

Mark Sermon Series #1**Introduction****Mark 1:1-20**

1. Share an occasion when you saw something and arrived at a conclusion only to discover that it was wrong when you looked closer.
2. Mark starts his Gospel with a proclamation: “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” (Mark 1:1). How can we find the significance of this proclamation especially in reference to Jesus as the Son of God and how this proclamation strengthens our faith in Him?

Read Mark 1:1-8

3. John the Baptist is introduced in this passage as the one who prepares the way for Jesus. Why is this role important? (see prophecies from Mal 3:1 & Isa 40:3)
4. In Mark 1:9, we read that Jesus was baptised by John. How do we understand this event in light of the voice from heaven pronouncing that Jesus is the son of God?
5. In Mark 1:12-13, how did Jesus counter Satan’s temptation and how can we apply this for ourselves today?
6. Jesus called people from humble backgrounds to be his disciples (Mark 1:16-20). How does this inspire you to make yourself available to serve God's kingdom? [Take specific steps to respond to God's call]
7. What must we do today to "repent and believe in the gospel?" In smaller groups, share with one another and help each other be accountable to our responses.

Mark Series #2**Mark 1:21 – 3:12**

1. Share an occasion when you suffered from illness and prayed for healing (or know someone who did). Were you healed? Share how you felt.
2. Many were amazed by Jesus' teachings because He spoke with authority. From Mark 1:21-28, elaborate on the difference between the authority with which Jesus taught and the authority of the Scribes?
3. Read Mark 1:23-26. How does the demonstration of Jesus' authority over an unclean spirit give us courage to live victoriously in our daily lives?
4. What does Jesus going to a solitary place to pray reveal about the importance of prayer in Jesus' life and how can we apply this to our own lives? (Mark 1:35-39)
5. Jesus heals a leper by touching him. Following Jesus' example, how should we behave towards those who may be marginalized or stigmatized in our society or those who we may consider to be different from us? (Mark 1:40-45)
6. In Mark 2 and 3, Jesus performs miraculous healings on the Sabbath, leading to criticism from the religious leaders. How does Jesus' reply to the leaders tell us about what more important? (See Mark 2:6-12, 23-28, 3:1-4)
7. [Optional] Read Mark 3:7-12. Jesus gives strict orders to the unclean spirits not to make Him known. What reasons might Jesus have had for wanting to keep His identity concealed at this point in His ministry?
8. How does Jesus as the king who brings healing change the way you view human sickness and physical deterioration?

Selected Questions from 16 July 2023

Q. How is Mark's focus different from the other gospels?

Answer: Each of the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) offers a unique perspective on the life and teachings of Jesus. Matthew's Gospel, in particular, places a strong emphasis on presenting Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah and King, fulfilling the prophecies found in the Old Testament (Matthew 1:18-25). The primary purpose of Matthew's writing is to demonstrate to the Jewish Christian audience that Jesus is indeed the promised Messiah they have been eagerly awaiting.

On the other hand, Mark's Gospel places a strong emphasis on the arrival of the Kingdom of God through the person of Jesus (Mark 1:5). Additionally, Mark underscores the pressing need for an immediate response to the advent of the Messiah. Throughout his Gospel, he employs the word 'immediately' to highlight the sense of urgency in taking action.

Luke's Gospel emphatically proclaims Jesus as the Saviour of the world, underscoring His universal mission from Jerusalem to the farthest reaches of the earth (Luke 24:47). Luke's writing beautifully illustrates that the message of salvation through Jesus is not limited to a specific group; rather, it is a gift offered to all, both Jews and non-Jews alike.

Q. Who was the Book of Mark written for? Was it the Jews?

Answer: Mark obtained the materials for his Gospel primarily from Peter during his time in Rome. His audience likely consisted of Gentiles living in Rome who were eager to gain a deeper understanding of Jesus' teachings.

Furthermore, Mark's Gospel contains fewer references to the Old Testament compared to Matthew, indicating that his readers might not have been well-versed in Jewish Scripture. Based on this observation, it is reasonable to conclude that Mark wrote his Gospel with a focus on non-Jewish readers.

Q. What is the overarching "lesson" of Mark?

Answer: The Good News of God's Kingdom has been revealed in the person of Jesus, and for people to enter this Kingdom, the first step is to respond with repentance.

