

Bible Study

A watercolor-style background illustration. It depicts a landscape with mountains, a body of water, and a small boat with a sail. The colors are muted and blended, creating a soft, artistic feel. The text is overlaid on this background.

the good news of Jesus.

Mark's Gospel

Trinity Church Brighton
2024

The Good News of Jesus. Mark's Gospel

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Introduction

At Trinity Church Brighton we made our way through Mark 1-8 in early 2023, and we return to the second half at the start of 2024. The two halves of Mark's Gospel hinge on the true but confused declaration of Peter in Mark 8:29 that Jesus is the Messiah. Up until that point Mark has been painting a picture of who Jesus is. A man of uncommon wisdom? A wonder worker? A revolutionary? Or the one that Mark describes from the outset as "the Messiah, the Son of God." (1:1) So we began 2023 with the question: Who is Jesus?

Now in 2024, we begin the year asking the question that Mark 9-16 poses: What does it mean to follow Jesus? As Mark describes Jesus' journey to Jerusalem and his impending death on the cross, we see Jesus unpack for his disciples what he meant when he said that "whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves, take up their cross and follow me" (8:34) This is a call to cross-shaped discipleship.

Anyone who compares our study notes from 2023 and 2024 will notice that we've not included studies from 9:2-10:31. (This is not because we're uncomfortable with what is covered in this section - you're welcome to check out the sermons online at <https://www.trinitybay.church/resources/sermon-archive/>) This is because these studies are primarily written for our Growth Groups, and most of them were on break during the time we covered that section.

There is another reason that we've chosen to begin these studies at Mark 10:32. This is the third and final occasion that Mark records Jesus telling his disciples what will happen to them when they get to Jerusalem. From this point on, Mark takes us on that journey with an ever-increasing focus on the cross. In a lovely quirk of the calendar, a delayed start in our studies coincides with the beginning of the season of Lent in 2024, which falls on February 14. With that in mind, we've structured these studies a little differently to those from last year, inviting a more reflective approach that focuses us on the cross of Christ and how we respond in repentance and thanksgiving. (Of course we can still dig deeply into the Bible passages set for each week, and the sample COMA questions provided are a useful tool to facilitate that process.) In our Sunday gatherings we'll set aside time

for a little more reflection than we usually do, and we'll aim to direct that in ways that complement the reflections encouraged in these studies. This combination might then be the basis of ongoing reflection, repentance and thanksgiving throughout your week as we journey with Mark towards the cross and our celebrations on Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

Traditionally Lent has been a time for fasting in various forms. There is a danger in the potential for this to take on a life of it's own, distracting us from the completed work of Christ on the cross and instead focusing on our own sacrifice as a work worthy of attention (see Matt 6:16-18). However, a period of thoughtful self-discipline can be helpful in a variety of ways. Fasting can be associated with sorrow and mourning, which can be a helpful attitude with which to approach repentance for our sins. Fasting also has a way of giving us that 'yearning' feeling that prompts us to reflect on Jesus as the only one who can truly satisfy our deepest needs. Fasting reminds us that we are fragile and physical beings, which is a helpful prompt to reflect on the profound significance of Jesus' bodily suffering. So, you might like to consider fasting in some form during Lent. Alternatively, you might choose to abstain from a particular activity you normally do, or perhaps you might commit to a particular spiritual discipline such as focused prayer or Bible reading during this time. To be clear, none of this is essential. But these are some simple suggestions to help us step back from the usual routines of life and reflect on the profound significance of the cross. As a church family, let's take the opportunity to start this new year asking God to grow us in our understanding of, commitment to, and delight in cross-shaped discipleship.

The table below outlines the passages we'll be working through in our Sunday sermons with the associated titles that help highlight the big ideas within each block. The studies below will work just as well in the week prior to or in the week following the sermon.

Date	Passage	Sermon Title
4-Feb-2024	Mark 10:32-45	Cross-Shaped Glory
11-Feb-2024	Mark 10:46-52	I Once Was Blind...
18-Feb-2024	Mark 11:1-33	Entering Jerusalem
25-Feb-2024	Mark 12:1-17	Give To God What Is His
3-Mar-2024	Mark 12:18-44	Eternal Life
10-Mar-2024	Mark 13:1-37	Keep Watch For Jesus
17-Mar-2024	Mark 14:1-72	The Night Of Tests And Trials
24-Mar-2024	Mark 15:1-47	The Death Of The Divine

For those who like to dig deeper, here are a few great resources on Mark:

- *Mark For You* (Jason Meyer, The Good Book Company). This unpacks Mark verse by verse but with a strong focus on application.
- *The Message of Mark* (Donald English, The Bible Speaks Today Series). This is an excellent, accessible commentary.
- *The Gospel According to Mark* (James Edwards, The Pillar New Testament Commentary) This is a much detailed commentary for those with plenty of time for reading.

