

The Gospel of Mark
A 12 week study

Week 1

Mark 1:1-2:12

Sunday, August 28

Mark 1:1-8

Mark starts off his gospel saying specifically that it is the “beginning” of the gospel or good news. We might realize that he means his whole gospel as a beginning when we reach the final verse of Mark and realize there is no clear end to the book. If this book is only the beginning, what do you think Mark is pointing to as “the rest of the gospel”?

Rabbis at this time saw the task of untying the straps of one’s sandals as one of the lowest jobs of a servant. One popular saying was that a Rabbi’s disciple was not above doing any servant’s job for his master except to untie his master’s sandals. This job was seen as too low for a disciple. Why do you think John mentioned untying Jesus’ sandals?

Why do you think it was important to Mark to tell us what John wore and ate?

John the Baptists pointed others, not to himself, but to Christ. Is this something you do in your daily life? How are you able to point others to Christ?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

Monday, August 29

Mark 1:9-13

John preached a baptism of repentance. Why do you think Jesus was also baptized? Did he need repentance?

God the father tells Jesus he is pleased with him. Why do you think God is so pleased with Jesus?

For what do you think God is pleased with you?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

Tuesday, August 30

Mark 1:14-20

The word 'gospel' means, "good news." **Read Romans 1:1-6** and **1 Corinthians 15:1-4**. In these verses, Paul talks about the gospel of God. However, Paul is living after the death and resurrection of Jesus. What do you think Jesus preached that was the "good news of God"?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the great Christian theologian who was killed after his role in the plot to take the life of Adolf Hitler, noticed that this episode does not say that the first disciples accepted any belief system or "way of life". It simply indicates that they were obedient. Jesus called, and they followed. What do you think this says about the Christian life? What does it mean to be Christ's disciple?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

Wednesday, August 31

Mark 1:21-28

What do you think it means to teach “with authority”?

The unclean spirit’s question gives an image of two difference spheres – “we live in one and you, Jesus, live in the other. There is no connection between us.” Jesus, however, does see a connection. What connect does Jesus see between himself and the unclean spirits?

How does Jesus connect with you in your daily life?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

Thursday, September 1

Mark 1:29-39

How many sick were brought to Jesus? Who gathered outside the door?

Think about how tired Jesus must have been. What did he do in the morning?

Do you think it is important to go to a lonely place or to get away from the hustle and bustle of life in order to pray? Why or why not?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

Friday, September 2

Mark 1:40-45

We often read this story as though Jesus saved this person from a deteriorating skin disease. However, the word used here which is often translated as "leper" just means that he had a skin condition that made him "unclean." In bible times, certain skin diseases could make you unclean (see Leviticus 3). These people had to live outside of the community as long as they had the condition. Once they got rid of the condition and the priest recognized it, they were able to rejoin society, and they were able to participate in temple worship again.

You may notice that some translations say that Jesus was indignant or "moved with anger" while other translation say that Jesus was "moved with compassion." This is because we have many different Greek manuscripts and some have one reading and some have the other. Most scholars agree that the oldest and better translation is the former: Jesus was angry. This might be because he knew once he cleansed the man he would no longer be able to enter openly into towns. All in all, the verses suggest that it was very important to Jesus to heal this person. Why do you think cleansing this man was so important to Jesus?

In what way did Jesus and the man switch places after the healing?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

Why does Jesus forgive the man of his sins?

Why does Jesus heal the man?

What does the order and the reasons listed above tell you about Jesus' priority in healing and forgiving?

Which do you think is more important, that Jesus heal you of any infirmities or forgive you of your sins? Why do you think that?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

Week 1- Mark 1:1-2:12
Sermon Notes

September 4, Sunday

Mark 2:13-17

Who were the "sinners"? This term was used not to denote people who 'sinned'. Rather, it referred to people who disregarded either the laws in the Torah (sometimes the morals laws and sometimes the purity laws), the laws of the Pharisees, or both. Not only did they break the laws, but they did not repent or even try to follow them. In some cases, this might be people who violated Temple restrictions. In some cases, it might mean people who were observers of the Torah but did not follow the laws of the Pharisees. In many cases, this included people who were forced to break the law in order to make a living. This is why the term is used so frequently with tax collectors and prostitutes. In all cases, it was people who, because of their actions, were generally looked down on and avoided by most religious people. In verse 16, the Pharisees and teachers of the law ask Jesus' disciples a question that they do not answer. What would your answer be?

Who do you think are the 'righteous' and the 'sinners' today?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

September 5, Monday

Mark 2:18-22

At the heart of the Jewish religion is remembering. The Jewish calendar was based on remembering events in history when God acted on behalf of the Jewish people. Fasting was also used to remember. Often times, fasting was done to remember the trials of the Jewish people. This is what is behind the question asked to Jesus. How did Jesus respond to the challenge of the people in these verses?