In Mark's Gospel, we encounter a strikingly different portrayal of the King of the Kingdom of God, distinct from the traditional concept expected by the Jewish people. This King, rather than arriving in grandeur and power to be served, humbly chose to be a servant, dedicating Himself to serving others, as beautifully exemplified in Mark 10:41-45.

Q. After Jesus received God's "endorsement", the Spirit immediately sent him to desert to be tempted. What is the significance of this?

Answer: The temptation of Jesus may show 3 things –

- i. Jesus was a real human that not immune to temptation and yet he resisted the temptation successfully. You can read the more details of the nature of His temptation in Matthew 4:1-11).
- ii. The desert may signify preparation that precedes ministry. Moses spent 40 years in the desert before God called him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt (Acts 7:23-30; 1 Cor. 10:5). Mark and Matthew record that Jesus was in the desert of 40 days.
- iii. It shows Jesus' dependence on the Word of God. In Matthew we clearly read that Jesus' way of resisting the temptation is using the Word of God (Matthew 4: 4, 7, 10).

Q. If Jesus was Son of God, and sinless, why did he need water baptism? Was it just for optics since he was living on earth as a man?

Answer: Mark provides little information on this issue. However, Matthew records that when Jesus asked to be baptised by John, Jesus said, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness." To fulfil all righteousness, according to some commentators, refers to 'every ordinance' or 'every institution.' Just as Jesus was circumcised when He was 8 days old (Luke 2:21), now, as John was sent by God to establish the ordinance of water baptism, Jesus, in His humility, submitted to this 'ordinance.'

So, Jesus came to John to be baptised not for repentance but to show His submission to the One who sent John and Himself.

Mark Series #3**Mark 3:13-6:6**

1. Read Mark 4:3-8. In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus vividly portrays the diverse types of soil upon which the seed was scattered. What valuable insights can we glean from the characteristics and outcomes associated with each soil mentioned in the parable?
2. Read Mark 4:10-12. Why do you think Jesus employed parables as a means to convey His teachings about the Kingdom of God?
3. According to the Parable of the Sower, what are some of the obstacles that can hinder the growth of God's Word in our lives? How can we identify and overcome these obstacles?
4. The Parable of the Sower highlights the importance of having a receptive heart to receive God's Word. How can we cultivate and maintain a receptive heart in our daily lives amidst the distractions and challenges of the world?
5. How can we demonstrate the growth of God's Word within us, both internally (in our inner being) and externally (through our actions and words to the community and to the church)? Please provide at least one example of internal evidence and one of external evidence.

Selected questions from Mentimeter on 23 July 2023 (Other questions are addressed by Ps Jeremy and or Ps Loretta during Panel Discussion on 30 July 2023 at the Chapel).

1. How do you know if someone is possessed?

Answer:

The following Bible verses give us clue to identify if a person is possessed by demons or evil spirits:

- a) Matthew 9:33 – Being muted (inability to talk could be one of signs of being possessed).
- b) Mark 1:24 – His speech is controlled by the spirit (not speaking on his own).
- c) Luke 9:39 – His body is taken control by the spirit (screaming, convulsing, foaming of the mouth – note: not all those symptoms are due to evil spirit, it could be a medical condition).
- d) Mark 5:3-4 Shows supernatural strength.
- e) Mark 5:7 – exhibit supernatural knowledge (despite leaving in the tombs and mountains (Mark 5:5)), the person who possessed by the unclean spirit recognized Jesus as the Son of the Most High.

2. Jesus is the second person of the one triune God & He is also the Son of God. How do you reconcile that?

Answer:

When the Bible proclaims Jesus as the Son of God, it is essential to recognize that this description does not imply a conventional father-son relationship as we understand it in human terms. The divine concept of Jesus being the Son of God transcends the physical aspects of procreation, which are inherent to human parentage.

Clarifying this further, the Bible does not suggest that God the Father engaged in any earthly procreative process with Mother Mary to conceive Jesus.

Luke 1:35 gives us a clue why Jesus is called the Son of God. The verse says, “And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.” (ESV)

Furthermore, John 1:1 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John 1:14 says, And the Word became flesh and dwelt

among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

With this in mind, we can grasp that Jesus, as the Second Person of the Trinity, is referred to as the Son of God because of His incarnation into human flesh as Jesus. Importantly, His status as the Second Person of the Trinity remained unaltered during His time on earth.

