



Term 4 2019

Narrabeen
ST. FAITH'S *Anglican Church*

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Cross Culture

This term we study some sections of Mark's gospel. This gospel might be titled: "The gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (and the story of the disciples' failure to understand him)".

Recently a Christian friend that I have known for many years told me she no longer believed in hell. I guess the idea of God's judgement seemed to contradict the picture of a loving God, for her. But her comment made me think again about what I do, and do not, know about God and about Jesus. What sort of Jesus do I believe in? One who teaches about a hell to be avoided at all costs. Or a Jesus who wouldn't hurt people like that? Others teach a Jesus who wants all his followers to be wealthy and successful. Still others, a Jesus who now endorses sexual behaviour that was once considered immoral. Well, this question of "Which Jesus are you following?" is not new. Jesus' chosen twelve disciples were constantly showing that they had a different picture of Jesus, from the man before them. Jesus kept doing and saying things that confronted, upset, and challenged them.

As Jesus did this, he forced these 12 men to look again at themselves. He exposed their hearts, motives, loves and hates. And what emerged in this "reality check" was not pretty. And as we study chapters 9 and 10 of Mark's gospel this term, we will find ourselves walking in the disciples' shoes. Jesus will, I believe, expose our true motives, desires and hopes. Just as he did for those first disciples. We will see Jesus as he truly was, and is – God the Son, who came to save.

We pick the story up, just after Jesus' identity as "the Christ" has first been announced to the twelve. Jesus' identity has been almost a "secret" to this point, and the key question for readers of Mark chapter 1-8 has been "Who is this man?" But now, the question becomes "What does it mean for Jesus to be the Christ?" and closely connected to that "What will it mean to follow him?"

Jesus is recorded in Mark 8:31-32, saying that for him, being the Christ means suffering. Peter rebukes Jesus for this, leading Jesus to say that those who will follow him must expect costly sacrifice, also. Or else Judgement (8:34-38).

In the next two chapters of Mark, we see Jesus dealing with teaching disciples who are trying to come to terms with Jesus, as he really is. Let's join them.

Kerry Nagel

STUDY ONE: Jesus in Power

Mark 9:2-13

1/ Getting Started

a) What do people say about Jesus, today? List what you think your neighbours, friends or family members might say about Jesus.

b) Discuss why people think this way.

2/ Turning to the Bible

a) Read Mark 9:2-13. From verses 2 to 6 why does Peter feel frightened? (Read Exodus 24:15 as background)

b) What does God the Father say about the identity of Jesus? (v7)
(See Psalm 2 and Deuteronomy 18:15)

- c) What does Jesus say about his own identity in verses 9 and 12? (See also Daniel 7:13-14)
- d) In verse 11, Jesus' three chosen disciples ask him a question. They believe that once Elijah comes to "restore all things" (Malachi 4:5-6), there will be no need for the Messiah to suffer. How does Jesus correct their expectations? (v12-13)
- e) What things do you think these disciples are struggling to understand, about Jesus and his teaching? Why, do you think? Discuss.

3/ Getting Personal

- a) How does the picture of Jesus in this passage compare with your friends' views of Jesus? Discuss.
- b) How does this picture of Jesus challenge your own view of Jesus? Discuss.

c) What response do you think we should make, as a result? Discuss.

4/ If you have time

a) Read Mark 8:34 to 9:1. Chapter 8:38 refers to the promised return of Jesus at the last judgement. What then, is Jesus pointing forward to in chapter 9:1? Discuss.

b) Many people (mistakenly) claimed that Jesus was going to return in the lifetime of the disciples. But read 2 Peter 1:16-18. When did Peter say he had seen a "powerful demonstration" from God? Discuss.

PRAYER POINTS

Include people who do not know Christ yet

STUDY TWO: Frail Faith

Mark 9:14-29

1/ Getting started

- a) Who do you see people trusting to help them with the problems of life? Why? Discuss.

2/ Turning to the Bible

- a) Read Mark 9:14-29. Who is arguing at the start of this incident and why?

- b) What problem does the man who comes to Jesus have?

- c) From verses 21-22, why does he come to Jesus?

- d) What "attitude" of the people and the man who comes to Jesus, does Jesus despair over? (v19, v23) Why?

e) In verses 25-29, what authority does Jesus' demonstrate? What does this show about his identity?