How is the Christian life filled with both fasting and feasting, mourning and celebrating?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

September 6, Tuesday

Mark 2:23-28

Read **1 Samuel 20:31-21:6**. In these verses, David is fleeing from Saul who wants to kill him. God had appointed David king. The present king, Saul, was not happy. As David was running, he got hungry. David went into the synagogue because he knew there would be consecrated bread there. David ended up lying to the priest in order to get the bread – there was no secret mission, and there were no men. Further, as Jesus says, it was unlawful for David to eat this bread. Why do you think Jesus uses this story in order to justify his disciples picking grain on the Sabbath?

In this story, Jesus is not saying the Sabbath is unimportant. He is saying that some things are more important. Can you think of similar things in your life that are important for your worship? When might it be appropriate to forsake those practices for God?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

September 7, Wednesday

Mark 3:1-6

This is the second time Jesus heals someone on the Sabbath. The first time was in Mark 2:1-12. What is one way the two healings are similar?

What is one way this episode in chapter 3 is different from the healing in chapter 2?

Jesus is angry when he sees the stubborn hearts of the people. They were so focused on his breaking the law that they could not admit that healing a person, even on the Sabbath, was a good thing. Do you feel there are circumstances or issues that people today want so badly to see in a certain way that they are blinded to how God's goodness might be working?

Do you ever do this?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

September 8, Thursday

Mark 3:7-12

Why do you think Jesus did not want the unclean spirits to reveal who he was?

So far in this gospel, no one has recognized Jesus as the Son of God. However, there are many crowds who follow him because of his healings. Do you think there are ways that we today follow Christ because of what we feel he can do for us rather than for who he is? How can we make sure we don't do this?

Are there ways in which you, personally, do this?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

September 9, Friday

Mark 3:13-19

Jesus called disciples so that they might do three things. What are they?

Do you think Jesus knew at this time that Judas would betray him? Do you think it would have mattered to Jesus?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

September 10, Saturday

Mark 3:20-21

Read **Luke 12:49-56**. Jesus spoke many times about divisions inside of a household. Many of Mark's readers might have been experiencing these family divisions. Gentiles who worshiped the Greek gods thought that forsaking those gods would bring disaster on their households. Many Jews thought that Jewish Christians would incur the wrath of God by violating the first commandment and treating Jesus as a second god. How might this story of Jesus' family have been seen as comforting to the people reading this gospel?

How might the story of Jesus' family be comforting to people today?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

Week 2 - Mark 2:13-3:21
Sermon Notes

Week 3

Mark 3:22-4:34

September 11, Sunday

Mark 3:22-30

Who do you think the 'strong man' is?

It is sometimes unclear exactly what Jesus means by, "blasphemy of the holy spirit." However, these verses seem to indicate that that phrase refers to calling those things which God does evil. Jesus is driving out demons in the name of God, but the Pharisees and teachers of the law say he is doing it in the name of Beelzebul, the prince of Demons. Do you think there are ways today that religious leaders or religious people fail to recognize God's actions?

Do you think they ever go so far as to say that some work God is doing on earth is actually evil?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

September 12, Monday

Mark 3:31-35

Mark has a literary technique that has come to be called a 'Marcan Sandwich' or an interpolation. These are instances where Mark will start a story, tell a related story in the middle, and then end the first story. Mark 3:31-35 give the conclusion of the story started in 3:20-21. How does the story in the middle (Mark 3:22-30) relate to this story that surround it (look especially at 3:25)?

Is Jesus' household divided?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

September 13, Tuesday

Mark 4:1-12

In verse 12, Jesus quotes from the call of Isaiah the prophet found in Isaiah 6. Many commentators read this as a poetic way to say that God is not going to MAKE people not understand but that that is what is going to happen. According to Jesus, who *IS* supposed to understand?

Do you think the secret of understanding was given only to the disciple back then, or do you think disciples of Christ even today are given that gift? Why or Why not?

Why do you think the secret of understanding is given only to the disciples and not everyone?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

September 14, Wednesday

Mark 4:13-20

Do you think we are always just one kind of soil? Do we become different kinds of soil at different times in our lives?

Our desire is to be the good soil. What crops are you producing, "some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown"?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

September 15, Thursday

Mark 4:21-29

After reading these verses, read Mark 4:10-12 again. How does this parable connect to those verses?

One of the beautiful things about parables is that they can be read in many different ways. One way to understand this parable is that it is the kingdom of God that is always growing. Read **2 Thessalonians 1:3** and **1 Peter 2:2-3**. Christianity involves growth. When we are stagnant in our faith, we stop developing in the life that God has for us. How have you grown lately?