Crucially, we must understand that Jesus' earthly incarnation did not diminish His eternal position within the Trinity. He was, is, and always will be the Second Person of the Trinity, an inseparable part of the divine Godhead.

Mark Series #4**Mark 6:7-8:26**

1. Share a time when you may have been extremely hungry. What would you have done to satisfy that hunger?

Read Mark 6:30-44

2. Why did the disciples want to send the people away?
3. How can we overcome our tendency to focus on scarcity and limitations, and instead, step out in faith to offer what we have to God, believing that God can multiply our "Small Things" and use it for his purposes?
4. How does the story of Jesus feeding the multitude challenge us to trust in God's provision and recognize his promise to supply all our needs and even make us a blessing to others?
5. From Mark 6, how would you describe Jesus as the "Picture of the good shepherd?"

Read Mark 7:6-13

6. What practical ways can we adopt to ensure that our worship and devotion to God come from a sincere and authentic heart rather than being driven solely by fulfilling tradition or maintaining routine?

Pledging is a Methodist tradition and a spiritual discipline whereby we prayerfully consider how much we commit to give to the Lord through his church for the next year. The pledge can be your tithe (10%) or whatever amount you have decided in faith to present to the Lord for the next year.

7. How does pledging signal our trust in God's provision for us and his power to multiply what little we offer for his glory?

**As of the sermon on 30th July 2023, there have been no questions posted via Mentimeter.*

Mark Series #5**Mark 8:27-9:50**

1. What is your most precious possession?

Read Mark 8:27-38

2. Peter responds to Jesus' question "But who do you say that I am?" by declaring "You are the Christ" (verse 29). What do you understand from Peter's confession and how does that impact our lives?
3. What does it mean to be obedient to Jesus's call to "deny oneself, take up Jesus' cross and follow him"?
4. In verse 36, Jesus says, "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?" What would Jesus have meant by the word "soul"?

Read Mark 9:30-37

5. What meaning does it hold for you that Jesus is the king who must die?
6. What is the distinction between being considered great in the eyes of the world versus being great in the eyes of God? How should this change the way you live?
7. Are you denying yourself, taking up the cross and following Jesus? What must you do (or give up, or change) to grow as a follower of Jesus?

Mark Series #6**Mark 10:1- 52**

1. What holds the top spot as your foremost priority in life? Following that, how would you rank your subsequent priorities, from number two onward?

2. What are the areas in your life where God might be asking you to make sacrifices in order to follow Him more closely? It might not be material possessions, but could be your time, talents, or even relationships.

3. Drawing from the teachings in Mark 10:22, are there any aspects in your life that hinder you from following Jesus wholeheartedly? If so, please take a moment to reflect on those obstacles and share them with your group.

4. How can you develop a mindset that focuses more on storing up treasures in heaven rather than on temporary worldly gains?

5. What practical steps can you take to cultivate an eternal perspective in your daily decisions and actions?

6. In Mark 10:23-25, Jesus highlights the difficulty for the rich to enter the kingdom of God. However, in the subsequent verses, he emphasizes that "with God, nothing is impossible." (10:27). How can this message inspire and motivate us in our mission project aimed at reaching out to the Japanese?

“Jesus is the second person of the one triune God & He is also the Son of God. How do you reconcile that?” – *Question from Mentimeter*

Son of God (υἱός τοῦ θεοῦ, *huios tou theou*). A title often used of [Jesus](#) in the [New Testament](#) that has a background in [Old Testament](#), Second Temple Jewish, and Graeco-Roman contexts.

Old Testament Uses

The Old Testament uses the term “son(s) of God” or “God’s son(s)” to refer to kings ([Pss 2:7](#); [89:27](#)), heavenly beings ([Gen 6:2](#); [Pss 29:1](#); [82:6](#); [Job 1:6](#)), and Israel ([Exod 4:22–23](#); [Hos 11:1](#)). The term usually serves to designate special agents of God’s will and the recipients of His love ([Psa 89:1–4](#); [Hos 11:1](#); [Deut 32:8–9](#) DSS).