COMA questions for the Gospels and Acts

Context

- What has happened so far in the narrative? Have there been any major events, characters or themes?

- What has happened just prior to the section you are reading?

Observation

- What do you learn about the main characters in this section? How does the author describe them? How do they describe themselves?

- Is time or place significant in the events that happen in the passage?

- Is there a conflict or high point in the passage?

- Do you think there is a main point or theme in this section of the story?

- What surprises are there?

Meaning

- Are there any 'editorial' comments from the author about the events in the narrative? How do these comments illuminate what is happening?
- Does someone in the narrative learn something or grow in some way? How? What does this person learn?
- What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is, and what he came into the world to do?
- How could you sum up the meaning of this passage in your own words?

Application

- How does this passage challenge (or confirm) your understanding?
- Is there some attitude you need to change?
- What does this passage teach you about being a disciple of Jesus?

Mark 10:32-45 *Cross-Shaped Glory*

Sermon notes for Sunday February 4

Mark 10:32-45 *Cross-Shaped Glory*

This is the third time Mark records Jesus' prediction of his approaching death. You might like to look back over the previous two occasions in Mark 8:31-32 and 9:30-32 and consider what new information Jesus gives his disciples here in chapter 10.

Reflect:

The theme of glory runs through this passage as Jesus sets out the true glory of the Son of Man revealed in the cross in contrast with the glory that the world seeks. Reflect on the path to glory that Jesus offers his disciples.

Repent:

In what ways do we share the perspective of the disciples (v37, 41), and what does it mean to come to Jesus asking him to ransom us from this captivity? (v45)

Give Thanks:

How are you moved to thankfulness as you reflect on the glory of the Son of Man in this passage?

Mark 10:46-52 / *Once Was Blind*

Sermon notes for Sunday February 11

Mark 10:46-52 / Once Was Blind

Mark records for us two occasions that Jesus heals a blind man. In 8:22-25 his healing took place in two stages, and this led into Peter's declaration that Jesus is the Messiah. But it became clear that Peter still had a pretty fuzzy view of what that meant. When we meet Bartimaeus we discover that, figuratively speaking, this blind man already has a pretty clear picture of who Jesus is (v48).

Reflect

What has Jesus been doing since he last healed a blind man? How does Bartimaeus portray the response of an ideal disciple?

Repent

How has God made you aware of ways that you have failed to see who Jesus really is? Are there aspects of this that you need to repent of?

Give Thanks

Imagine a prayer of thanksgiving that Bartimaeus may have prayed as he followed Jesus along the road, and make it your own.

Mark 11:1-33 *Entering Jerusalem*

Sermon notes for Sunday February 18

Mark 11:1-33 *Entering Jerusalem*

Psalm 118 provides a helpful backdrop to the festival procession. The crowds shout “Hosannah” (Lord, save us! – see Ps 118:25), declare blessing on the one who comes in the name of the Lord (see Ps 118:26), and celebrate the rule and reign of God in a festal procession up to the temple (see Ps 118:27). The demonstrations of judgment that follow with the fig tree and the temple point us forward to what is going to take place at the cross: both the ransom for many and the replacement of the old way.

Reflect

Throughout his Gospel, Mark is inviting his reader to consider how we respond in faith to who Jesus is and what he has done for us. How does this passage prompt you to respond to his authority in your life?

Repent

At the cross we clearly see Jesus as Saviour. How might we need to repent of failing to recognise him as Lord?

Give Thanks

How does the humble authority of Jesus prompt you to thanksgiving?

Mark 12:1-17 *Give To God What Is His*

Sermon notes for Sunday February 25

Mark 12:1-17 Give To God What Is His

Psalm 118 is once again an important background to this passage, as Jesus quotes from Ps 118:22-24 in Mark 12:10-11. This prompts us to consider how the words of Ps 118 around v22-24 also relate to what Jesus is teaching. Although the Pharisees perceived this parable was spoken against them (12:12), it seems they still failed to see what it said about Jesus.

Reflect

In this passage Jesus gives two illustrations of the nature of sin (tenants and coins). How do these descriptions of sin help us appreciate the righteous judgment of God and our need for his grace?

Repent

The illustrations of tenants and coins both relate to the sin of withholding from God what is rightfully his. How does this prompt you to repentance?

Give Thanks

Give thanks in light of Psalm 118:19-24.

Mark 12:18-44 *Eternal Life*

Sermon notes for Sunday March 3

Mark 12:18-44 *Eternal Life*

Note the conga line of opponents trying to get a piece of Jesus: the chief priests (12:12), the Pharisees and Herodians (v13), and now the Sadducees (v18) and a teacher of the law (v28). We might miss just how profoundly confronting Jesus' rebuke of these last two is. The Sadducees were the ruling party amongst mainstream Judaism at the time yet here Jesus boldly accuses them of being 'in error' (v24) and 'badly mistaken' (v27). The teacher of the law would have been considered by everyone (including himself, it seems) to be right in the middle of the kingdom of God and yet Jesus concluded that 'You are not far from the kingdom of God', which implies that he's still on the outside!

