King's Service
- 66** The King's Arrival
- 72** The King's Controversies
- 78** The King's Commandment
- 84** The King's Predictions
- 90** The King's Return
- 96** The King's Anointing
- 102** The King's Humiliation
- 108** The King's Sacrifice
- 114** The King's Victory

Welcome to the Gospel of Mark

If you were going to write about the life of Jesus, where would you start?

Matthew opens his gospel account with a genealogy, grounding Jesus' story in the historical significance of Abraham's family. Luke provides a highly personal look into the events leading up to Jesus' birth. John's stunning prologue echoes Genesis, emphasizing Jesus' oneness with God in the beginning...

Then there's Mark.

"The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God..."
(Mark 1:1)

Right off the bat, Mark announces Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God and charges into a rapid-paced narrative characterized by the word "immediately," which he repeats 41 times.

As modern readers from a distant nation, we're unfamiliar with many places Mark mentions from scene to scene, but we almost get the picture of Jesus zigzagging across the map with a fiery sense of urgency. He goes about teaching with authority, driving out demons, and healing the sick. He calms a storm and even raises a girl from the dead. We get story after story of evidence pointing to Jesus' authority.

The narrative dramatically builds to Peter's declaration that this man is, in fact, the Messiah (Mark 8:29). Then, there is a surprising twist...

Despite numerous displays of His power and right to rule, Jesus shares a shocking message:

“He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the law and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.” (Mark 8:31)

Our study of the Gospel of Mark will focus on the kingship of Jesus, but how this king came into His rule will challenge our ideas of power. Jesus says surprising things like:

“For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:45)

In the same breath, Jesus both identifies Himself as the King, assigning Himself the title “Son of Man” from the prophecies of Daniel, and as the “Suffering Servant,” written about by the prophet Isaiah.

He is the one who has the right and power to rule, yet He will ascend to His throne by death on a cross, which no one, not even His closest disciples, expected.

Many of them saw Jesus’ crucifixion as a defeat until, days later, they found His tomb empty and were left wondering, “Could this all have been God’s plan to save for Himself a people through His Son, Jesus — the Servant King?”

Welcome to the Gospel of Mark.

Artist's Note

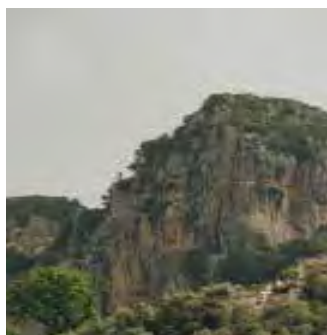
The Gospel of Mark captures the paradox of the Gospel of Jesus. It focuses on themes of *reversal, irony, and the upside-down kingdom*; Jesus is the King who rules and the King who serves. It captures the contrast between the expectation and reality of what the King and His rule will be like, as well as displaying how Jesus changes everything. He makes the unclean, clean and the blind to see. All of this *contrast and duplicity* is told within the context of Jesus' life and ministry.

With that in mind, diptychs (a pair of images used to tell a story or convey a message) were chosen to accompany this Mark Study Journal. Diptychs in the early church were used for a few purposes, but artistically they were often used to portray scenes from Jesus' life, displayed within the church.

The artwork in this book aims to communicate themes of contrast and paradox in the Gospel of Mark through the pairing of images.

All art was created by local Northwest Arkansas artists.

Prayerfully, this art inspires you to meditate on who Jesus is and how He has revealed Himself in the Gospel of Mark.



About

When you think about the inner circle of Jesus, the names that come to mind are likely John, James, and Peter. And we'd hope, and perhaps even expect, that these closest companions of Jesus would have written accounts about their time with Jesus.

We have John's gospel, his three smaller letters, and Revelation.

We have two letters from Peter to the early churches, but given how prominent a character Peter is in the gospels and Acts, we might wonder, "Why didn't Peter write a full gospel account?" Matthew and John both recorded their experiences as disciples of Jesus, so why don't we have an account from Peter? Well, most scholars would say that we do.

As early as 140AD, early church fathers accepted the book of Mark as Peter's account of Christ's life. Papias, quoting from "the Elder," likely John, wrote this:

"The Elder said this also: Mark, who became Peter's interpreter, wrote accurately, though not in order, all that he remembered of the things said or done by the Lord. For he had neither heard the Lord nor been one of his followers, but afterward, as I said, he had followed Peter, who used to compose his discourses with a view to the needs of his hearers, but not as though he were drawing up a connected account of the Lord's sayings. So Mark made no mistake in thus recording some things just as he remembered them. For he was careful of this one thing, to omit none of the things he had heard and to make no untrue statements therein."

When we read Mark's gospel, we read the memoirs of Peter's experience with Jesus.

Papias' statement also alerts us that the order of events in the book of Mark might not follow a strict chronology. Still, Mark carefully recorded the events precisely as Peter described them. But who is Mark?

The first time we meet him in the New Testament, he is identified by his full name, John Mark (Acts 12:12). He is also identified as a "helper" to Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:5), and Colossians 4:10 reveals him as a cousin of Barnabas.

On that journey, Mark angered Paul so much that he refused to take Mark with him on his next missionary trip. Barnabas and Paul fought over this and went their separate ways (Acts 15:36-39). While Mark largely disappears from the narrative after this, we see several references to him again in the epistles. Apparently, he and Paul reconciled because Paul tells the Colossian church and Philemon to welcome Mark (Col 4:10, Phlm 24) and says Mark is helpful to him in his ministry in his second letter to Timothy (2 Tim 4:11). Significantly, Peter mentions Mark as his son in the faith (1 Peter 5:13), with him in Rome at the time he was writing his first epistle.

There is some debate about the exact time the book was written. While some hold to a date in the 60sAD, most believe the Gospel of Mark was completed in the mid to late 50sAD, coinciding with Peter's time in Rome. The time of writing is important when comparing Mark to the other gospel accounts. Many believe the Gospel of Mark was the first gospel account written and that Matthew and Luke relied on Mark as a source when they wrote their Spirit-inspired accounts of the life of Jesus. These three books are referred to as "the synoptic gospels" ("synoptic" meaning "the same eye") because of their similarities. If Mark was the first written gospel, this careful recording of Peter's recollections set the template for other biblical accounts of Christ's life and ministry.

Reading the Gospel of Mark

The gospel of Mark rewards repeated readings. Each time we pick up this deceptively simple book, we notice something new.

Often, we study a book of the Bible one small section at a time, mining each passage for truth and application. While this approach has its benefits, we can miss more significant themes of a book if we only read it in short bursts. After all, we don't typically watch a movie for the first time by pausing after every scene. We certainly wouldn't skip ahead to the action sequences and miss essential plot points. No, we take the story in all at once, letting the scenes build upon one another and blend into a whole experience that transports us to a different place and time.

The book of Mark can do that for us if we just sit down and read it. We can experience a day in the life of Jesus and His disciples. We can hear the air of mystery in Jesus' teaching through parables. We can wonder, along with the eyewitnesses, at His dazzling displays of power. And we can feel the pain and isolation of His sacrifice before the thrill of His resurrection victory.

So, let's begin our experience together in this gospel by reading it — all of it — at once.

After we've read the book all the way through, we will return for a closer look, working through it passage by passage to fully appreciate the details.

The daily readings in this guide will direct our focus to key scenes in the Gospel of Mark. In addition to Mark's passages, we'll explore other scriptures showing how this gospel aligns with the Bible. Mark deliberately documented and organized Peter's account, shaping thematic connections throughout.

As we work through this incredible book, keep an eye out for these literary and structural features:

The Structure of Mark¹

Mark divides easily into two major units that form the central theme of our study.

The first section of Mark focuses on the authority of Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God (1:1-8:26). It is in these chapters that we will see Jesus' authority (1:14-3:12), His teaching (3:13-6:6) and His mission (6:7-8:26).

The second section describes Him as the Suffering Servant (8:27-16:8). This section opens with Peter's bold confession in 8:29, "You are the Messiah." Here we will see Jesus' instructions to the disciples (8:27-10:52), His confrontations in Jerusalem (11:1-13:37), and finally, His death and resurrection (14:1-16:8).

¹ Adapted from *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* by Mark L. Strauss

Geography in Mark

Another interesting structural marker is the geography of the book. After an introductory section (1:1-13), the action takes place in and around Galilee (1:14-8:21). The middle section of the book occurs on the way to Jerusalem (8:22-10:52), with the book concluding with the events in Jerusalem (11:1-16:8). This geographic structure gives the reader a sense of the relentless movement of the life of Christ to the cross and ultimately to His resurrection.



The “Sandwich” Technique in Mark

Another element to look for in our study of Mark is something called “intercalation” — also called the “sandwich” technique. Notice how Mark often begins sharing about an event only to interrupt it with a different event and then return to the original story. By this method, the writer relates two distinct events and uses one to comment on the other.

A famous example is the cursing of the fig tree: Jesus curses a fig tree, then we see Him clearing the Temple, and then He returns to find the fig tree withered (11:12-25). This order of events shows that the clearing of the Temple and the withering of the fig tree both speak to the failure of Israel to produce the fruit that God desired. As we read, look for other examples of events that seem “sandwiched” in the middle of another story and consider if this is an intentional move by the author to communicate something important.

Mystery and Irony in Mark

The Gospel of Mark carries an air of mystery. It all starts with the proclamation, “The time has come... the kingdom of God has come near” (1:15). Jesus gradually reveals His powerful identity through miracles and teachings, though He repeatedly instructs His followers to keep His identity a secret.

Mark uses irony to draw his readers’ attention to the very things the crowds and even the earliest followers of Jesus failed to see: this all-powerful king was also the Suffering Servant. Perhaps the most apparent revelation of Jesus comes during what appeared to be the lowest point of shame and defeat, His death on the cross. A Roman soldier, of all people, proclaims, “Surely this man was the Son of God!” (15:39b). As one scholar put it, “The identity of Jesus as the mysterious embodiment of Israel’s God can never be separated from his identity as the crucified One.”²

As we read this Gospel together, let’s engage it with our minds and hearts. Let’s allow ourselves to be captivated by the mystery and the wonder of the gospel story as we see the mighty creator God of Israel take on flesh, walk among us, and conquer sin and death.

May the Holy Spirit work in each of us as we open this Gospel together.

² From *Echoes of the Scriptures in the Gospels* by Richard B. Hayes

The Mark Study Journal is laid out in weekly sessions with resources for daily engagement to help us grow together.

Each session includes the following:

- scripture passage for the week
- contextual introduction to aid in the study of the week's passage
- observation, interpretation, and application prompts to accompany the week's passage
- daily readings to guide your study through the week
- discussion questions to help you process the passage in personal and small group settings

Use this journal wherever you study Mark—in your personal time with God, in small group meetings, and in corporate worship. Together, let us hear afresh the good news of Jesus the King.