Second Temple and Hellenistic Jewish Uses

Certain texts from Qumran refer to a son of God. For example, [1Q28a](#) or [1QSa](#) describe a son of God—a [messianic figure](#), with a paramount role in [eschatological](#) events. The fathering language in these texts echoes the psalms. In [4Q246](#) an eschatological figure is identified as the son of God. This could be understood as a messianic figure, but the text is too fragmentary to say for certain.

There are also references to sons of God in deuterocanonical and pseudepigraphal books. For example, the angels are called sons of God in the Wisdom of Solomon ([Wis 5:5](#)). The righteous person is also called a son of God ([Wis 2:18](#); [Sir 4:10](#)). [Jubilees 1:24–25](#) looks ahead to a restoration of God’s people in which they will be called “sons of the living God.”

The Hellenistic Jewish writer [Philo of Alexandria](#) references an intermediary with many names, one of which is “son of God.” This individual is an adaptation of a Jewish angelic figure. For example, while discussing the reason why people can be given the designation “the sons of the Lord God” ([Deut 14:1](#); cf. [Deut 32:18](#)), Philo states that even if no one is qualified to be called a son of God, that person can be called “the son of the divine Logos,” “the first born,” and the “the eldest” of all God’s angels ([Philo, Conf., 146–47](#); Endo, *Creation and Christology*, 175).

Graeco-Roman Uses

Certain Roman rulers were designated as a son of god, or a son of their deified father. For example, Augustus’ official name was “Emperor Caesar Augustus, son of god” (Collins, “Mark and His Readers,” 95). Following an emperor’s funeral, the senate could decide to deify the former ruler and establish an [official cult](#) in his honor (Price, “Gods and Emperors,” 83). After the death of [Julius Caesar](#), the senate honored him as a divine, ascended being. Thus, Julius Caesar’s adopted son Octavian was considered the son of a divine man (*divi filius*), which was later inscribed on coins, inscriptions, and monuments (Mowery, “Son of God,” 101; Peppard, “The Eagle,” 435). Many honorific titles were inscribed in highly visible public places, such as an inscription from [Macedonia](#) that recognized Augustus as son of God (Mowery, “Son of God,” 110; Peppard, “The Eagle,” 434).

Other emperors in the first century to receive divine status (*apotheosis*) include [Tiberius](#), [Claudius](#), [Vespasian](#), [Titus](#), and Nerva (Elliott and Reasoner, *Documents*, 141). Sons of these divinized rulers could embrace the honorific title,

son of god. In an edict, Tiberius 'adopted son Germanicus called himself "son of the god Augustus [Tiberius] and grandson of Augustus" (Collins, "Mark and His Readers," 95). The [emperor Nero](#) was Claudius 'adopted son and was called the "son of the divine Claudius" (Elliott and Reasoner, *Documents*, 149).

New Testament Uses

The language of sonship in the New Testament communicates [God's](#) endorsement, commission, and empowerment of Jesus as the chosen king (Bateman, "Defining the Titles," [547](#)). When the Gospel authors spoke of Jesus as the Son of God, they may have intended the title in the sense of the Old Testament regal notion of a divinely chosen king. For example, God's voice of approval—my "beloved son"—spoken to Jesus at His [baptism](#) ([Mark 1:11](#)) has a verbal connection with [Psa 2:7](#) and hearkens to first-century Jewish messianic expectations and the Judaism of his time. There are, however, other views of the title's origin. For instance, according to Rudolf Bultmann, the early church applied the title to the [risen](#) Christ (Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 128). For Bultmann, God's proclamation of Jesus as His beloved son at the [transfiguration](#) ([Mark 9:7](#)) represents an instance of divine sonship being assigned to the resurrection story and projected into the past by the church (Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 125; compare [Acts 13:33](#), [Rom 1:3–4](#), which link divine sonship to the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus).

Oscar Cullmann suggests the title came from Jesus 'own self-conscious use of Old Testament language, reflecting an understanding that in some unique way He was God's Son (Cullmann, *The Christology*, 282–83). Jesus 'use of [Abba](#) ([Mark 14:36](#)) does imply personal awareness of a Father-Son relationship of some kind (Loader, "The Apocalyptic," 528). Summarizing the conclusions of J. Jeremias, Richard Bauckham states that there is no evidence of the use of ἄββᾶ (*abba*) as an address to God in all the prayer literature of Judaism (Bauckham, "The Sonship," 246). This may demonstrate a perceived distinctiveness about Jesus 'relationship to God—Jesus was not simply communicating a good Jewish person's relationship to God as His father (Bauckham, "The Sonship," 248).