Is there any place in your life where you feel you need to grow more? How can you accomplish that?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

September 16, Friday**Mark 4:30-32**

This parable is taken directly from Ezekiel. Read **Ezekiel 17:22-24** and **Ezekiel 31:5-6**. Just like yesterday, we again get a theme of growth. However, this time Jesus suggests that the growth of the kingdom (and YOUR growth) benefits the birds who can “perch in its shade.” In the Ezekiel readings, the tree is the Jewish nation and these birds represent the gentile nations. They are the ones who benefit from the tree. Yesterday, you were asked in what ways your faith and love of Christ is growing. Today, think about ways that your growth serves others. Do others enjoy the benefits of your growth? If so, how? If not, how can you better use your growth in Christ to benefit others?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

September 17, Saturday**Mark 4:32-34**

In these two short verses we have what appears to be a reiteration of 4:10-12. Notice that Jesus takes time to talk to his disciples. It gets more and more amazing when you think of the growing popularity of Jesus. Even Jesus finds time to share things with those closest to him that he is not able to share with others. Who in your life are you able to speak with differently than anyone else? Who do you share things with that you cannot share with others? Does that person know how special they are to you? Do you think it is important to let them know?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

Week 3-Mark 3:22-4:34
Sermon Notes

September 18, Sunday**Mark 4:35-41**

Read **Jonah 1:4-12**. Mark tells this story much in the same way the story of Jonah is told. He even uses a lot of the same vocabulary as the Greek version of Jonah. Jonah is reluctant to do what God wants him to do. So, he runs. He gets on a boat and as he was traveling God sent a great storm. Jonah had to sacrifice himself (v. 12) in order to save his crewmates. He was swallowed by a large fish (whale?) and was inside the fish for 3 days and 3 nights before he was spit up. After this episode, Jonah was ready to be the prophet God wanted him to be.

Jonah was commanded to go prophesy to Ninevah that they should repent and turn from their evil ways. He did and his prophecy was successful – Ninevah repented. Unlike most pastors, Jonah was upset that the people repented. This is probably because the Ninevites were foreigners who were enemies of Judah and Israel. Jonah told God that he felt tricked: he wanted Ninevah to be destroyed, yet he knew that if he prophesied to them, they would change their way and God would not destroy them. He knew this because, he said to God, “I knew that you are a merciful and compassionate God, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. You are eager to turn back from destroying people.”

Besides falling asleep in the stern of the ship, during a storm, while all of his crewmates thought they were going to die, what other parallels do you see between Jesus and Jonah?

Are there storms in your life that you feel Jesus does not care about because he is asleep in the stern?

How might this story comfort you during those times?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

September 19, Monday

Mark 5:1-20

Jesus has been preaching and healing in Galilee. Galilee is north of Judea and is populated by Jews and Gentiles. In these verses, Jesus crosses over the Sea of Galilee into territory that appears to be primarily gentile territory. This story is very similar to the one we just encountered when Jesus and his disciples crossed the sea: there is a man going through a personal storm, Jesus calms the storm in this man's life, people are afraid when they see that the power of Jesus overcame the storm, and that fear leads to the people asking about Jesus. Why do you think Mark connected these two stories in this way? What similar message do they have?

Do you think the people cared for the demon-possessed man? Why or why not?

Are there times in our society that we treat less fortunate people like the people of Gerasene treated this demon-possessed man? If so, when? How?

Why did Jesus tell the man who had been demon-possessed that he could not come with him?

September 20, Tuesday**Mark 5:21-34**

When read by itself, this story seems to show two things happening to the woman. First, she touches Jesus and is "freed" from her suffering. Second, she confesses to Jesus and is healed (literally, it says that she is 'saved'). We might wonder what would have happened to the woman if the story had ended at verse 29. What if, after seeing that the pain left her, she just went back to her daily life? Would she still have been healed or would the pain have returned? What extra benefit do you think she got from falling at the feet of Jesus and confessing and being "saved"?

Just as with the story of the leper in Mark 1:40-45, this woman's flow of blood made her unclean so that she was not able to mix easily with the rest of society or participate in temple worship. Impurity or 'uncleanness' travels between people through touch, that is, if you are touched by someone who is unclean, you become unclean. What unexpected things happens in this story when the woman touches Jesus?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

September 21, Wednesday**Mark 5:35-43**

This is another example of a Marcan Sandwich like we saw earlier in Mark 3:20-35. In these verses, the raising of Jairus' daughter is interrupted by the story of the woman with the flow of blood. Why do you think Mark put these two stories together?

What do they both have in common?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

September 22, Thursday

Mark 6:1-6

This story has the potential to make us uncomfortable. How could it be that Jesus 'could not' do something?!? Why do you think he could only do limited miracles there?

Have you ever experienced rejection or felt as though you have offended someone just because of who you were?

How do you think this episode made Jesus feel?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

September 23, Friday

Mark 6:7-13

Why do you think Jesus sent the disciples out in pairs?

William Placher, in his commentary on Mark, noted that sending the disciples out as Jesus did makes them dependent on the hospitality of strangers. The disciples were forced to look, not for a house of morally upright people, people with a bigger house, people who were having something good for dinner, or even people who believed the same things they did. Instead, the only criteria for them to stay at a house was that the house owners would allow them to stay. What do you think this tells us about the Christian life?

Is there a time when we should stop talking to those who do not welcome us or will not listen to us? If so, at what point?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

September 24, Saturday

Mark 6:14-29

Read Malachi 4:1-6. This is the last chapter in the Christian Old Testament. Why are people claiming that Jesus is Elijah?