Reflect

These two episodes are connected by the theme of life after death – which the Sadducees denied and which the teacher of the law assumed was his for the taking. How do you view the reality of eternal life?

Repent

So often we get caught up in the present and fail to see the profound significance of Jesus' death for the sake of our eternal future. Where might you need to ask his forgiveness for this?

Give Thanks

The teacher of the law looked to his ability to keep the law for his hope of eternal life. Thank God that we look to the cross of Christ for our sure and certain hope!

Mark 13:1-37 *Keep Watch For Jesus*

Sermon notes for Sunday March 10

Mark 13:1-37 Keep Watch For Jesus

This chapter is one of the most challenging in the book of Mark to understand! Two brief comments may help: First, Jesus employs a communication style that would have been familiar to his disciples as 'apocalyptic': a symbolic revelation of God's power behind the scenes. We can read Daniel 7 to 12 as an OT example of this, though there were many other examples in Jewish writing around the time. So it would have been pretty clear to them that Jesus was speaking figuratively about the future, even if they weren't quite sure what it all meant. Second, there are a number of times in the Bible where pictures of the future can have multiple points of reference, or multiple 'horizons' on view. For example, the virgin giving birth in Isaiah 7:14 has a near horizon in Isaiah's own time, and a distant horizon in the birth of Jesus (see Matt 1:23). So it may be that Jesus is describing more than one timeframe on view. It may be a mistake to move too quickly to the specifics of what he is referring to.

Reflect

Regardless of the specific events that Jesus is outlining, how would you describe the emotional impact of what he says? Where is safety found? How does Jesus want people to respond?

Repent

How does the sense of urgency, of resilience in hardship and of watchful waiting prompt you to turn to God in repentance?

Give Thanks

How does the cross of Christ grant us great confidence as we watch and wait?

Mark 14:1-72 *The Night Of Tests And Trials*

Sermon notes for Sunday March 17

Mark 14:1-72 *The Night Of Tests And Trials*

Finally, we reach the destination of this long journey that Jesus has been on since the end of Mark 8. The final night in Bethany is marked by an anointing in preparation for his burial, and the next day Jesus enters the city of Jerusalem for the final time. Note how Mark, who has been so concise and fast paced throughout his account, slows right down, dwelling on details, and providing lots of dialogue. This long night of testing and trials takes 60 verses for Mark to unpack. He's making us pay close attention!

Reflect

After all that we have seen over the last few months on the road with Jesus, what stands out to you from this chapter?

Repent

The woman associates with Jesus in a most costly way, while Judas betrays him and Peter denies him. How do the various reactions and responses from the characters across the chapter help you reflect on your own need for the grace of God?

Give Thanks

Jesus chose the cross knowing exactly what lay ahead of him (Mark 10:32-34) and what his disciples would do (14:8, 18, 27, 40). Give thanks as you reflect on the significance of this for you personally.

Mark 15:1-47 *The Death Of The Divine*

Sermon notes for Sunday March 24

Mark 15:1-47 The Death Of The Divine

Recall how Mark described his Gospel in the opening verse of the book: “The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God.” At the middle of the book of Mark we reached that great climax where Peter identified Jesus as Messiah. Here, at the foot of the cross, someone quite unexpected is the first and only person in Mark’s gospel (other than demons and God himself) to name Jesus as he is: the Son of God: A Roman centurion involved in his execution! There are debates about whether he understood the significance of what he said given he probably came from a pagan background, but the point that Mark makes through him is clear: It is at the cross that we see who Jesus really is.

Reflect

This chapter is characterised by the evil that battles to overcome Jesus. What most impresses you about Jesus in the midst of it all?

Repent

We have just read of the most profound event in human history, and yet, as the saying goes: “familiarity breeds contempt.” How are you prompted to repent of being overly familiar with Jesus’ death in this way?

Give Thanks

These events would have been lost to history except that God ensured that there would be witnesses to make them known (Mark 1:1, 15:40-41) As we approach Good Friday, let’s give thanks for the good news passed down to us through the years.

End Of Term Reflection

Having come to the end of our time in Mark's Gospel for this year, take a moment to reflect on our last few months in God's word.

How have you been encouraged or challenged to reflect on the significance of Jesus' death on the cross – either as a reminder or perhaps for the first time?

How have you been encouraged or challenged to reflect on what it means to follow Jesus – either as a reminder or perhaps for the first time?

What are you thankful to God for?

What are some changes that you would like to make in light of what we have learned from Mark? Aim for 1 or 2 that are specific enough that you can put them into action in the next few weeks.

How have you seen God answering prayer in your group?

Who is one person you want to pray for an opportunity to share the gospel with? In addition to praying, what is one specific action that you can take towards this goal?

Prayer Points

Prayer Points