Connection to Roman Rulers

On other occasions, the Gospel authors may have employed the title to elevate Jesus over Roman rulers who often referred to themselves by this particular designation. For example, the Gospel authors may have included the Roman centurion's claim about Jesus as a/the Son of God ([Mark 15:39](#)) or the Roman soldiers who confess Jesus as a/the Son of God at the cross ([Matt 27:54](#)) as a way of transferring to Jesus a title then attributed to Roman emperors (Carter, *Matthew and Empire*, 69). Their audience would likely have understood the centurion's and the soldiers 'claim that the crucified Jesus was the authentic son of God to mean He was the ruler of the known world rather than the emperor.

Further, in the Graeco-Roman world, the enthronement or birth of an emperor was regarded as "good news" (Kim, "Jesus the Son of God," 128). For example, a Priene inscription about Caesar Octavian from 9 bc speaks of his birth as the birthday of the god and as the beginning of his good news for the world (Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark*, [69](#)). Therefore, it is significant that [Mark](#) opens his book with "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" ([Mark 1:1](#) NRSV). Mark may have intentionally drawn this parallel in order to draw a

connection between [Jesus' arrival](#) and the arrival or celebration of the Roman emperor.

The Text-Critical Problem in the Opening of Mark's Gospel

The phrase “Son of God” in the opening of Mark has inspired much [textual-critical](#) debate. The phrase $\nu\iota\omicron\upsilon\theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ (*huiou theou*) is missing in the [Codex Sinaiticus](#) and several other important textual witnesses. Arguments center on whether the phrase was accidentally omitted from an initial text or added by a [scribe](#) in order to expand the divine name or the title of the book. The disputed phrase $\nu\iota\omicron\upsilon\theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ (*huiou theou*) is enclosed in brackets in Nestle-Aland 27. In the recent SBL Greek New Testament, the phrase is omitted. Some scholars, such as Bart Ehrman, have argued for the shorter version, based on the unlikely event that a copier would have omitted words in the very first line of the text (Ehrman, “The Text of Mark,” 150). Copying texts was a long, difficult process. Fatigue would have led to carelessness that resulted in omissions, but these were not likely at the outset of the process (Ehrman, “The Text of Mark,” 150). Ehrman also claims the shorter version is to be preferred by its occurrence in a “range of textual witnesses that are early, widespread and unrelated” (Ehrman, “The Text of Mark,” 150).

Tommy Wasserman takes issue with Ehrman's view, citing several examples from other passages in the New Testament where an omission occurs at the beginning of book, such as [2 Cor 1:1](#), where Codex 489 omits $\tau\omicron\upsilon\theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ (*tou theou*) (Wasserman, “The ‘Son of God,’ ” 47).

Dean Deppe approaches the issue by asking whether the title “Son of God” is required in the opening of the Gospel to adequately reflect Mark's [Christology](#) (Deppe, “Markan Christology,” 45–64). According to Deppe, the opening of Mark correctly but insufficiently attributes [Jesus as the Christ](#), because Mark's presentation of Jesus also requires the Son of God designation in order to emphasize His [glory](#) (e.g., [Mark 1:11](#); [9:7](#)) and [His suffering](#) (e.g., [Mark 15:39](#); Deppe, “Markan Christology,” 55). “Son of God” appears at crucial points in the Markan text. Deppe concludes that the phrase was included in the original opening because it more fully reflects Mark's theology of Jesus expressed throughout the Gospel (Deppe, “Markan Christology,” 55).

“Son of God” at the Conclusion of Mark's Gospel

The confession by a Roman soldier at the conclusion of the Gospel of Mark is also a topic of active discussion. As noted, [Mark 15:39](#) recounts a centurion's statement following Jesus' death in which he proclaims that “truly this man was a/the Son of God.” The definite article does not appear in the Greek text before the noun “Son,” making the interpretation of $\nu\iota\omicron\varsigma\theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ (*huios theou*) a matter of debate. Should it be translated as “a son of God” or “the Son of God”? Normally, predicate nouns that precede the verb exclude the article. Yet there are exceptions to the rule (Johnson, “Is Mark,” 4). If the article is omitted, the meaning more likely communicates the centurion's assertion, either honestly or mockingly, that Jesus was a divine man/son of a god.