3/ Getting personal

a) It seems from verses 28-29, that the disciples felt they were "important" and powerful in themselves – powerful enough to cast out the demon. What did they need to learn and how might this be a lesson to us?

b) The crowds were amazed at Jesus' previous miracles (see v15), but this is different to the faith Jesus is seeking (v19). What is the difference?

c) How does your faith compare with that of the father in v22-32? Discuss.

PRAYER POINTS

Include people who do not know Christ yet

STUDY THREE: True Greatness

Mark 9:30-37

1/ Getting started

a) How does our society measure greatness? Who, would you say, are examples today of those regarded as great, by people in general in Sydney? Why?

b) How do you feel towards such people? Why do you think? Discuss.

2/ Turning to the Bible

a) Read Mark 9:30-37. Verses 30 and 37 tell us that Jesus is on a journey. This journey is very significant in the "shape" of Mark's gospel. On a map, trace where Jesus began (noted in ch 8:27), then look at ch 10:32. Where is Jesus deliberately heading? Why?

b) Verses 30-32 record the second time Jesus declares his "purpose". Who in particular, does he speak to? Why do you think he does it this way?

c) What does Jesus say is going to happen to him?

d) How do the disciples respond to this? (v32). Why do you think they respond this way? Discuss.

e) In verses 33 to 37, Jesus teaches the disciples about who is "first" or "great". What is Jesus' main point to them? Discuss.

3/ Getting personal

a) What is the connection between Jesus' announcement in verse 31, about what is ahead for him, and his teaching in verses 33 to 37 about greatness? Discuss.

b) How does this teaching challenge our own attitudes? Discuss.

4/ If you have time

a) Jesus clearly knows what is ahead for him, in God the Father's purpose. But, how does he know that he must die in this way? Some suggest that he has had a special "word" from God the Father. But look up Mark 9:12. What source does Jesus give, for this knowledge? (possibly Isaiah 53?)

b) Also, look up ch 14:27. How does Jesus say he knows he will be deserted by the disciples? Discuss.

c) In what, then is Jesus "trusting"? How is that different, or similar to what God calls us to do? Discuss.

PRAYER POINTS

Include people who do not know Christ yet

1/ Getting Started

a) What is pride? Give some examples of people acting proudly, in our world.

b) Why is pride dangerous? Discuss.

2/ Turning to the Bible

a) Read Mark 9:38-41. In verse 38, the NIV translates "because he was not one of us". More precisely, the original says, "he was not following us". Why do you think the disciples told the man to stop?

b) What does this show about the disciples' thinking about their own "importance"?

c) Why do you think they feel this way?

d) How does Jesus correct the disciples' attitude by what he says in verses 39-41?

e) Read verses 42 to 50. Proud people often ignore the consequences of their actions for others. In verse 42, what strong warning does Jesus give his disciples, about this sort of attitude?

f) In verses 43 to 50. Jesus turns to warning the disciples directly. They were worried about who else was casting out demons in Jesus' name. What should they have been more concerned about, according to Jesus?

3/ Getting personal

a) What would you say to someone who says they follow Jesus, but don't believe in hell? Discuss.

b) How was pride dangerous, for the disciples? Discuss.

c) How can we avoid this danger for ourselves? In particular, how can we take the warning in verse 42 and put it into practice? Discuss.

PRAYER POINTS

Include people who do not know Christ yet

1/ Getting Started

a) Describe the common attitudes to marriage in our society today. When do people generally get married? Why?

b) Describe the common attitudes to divorce in our culture. When do people divorce? For what sort of reasons?

(Note: This will clearly be a very painful subject for many of us. Still, it is important we try to understand Jesus' teaching here and put it in its context.)

2/ Turning to the Bible

a) Read Mark 10:1-12. What question do the Pharisees ask Jesus and why do they question him in this way? (v2).

b) From verse 5, why according to Jesus, did Moses introduce instruction about divorce?

c) From verses 6 to 9, what does Jesus emphasize as God's original intention for marriage?

d) The disciples struggle to understand or accept Jesus' teaching. In verses 10-12, how does Jesus clarify his meaning to them?