Why does Herod think Jesus is John the Baptist returned from the dead?

Herod ends up killing John the Baptist because he is put in a situation where he must choose to honor God or please human beings. In what ways do we sometimes choose to please people rather than please God?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

Week 4-Mark 4:35-6:29
Sermon Notes

Week 5

Mark 6:30-7:23

September 25, Sunday

Mark 6:30-34

How was the crowd like sheep without a shepherd?

Have you ever felt like a "sheep without a shepherd"? When? What did you do about it?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

September 26, Monday

Mark 6:35-44

Jesus said, "you give them something to eat." What do you think would have happened if the disciples would have agreed and started to go into the city to buy food instead of questioning Jesus?

This story comes immediately after the story of Herod. How do these two leaders, Herod the political leader and Jesus the spiritual leader, differ?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

September 27, Tuesday

Mark 6:45-52

A literal translation of 6:48 would be that Jesus "intended to" or "wished to" pass by them. Why do you think Jesus wanted to pass by them without them noticing him?

Verse 3:52 says that the disciples did not learn the lesson from the loaves? What lesson do you think they were supposed to have learned?

What lesson did you learn from the loaves?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

September 28, Wednesday

Mark 6:53-56

The people recognized Jesus as soon as he got off the boat. Do you recognize Jesus in your daily life?

Are there times when it is harder to recognize him?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

September 29, Thursday

Mark 7:1-4

The Pharisees and many of the Jewish people followed traditions that helped them keep the laws that God gave. Do you have traditions that you follow that help you worship or feel closer to God? If so, what are they?

Jesus does not say these traditions are bad to have or to follow. When do they become bad?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

September 30, Friday

Mark 7:5-13

How do the Pharisees dishonor God's law by following human law?

Are there things that you affirm about God but don't always live by? If so, what?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

October 1, Saturday

Mark 7:14-23

Jesus does not do away with the categories of clean and unclean. Instead, he redefines them. To Jesus, what do these terms mean?

What makes a person clean or unclean?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

Week 5-Mark 6:30-7:23
Sermon Notes

October 2, Sunday**Mark 7:24-30**

This has been called the hardest story in all of the gospels to read. Jesus seems her to become rude and offensive to a woman who is asking him to heal her daughter. The story presents Jesus' refusal as though it is because the woman was a Gentile. However, we have already seen Jesus cast demons from a Gentile man. This might lead one to believe that his refusal was because she was a woman. Either of these would indicate Jesus' humanity, i.e., how he was bound to seeing things through the lens of the social structures of his day. Another suggestion is that he was just testing the woman. Still others have argued that he was always going to heal the daughter, but first he wanted to give a lesson on how salvation would be brought to the Greek nations through the Jewish nation.

Another suggestion is that Jesus was vetting the woman, in a way. We have seen and will see even more that one theme of the Mark's gospel is that miracles are not necessarily easy for Jesus. They are both mentally and physically taxing. They are also not done by Jesus alone. He requires participation by the one being healed ("your faith has healed you!"). It might be that the reply of the woman was the active participation that Jesus needed.

Do any of these answers suggested appeal to you? Why? If not, do you have a suggestion for Jesus' reply? What is it?

Unlike other healings in the gospel of Mark, Jesus does not tell this woman that this healing had anything to do with her faith. Why does Jesus end up healing the daughter?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

October 3, Monday**Mark 7:31-37**

Before Jesus heals this man, he 'groans' (verse 35). This is the second time that Jesus seems to be 'put out' when he heals someone (see 1:40-45). This might also apply to the story we just read of the Syrian-Phoenician woman, that is, Jesus had just retreated to pray, and he might have felt bothered by the woman). This is a characteristic of Mark's gospel. Jesus shows many more human emotions than in the other gospels, and it seems to take him more effort to perform healings (remember in 6:1-6 when he wasn't able to heal many people in his home town?) One reason for Jesus irritation (and in this case, his groan) could be that he keeps agreeing to heal people, telling them not to tell anyone, and they do anyway. Why do you think Jesus commands the people not to tell anyone?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

October 4, Tuesday**Mark 8:1-10**

This story is very similar to the story in chapter 6 when Jesus feeds 5000 people. How is this story different?

It is notable that in both stories Jesus uses his disciples to help feed the multitude. Is Jesus using you today to help his ministry? How? If not, are there ways you think you could be used in his service?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

October 5, Wednesday

Mark 8:11-13

As if on cue, the Pharisees show up after this miracle. They ask Jesus for a sign. Why is this ironic considering what just happened?

Do you think there are signs of God's greatness that we don't always recognize for what they are? What are some examples?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

October 6, Thursday

Mark 8:14-16

After feeding another multitude with bread, this story begins with the disciples only having brought one loaf of bread. What does the bread symbolize? Why is it telling that the disciples do not bring much?