Kelly Iverson asserts that whether the confession represented a genuine expression of [faith](#) and devotion or a derogatory statement of mockery depends on the unknown tone, gestures, and facial expressions communicated with the statement (Iverson, “A Centurion's ‘Confession,’ ” 330).

According to Tae Hun Kim, the epithet without the definite article would not have had christological significance but would have echoed the language of Roman emperor worship and perhaps still challenged the ruling Roman authorities by assigning this designation to Jesus (Kim, “The Anarthrous,” 221–41).

Earl Johnson doubts Mark’s audience would have believed in a Christian confession from a Roman centurion; Romans generally disliked foreigners and would be unlikely to respect one sentenced to [crucifixion](#) (Johnson, “Is Mark,” 14).

The Son of God

In his letters, [Paul](#) uses “Son” and “Son of God” as key [titles for Jesus](#) (e.g., [Rom 8:3–4](#)). Paul’s references to Jesus’ divine sonship have the definite article (“the”) along with the phrase Son of God, conveying that Jesus’ divine sonship was unique (Hurtado, “Son of God,” 903). As the unique Son, He holds “special standing, status and favor with God” (Hurtado, “Son of God,” 903). Paul uses divine sonship to convey themes of ancestry, power, and the right to rule as reigning king ([1 Cor 15:20–28](#); Elliott, *Documents*, 144). Paul also speaks of God sending the Son for the reconciliation of humanity ([Rom 5:10](#))—a Son, now in [heaven](#), will return at the [second advent](#) for awaiting Christians ([1 Thess 1:10](#)). In these passages, Paul describes Jesus’ divine sonship as [soteriological](#) and eschatological ([Gal 4:4–5](#); Peppard, “Adopted and Begotten,” 98).

A Son of God

Son of God is also applied to a person who places faith in Jesus. In [Galatians](#), Paul describes [Christians](#) as sons of God ([Gal 3:26–28](#)), adopted siblings and heirs of the covenantal promises of [Abraham](#) ([Gal 3:28–4:6](#)). Paul’s use of the term reflects the imagery of [adoption](#) and inheritance practices in Roman society. In Graeco-Roman culture, adopted sons were guaranteed [inheritance](#) rights, which included not only land and other wealth but also the family name, the family honor, and a share of the family spirit (Peppard, “Adopted and Begotten,” 96). Thus, “son” carries much weight in terms of status and position.

Selected Resources for Further Study

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David Seal

John D. Barry, David Bomar, et al., eds., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

Mark Series #7**Mark 11:1-33**

1. Think back to a time when you acted with pride.

Read Mark 11:1-11

2. In verse 2, Jesus tells His disciples to borrow a young donkey, probably owned by someone in the village. Despite the unusual request, the disciples follow His instructions. If God asks you to do something unusual, unconventional or unfamiliar (e.g. joining a mission trip to Timor Leste), how would you respond?
3. The choice of a young donkey, a humble animal, instead of a big and powerful war horse, reveals Jesus' humility. How does Jesus' choice of a humble donkey reflect His character and the nature of His kingship?
4. How can we, as Jesus' disciples imitate His humility in our own lives?

Read Mark 11:15-19

5. Instead of going into Jerusalem to be proclaimed as the Messiah who will deliver the Jews from Roman's oppression, Jesus went to "cleanse" the temple instead, by overturning tables of moneychanger and seats of those who sold pigeons. What is the significance of this act?
6. Consider your bodies as a temple of God (1 Cor 6:19). What areas of your life need a transformation (overturning) in order for you to wholeheartedly love and serve God?

Read Mark 11:12-14, 20-25

7. When Jesus cursed the fig tree for not bearing fruit out of season, it might have seemed harsh. Nevertheless, it allowed Jesus to teach a profound lesson on the power of prayer that is made in faith (as seen in verses 23-24). What does it mean to pray with faith?
8. Do you pray with faith? If not, what hinders you from believing that God is able to answer your prayers? Spend some time praying for one another to grow in faith in our prayer lives.