*"Torn Open" by Rachel Borntrager
11"x14" ink, acrylic, and pastel on raw canvas*



week one

THE KING'S INTRODUCTION

Mark 1:1-15

The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, ² as it is written in Isaiah the prophet:

“I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way”—

³ “a voice of one calling in the wilderness,
‘Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.’”

⁴ And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

⁵ The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. ⁶ John wore clothing made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ And this was his message: “After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸ I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

The Baptism and Testing of Jesus

⁹ At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

¹² At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, ¹³ and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

Jesus Announces the Good News

¹⁴ After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵ “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”

week one

Mark's opening words signal the importance of the story he will tell.

Quoting one of Israel's most prominent prophets, Isaiah (and Malachi, too), Mark signals that this story is the continuation of one that began long ago — the story of God's people, Israel, passed along through the centuries in the Hebrew scriptures. It is a story filled with prophecies pointing to one who was to come. This story now finds its fulfillment in Jesus, the Messiah and King of the world.

A revival is underway as the "whole Judean countryside" responds to the call of John the Baptist to repent and prepare for the coming of Israel's promised King (Mark 1:5). After years of prophetic silence, a new spokesman for God has appeared. Every detail about John, even his clothing, echoes back to the time of the prophet Elijah (2 Kings 1:8). While Mark's summary of the Baptist's ministry seems brief, it is loaded with expectation: A mighty King is coming and with Him the Holy Spirit.

The baptism of Jesus of Nazareth removes all doubt about who the identity of this "coming one" might be. Jesus sees "heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove" (Mark 1:10).

The "tearing" of heaven recalls Isaiah 64:1, which depicts the heavens torn open and God coming down. When God speaks from heaven, "You are my Son, whom I love" (Mark 1:11), we have an incredible picture of the Trinity as Father, Son, and Spirit are each identified in this baptismal moment. With the Father's announcement underscoring His unique identity as the Son of God, we see Jesus led by the Spirit into the desert.

Mark's treatment of the temptation of Jesus is also brief, encompassing only two verses. Yet, this introduces the reader to the repeated displays of Jesus' authority over demons as the narrative unfolds.

The stage is set for Jesus to begin his Galilean ministry with a simple proclamation:

"The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"
(Mark 1:15).

daily readings

Day 1 Mark 1:1-15

Day 2 Luke 3:1-18

Day 3 Matthew 4:1-11

Day 4 Mark 1:16-28

Day 5 Luke 5:1-11

Day 6 Mark 1:29-39

Day 7 Mark 1:40-45

observation

Underline each place named in the text, including non-specific places like “the wilderness.” Mark uses geographic markers throughout his gospel to develop themes throughout the narrative.

interpretation

Do you notice any shared themes or phrases that connect the three sections of today’s passage (1-8, 9-13, and 14-15)?

application

What’s a specific area of your life where you need to “repent and believe the good news” (1:15)? What would repentance from that entail?

discussion questions

Share about a time you received really good news. How did you hear the news? How did you respond?

John the Baptist came to “prepare the way for the Lord” (1:3). Why does it matter that this was an Old Testament prophecy? What did John the Baptist do to prepare the way for Jesus?

What was the role of baptism in John the Baptist’s message? Jesus had nothing to repent of, so why do you think he wanted to be baptized? What is the baptism of the Holy Spirit predicted by John in verse 8?

What is the significance of Jesus, the Spirit, and the Father interacting in verses 10-11? How does this build Mark’s argument that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God (1:1)?

What does it mean that the Kingdom of God has come near? How is this message still important today? What is our part in proclaiming and demonstrating the truth of this message?

artist's note

“Using a variety of soaking techniques and dozens of layers of ink, acrylic paint, and pastel, I chose to honor the moment in Mark 1 where the Holy Trinity— Father, Son, and Holy Spirit— is revealed in powerful exchange of blessing: ‘You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.’ With the fluidity of paint, I chose to represent the Spirit; with golden lines, the voice of the Father; and with the raw canvas (earth grown-fibers), I chose to represent Christ incarnate.”





*“Mark 2:1-12” by Matt Turner
digital photography*



week two

THE KING'S AUTHORITY TO
FORGIVE SINS

Mark 2:1-12

A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. ² They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. ³ Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. ⁴ Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. ⁵ When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

⁶ Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, ⁷ "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

⁸ Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? ⁹ Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? ¹⁰ But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the man, ¹¹ "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." ¹² He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

week two

Jesus returns from His travels around Galilee to His temporary home in Capernaum, a small village on the Sea of Galilee. Word quickly spreads that the miracle-working teacher is there, and soon, the house and surrounding streets fill with people seeking to hear Him speak.

One group struggles to get through the crowd, carrying their paralyzed friend. They know Jesus can heal him, but they can't even get close enough to ask Him. In their determination to get their friend to Jesus, they lift him onto the roof, pull apart the tiles, and lower him into the room where Jesus is teaching.

Jesus interprets their persistence and effort as a show of their faith, but He doesn't immediately heal the man. Instead, Jesus says his sins are forgiven. This statement stirs up controversy among the religious leaders — a theme we'll see throughout the book. Anticipating their objections, Jesus validates His authority to forgive sin by healing the paralytic.

During this miracle, Jesus refers to Himself as "The Son of Man," a title echoing the Old Testament prophet Daniel (Daniel 7:13), in which God gives a figure called the Son of Man authority and a kingdom.

As the paralyzed man stands and walks, everyone marvels at the miracle, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!" (Mark 2:12).

As impressive as the miracle is by itself, let's be careful not to miss the Man. In this scene, Jesus has made an enormous claim about His identity. He has the authority to heal and, even more astounding, the authority to forgive sins.

daily readings

Day 1 Mark 2:1-12

Day 2 Mark 2:13-28

Day 3 Mark 3:1-19

Day 4 Mark 3:20-35

Day 5 Mark 4:1-20

Day 6 Mark 4:21-41

Day 7 Mark 5:1-20

observation

Underline words that speak of Jesus' authority, put a box around parts that indicate controversy, and circle the words "sin" and "forgive." Note any contrasts in the passage.

interpretation

What is the relationship between forgiveness of sins and healing in this passage? Note the contrast in the reaction of the teachers of the law and the people who had gathered to hear Jesus.

application

Where do you need to seek the healing words of Jesus in your life? Spend some time in prayer about this.

discussion questions

Who is your “call at 2 AM” friend? Who do you know would be there for you no matter what? How did you develop that kind of relationship with them? Share with the group.

What do you think the paralyzed man and his friends were thinking when they arrived to find crowds outside the door of the home where Jesus was speaking? What do you imagine the man was thinking as his friends hoisted him onto the roof or when they lowered him into the room where Jesus was?

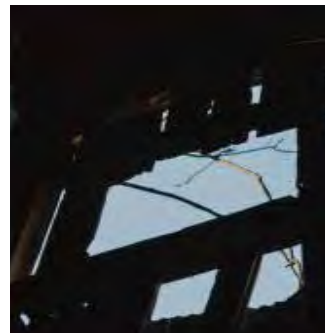
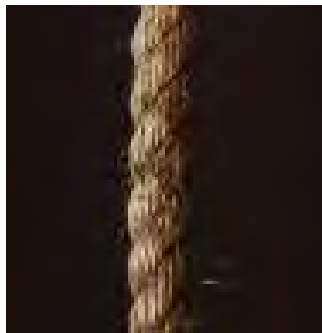
Why does the statement “your sins are forgiven” spark thoughts of blasphemy in the minds of the religious leaders? How does healing the man prove that Jesus has the authority to forgive sins? Which is easier to say, “Get up and walk” or “Your sins are forgiven”? Which is easier to do, forgive sins, or heal a paralyzed person?

What is the role of faith in this story? Whose faith does Jesus commend? Why does Jesus emphasize faith when He addresses them? How would faith change the attitude of the teachers of the law? What do you think happened to the faith of those who witnessed the miracle?

Where do you see yourself in the story? Are you in the crowd, straining to see and hear Jesus? Are you the paralyzed man needing the healing touch and forgiveness of Jesus? Are you the friends laboring to bring your friend to Jesus? Or are you the teachers of the law, unable to accept something new that’s right in front of you?

artist's note

“I was very excited to capture these photos because this is my favorite piece of scripture. These photos share two key takeaways from two different perspectives. The first picture is a reminder for us, as believers, to have faith and selflessness like the friends of the paralyzed man from Capernaum—a faith that brings others into the hope, healing, and relationship that Jesus calls us into. The second image is from the view of the paralyzed man. The light shining through the dark space symbolizes his need for Jesus’ healing, both physical and spiritual. Healing that points to and glorifies a God who cares for our eternal salvation and our physical wellbeing.”





"Redbud, Arise!" by Michelle Jordan
20"x 8" watercolor on canvas

week three

THE KING'S POWER OVER
DEATH AND DISEASE

Mark 5:21-43

When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. ²² Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. ²³ He pleaded earnestly with him, “My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.” ²⁴ So Jesus went with him.

A large crowd followed and pressed around him. ²⁵ And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. ²⁶ She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. ²⁷ When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, ²⁸ because she thought, “If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.” ²⁹ Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

³⁰ At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, “Who touched my clothes?”

³¹ “You see the people crowding against you,” his disciples answered, “and yet you can ask, ‘Who touched me?’”

³² But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. ³³ Then the woman, knowing

what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. ³⁴ He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”

³⁵ While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. “Your daughter is dead,” they said. “Why bother the teacher anymore?”

³⁶ Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.”

³⁷ He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. ³⁸ When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. ³⁹ He went in and said to them, “Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.” ⁴⁰ But they laughed at him.

After he put them all out, he took the child’s father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. ⁴¹ He took her by the hand and said to her, “*Talitha koum!*” (which means “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”). ⁴² Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. ⁴³ He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

week three

We have seen various “power encounters” highlighting Jesus’ authority in the daily readings leading to this lesson. He displayed power over the natural world by calming a storm (4:35-41) and over the supernatural world by casting out a legion of demons (5:1-20).

These encounters continue in today’s reading as Jesus shows His power over an incurable disease (5:25-34) and even death itself (5:21-24, 35-43). In each encounter, Jesus reverses some effect of The Fall, showing that the Messiah brings the power to restore that which sin has broken. Indeed, the Kingdom is near (1:15).

Notice in the text that Mark uses a “sandwich” technique to highlight Jesus’ power over sin and death. He begins the story with Jairus’ daughter, then interrupts the scene with a story about a woman with a bleeding disease. After the woman’s healing, the story of Jairus’ daughter resumes. How do each of these stories comment on the other?