Read **Deuteronomy 16:1-4**. Jews used leaven or yeast to make bread all year long except during Passover. They did not use it during Passover in order to remind themselves of the time when they were rushing out of Egypt from slavery. Why might this information from Deuteronomy be significant to understand Jesus' warning against the yeast of the Pharisees?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

October 7, Friday

Mark 8:17-21

Jesus and his disciples are getting closer and closer to Jerusalem and the time of Jesus' death and the disciples are still having a hard time understanding him. Do you think this has an impact on what Jesus feels?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

October 8, Saturday

Mark 8:22-26

Here is another instance where Jesus seems to have a hard time healing - it takes him two tries! This is similar to the story in 6:1-6 when Jesus is unable to do all of the healings he would like to do. Is there anything similar between the two instances that might explain these difficulties?

Some commentators see here that Mark is deliberately making a connection to the rest of his book, specifically how the disciples (and indeed all people) come to recognize Jesus in two stages – only partial understanding at first and then a fuller comprehension later. What do you think?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

Week 6-Mark 7:24-8:26
Sermon Notes

Week 7

Mark 8:27-9:35

October 9, Sunday

Mark 8:27-30

Caesarea Philippi has a very long history of political and religious significance. Among other names, the city was known as Paneas because it contained a temple to the Greek god Pan, the god of the wilderness. Around the time Jesus was born, the city had been renamed Caesarea for Caesar Augustus. Also, King Herod built a temple there for worship of Caesar. How does the history of Caesarea Philippi give more significance to Jesus' question to Peter?

Who do you say that Jesus is (especially in relation to politics and religion)? How do you let that definition guide your life?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

October 10, Monday

Mark 8:31-33

Jesus' words to Peter call to mind what was said to the people in 7:8. Reread 7:8. How did Peter's answer show that he was more concerned about human things than godly things?

Think about what you have learned so far in this gospel about Jesus and what it means to call him the Messiah. Do you feel you ever turn Jesus into who you want him to be instead of who he actually is?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

October 11, Tuesday

Mark 8:34-9:1

Is there a way in which people today are neglecting their souls in order to 'gain the world'?

Do you ever neglect your soul for the world?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

October 12, Wednesday

Mark 9:2-13

God used Moses to lead the people out Egypt. He gave his law through Moses. However, even though Moses led the people to the promised land, he was not allowed to enter.

During the time of King Ahab in the 9th century, Elijah the prophet saw that the Israelites were starting to follow the foreign god, Baal. Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal on behalf of God and won. 2 Kings says that Elijah was taken to heaven without dying.

Why is it appropriate to see Jesus standing together with Moses and Elijah? How is Jesus' mission similar to and a continuation of Moses and Elijah's missions?

Read **Malachi 4:4-5**. How do these verses in Mark reference the verses from Malachi?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

October 13, Thursday

Mark 9:14-29

Have you ever prayed the father's prayer before – "Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief?"

When? What was the outcome?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

October 14, Friday

Mark 9:30-32

Why do you think the disciples don't understand what Jesus is saying even though he says it so clearly?

Do you think there are times when we misunderstand Jesus and what God wants because it differs from what we want?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

October 15, Saturday

Mark 9:33-35

How does Jesus define greatness?

How do you define greatness?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

Week 7-Mark 8:27-9:35
Sermon Notes

October 16, Sunday

Mark 9:36-37

Different cultures and societies often read these verses differently depending on how they see children. In Jesus' day, children were seen as the most vulnerable in society. They had no rights of their own. In fact, it is probable that Jesus spoke this in Aramaic, and the Aramaic word for child could also mean servant or even lamb. Welcoming a child meant to welcome those whom no one else welcomed. We miss the lesson if we do not see how hard this would have been to accept. It was completely counter-cultural. This is why Jesus was so despised by the religious and political leaders of his day. To Jesus, love overcame societal norms. Are there "children" today whom Christians should care for even though our society does not?

Do Christians stand out today as a welcoming group? If so, how? If not, what do you think we can do to change that image?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

October 17, Monday

Mark 9:38-41

These verses present to us another group of people who seem to be Jesus' followers but are not part of the disciples. How do the disciples react to those who are "not in our group" as opposed to how Jesus reacts toward them?

Is there a lesson that we could learn from this for today? If so, what is it?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

October 18, Tuesday

Mark 9:42-50

Jesus is quoting these verses here from Isaiah. Read **Isaiah 66:22-24**. For Isaiah, the dead bodies who suffer the worms that never die and the fire that never goes out are ones that rebel against God. How are the people who Jesus describes rebelling against God?

Do you think Jesus is being literal here? Will stumbling earn someone being thrown into hell?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

October 19, Wednesday

Mark 10:1-12

These verses are some of the hardest for us today. Divorce is a wide-spread practice. One study in 2022 estimated that 41% of all first marriages end in divorce. This passage presents a good question for us on biblical interpretation, that is, how fair is it to treat our society like the Israelite society in the time of Jesus? How might divorce back then have been different from divorce today?

