

THE GOSPEL OF MARK – SESSION 3

Academy of Christian Discipleship

Mark 8:27 – 16:20

The second half of the Gospel of Mark prepares readers for the Passion of Jesus. “Passion” is derived from the past participle of the Latin *patior*, which means “to suffer.” The focus of the narrative in the second half of Mark is direct and singular—“on the way” to Jerusalem. Elements that characterized Jesus’ ministry in Galilee—miracles, exorcisms, parables, large crowds, the command to silence, hindrance from the disciples, outdoor teaching, and crossing the Sea of Galilee—are either reduced in number or entirely absent in the second half of the Gospel. The ministry of Jesus is now limited primarily to his disciples, specifically, to prepare them for his suffering and death in Jerusalem. The preparation occurs in three blocks of material: 1) discipleship (8:27-10:42), 2) Jesus’ teaching in the temple of Jerusalem (chapters 11-13), and 3) Jesus’ arrest, trial, crucifixion and resurrection (chapters 14-16). We will consider these three blocks in the three segments of tonight’s lecture.

Notes (Sessions 3.1 - 3.3)

I. Mark 8:27-10:52 Discipleship

A. Passage for consideration: Peter’s Confession and the Transfiguration (8:27-9:8).

B. Overview

1. Peter’s confession and the transfiguration are followed by a series of short narratives in the latter part of chap. 9, all of which speak to the theme of humility and suffering “on the way” to Jerusalem, i.e., in following Jesus.
2. Chap. 10 gives five stories in sequence, all devoted to the theme of discipleship.
 - a. 10:1-12 Discipleship in marriage
 - b. 10:13-16 Discipleship with children

- c. 10:17-31 Discipleship with possessions/wealth
- d. 10:32-45 Discipleship in leadership in the Christian community
- e. 10:46-52 Bartimaeus: A Model Disciple

II. Jesus in the Temple of Jerusalem

A. Passage of consideration: Entry into Jerusalem, Fig Tree, the Baptist (Mark 11)

B. Overview

1. Mark 11-13 contains nine stories, all of which are set in the Jerusalem temple. In most of the stories religious leaders oppose and attack Jesus in the temple, and in all of the stories the temple meets with Jesus' judgment.
2. As you read through the stories in this section, ask these two questions: 1) in what way does Mark depict the temple negatively, and 2) in what way does Jesus become the fulfillment and replacement of the purpose of the temple, i.e., the place where one meets God?
 - a. 11:1-10, Entry into Jerusalem
 - b. 11:11-25, Withered fig tree
 - c. 11:27-33, Question about John the Baptist
 - d. 12:1-12, Parable of the Vineyard
 - e. 12:13-17, Paying taxes to Caesar

- f. 12:18-27, Sadducees and the resurrection
- g. 12:28-40, Challenges from scribes
- h. 12:41-44, the Widow in the temple
- i. 13:1-37, Jesus's sermon on the Second Coming "opposite the temple."

III. Arrest, Trial, Crucifixion, and Resurrection of Jesus

A. Passage for consideration: Confession of the Centurion (Mark 15:16-39)

B. Overview

1. Mark 14 is the longest chapter in the Gospel, and its theme is the abandonment of Jesus. The chapter begins with Jesus and the disciples together in typical circumstances. It ends with all groups and persons who have been associated with Jesus throughout the Gospel abandoning Jesus. Follow the theme of abandonment through the chapter, especially as it is depicted in the Last Supper (14:17-25), Gethsemane (14:32-42), and Peter's denial (14:53-72).
2. Mark 15 recounts Jesus' trial by Pilate, his scourging, crucifixion, death, and burial. The Roman administration of death was extremely cruel and brutal. The crucifixion of Jesus is narrated by Mark, however, with the utmost restraint and objectivity. There is no exploitation of the savagery of crucifixion either to sensationalize Jesus' death or to evoke sentimentality from readers. Mark places the accent, rather, on the shame and mockery to which Jesus was subjected. Why this unusual emphasis?
3. Mark 16 recounts the appearance of the angel to the women following Jesus' resurrection. An actual resurrection appearance in Mark is absent, however. The resurrection account in 16:9-20 was not original to Mark, but comes from a later period. The original resurrection appearance may have filled the final page of Mark's Gospel, which was lost due to wear and tear. Even though Mark, the earliest Gospel, does not have a resurrection account, Paul's account of the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15 antedates Mark by at least a decade.

Assignments

FIRST WEEK: Read Mark 3:13-15, the call and commission of a disciple. You are a disciple of Jesus. Apply these words to your own life. Think, ponder, pray about what it means for you to be with Jesus? Similarly, to proclaim him, to be verbally responsible to your faith? Lastly, to exercise “authority in casting out demons,” to face and oppose evil rather than avoiding it?

SECOND WEEK: Read Mark 7:31-37, the story of the healing of a man of impaired hearing and speech. When people saw what Jesus did for the man, they said, “He has done all things well” (v. 37). Think of this as a description of Jesus Christ’s work in your life. Claim this statement in your own life: Jesus has done all things well. Thank him for the good you know and have experienced. Claim this statement also for those things that you don’t understand or that don’t seem good to you. Redemption means rescue from evil and restoration for good and God’s purposes. Claim this verse: “He has done all things well.”

THIRD WEEK: Mark 10:46-52, the story of blind Bartimaeus. Verse 52 ends with a statement that could be the most important insight into discipleship. It could even be the title of the Gospel. “Following Jesus on the way.” Bartimaeus responded to the restoration of his sight by “following Jesus on the way.” Think, ponder, pray. What does it mean not for God to bless your way, but for you to follow Christ on his way in your life and in our world?

FOURTH WEEK: Mark 15:39, the confession of the centurion at the cross. How could a man who was chief of the execution squad make such a statement about Jesus? What did he mean by it? What does Mark want to teach us by having this saving truth declared by a Gentile Christ killer? What does this tell us about God’s grace? What does this tell you personally, for all your sinfulness, about God’s saving grace to you?

Spiritual Exercises & Special Project

Lectio divina is a way of reading Scripture slowly, prayerfully and expectantly. It moves beyond the setting and place of the story, its ancient history and customs. The reader enters the story, allowing it to speak at a deep and personal level. Practice this kind of reading in the coming month as you read and reread Mark 8:27-38. The Caesarea Philippi episode was a challenge to the first disciples, and it is no less for us today. Jesus knows that. He didn’t reject Peter and the others when they stumbled at his demands, and he won’t reject you. As you read this passage prayerfully and receptively, do three things. First, thank God for the demands that you already believe and are doing. Second, thank God for those you understand, even if you don’t do them. Third, pray that God will give you an understanding mind and sincere heart as you seek to understand and obey this central message of the Gospel of Mark.