Sandwiching these two stories together highlights the wide range of people who came to Jesus for healing. Jairus, a synagogue official, is a person of high social standing. The woman, ceremonially unclean, is excluded from the religious and social life of her community. For all the differences between them, they have one thing in common: they have heard about Jesus and believe that He can bring healing.

Jairus expresses faith by falling at Jesus’ feet and pleading with Him. The woman simply touches the hem of His garment, believing mere contact with Jesus will be enough. For both, their faith brings healing. Interestingly, the Greek word “heal” used in Mark 5:23 can also mean “saved.” Both Jairus and the woman experience the freedom, healing, and restoration that can come from Jesus when we obey His simple command, “Don’t be afraid; just believe” (5:36).

When Jairus hears his daughter is dead, he could have given up or even been angry that the encounter with the bleeding woman delayed Jesus from saving his daughter. Instead, Jesus’ words seem to communicate, “Jairus, this woman was healed by touching my clothes. Do you think death can stop me? Let’s keep going. Just believe.”

The faith of the sick woman models the simple faith Jairus needs.

daily readings

Day 1 Mark 5:21-43

Day 2 Mark 6:1-13

Day 3 Matthew 9:27-34

Day 4 Matthew 9:35-11:1

Day 5 John 5:1-17

Day 6 John 5:18-47

Day 7 Mark 6:14-29

observation

Draw a squiggly line beneath each word representing suffering or death (bleeding, dying, etc.). Now, box each word meaning faith, healing, or restoration (live, peace, etc.). Circle each marker of time, such as “immediately” or “then.”

interpretation

Look at your markings from your observations. How does this story fit together? How are the two events related? How are they different? Why does Mark weave these stories together?

application

Where do I need to “not be afraid; just believe” (5:36)? Am I afraid people will laugh at me (5:40) for believing Jesus can do the impossible? How can my faith be more like Jairus and the woman with the bleeding issue?

discussion questions

Have you ever had to ask for something big from someone in authority? Maybe it was your boss or a political leader. Perhaps you've gone before a board or a decision-maker with a big ask. What was that like for you? Have you ever been the one others were coming to with a request? Share with the group.

What were the obstacles that Jairus and the woman with the bleeding issue had to overcome to get to Jesus? How are those obstacles similar to what might keep someone away from Jesus today?

What are some of the emotions people experience in this story? (Look at Mark 5:23, 33, 35, 38, and 40.) Why are the responses to Jesus so varied? Why do you think Jesus cleared everyone out except the girl's parents and His inner circle of disciples before He raised her?

What does this story reveal about the faith of the woman? About the faith of Jairus? About the faith of the onlookers and crowds? What does this story reveal about our faith?

This story vividly shows Jesus' compassion for suffering people. How can we, as individuals or as a group, offer compassion to people around us who are hurting? Write down the name of someone you know who needs the kindness of Jesus. Pray for an opportunity this week to reach out to them with compassion in the name of Jesus.

artist's note

“Like the healing witnessed by those in Jesus’ time here on earth, or the resurrection power that brought Tabitha back to life... seasonal change in spring reminds me of rebirth, redemption, and glorification when blooms burst out of seemingly dead branches.

Many Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled as Jesus walked out His life. ‘Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard. The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor’ (Luke 7:22).

God has mysteriously woven into the fabric of creation, millions of metaphors that are meant to point us to Him and spring blooms are but one!”





*“Brotherly Love” and
“Bread of Life”
by Howard Thompson
digital photography*

Mark 6:30-44

The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught.

³¹ Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.”

³² So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. ³³ But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them.

³⁴ When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.

³⁵ By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. “This is a remote place,” they said, “and it’s already very late. ³⁶ Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.”

week four
THE KING’S PROVISION



³⁷ But he answered, “You give them something to eat.”

They said to him, “That would take more than half a year’s wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?”

³⁸ “How many loaves do you have?” he asked. “Go and see.”

When they found out, they said, “Five—and two fish.”

³⁹ Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass.

⁴⁰ So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. ⁴¹ Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. ⁴² They all ate and were satisfied, ⁴³ and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. ⁴⁴ The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.

week four

The disciples have been out doing ministry in Jesus' name, experiencing His power for themselves. They are excited and eager to share all they have experienced. We can also assume they are exhausted because Jesus suggests they break away to rest from the rigors of daily ministry work. But they can't seem to get away from the persistent crowds.

Rather than being frustrated by their pursuit of Jesus and His disciples, He has compassion on them and recognizes their need for a shepherd (see John 10:11, 14). After a full day of teaching, the disciples are concerned that Jesus has forgotten something. They bring it to His attention in Mark 6:36, as if Jesus Himself weren't hungry and could not see the hunger in the crowd as clearly as the disciples.

The story is characteristically brief but powerful in Mark. Jesus takes the meager offering of five small loaves and two fish, blesses it, and returns it to the disciples to give away. After 5,000 men (maybe 10,000 or 15,000, including women and children) have eaten their fill, each disciple receives a whole basket of leftovers. It's a beautiful picture of miraculous provision, not just meeting the need but exceeding it.

What a picture of Jesus' Kingdom! A place where leftovers exceed the original ingredients, and everyone has their fill.

This miraculous event models how we ought to serve God and others. We simply take what we have, meager though it may seem, and submit it to Jesus. He blesses it and returns it to us. Then it's up to us to give it away. In the end, we, like the disciples, become the ones with full baskets.

daily readings

Day 1 Mark 6:30-44

Day 2 Luke 10:1-24

Day 3 Exodus 16:1-36

Day 4 John 6:35-59

Day 5 John 6:60-71

Day 6 1 Corinthians 11:23-34

Day 7 Luke 14:15-24

observation

Circle the word “eat” each time it appears. Double-underline each connecting word (but, then, so, etc.) and consider how the story fits together.

interpretation

Imagine this event through the eyes of the crowd and the eyes of the disciples. What was the experience of each group? How were they different, and how were they similar?

application

What do you need to give to Jesus so that He can bless it and give it back to you to give away? Think through your time, talents (abilities), and treasures (or possessions).

discussion questions

Have you ever run out of something important? Or thought something would run out, but it turned out to be enough? Share about that experience.

The disciples were expecting to take a break but ended up with a hectic day of ministry. How do you think they felt about that? What was the difference between how Jesus approached the crowd and how the disciples viewed them?

Why do you think Jesus challenged the disciples to give the crowd something to eat? What lesson did Jesus want the crowd to learn? What did He want the disciples to learn? What does He want us to learn from this passage?

Imagine walking through the crowd distributing food to 5,000 people (maybe 10,000 or 15,000, including women and children) and never running out. What would that tell you about Jesus? What would you learn about yourself? How would you feel sitting there with a full basket of leftovers at the end of the day?

How can we experience the modern version of this miracle today? What do we need to trust Jesus with to see Him multiply it? How can we offer what we have to Jesus, see Him multiply it, and have a “full basket” spiritually?

artist's note

"Sheep only come down from the mountain in Colorado Springs at a certain time of the year. I got to photograph them during a worship and praise gathering.

They walk like sheep without a shepherd. So they keep walking, looking for the shepherd, taking comfort in each other but are still not satisfied. This leads them to deserted places, oblivious to hunger.

But the bread that Jesus offers feeds more than the body, it feeds the soul."





"Home At Last" by Scott Fowler
5.3" x 4" digital art

week five

THE KING'S DEITY

Mark 6:45-56

Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. ⁴⁶ After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray.

⁴⁷ Later that night, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land. ⁴⁸ He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. Shortly before dawn he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them, ⁴⁹ but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out, ⁵⁰ because they all saw him and were terrified.

Immediately he spoke to them and said, “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.”

⁵¹ Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed, ⁵² for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.

⁵³ When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret and anchored there. ⁵⁴ As soon as they got out of the boat, people recognized Jesus. ⁵⁵ They ran throughout that whole region and carried the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. ⁵⁶ And wherever he went—into villages, towns or countryside—they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed.

week five

Exhausted by a long day of ministry (see Mark 6:32-44 from last week), the disciples are ready to cross the lake and finally rest in their home base of Capernaum. If you've ever rowed a boat against the current, you can imagine what fighting a stormy sea with oars would be like. Imagine how frustrated and fatigued they felt by the time Jesus reached them just before dawn. The combination of weariness, the storm, and the late hour contributed to their confusion. Was it a ghost? After all, a ghost in those conditions would have been more expected than their teacher walking across the surface of the stormy sea!

What a calming effect the familiar voice of Jesus must have been. "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid" (6:50). While the statement "It is I" was a common phrase in Greek (*ego eimi*), it literally translates to "I am." Anytime we see Jesus use this phrase, our minds should go back to Exodus 3:14 when God revealed His covenant name to Moses: Yahweh or 'I AM WHO I AM' — often written as LORD in all caps in our English Bibles).

We've seen Jesus' humanity displayed through His hunger and fatigue, but here, there is no denying His deity. Jesus does something only God can do. He displays power over the chaotic seas, echoing the Creation narrative in Genesis 1 and the parting of the Red Sea in Exodus. Jesus walks on the surface of the foaming sea, and His very presence in the boat causes the wind to cease.

Jesus enters the storm to be with His disciples, telling them, "Take courage! I AM." In doing so, we see a picture of Yahweh entering His creation in the flesh to rescue His people.

daily readings

Day 1 Mark 6:45-56

Day 2 Matthew 14:2-33

Day 3 Mark 7:1-23

Day 4 Mark 7:24-37

Day 5 Mark 8:1-13

Day 6 Mark 8:14-21

Day 7 Mark 8:22-26

observation

Circle time markers like “immediately,” “later,” etc.
Underline words that reflect emotion. Box the action of the crowds in Mark 6:45 and 53-56.

interpretation

How do the dismissal and the gathering of the crowds frame the narrative in this passage? How is the disciples’ amazement connected to their lack of understanding in Mark 6:51?

application

Where do you need to look for courage in your life right now? How can believing that Jesus is your King, Messiah, and Incarnate God give you courage in that situation? Seek the Lord in prayer on that issue.

discussion questions

How do you feel about being on the water? Do you enjoy being out on a boat, perhaps skiing or wakeboarding? What about going out on the ocean? Would you enjoy being on a deep-sea fishing boat or prefer to stay on the shore?

Do you think Jesus knew there was a storm coming? If so, why did He send the disciples into the storm? Why do you think He sent the crowds home but put the disciples in the boat?

Several disciples were natives of Galilee and had spent their lives on that lake (the Sea of Galilee). Why do you think they were having such a difficult time with this particular storm? Why do you think they responded the way they did when they saw Jesus approaching them?

What was Jesus teaching the disciples (and us) through this experience? Why do you think they were amazed by this even though they had just seen Him do an awe-inspiring miracle earlier that day (Mark 6:51-52)? Do you think the disciples had a different attitude toward the crowds mentioned in Mark 6:53-56 than those in 6:36?