Do you think Jesus condemns divorce today?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

October 20 Thursday

Mark 10:13-16

This is the third time Jesus mentions being like children. While we tend to see children as being innocent, this is not how people in the ancient world understood them. Instead, people in the ancient world would more likely have understood Jesus to be speaking about children as totally reliant on their caretaker. Therefore, instead of saying, "you should have blind faith like a child," Jesus is probably saying, "you should completely rely on God like a child completely relies on their caregivers." Are there ways in which you completely rely on God?

Are there ways in which you stumble in this area?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

October 21 Friday

Mark 10:17-22

To answer the man's question, Jesus quotes 6 of the 10 commandments. Read the 10 commandments in **Exodus 20:12-16**. Which four does Jesus leave out?

How does Jesus' directive to the man in verse 21 address the other 4 commandments?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

October 22 Saturday

Mark 10:23-27

At first, Jesus seems to indicate that it is impossible for a rich person to enter into heaven. However, he says, "with human beings it might be impossible, but with God it is possible." Why do you think Jesus indicates that it is so difficult for a rich person to enter into heaven?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

Week 8-Mark 9:36-10:27
Sermon Notes

Week 9

10:28-11:35

October 23, Sunday

Mark 10:28-31

Reread Mark 3:31-35. How do these verses relate to the earlier verses about family and possessions?

What do you think verse 31 means?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

October 24, Monday

Mark 10:32-45

Have you ever had authority over anyone? What is the best way to use your authority in a Christ-like way?

What does it mean to give your life as a 'ransom'?

Christians are called to follow Christ. Do you think Christians are also called to give their lives as a "ransom for many"?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

October 25, Tuesday

Mark 10:46-52

Jesus asked the blind what he would like him to do even though it was obvious that he wanted to be healed. It is important to Jesus that we ask. Read **James 4:1-3**. Why is it important to ask for those things we seek?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

October 26, Wednesday

Mark 11:1-10

By riding a colt into Jerusalem, Jesus was fulfilling a prophecy by Zechariah. Read **Zechariah 9:9-10** and **14:4**. What is Jesus saying about himself to the people by entering into Jerusalem this way?

What about you? Do the verses in Zechariah help you see the message and mission of Jesus in a different light? If so, how?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

October 27, Thursday

Mark 11:11-19

Many commentators have noted that money changing inside the temple was probably necessary for temple worship. For instance, it would have been very difficult to take animals (especially with no blemishes) all the way to temple (especially if one wanted it to make sure they remained without blemishes once they got it there). Therefore, people would need to buy animals at the temple. Further, it would certainly not have been appropriate for people to pay for these animals with coins with pictures of pagan gods on them. Therefore, the money changes would swap out the idolatrous money for money that could be used to purchase animals to sacrifice.

Read **Jeremiah 7:1-11**. In these verses, God is mad with the people because they believe they can do anything they want to do as long as they worship in the temple. Jeremiah speaks the words of God to let them know that if they do not reform their ways but still keep going to temple, they are treating temple which bears the name of God into a house of robbers.

Many reasons have been suggested as to why Jesus was so upset. Given the two reasons above, it is very likely that Jesus was upset, not because the money changers were cheating others, but instead, like Jeremiah, because people were treating temple worship as though correct religion was a substitute for correct moral action. Do we have this probably today? Do we sometimes believe that it does not matter how we treat others as long as we do the correct religious practices?

Jesus most likely specifically overturned the money changers' tables because of their necessity in sacrifices. "Correct religion" is Jesus' day meant making the correct sacrifices. If Jesus were to come into our churches today, what would he overturn?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

October 28, Friday

Mark 11:20-25

Here is another Marcan Sandwich. Mark starts the story of the fig tree in 11:11-12, tells the story of Jesus driving out the money changers in the temple, and finishes in these verses. Read **Jeremiah 8:10-13** Why does God take away the figs in these verses in Jeremiah?

How do these verses from Jeremiah help you understand this episode of the fig tree and the temple changers in Mark?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

October 29, Saturday

Mark 11:27-33

Read **James 5:12**. When Jesus asks his question to the Chief Priests, elders and teachers of the law, they could not say what they actually felt because they were afraid of what others would say about their answers. Do you see a problem with religious leaders being too careful in what they say so as to make sure they do not insult anyone? Why or why not?

At first, this story seems to present a problem. We might criticize the religious leaders for not answering Jesus' question. However, Jesus does not answer their question either. However, what you might miss on your first reading is that Jesus does, in fact, answer their question, i.e., the answer to their question is the same answer to his question: both got their authority from heaven. Why might Jesus have answered their question in this way?

What about you? When is it appropriate to be careful in what you say and when is it not appropriate?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

Week 9-10:28-11:35
Sermon Notes

Week 10

Mark 12:1-13:13

October 30, Sunday

Mark 12:1-12

In Isaiah 5, Israel is compared to a vineyard. God gave the Jews his vineyard to tend. In this parable, Jesus references the prophets that have been sent to Israel, and he references himself. Why did the tenants kill the prophets and the son (Jesus)?