3/ Some background

It helps next to take a step back and look at the context of this section. Elsewhere, scripture does give reasons for a man or woman to divorce a partner (e.g. Matthew 19:9, 1 Corinthians 7:15). So, why does Jesus not raise these issues here?

a) First, because of the Pharisees' motives. It is likely that they know what the local governor did to John the Baptist (Ch 6:18). How does this explain their aim in verse 2?

b) Also, the Pharisees were known for frequently divorcing their wives and remarrying often. If this was the culture, what is Jesus' teaching aiming to attack? Discuss. (See also Malachi 2:13-16)

4/ Getting personal

a) Many of us feel guilt for failures in the area of marriage and sexual behaviour in general. Look at chapter 3:28 and 10:45, regarding forgiveness.

b) How should Jesus' teaching here challenge our thinking about marriage, if we are already married? Discuss.

c) How should Jesus' teaching here shape our attitude to marriage, if we are single? Discuss.

PRAYER POINTS

Include people who do not know Christ yet

STUDY SIX: How to Receive Eternal Life

Mark 10:13-31

1/ Getting started

a) What do you feel are some signs that a person is blessed by God today? Discuss.

b) How can you tell if you are a person approved by God? Discuss.

2/ Turning to the Bible

a) Read Mark 10:13-16. What does the treatment of the children by the disciples show about the disciples' attitude to children?

b) What does Jesus' treatment of the children show about his attitude to them?

c) What is it about children that Jesus says, "the Kingdom of God belongs to them"?

d) Read Mark 10:17-31. From verse 21, how does Jesus feel toward this man who has asked the question about gaining eternal life?

e) Why do you think Jesus feels this way toward him?

f) What instruction does Jesus give the man, so that he can gain eternal life? (v21)

g) Why do you think Jesus chooses this instruction?
(see Mark 12:30, Ephesians 5:5, Mark 8:34)

h) Why do you think the disciples are so surprised at Jesus' two statements in verses 23 and 24-25?

i) What does Jesus promise those who do trust him? (v28-30)

3/ Getting personal

a) What does this passage teach us about whether wealth is a sign of God's blessing in this world or not?

b) What is it about the children (v13-16), that the rich man lacks?
Discuss.

c) What is it that God can do in/with a person, that means they can
be saved and inherit eternal life? (v27) Discuss.

PRAYER POINTS

Include people who do not know Christ yet

1/ Getting started

- a) Who do you feel has the greatest authority and power in our world, our society?

- b) How do they use their authority? Why do you think they do this?

2/ Turning to the Bible

- a) Read Mark 10:32-34. From verse 32, what is Jesus doing that surprises some and makes people afraid? Why do you think, they respond this way?
(Note: The religious leaders and the Pharisees, were based in Jerusalem)

- b) From verses 32 to 35, how does Jesus respond to the way "the twelve" are feeling? Why do you think Jesus says what he does to them?

- c) Read Mark 10:35-45. What does the question James and John ask show about what they think will happen, when they all get to Jerusalem? (v32-40)

- d) How does Jesus describe the behaviour of those in power, in the wider world? (v41-42) What does this mean in practice? (Give examples if you can)
- e) In what way must disciples or followers of Jesus, be different? Why? (v43-45)

3/ Getting personal

- a) What does this section of teaching on discipleship have to say to those with authority and leadership positions in church? How should this shape their planning etc?
- b) What does Jesus' teaching here mean for you personally? Discuss.

PRAYER POINTS

Include people who do not know Christ yet

1/ Getting started

a) What is it to have "faith" in another person?

b) Which people do you have faith in? Why?

2/ Turning to the Bible

a) Read Mark 10:46-52. What title does Bartimaeus give to Jesus?
(v47-48)

b) What is the significance of calling someone by this title?
(See 2 Samuel 7:11-14)

- c) From verse 48, what does the crowd say to Bartimaeus? Why, do you think? (see also 10:13)
- d) Jesus' response is different to that of the crowd. What does Jesus say to the man? (v49) What does this show about Jesus' character?
- e) What does Jesus say has led to the man being healed? (v52) Why, do you think?
- f) What does Bartimaeus do, once he has been healed/saved? (v52) How does this contrast with the disciples? (v13)

3/ Getting personal

- a) It is helpful to know that the word for "healed" in verse 52 also means "saved". Try to summarize what the blind man believes about Jesus. How does this compare with your own 'picture' of (faith in) Jesus? Discuss.

- b) As we finish this series of studies, list the things the disciples have struggled to understand, about the reality of following Jesus. Which is most significant for you? Why? Discuss.

PRAYER POINTS

Include people who do not know Christ yet