Is there a place in your life where you, like the disciples, have a hard heart? How does that make it difficult to see what Jesus is doing? Write down an area of your life that you would like someone to pray for, and then trade notes with someone in your group (men with men, women with women.) Commit to pray for them as they pray for you.

artist's note

“Life was dark and colorless before Christ.

In the dark night, the disciples thought Jesus was a ghost. In my darkness before Christ, my life reflected my own corruption, depravity, and need for Him.

Then he gave me the courage I needed to follow Him. My life became multi-colored—full of light and vitality.”





*"Windows" by Kerri Hoffmann
5"x5" acrylic and gold leaf on canvas*

week six

THE KING'S TRUE IDENTITY

Mark 8:27-9:1

Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, “Who do people say I am?”

²⁸ They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.”

²⁹ “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

Peter answered, “You are the Messiah.”

³⁰ Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

Jesus Predicts His Death

³¹ He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. ³² He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

³³ But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. “Get

behind me, Satan!” he said. “You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”

The Way of the Cross

³⁴ Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. ³⁶ What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? ³⁷ Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? ³⁸ If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”

9 And he said to them, “Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see that the kingdom of God has come with power.”

week six

Mark made intentional decisions in how he tells the story of Jesus. As we turn to this next section of Mark's gospel, notice how he sandwiches a string of stories between two accounts of Jesus healing the blind (See Mark 8:22-26 and 10:46-52). The material in between, therefore, is intended to help us see Jesus more clearly: His nature, lifestyle, and mission.

As this essential section of the gospel begins, Mark confronts his audience with a profound question — Who is Jesus? That may be the most important question a person could ever ask and answer — Who is Jesus, really?

Mark intentionally mentions the location of this conversation, a city named for Caesar and the father of Alexander the Great (Philip). In a city set apart for the Roman King, Jesus' disciples make a somewhat surprising declaration: "You are the Messiah" (Mark 8:29). "Messiah" was a complicated title filled with ancient hopes. God's people anticipated a conquering King who would defeat their enemies and reign on David's throne — a risky thing to voice in Caesarea Philippi.

Yet, Jesus would embody a different kind of Kingdom. He intended to conquer, yes, but not by the traditional means or the traditional methods. He understood His road to lasting victory over their true enemy would lead Him to the cross.

Notice how Jesus is shedding some of the mystery here, telling His disciples blatantly what will happen to Him. They struggle to see it, blinded by their preconceptions about a conquering Messiah and the desire for self-preservation. Still, Jesus bids them to follow Him, cross and all.

daily readings

Day 1 Mark 8:27-9:1

Day 2 Matthew 16:1-28

Day 3 Daniel 7:9-14; 15-18

Day 4 Luke 19:1-10

Day 5 John 6:60-69

Day 6 Romans 1:1-6

Day 7 Philippians 2:5-11

observation

Draw an open bracket before chapter 8:22 and a closed bracket at the end of 10:52, marking this section as a literary unit. How are the paragraphs that makeup 8:27-9:1 structured? Circle the commands given by Jesus in the passage. Underline the promises given by Jesus in the passage.

interpretation

Why does Mark place Peter's declaration here? What do you know about the Messiah and the expectations concerning the one who would put on that title? How do the commands that follow relate to that declaration?

application

In Mark 8:34-35, Jesus' summons includes commands. What are they? What does it look like to reorient your life towards Jesus? Practically, what does Jesus' summons look like for your life right now?

discussion questions

Can you think of a famous person who people debate the merits of their popularity, with some finding their fame worthy of their talents and others disagreeing completely?

What would people say about you if you were to ask them point blank: Who am I to you? How would they identify you? What characteristics would they note?

As the Gospel of Mark builds, this fundamental question takes center stage: Who is Jesus? From studying Mark and any external learning you've done, what were the various responses to Jesus? In other words, how did the different groups in Israel at the time view Him?

How do different people today answer this question? What are typical responses to Jesus?

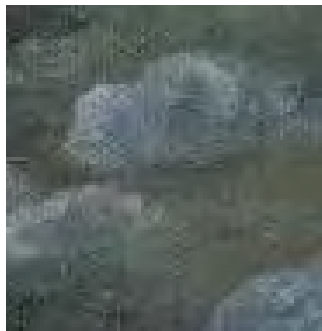
What does it mean for Jesus to be the Messiah of Israel? What does it mean for Him to be the Son of Man (Daniel 7:13-14)?

If Jesus is Israel's Messiah and the true King of the world, what does His radical summons look like for your life this week (Mark 8:34-38)? What needs to be changed, limited, or increased? How can you align your heart (your will) with Jesus as King this week?

artist's note

"In Mark, Jesus chooses to reveal aspects of His deity to those around Him in different ways. He often takes an expectation that people have about the coming King, the Messiah that will save them from the broken world around them, and He flips the expectation on its head.

They are looking for a King who is coming in thunder and lightning, who will strike down their enemies with a mighty force and claim His place on the worldly throne of power. But that is not the King they got. He's not coming in storm and peril, He's coming on the clouds, with light and glory. Revealing Himself as the Servant King — the King who reigns in the highest places and the lowest — He's not coming in a thunderstorm, He's coming in the rising of the sun."





*“Breckenridge” by Kyra Hansen
photograph, 35mm film*

week seven

THE KING’S GLORY

Mark 9:2-13

After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. ³ His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. ⁴ And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

⁵ Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” ⁶ (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)

⁷ Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!”

⁸ Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

⁹ As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. ¹⁰ They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what “rising from the dead” meant.

¹¹ And they asked him, “Why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?”

¹² Jesus replied, “To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restores all things. Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected? ¹³ But I tell you, Elijah has come, and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him.”

week seven

The Old Testament brims with fantastic stories about the presence of God with His people. From the beginning, the Creator desired to walk with His people in the garden. But people rejected God's good rule and took power into their own hands. Yet, the Lord pressed in even still. He met with Abraham in fire, confirming His covenant to bless the world through Him. He surprised the wandering Moses from within a fiery bush, leading Him to rescue His enslaved people. He thundered from Mount Sinai, inviting His people to join Him as a kingdom of priests to bring goodness to the world. He led them through the wilderness as a pillar of fire over their tabernacle. He displayed His power over the other gods, consuming the altar Elijah built while shaming the prophets of Baal. He blessed Jerusalem, coming to live in their very presence in the Temple.

The Old Testament is a story of a good and loving Creator who passionately desires to bless the world through His people. The Torah, the Prophets, and the Psalms all echo this story. Here, on the mountain, these themes rush together to make a startling statement: this Jesus is God coming to visit His people. Moses, Elijah, and the Psalms (Psalm 2:7-9) all direct us toward this one man. He is the Son of Man (Daniel 7:13-14) who brings God's Kingdom.

daily readings

Day 1 Mark 9:2-13

Day 2 Genesis 2:1-17

Day 3 Exodus 19:1-20

Day 4 2 Chronicles 7:1-3

Day 5 Ezekiel 10:1-22

Day 6 Isaiah 60:1-61:6

Day 7 Revelation 21:1-8

observation

Underline the verbs in the passage. Put brackets around the spoken words, highlighting the speech within.

interpretation

Can you name another time in the Bible when the glory of God showed up on a mountain in a bright way? What does the dialogue in the passage suggest concerning the significance of the event itself? Why do the two figures, Elijah and Moses, appear? What is the significance of this?

application

Jesus unites heaven and earth in Himself and then invites His followers to enter this union (we are “in Christ”). What does it mean for you this week to know that because of Jesus’ work on the cross and the subsequent events at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4), you are now the place where heaven and earth intersect? The church is now the Temple of God on earth. How does that land on you? What does that mean for your life this week?

discussion questions

Thinking of the expression “mountain-top experience,” can you name a time in your life (career, family, hobby, sports) when you had a “mountain-top experience”?

Can you name something you used to love that is now obsolete and irrelevant in our society?

This week’s daily readings reveal that Yahweh intends to unite heaven and earth. God intended this with the Garden of Eden, the Tabernacle, and the Temple. Yet, during the exile period in the Old Testament, the glory of Yahweh departed the Temple and the city, with no biblical account of its return. What expectations would you imagine this created for the ancient Hebrew people?

Jesus’ moment on the mountain demonstrates that He is the glorious return of Yahweh. What is the significance of Elijah and Moses? How does their presence amplify this already dramatic moment? What does the command from the heavens contribute to the moment?

If Jesus is where heaven and earth intersect, what does it mean that He has deputed (Acts 1:8) and empowered (Acts 2:1-4) His disciples to go and represent Him on the earth today? Do you see glory when you see Jesus? Do you see the story of the Bible coming to its crescendo? Do you affirm the witness of the prophets and the Law (as well as the Father)? What do you glory in, if not Jesus? How do you reset your worship (not Sunday morning, but the thing that receives the praise of your life) to Jesus this week?

artist's note

“I could never come close to fully encapsulating the beauty of Mark 9 and its depiction of the Lord’s miraculous character. I took this image on my film camera in Colorado. With the setting of Mark 9 being a high mountain, I was reminded of this image. I was in this moment, as I often am, left in awe of the Lord just as I was when reading through this passage.”





*“Taj Hotel” and “Eunuch with Child” by
Brandon Jennings, digital photography,
curated by Kelsey Jennings*

week eight

THE KING’S SERVICE

Mark 10:35-45

Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. “Teacher,” they said, “we want you to do for us whatever we ask.”

³⁶ “What do you want me to do for you?” he asked.

³⁷ They replied, “Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.”

³⁸ “You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said. “Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?”

³⁹ “We can,” they answered.

Jesus said to them, “You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, ⁴⁰ but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared.”

⁴¹ When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. ⁴² Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ⁴³ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

week eight

Like the modern world, the path to greatness in the ancient world was clear. It involved power, prestige, honor, and beauty, and few could acquire it. Those who had it didn't want to lose it, while those without it clamored to gain it — often by violent means. Such was, and is, the way of the world.

Jesus entered this ancient world with a radical message. While Jesus' words may be familiar, do not miss how counter-cultural they are. These words speak of a different kind of kingdom, with a new kind of King, and a new way to define greatness. Whoever would align to this King, embrace His rule, and live accordingly, would experience true greatness.

Modern leadership theory often promotes “servant leadership” for its effectiveness yet fails to recognize its source. This kind of greatness comes only by embracing the Servant King who laid down His life for the world.