Is there a way in which Christians “kill” those who speak for the Lord in order that they might own the religion for themselves?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

October 31, Monday

Mark 12:13-17

Jesus’ answer seems to indicate that those who participate in the economic system of Rome should pay taxes. Another way to say this is, you can’t play the game but then decide you don’t want to play by the rules when they don’t suit you. Just as those in the first century, we are all forced to ‘play the game’ of economics and wealth. However, Jesus’ answer seems to imply that there will come such a time when it is no longer necessary to participate. What do you think Jesus meant by his answer?

Should Christians pay taxes? How can we understand Jesus’ answer for today?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

November 1, Tuesday**Mark 12:18-27**

The Sadducees were a different sect of Jews (like the Pharisees). They rejected any oral traditions of the Pharisees and, instead, strictly followed the letter of the law. Because of this, they did not believe in an afterlife, angels, or that there was any life after death (since the Law or Torah [the first five books of the bible] doesn't mention any of these things). Instead, they believed that religious life was only important in the here and now. A good fate was to be found in living a long life and having many children who would carry on your name. Because of this, it was important to them that a woman was able to have children, even if her husband died before getting her pregnant. Read **Deuteronomy 25:5-6**. In answer to their challenge, what was Jesus pointing out to the Sadducees about God's statement that God was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob even during the time of Moses?

How did Jesus' answer show how God is interested in both the afterlife and our lives here on earth'?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

November 2, Wednesday**Mark 12:28-34**

Read **Isaiah 1:13-17**; **Hosea 6:6**, and **Amos 5:21-24**. How does the man's answer to Jesus call to mind what the prophets also taught?

How can you make sure you are placing loving others above being "religious"?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

November 3, Thursday

Mark 12:35-37

Christ (or the Messiah) is called the Son of David because he is in the same genealogical line as David. However, in this teaching, Jesus is saying something else about the relationship between the Messiah and David. What is it?

David was not only seen as a great king in Israel's history. He was seen as THE king. He brought the people together under one kingdom, increased the land of the kingdom, pushed their enemies away, and made Jerusalem the capital. In suggesting that even David bows down to him, is Christ also saying something about our political leaders?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

November 4 Friday,

Mark 12:38-44

What does Jesus say is the problem with the teachers of the law?

How are they different from the widow?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

November 5, Saturday

Mark 13:1-13

Reread Mark 11:27-35. How does Jesus' advice to his disciples in 13:11 contrast with the answer from the Chief Priest, elders and teachers of the law in 11:32?

Read **Matthew 5:33-37**. How do these verses and Mark 13:11 go together to show how a follower of Christ should speak?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

Week 10-Mark 12:1-13:13
Sermon Notes

Week 11

Mark 13:14-14:42

November 6, Sunday

Mark 13:14-32

While we sometimes read chapter 13 as though Jesus is talking about the end of time, he is talking about the destruction of the Jewish temple which will take place about 40 years after his death and resurrection (see 13:1-4. Also, in 13:14, "the abomination that causes desolation" is a reference to Daniel when an outside force stops sacrifices in the temple and sets up their own idols in the temple. This is what the Romans do in AD 70.

At times like these, it is easy to believe false prophets and false messiahs as Jesus mentions in 13:21-22. Do you see people turning to fall prophecies or religions today?

Why is it so easy to get distracted from the true Messiah of God? What can you do to make sure you don't get led astray?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

November 7, Monday

Mark 13:33-37

Jesus admonition to the disciples is to "watch". He indicates that the opposite of "watching" is "sleeping". What does watching and sleeping look like today? How might you make sure you are "not sleeping," but, instead, "watchful"?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

November 8, Tuesday

Mark 14:1-9

In this story, a woman worships Jesus by anointing him with expensive perfume. Some say a better way to honor God would have been to sell the perfume and give the money to the poor. Jesus obviously believed in giving money to the poor. Reread Mark 10:17-22. What is the difference in the two stories? When it is appropriate to sell your things and give the money to the poor, and when is it appropriate to NOT do so?

Are there times when people today get upset with others who do not worship the way they think they should? How do you feel about that?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

November 9, Wednesday

Mark 14:10-11

Read **Exodus 14:4-10**. The Passover began the feast of Unleavened Bread. The Passover was done to remember and celebrate the LORD passing over the houses of his people in Egypt during the last plague on Egypt. The Feast of Unleavened Bread was done to remember when the Jews fled slavery in Egypt. The religious leaders were scared the people would riot if they tried to arrest Jesus during the festival. Given the history and importance of the celebrations, why might the people riot?

Here is another sandwich. This chapter starts off with the religious leaders wanting to kill Jesus, and it ends when they find a way to do it. In between is a story about Jesus being anointed. Why would Mark sandwich these two stories together? What does the middle story (the story of the woman anointing Jesus) have to do with the story of the religious leaders seeking to kill Jesus?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

November 10, Thursday,

Mark 14:12-21

After Jesus predicts that he will be betrayed by one of the twelve, the twelve do not get mad that there is a betrayer in their midst. Instead, they are "saddened." Why do you think they would all be sad instead of mad?