The Son of Man (Daniel 7:13-14) forces us to choose: to which Kingdom will you belong?

daily readings

Day 1 Mark 10:35-45

Day 2 Mark 9:14-29

Day 3 Mark 9:30-50

Day 4 Mark 10:1-16

Day 5 Mark 10:17-34

Day 6 Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Day 7 Romans 5:1-11

observation

Underline the words Jesus uses to describe the typical rulers of the world. Circle the words that Jesus says should characterize His Kingdom.

interpretation

Why do you think the disciples still struggled to understand Jesus' words and actions? What was holding them back intellectually and experientially? How does Jesus' modeling of 10:45 with His life motivate your response to His radical summons in 10:41-45?

application

How does our culture define greatness, and how does that differ from how Jesus defines it? How does your definition need to change?

discussion questions

What makes someone great? What do we typically look for in greatness?

Jesus redefines the nature of greatness for His Kingdom. It is a radically different kind of Kingdom with a radically different kind of King. Why do you suppose Jesus' disciples struggled so much to understand His words and actions?

What makes you struggle to understand Jesus' words and actions and radically embrace His kingdom and its calling? What holds you back?

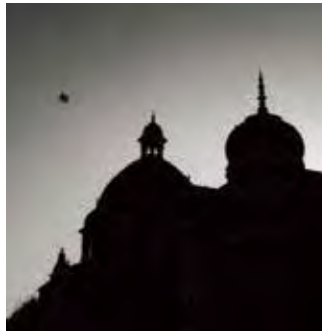
How does Jesus' death empower His people to follow Him? How does it affect your motives? How does it affect your actions?

Jesus laid His life down for even those who were His enemies. Does anyone come to mind when you hear the word enemies? What would it mean for you to love them as Jesus does?

artist's note

“My interpretation of Mark 10:35-45 is reflected in these photographs taken by Brandon Jennings. The imposing silhouette of the “Taj Hotel” is juxtaposed against the intimate scene of “Eunuch with Child.” Reflecting on verse 42, the grandeur of power contrasts sharply with the humility of service. The towering presence of authority portrays the dominance of worldly rulers, while the tender image of a eunuch caring for an orphan embodies the true greatness found in servanthood.

Historically, eunuchs were often slaves or servants, subject to abuse of power, stigma, and discrimination. Brandon served at a Christian orphanage in India where they defied societal norms by employing and empowering the marginalized, offering redemption and hope to the “least of these” by embodying Christ’s teachings from verses 43-44. In this visual narrative, I aim to provoke contemplation on societal hierarchies and the transformative power of selfless acts. The viewer is invited to reconsider notions of leadership and virtue, urging us to embrace humility and compassion as the ultimate markers of significance.”





*"Mark 11:1-26" by Andrea Barnett
digital photograph*

Mark 11:1-26

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples,² saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here."³ If anyone asks you, "Why are you doing this?" say, "The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly."

⁴ They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it,⁵ some people standing there asked, "What are you doing, untying that colt?"⁶ They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go.⁷ When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it.⁸ Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields.⁹ Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted,

"Hosanna!"

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

¹⁰ "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!"

"Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

¹¹ Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

week nine
THE KING'S ARRIVAL

Jesus Curses a Fig Tree and Clears the Temple Courts

¹² The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. ¹³ Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. ¹⁴ Then he said to the tree, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And his disciples heard him say it.

¹⁵ On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple courts and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, ¹⁶ and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. ¹⁷ And as he taught them, he said, “Is it not written: ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations’? But you have made it ‘a den of robbers.’”

¹⁸ The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.

¹⁹ When evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city.

²⁰ In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots.

²¹ Peter remembered and said to Jesus,

“Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!”

²² “Have faith in God,” Jesus answered.

²³ “Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. ²⁴ Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

²⁵ And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.” ²⁶ *(Some manuscripts include here words similar to Matt. 6:15)*



week nine

Jesus presents Himself to Israel as their true King, the Messiah who came from God. In doing so, Jesus reorients the entirety of the Old Testament way of following God around Himself, including the Temple.

For the Old Testament Jews, the Temple was where heaven and earth came together. The Temple is where they could interact with Yahweh's glory, seek the forgiveness of sins, and intercede for the nations of the earth. They treasured the Temple. It was of utmost importance to their way of life, and many believed it was vital for their right standing with God.

However, Jesus openly spoke about Himself being where heaven and earth came together. Yahweh's glory appeared to the disciples in Jesus on the mountain. He forgave sin as only the Father was allowed. He calmed the storm. Taking things even further, He spoke harshly about the leadership in Israel, condemning their hypocrisy and revealing their lack of loyalty to God alone.

In this shocking moment, Jesus chooses the Passover to do the unthinkable. Symbolically and dramatically, Jesus declares that the Temple, its sacrificial systems, and its leaders are not where the people meet their Creator. This mountain, Mount Zion, will be thrown down. Their Creator has come. He is in their midst, but they do not recognize Him.

This moment comes with profound implications. The time is now at hand. Would the people respond to Jesus with an open heart or rush to put Him away? After this, there is no turning back. He must be heard and followed or dealt with once and for all.

daily readings

Day 1 Mark 10:46-52

Day 2 Mark 11:1-11

Day 3 Zechariah 9:9-17

Day 4 Psalm 118

Day 5 Mark 11:12-25

Day 6 Jeremiah 7:1-20

Day 7 Isaiah 5:1-7

observation

Underline the verbs. Circle any references to the Old Testament and look them up.

interpretation

Why did Jesus send them to get the donkey? What would this mean? What do you make of the people's response? (Remember, tens of thousands are in town, with many hoping that someone would finally overthrow the Romans and bring peace.) How do you understand Jesus' actions and words in this scene? What is He saying? Do you think the disciples "get it" yet?

application

If you are a follower of Jesus, what does it mean for you this day to recognize that you are the dwelling place of God in the world? How does that make you feel? What should that mean for your words and actions today?

discussion questions

What are the primary symbols, images, and places that are precious to your country of origin?

How would you feel to see someone denouncing or dishonoring those things?

What do you think Jesus is signaling with this dramatic action?

What do you think the crowd thought when they saw these events? What about the Temple leaders? Jesus' disciples? Which group do you identify with most?

The Jewish story was about Yahweh coming to bless His people so that they may be a blessing to the rest of the nations (Genesis 12:1-3, Exodus 19:5-6). This story is ultimately written through Jesus and those who follow Him. Can you recognize your part in the story? How does that change your decisions, feelings, and desires this week?

artist's note

“Photographing the microscopic detail of a fig leaf, similar to that of the tree Jesus cursed, I wanted to show the contrast between our own plans and God’s intentions. We usher Him into our lives with grand ideas of how fabulous things will be. With ideas that are lush in our own eyes, we see our personal dreams being the pipeline that brings life to the plant, with God playing an assistant role.

To our dismay, we are wildly surprised and sometimes disappointed when we see Him do something that isn’t what we expected. But even when things aren’t our way, there is still a path in place, great attention to detail still there, just not quite how we envisioned. Just like Jesus was putting to death the visions His people had for His Kingdom, we are invited to put to death our own limitations we place on God, and watch with anticipation for what comes next.”



Mark 11:27-12:27

They arrived again in Jerusalem, and while Jesus was walking in the temple courts, the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders came to him. ²⁸ “By what authority are you doing these things?” they asked. “And who gave you authority to do this?”

²⁹ Jesus replied, “I will ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

³⁰ John’s baptism—was it from heaven, or of human origin? Tell me!”

³¹ They discussed it among themselves and said, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will ask, ‘Then why didn’t you believe him?’” ³² But if we say, ‘Of human origin’ ...” (They feared the people, for everyone held that John really was a prophet.)

³³ So they answered Jesus, “We don’t know.”

Jesus said, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.”

The Parable of the Tenants

12 Jesus then began to speak to them in parables: “A man planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a pit for the winepress and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to

another place. ² At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. ³ But they seized him, beat him and sent him away empty-handed. ⁴ Then he sent another servant to them; they struck this man on the head and treated him shamefully. ⁵ He sent still another, and that one they killed. He sent many others; some of them they beat, others they killed.

⁶ “He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’

⁷ “But the tenants said to one another, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’ ⁸ So they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard.

⁹ “What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others. ¹⁰ Haven’t you read this passage of Scripture:

“‘The stone the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;

¹¹ the Lord has done this,
and it is marvelous in our eyes’?”



week ten

THE KING’S CONTROVERSIES



*"Cornerstone" by Kerri Hoffmann
digital photo collage*

¹² Then the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders looked for a way to arrest him because they knew he had spoken the parable against them. But they were afraid of the crowd; so they left him and went away.

Paying the Imperial Tax to Caesar

¹³ Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words. ¹⁴ They came to him and said, "Teacher, we know that you are a man of integrity. You aren't swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not? ¹⁵ Should we pay or shouldn't we?"

But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. "Why are you trying to trap me?" he asked. "Bring me a denarius and let me look at it." ¹⁶ They brought the coin, and he asked them, "Whose image is this? And whose inscription?"

"Caesar's," they replied.

¹⁷ Then Jesus said to them, "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's."

And they were amazed at him.

Marriage at the Resurrection

¹⁸ Then the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question.

¹⁹ "Teacher," they said, "Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. ²⁰ Now there were seven brothers. The first one married and died without leaving any children. ²¹ The second one married the widow, but he also died, leaving no child. It was the same with the third. ²² In fact, none of the seven left any children. Last of all, the woman died too. ²³ At the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?"

²⁴ Jesus replied, "Are you not in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God? ²⁵ When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. ²⁶ Now about the dead rising—have you not read in the Book of Moses, in the account of the burning bush, how God said to him, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? ²⁷ He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. You are badly mistaken!"

week ten

This complex passage has much to discuss.

First, remember where we are in the story: Jesus has publicly cast judgment on the nation's leadership in the sacred Temple itself. Second, this is the Passover holiday, with tens of thousands in town to celebrate God's faithfulness.

Now, the religious leaders look to silence this new movement and its new leader. Their strategy? Lure Him into all the various controversies and hot-button topics of the day. That should settle things down, giving people a reason not to like Him.

So, the various groups in power collect their very best questions and lob them at Jesus. Only, this man seems strangely prepared. His answers are shockingly brilliant. He can answer the questions from the Pharisees (who affirm the resurrection of the body and debate the fine points of the Torah and its observance), as well as the Sadducees (who deny the resurrection of the body and keep the Temple's activity running), and no one can make those two groups happy. He can even respond to the Torah experts trained in the Law of Yahweh.

What is more, not only does He not wilt under such pressure, but He turns the attention of the crowds back on the religious leaders. The plan is backfiring!