In our society today, we seem to get angered, outraged, or offended by almost anything. Do you think this is because anger is an easier emotion than sadness? Do you feel there are instances when you get angry when it is really sadness you are experiencing?

The disciples questioned Jesus whether or not it was them. Do you think all of them were afraid that it might actually be them who would betray him?

Do you ever get scared that you will or do betray Jesus in certain situations?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

November 11, Friday**Mark 14:22-25**

Jesus says that the wine is his "blood of the covenant". Some ancient manuscripts say "new covenant". This new covenant was prophesied in Jeremiah. Read **Jeremiah 31:31-33**. Christians all of the world, of all different denominations celebrate the Lord's supper. To some, it is one of the most, if not the most, important tradition in the Christian church. How can reading these verses in Mark and Jeremiah help you as you grow in your faith and understanding of this sacred meal?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

November 12 Saturday**Mark 14:26-42**

Jesus went away and prayed the same prayer three times with presumably the same answer. What does this say about our own prayers and expectations of God?

Is there anything this story can teach us about those times when we also might feel ashamed and "don't know what to say" to God?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

Week 11-Mark 13:14-14:42
Sermon Notes

Week 12

Mark 14:43-16:8

November 13, Sunday

Mark 14:43-52

Jesus' question is very ironic. They come to get him at night with swords and clubs, and he asks, "am I leading a rebellion?" In what way WAS Jesus leading a rebellion?

Is Jesus still leading a rebellion? If so, how? If not, why not?

The story of the young man in verse 51 and 52 is only found in Mark. Mark probably includes it because it shows something very important that he wants the readers to see. What do you think it is?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

November 14, Monday

Mark 14:53-72

Read **Leviticus 20:13-16**. The Jewish leaders could not find cause to kill Jesus until he spoke up and said that he was the Messiah. They considered this blasphemy. Do you think they had the right to kill him if he had blasphemed? Why don't we kill people today for blaspheming?

In the eyes of the religious leaders, Jesus deserved death. However, read verse 65 again. Even if they felt they were going to institute a proper form of judgement on him, how did they go further than what is written?

Can you think of examples of how we might go further than what is written in our laws when we find someone guilty of a crime in our justice system?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

November 15, Tuesday

Mark 15:1-20

Pilate's interest in Jesus and during this feast was to keep the people from rising up. He did not care about putting an innocent man to death as long as it fulfilled his goal. Why do you think he kept calling Jesus, "the king of the Jews" (also see 15:26)?

This is an instance where the people probably knew what the right thing to do was, but the political and religious leaders purposefully led them in the wrong direction in order to fulfil their own agenda. Can you think of a way this happens today?

What is a Christians responsibility in the midst of political or religious societal pressures that go against what they know is pleasing to God?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

November 16, Wednesday

Mark 15:21-32

Reread Mark 10:37-40. Who is found at Jesus' left and right hand?

The gospel of Mark does not say anything about a thief being kind to Jesus or asking Jesus to remember him when he comes into his kingdom. For one reason or another, Mark says that both of those crucified with Jesus mocked him. Whether Mark chose to leave the repentant thief out of his narrative or he just did not know about him, it serves Mark's narrative that he is not there. How do you read the story differently without the repentant thief?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

November 17, Thursday

Mark 15:33-39

Read **Hebrews 9:1-7**. What do you think was significant about the veil in the temple being torn in two?

So far, in this Gospel, Jesus has not been proclaimed the Son of God by any human being. Only God and demons have called him this. Why do you think it is significant that the first person to recognize Jesus as the Son of God is a Roman centurion, and that he only notices this AFTER Jesus death?

What does it mean to worship a crucified messiah?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

November 18, Friday

Mark 15:40-47

We have not heard about any of Jesus' disciples since Peter's denial in chapter 14. However, twice in this passage we are told of the women that witnessed the death and the burial of Jesus. As in most ancient cultures (and still some today), women were seen as the weaker, inferior sex. Some Greeks understood women to be underdeveloped men, or men who did not fully form in the womb. Others thought that women were the product of weaker sex cells. Do you think that Mark's early readers/hearers would have thought it was significant, or understood the story differently knowing that Jesus' male disciples had fled but that these women were present during the crucifixion and burial (and in the next chapter witnesses to the empty tomb)?

Does it help you see the story in a different way? If so, how?

What lesson could Christians get from these verses on how to treat others that our society might treat as inferior?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

November 19, Saturday

Mark 16:1-8

The gospel of Mark ends on 16:8. One of the biggest questions about the gospel of Mark is why there is no resurrection narrative. This was such a problem for some early scribes that copied the gospel of Mark, that they added endings that included the resurrection. The most popular of these is known as the 'longer ending' and can be found as a footnote in most translations (the longer ending is usually known as Mark 16:9-20). Why do you think Mark does not have a resurrection narrative?

How has the empty tomb affected your own life?

Remember back to Mark 1:1, this is only "the beginning of the gospel." How does the gospel story still continue in your own life?

What other questions can you think of to ask about these verses? Did anything stick out to you?

Week 12-Mark 14:43-16
Sermon Notes