Jesus embarrassed those in power. Jews refused to carry the Roman coin, citing it as an idolatrous affront to Yahweh. The Romans even permitted them to mint their own coinage. Yet here, in the Temple courts, the religious leaders are exposed for their hypocrisy and greed.

daily readings

Day 1 Mark 11:27-12:27

Day 2 Matthew 21:23-22:46

Day 3 Matthew 23:1-39

Day 4 Isaiah 5:8-30

Day 5 Ezekiel 34

Day 6 Romans 13:1-8

Day 7 1 Corinthians 15

observation

Put a box around the different groups interacting with Jesus. Who brings these questions and controversies to Him? Look up any Old Testament references in this passage (Study Bibles are helpful — don't miss Isaiah 5!) Underline the motives of the religious leaders.

interpretation

Who are the Pharisees, and what do you know about them? Who are the Sadducees, and what do you know about them? Why would Jesus ask someone in the crowd to produce a coin with Caesar's image? What do you make of Jesus' answers here?

application

What big questions would you want to bring to Jesus? Write them down and spend some time in prayer.

discussion questions

What is the best pizza in your city? If such a small matter can be so controversial, how do we deal with larger ones?

The religious leaders approach Jesus with the most controversial topics of the day, theologically, socially, and politically. What are some of those in our world today?

What emotions surface for you when thinking about the above question?

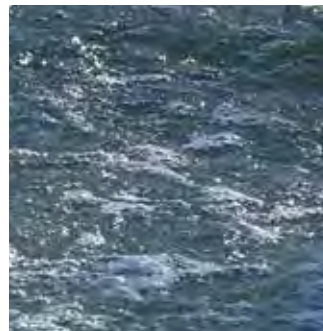
What do you think of Jesus' responses to these questions? What strategy does He use? Is He effective?

Notice Jesus' teachings do not align with either of the dominant parties in Israel at the time. Both the Pharisees and the Sadducees distrust Him, misunderstand Him, and want Him pushed to the side. What parallels do you see in the modern world?

How can you run every controversy, whether theological, political, social, or otherwise, through the wisdom of Jesus as King?

artist's note

“For this photo collage, I focused on Mark 12:10-11, where the text is quoting Psalm 118:22, ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.’ Jesus is faced with opposition, questioning Him on His authority and leading Him into questions they assume He will crush under. However, He turns their questions on their head and surprises them with His prepared answers. Jesus, the King of controversies, is neither one to come with a hard hearted, unrighteous anger, nor is He afraid to stand in the mess and confront what isn’t right. He is the King of justice, the refreshing flow our souls most desire.”





*"Priorities" by J Riley Carson, 35mm film
Portra 400, Rocky Mountain National Park*

week eleven

THE KING'S COMMANDMENT

Mark 12:28-37

One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?”

²⁹ “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ ³¹ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”

³² “Well said, teacher,” the man replied. “You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. ³³ To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

³⁴ When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

Whose Son Is the Messiah?

³⁵ While Jesus was teaching in the temple courts, he asked, “Why do the teachers of the law say that the Messiah is the son of David? ³⁶ David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared:

“‘The Lord said to my Lord:

“Sit at my right hand
until I put your enemies
under your feet.””

³⁷ David himself calls him ‘Lord.’ How then can he be his son?”

The large crowd listened to him with delight.

week eleven

Mark gives us a glimpse of Jesus' knowledge of the Scriptures and authority as a teacher to further reveal His identity as King. He was not another representative of some narrow-minded religious tradition or a dry academic whose focus on unimportant details closed His eyes to weightier things. His words hummed with the life and energy of the Kingdom of God.

In the final week of His life, religious leaders try to trap Jesus with legal puzzles, hoping to catch Him on some technicality. They want to find some reason to get rid of Him, even put Him to death. However, He consistently makes them look foolish. Jesus' clarity and wisdom attract individuals with honest questions and crowds tired of the standard religious answers.

Jesus' response to a religious leader's question about which commandment matters most clarifies the meaning of the whole Torah. The commands to love God and neighbor are neither novel nor obscure. But Jesus highlights that the purpose of the entire Torah, from sacrifice to ritual purity, is to show us how to love God and other people. Unlike most religious elites, this man understands Jesus' response and showers Him with praise. In recognizing Jesus' wisdom and authority, he stands at the gates of God's kingdom.

After answering the questions of the religious leaders, Jesus has a question of His own. He doesn't offer easy answers but provokes the crowd to form their own responses to His question, "Why would David call the coming King his Lord?" Jesus' question concerning the identity of the Messiah is not immediately resolved but seems to hang in the air for any reader of Mark's gospel to consider. Mark provokes us to ponder the identity of this King who speaks with such authority, wisdom, and understanding.

daily readings

Day 1 Mark 12:28-34

Day 2 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Day 3 Mark 12:35-37

Day 4 Deuteronomy 6:1-9,
Leviticus 19:11-18

Day 5 Psalm 110

Day 6 Mark 12:38-40

Day 7 Mark 12:41-44

observation

Observe how Mark characterizes Jesus' teaching. Underline descriptive words for Jesus' teaching.

interpretation

What does Jesus' question about the identity of the Messiah mean? What is Mark communicating about Jesus' identity by including this short section of His teaching?

application

Here, Jesus demonstrates His deep knowledge of the Scriptures. Though we may think He just understood the Bible because He is God, it seems clear that He grew in wisdom through study (Luke 2:46, 52). How are you engaging with God's word to grow in depth of insight?

discussion questions

Discuss a teacher who made a significant impact on you. What made them different from other teachers? Were there characteristics about their style, approach, etc., that made them stand out?

What does it mean to love God with all your heart? What about your soul, mind, or strength? How can we engage our emotions, thoughts, and actions to love God?

What does it mean to love your neighbor as yourself? What are some concrete ways you can love your neighbor? What do we do when our neighbors are difficult to love?

What does Jesus' authority in teaching demonstrate about His identity? How have you found the teachings of Jesus to be true in your life? What experiences have confirmed something He teaches in the gospels?

List five practical ways we can love our neighbors in our community. Hold one another accountable to put at least one of these things into action over the next week.

artist's note

“In Mark 12:28-37, scribes tried to trick Jesus by asking Him what the greatest commandment was. Often we misplace our own priorities in life, and too easily we miss what we were designed to love most.

The lone mountain represents the Shemah (which Jesus quotes from Deuteronomy 6) that our Triune God is one, and reminding us of where Yahweh first met with Moses on the mountain. Above all else, we should love the Lord our God with all of ourselves.

The second image reminds us of our neighbors, to love them as we love ourselves. Jesus designed us for community, and to share in appreciating the beauty of God together.

When we direct our love correctly according to the way of Jesus, we see life as it was meant to be — more abundant and free.”





*“Monumental” by Spencer Theobald
35mm film, Portra 400, Italy
curated by Kerri Hoffmann*



week twelve

THE KING'S PREDICTIONS

Mark 13:1-13

As Jesus was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!”

² “Do you see all these great buildings?” replied Jesus. “Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.”

³ As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately,

⁴ “Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?”

⁵ Jesus said to them: “Watch out that no one deceives you. ⁶ Many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am he,’ and will deceive many. ⁷ When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.

⁸ Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.

⁹ “You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them. ¹⁰ And the gospel must first be preached to all nations.

¹¹ Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.

¹² “Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death.

¹³ Everyone will hate you because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.”

week twelve

Jesus entered Jerusalem and focused all His attention on the Temple. He overturned the tables of the money changers, answered the questions of the scribes, and taught with authority.

In this passage, Jesus leaves the Temple for good, pronouncing God's judgment on it. The only mention of the Temple in the rest of Mark is when the curtain tears from top to bottom during Jesus' crucifixion.

On their way out of the East gate, the disciples speak about the impressive architecture of the Temple. Jesus' response shocks the disciples. He says all the beauty and splendor of the Temple would soon be rubble. For context, imagine someone predicting the fire at Notre Dame Cathedral or the attacks on 9/11.

The Temple was the center of priestly law and the dwelling place of God's presence with His people, Israel. It was where people of all nations could come and seek the Lord. It was where God provided a way to deal with sin and restore relationships. But the Temple had become a place to exploit the poor, exclude the nations, and preserve the political status quo. Beginning with the curse on the fig tree and cleansing of the Temple, Jesus symbolically enacted judgment on the Temple system. Here, He makes the symbols clear: the Temple will be destroyed.

The disciples' shock leads to a private question, "When, Jesus?" Jesus' answer draws on the language of the Old Testament prophets that would have been familiar to His disciples but seems strange or frightening to us. He foretells wars, earthquakes, and betrayal but tells His disciples not to fear. All the pain and persecution signify that something new is being born. The promised Kingdom is near.

daily readings

Day 1 Mark 13:1-13

Day 2 1 Kings 8:1-20

Day 3 Ezekiel 10:4, 18-19

Day 4 Jeremiah 51:45-46

Day 5 Micah 7:1-7

Day 6 Matthew 24:1-14

Day 7 Luke 21:5-19

observation

Underline all the commands Jesus gives His disciples in the passage. What is He asking them to do?

interpretation

Why did Jesus want His disciples to be aware of the challenges ahead?

application

Jesus and His disciples were willing to endure hardship and persecution for the gospel's sake. How do you respond when you face suffering, betrayal, or persecution? In this passage, how does Jesus instruct His followers to respond?

discussion questions

What emotions come to mind when discussing news and current events? Why are many of them negative?

Jesus instructs His disciples not to fear. Why do we often see the world through a lens of anxiety and fear? How should we view current events like war and natural disasters?

What does Jesus mean in saying we are “witnesses”? How can we preach the gospel to all nations? How can we listen to God’s Spirit when we are having spiritual conversations or giving a defense of our faithfulness to Jesus?

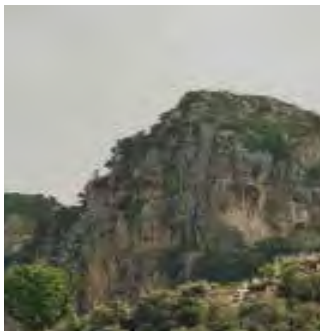
What does Jesus mean when instructing His disciples to stand firm to the end? Have you ever been misunderstood, dismissed, or excluded because you were being faithful to Jesus? How did you respond?

Identify someone in your life who needs to hear the good news of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. Pray for them. Look for ways to start spiritual conversations with them.

artist's note

“Mark 13 talks about how the great buildings and impressive architecture will be torn down eventually. Jesus has pronounced God’s judgment on the Temple and declares that the beauty of the Temple will be torn down. With this, Jesus is also speaking of what was happening in the Temple and all that the people had created it to represent. Abandoning its intent to be a place where God and people meet, it turned into a place for humans to seek power for themselves and put down others.

He is making these observations while sitting on the Mount of Olives. In these images, I aim to display the juxtaposition of the monument of the Temple in view and the mountain Jesus is upon. I think this pairing speaks to the expectation of monumental power and the replacement Jesus makes with His definition of greatness.”





*“Restoration from Desolation” by Isaiah Maina
acrylic paint and silver ink on canvas*

week thirteen

THE KING’S RETURN

Mark 13:14-37

“When you see ‘the abomination that causes desolation’ standing where it does not belong—let the reader understand—then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁵ Let no one on the housetop go down or enter the house to take anything out. ¹⁶ Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak. ¹⁷ How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! ¹⁸ Pray that this will not take place in winter, ¹⁹ because those will be days of distress unequalled from the beginning, when God created the world, until now—and never to be equaled again.

²⁰ “If the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would survive. But for the sake of the elect, whom he has chosen, he has shortened them. ²¹ At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah!’ or, ‘Look, there he is!’ do not believe it. ²² For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. ²³ So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time.

²⁴ “But in those days, following that distress,

“the sun will be darkened,

and the moon will not give its light;

²⁵ the stars will fall from the sky,

and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’

²⁶ “At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. ²⁷ And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.

²⁸ “Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. ²⁹ Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it is near, right at the door. ³⁰ Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. ³¹ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

The Day and Hour Unknown

³² “But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³ Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come.

³⁴ It’s like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch.

³⁵ “Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. ³⁶ If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. ³⁷ What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’”

week thirteen

Jesus uses the language of Old Testament, apocalyptic literature to reveal the nature of His judgment on the current order and His vindication as the rightful King. For that reason, this passage is often called the “mini-apocalypse.”

Our word "apocalypse" conjures cultural ideas about the destruction of the world. However, the English word apocalypse is derived from Greek and means “uncovering or revealing.” An apocalypse is when you suddenly see the true nature of something you couldn’t see before. Apocalyptic literature uses symbolic language to unveil the true nature of historical events and heavenly realities.

In instructing the disciples, Jesus alludes to the books of Daniel, Ezekiel, Joel, and Jeremiah to reveal the coming judgment. He draws from the well of the Old Testament to build His case: a new King is coming with power and glory, and all other pretenders to the throne will be cast down.

Jesus uses two parables to show the disciples how they should respond to the news of the coming Kingdom. The parable of the fig tree reminds them to stay aware of what is happening around them. The parable of the master, who left the servants in charge of the house, reminds them to continue fulfilling the task of bearing witness because the time of the master’s return is uncertain.

Jesus cautions us as well. We shouldn’t be unaware of what is happening around us. We ought to be able to make sense of the time in which we are living in light of the promises of God. However, Jesus said no one knows when He will return, not even Jesus Himself. So, we shouldn’t be obsessed with reading the “signs.” Instead, we should be diligent in our assignment as Jesus’ witnesses.

daily readings

Day 1 Mark 13:14-36

Day 2 Daniel 7:13-14

Day 3 Daniel 9:27, 11:31

Day 4 Ezekiel 7:14-22

Day 5 Joel 2:28-31

Day 6 Matthew 24:15-51

Day 7 Luke 21:20-36

observation

Underline Jesus' commands to the disciples.

interpretation

What does Jesus mean when He says "no one knows" the day or hour? What does it show us about Jesus' humanity?

application

What does it mean for you to be alert and ready?
In the parable in verses 34-37, what should the servants do until the master returns? What does that mean for you?

discussion questions

As a culture, we are obsessed with the end of the world, or at least the end of the world as we know it. Do you have a favorite post-apocalyptic TV show, book, or movie (i.e., *Walking Dead*, *The Road*, *Hunger Games*, etc.)? What does this interest tell us about ourselves?

How do you feel when you read Jesus' description of coming judgment? Are there things in the world that you think are worthy of this kind of judgment? Is it difficult to trust that God's judgment will be fair?

How do you feel about the promise that Jesus will return? Does this promise inspire hope, fear, etc.?

What does it mean to be alert and anticipating the return of Jesus? How could you stay ready for His return? What do the two parables show you about how you should prepare for His promised return?

Examine your life by considering Jesus' promised return. Where are you doing the work Jesus has assigned? How can you live with a sense of urgency and obedience to Jesus?

artist's note

“‘Restoration from Desolation,’ is categorized by several distinct sections. It seeks to take the viewer on a journey where they contemplate the passing away of the broken nature of the world, the seeming destruction of the old order, and the world’s recreation through the return of Christ.

Using bold colors to hold the viewer’s attention, I sought to draw the viewer to the vacant separation between areas of color, outlining the different sections within the scripture and forcing the viewer to stop and consider each section in context to one another. The pieces are to be viewed together, either side by side or stacked.”





*"Fragrance of Devotion" by Cate Robbins
11"x18" linoleum block print*

week fourteen

THE KING'S ANOINTING

Mark 14:1-11

Now the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were scheming to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him. ²“But not during the festival,” they said, “or the people may riot.”



³ While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head.

⁴ Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, “Why this waste of perfume?

⁵ It could have been sold for more than a year’s wages and the money given to the poor.” And they rebuked her harshly.

⁶ “Leave her alone,” said Jesus. “Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. ⁷ The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. ⁸ She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. ⁹ Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.”

¹⁰ Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them.

¹¹ They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

week fourteen

Jesus knew what lay ahead. He challenged the religious authorities and pronounced judgment on the corrupt Temple system. He predicted the ultimate destruction of the Temple and spoke about a new Kingdom that was coming. Jesus actively set in motion events that would lead to His crucifixion. And then He went to eat dinner.

At this dinner, an unnamed woman approaches Jesus with an unusual offering. She anoints him with an expensive perfume. It appears the woman had not been invited, and the gesture of breaking a costly jar of perfume over Jesus' head upsets those present. The jar itself is valuable, and the perfume even more so. The guests see this as a violation of what would have been expected of faithful Jews: to care for the poor.

Jesus, however, sees this woman's action as beautiful and significant. Jesus' statement is not a dismissal of concern for the poor but a comment on the occasion.

Anointing with oil or perfume is associated with kingship in the Old Testament. Messiah and Christ both mean "*anointed*" in Hebrew and Greek, respectively. The Messiah is the promised King, anointed by God, to rule and reign. But Jesus connects His anointing with His coming death.

Jesus' messianic anointing subverts our expectations of a king's rule and reign. We might imagine a king ascending to power, but Jesus' kingship descends, in servanthood, toward ultimate sacrifice on the cross.

All the events that will lead to Jesus' death will occur in the next two days following this somber moment. Judas will be instrumental in how those days play out. Scandalized by what he witnesses here at Simon's house, he begins to plot how he will betray Jesus to the corrupt religious leaders.

daily readings

Day 1 Mark 14:1-11

Day 2 Mark 14:12-26

Day 3 Mark 14:27-31

Day 4 Mark 14:32-42

Day 5 Mark 14:43-52

Day 6 Mark 14:53-65

Day 7 Mark 14:66-72

observation

Notice how Mark has “sandwiched” the story of Jesus’ anointing between two passages concerning His arrest. What do you think Mark is communicating here?

interpretation

Why do you think Jesus says this story will be told wherever the gospel is preached?

application

What might it mean for you to do something of beauty for Jesus?

discussion questions

What is the most memorable gift you've ever received? What's something memorable that you've given someone else?

Why were the religious leaders so interested in arresting and killing Jesus? What was so provocative about His behavior leading up to Passover?

Why were all the guests so shocked by the woman anointing Jesus? Why do you think she did it? Do you think she had in mind Jesus' explanation, or did she have some other intention? Why does Jesus see this act as not wasteful but beautiful?

How does Mark contrast the unnamed woman with Jesus' disciple, Judas? What is Judas' aim?

This passage brings our attention to things of value. The woman valued Jesus and communicated that through her actions. Judas loved money and showed this through his actions. Where do you find value? Discuss some ways you see that in your choices. What must change in your various social settings (home, work, hobbies, etc.)?

artist's note

“Unlike other art forms, block printing works by chipping away at a block piece by piece before the print can be transferred. I chose this method to mirror the woman's intentions in the anointing of Jesus in Mark 14.

The blue was chosen to represent the purity and expense that placed value on the perfume. The transition from the unbroken jar to the shattered pieces represents the movement from where the world expected value to be placed, in the alabaster jar and its contents, to where the woman saw the value of Jesus being immensely more than anything earth could offer.”





"Jesus Before Pilate" by Kingslee Kestner
digital photography

week fifteen

THE KING'S HUMILIATION

Mark 15:1-20

Very early in the morning, the chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, made their plans. So they bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate.

² “Are you the king of the Jews?” asked Pilate.

“You have said so,” Jesus replied.

³ The chief priests accused him of many things. ⁴ So again Pilate asked him, “Aren’t you going to answer? See how many things they are accusing you of.”

⁵ But Jesus still made no reply, and Pilate was amazed.

⁶ Now it was the custom at the festival to release a prisoner whom the people requested.⁷ A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising. ⁸ The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did.

⁹ “Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?” asked Pilate, ¹⁰ knowing it was out of self-interest that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him.

¹¹ But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead.

¹² “What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?” Pilate asked them.

¹³ “Crucify him!” they shouted.

¹⁴ “Why? What crime has he committed?” asked Pilate.

But they shouted all the louder, “Crucify him!”

¹⁵ Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

The Soldiers Mock Jesus

¹⁶ The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium) and called together the whole company of soldiers.

¹⁷ They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. ¹⁸ And they began to call out to him, “Hail, king of the Jews!” ¹⁹ Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. ²⁰ And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

week fifteen

The religious leaders determine Jesus must be executed. The high priest is so enraged by Jesus' claim to be the Messiah that he tears his clothes. But they don't have the power to carry out capital punishment. So, they take Jesus to someone who does.

Pilate was the Roman governor of the province of Judea, appointed under the emperor Tiberius and tasked with maintaining order. In a province where traditions were very un-Roman, rebellion was always possible. Pilate was wary and eager to maintain his power but not brutal or unreasonable.

The members of the Sanhedrin portray Jesus as unwilling to submit to Roman authority and a pretender to the title of King. Pilate asks Jesus if this is the case, and Jesus' response seems like a non-response: "You said it."

Pilate judges that Jesus has done nothing wrong. He offers to release Jesus, a tradition during festival weeks, but the same group of people who brought Jesus to Pilate stir up a crowd against Him. Barabbas, a known rebel and murderer, an actual threat to Roman order, was imprisoned there as well. The crowd responds to Pilate's offer to release Jesus by demanding he release Barabbas instead.

Pilate runs some quick political math and decides to release Barabbas rather than risk a riot. In this decisive moment, the guilty one receives pardon, and Jesus is condemned to die. Roman soldiers mock and beat Him and prepare to execute Jesus in one of the most brutal ways ever devised.

But none of this is accidental or out of control. Each event fulfills the destiny of God's promised Servant, envisioned in Isaiah 49-53. Paradoxically, God publicly vindicates Jesus as the promised King.

daily readings

Day 1 Mark 15:1-15

Day 2 Mark 15:16-20

Day 3 Isaiah 49:1-7

Day 4 Isaiah 50:4-9

Day 5 Isaiah 52:13-15

Day 6 Matthew 27:11-31

Day 7 Luke 23:1-25

observation

Notice how Mark portrays each character or group: the Sanhedrin, Pilate, the crowd, Jesus, Barabbas, the soldiers, etc. Write two words that describe each character/group.

interpretation

Why do you think Jesus kept silent? Why didn't He defend Himself?

application

Barabbas is freed while Jesus is condemned. How do you see your story in the story of Barabbas?

discussion questions

When have you made an urgent decision that would affect other people? How did you balance the needs of different groups affected?

Why do you think Pilate had Jesus crucified? How do we reconcile an evil action that was part of God's plan?

What does this passage show us about Jesus' kingship? How is it different from our conceptions of what a king should be?

Read Isaiah 53. How does the crucifixion vindicate Jesus as God's chosen Servant? In what ways can we emulate Jesus' sacrifice, and in what ways is it unique?

Read Matthew 16:24. What is a way you can serve others this week that costs you something (time, money, inconvenience, etc.) Share with the group and hold one other accountable.

artist's note

“A great injustice happened before Pilate with the delivery of Christ to the cross, yet through it, God made a way for ultimate justice. With this great irony, I wanted to contrast innocence and guilt. The white and black sheets are entangled together and separated throughout the photos. The crown of thorns — representing the ultimate death — marks the way for the guilty to be made innocent.”





*“Jesus Breathed His Last” by Kerri Hoffmann
digital photography*

week sixteen

THE KING’S SACRIFICE

Mark 15:21-47

A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross.²² They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means “the place of the skull”).²³ Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it.²⁴ And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get.

²⁵ It was nine in the morning when they crucified him.²⁶ The written notice of the charge against him read: THE KING OF THE JEWS.

²⁷ They crucified two rebels with him, one on his right and one on his left.^{28[1]}

²⁹ Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, “So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days,³⁰ come down from the cross and save yourself!”³¹ In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself!”³² Let this Messiah, this king of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe.” Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

The Death of Jesus

³³ At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.³⁴ And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a

¹(some manuscripts include here words similar to Luke 22:37)



loud voice, “*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?*” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”). ³⁵ When some of those standing near heard this, they said, “Listen, he’s calling Elijah.”

³⁶ Someone ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to take him down,” he said.

³⁷ With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.

³⁸ The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. ³⁹ And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, “Surely this man was the Son of God!”

⁴⁰ Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Salome.

⁴¹ In Galilee these women had followed him

and cared for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there.

The Burial of Jesus

⁴² It was Preparation Day (that is, the day before the Sabbath). So as evening approached, ⁴³ Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus’ body. ⁴⁴ Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. ⁴⁵ When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph. ⁴⁶ So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. ⁴⁷ Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where he was laid.

week sixteen

Mark's narrative has relentlessly brought the reader to this moment. He began with the bold declaration that Jesus was the Messiah and Son of God (Mark 1:1), followed by a compelling picture. We saw His authority over every sphere, both earthly and spiritual. We saw His power demonstrated on the grandest of scales. And we saw His deity revealed as we, the reader, realize with His disciples and other onlookers that this man, Jesus of Nazareth, is God in the flesh.

Three times in the central section of the book, Jesus predicted His death (Mark 8:31, 9:30-31, 10:33-34). Now, His prediction is coming true.

Mark's depiction of the crucifixion is brief and restrained. There was no need to describe the gruesome event to his original readers, as they were all too familiar with Rome's cruel method of dealing with its enemies. Mark states simply, "And they crucified him" (15:24).

In our daily readings this week, we will see numerous prophetic passages fulfilled in this event. It's not just the book of Mark that has pointed us to this moment. The entire Bible has anticipated it. The death and resurrection of Jesus is the central event in all of human history.

Notice the irony throughout Mark's description of the crucifixion. Jesus, the Creator, is mocked by those He created. The King of the World is sarcastically labeled the "King of the Jews." The very people Jesus is on the cross to save laugh at His inability to save Himself.

But Mark reserves the most remarkable moment of irony for verses 38-39. At Jesus' death, an earthquake tears the Temple veil in two. In trying to save their Temple system by killing Jesus, the Pharisees secure the Temple's end.

To further emphasize the irony, the most unlikely person sees the truth that even Israel's leaders failed to recognize. A Roman centurion proclaims the central truth of this book: "Surely this man was the Son of God!" (15:39).

daily readings

Day 1 Mark 15:21-47

Day 2 Psalm 22:1-18

Day 3 Psalm 22:19-31

Day 4 Isaiah 52:13-53:6

Day 5 Isaiah 53:7-12; Psalm 69:3, 21

Day 6 Psalm 105:28;

Amos 8:7-10

Day 7 Psalm 38:9-11; Daniel 9:26;

Genesis 3:15

observation

Underline every proper name in the passage. What part does each of these people play in this account? This week, as you do the daily readings, write the verse from Mark 15 where they are fulfilled next to them.

interpretation

Each gospel writer included different details about the crucifixion. Note some of the details Mark includes and jot down how they fit into the themes of authority, deity, and sacrifice that have been at the heart of this book.

application

Set aside time each day this week to reflect on this passage. Spend time meditating on the sacrifice that made it possible for you to become part of God's family. Consider fasting one day this week and spending the time you would have devoted to meals contemplating Mark 15:21-47.

discussion questions

When did you first hear the story of the crucifixion of Jesus? How did you react? How has your understanding of this event changed over the years?

Why do you think Mark includes the detail that Simon of Cyrene was chosen to carry the cross for Jesus? Why do you think Jesus couldn't carry it? What kind of effect would you imagine this experience had on Simon and his sons (mentioned in the passage)?

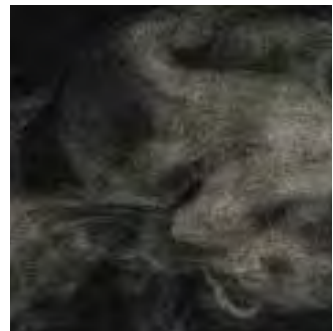
This week's study focused on the passage's ironic elements. As a group, discuss Mark's use of irony in the passage. How are the events of Mark 15:37-39 all related? What was happening at that moment?

How has studying and meditating on the sacrifice of Jesus this week impacted you? Share with the group how the Lord has used the crucifixion of Christ in your life.

Read Matthew 16:24. Close your time together with communion. All you need is juice and some crackers or bread. Read Psalm 22 aloud, each person reading two verses until you have read the whole passage. Remember His sacrifice together through communion (1 Corinthians 11:26). Close your time by singing the first verse of "Amazing Grace" (Mark 14:26).

artist's note

“In pairing these images, I saw in the fire the tension, the anticipation, the rise of the black ashes, reaching up the match stick, and the fall of the flame as it reaches its end. In the smoke, I saw the darkness as a result of a light snuffed out. I also felt a peace, a release. In the extinguishing of Jesus, King of the Jews, sin and death was held in the same hands as hope. All breath was held in, hoping the cross wasn't the end of the story, and it was released later as the tomb was left empty.”





*“Glorious Grave” by Kate Stoner, 8” x 10”
oil pastel on birch*

week seventeen

THE KING’S VICTORY

Mark 16:1-8

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. ² Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb ³ and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"

⁴ But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. ⁵ As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

⁶ "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. ⁷ But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"

⁸ Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

week seventeen

This passage is the final resolution of this story of a suffering Messiah who gives His life to free His people, rising in triumph over sin and death! And yet, in Mark's telling of these events, the story ends abruptly. Most English translations today set Mark 16:9-20 apart. Most scholars agree that these verses were not part of the original manuscript. We don't know if the original ending was lost or if Mark intended the story to end abruptly with the women afraid to talk about what they had seen. Perhaps Mark was continuing his emphasis on the necessity of faith while maintaining the air of mystery and awe surrounding Jesus throughout the gospel. The "young man," identifiable as an angel by his white robe, tells them the pertinent fact of the situation, "He has risen!"

No matter what we might suppose about the ending of this book, the facts of Mark 16:1-8, which are part of all of our earliest manuscripts, are not in dispute. As you read the other gospel writers' accounts of the resurrection this week, note the similarities and differences. Spend some time thinking about why each writer included the details that they did. Consider the simplicity of Mark's abbreviated verse narrative. The entire episode centers on the women who had been near the cross (15:40) and had now come to anoint the body of Jesus. It is to them that the angel delivers the news of the resurrection. Mark closes this gospel with the women bewildered and frightened by these events.

Mark emphasizes the call to discipleship here at the end of his gospel. Jesus of Nazareth was crucified, but He has risen. The evidence of the empty tomb is right in front of them. Now, they are to go and tell what they have seen. They are to return to Galilee, where Jesus will meet them. "There you will see him, just as he told you." (16:7)

Like these women, we should spend the rest of our lives telling people the good news of King Jesus. As we behold Him, we see the Messiah, crucified but now risen, ruling at the Father's right hand, just as He told us.

daily readings

Day 1 Mark 16:1-8

Day 2 Matthew 28:1-10

Day 3 Luke 24:1-12

Day 4 John 20:1-18

Day 5 Luke 24:13-35

Day 6 John 20:19-31

Day 7 Revelation 1:4-20

observation

Highlight every mention of Jesus, including pronouns that refer to Him. Underline the verbs (action words like “brought,” “went,” etc.). Circle each reference to the women. How does all of this fit together?

interpretation

Note the “sandwich” Mark uses: the women, the angel, the women. How does this structure highlight the resurrection? What would you say is the central idea of the passage?

application

Who is God calling you to “go and tell” about the resurrection of Jesus? What is holding you back from sharing this good news?

discussion questions

What is the most incredible event you have ever witnessed with your own eyes? Have you ever had difficulty getting someone to believe it happened? Share with the group.

Mark names each woman twice in this context (15:40, 16:1). What does this tell you about these women's devotion to Jesus? Why do you think the men are absent from this part of the story?

Look at the angel's statements in Mark 16:6-7. What is his central message? How do the women respond to what he is telling them? How are we to respond to this news?

How would your life be different if Jesus had not risen from the dead? Why is this a crucial part of the gospel message?

How has this study of Mark impacted your walk with Christ? Be as specific as possible. With whom will you share this? Pray for that person.

artist's note

"In a meditation on the hours between Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, the left panel of this diptych explores the somber darkness surrounding the burial site of Christ's body before the stone was rolled into place, sealing the entrance of the tomb.

The Savior's sacrifice is represented by a cold crown of thorns, juxtaposed against the right panel's royal crown, emitting light and piercing the sunrise, as the angel rolled the stone away revealing an empty tomb."