Questions from Mentimeter on 20 August 2023 that have not been addressed:

1. Does Jesus really mean that Christians have to sell ALL their possessions & give ALL proceeds to the poor? If not, what did He mean?

Answer:

It's not clear that Jesus intended all Christians to follow this rule. However, he did emphasize that we shouldn't value material possessions too much. Eternal life is a gift from God and can't be earned, so giving everything to the poor shouldn't be seen as a way to earn salvation. (Mark 10:27; John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8-9).

Furthermore, the obstacles that can hinder us from wholeheartedly following Jesus are not restricted to wealth alone; they can also encompass positions, statuses, or even our own family members. How often do we encounter individuals who are reluctant to embrace Christianity due to the fear of being disowned by their families?

2. Does the church have a marketplace ministry? Can the companies and workers nearby in one-north considered a mission field?

Essentially, any location or person untouched by the Gospel of Jesus Christ can be seen as a mission field. Nonetheless, in a Christian context, the term 'mission' often pertains to international endeavours, especially in places where the Gospel hasn't been proclaimed.

When we engage with non-believing friends in a well-covered Gospel area like Singapore, it's known as evangelism. If you feel led by God to connect with individuals in your local community, that becomes your mission field for evangelism.

Mark Series #8**Mark 12:1-44**

1. If you won a huge prize in a lucky draw, how would you feel about sharing it with some people you've never met?

Read Mark 12:1-12

2. Who are the various characters in the parable and who do they represent?
3. Why did the Jewish leaders and people reject the prophets that God sent, and now, God's son, Jesus? (See v.10, Mark 7:24-30 & 11:17)
4. Read Isaiah 5:1-7. How do you think the Jewish leaders would have interpreted the parable that Jesus told?
5. What is God's judgement on those who persistently reject the purposes for which God has called them to?

Read Mark 12:13-17

6. What was the trap that the Pharisees and Herodians set for Jesus?
7. How can we "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's?" (v. 17, See Gen 1:26-27, Rom 13:1-7 & 1 Peter 2:13-17)
8. What are the areas in our lives today where we might be tempted to believe have nothing to do with our faith?
9. Are you uncomfortable with the notion that Jesus is the King who brings judgement? Share why.

Question from Mentimeter on 27 August 2023 that has not been addressed:

1. Why did Jesus curse the fig tree in Mark 11:12? Is it simply to teach His disciples later to have faith in verse 20?

Answer:

This passage is among the most challenging in the Bible to comprehend. The complexity arises from the fact that Jesus did not find any figs on the tree due to the simple reason that “It was not the season for figs.”

Why did Jesus curse the tree when He knew it wasn't the season for it to bear fruit? Besides desiring to teach the disciples about faith in prayer, Jesus may have also intended to convey the following points:

- 1) He has authority over nature as the Son of God. It is part of Mark's broader narrative highlighting Jesus as the powerful Messiah and Son of God.
- 2) The fig tree symbolizes Israel (Hosea 9:10; Nahum 3:12). Jesus, through his words and actions, performed a miraculous act of destruction. Despite being covered in leaves, the tree bore no fruit, which could represent the hypocrisy of the nation of Israel, particularly its religious leaders who appeared devout outwardly but lacked genuine substance within.

Reflecting on Matthew 23:27, we find Jesus' poignant words directed towards the Jewish leaders: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness.”

With this in mind, our aspiration should encompass more than mere outward virtue; it should encompass an inner sanctification.

Mark Series #9**Mark 13:1-37**

1. Recall a memorable instance when you eagerly anticipated meeting someone you had longed to see. Reflect on the emotions that surged within you during the period of anticipation and share your thoughts and actions while patiently awaiting the person's arrival.

Read Mark 13:1-13

2. In his teachings, Jesus warned his disciples about false claimants who would say, 'I am He,' as the end times draw near. If you were there during that time, how would you protect yourself from being deceived? What steps can you take to safeguard your faith from falsehood?
3. Jesus also warned that, for His name's sake, many of His followers would face persecution and be brought to trial (v.9,11-13). What do you think will empower His people to sustain their faith in Jesus during such challenging circumstances?
4. In Mark 13:10 Jesus mentions that the gospel must be proclaimed to all nations before the end comes. How can we actively participate in fulfilling this mission even today?

Read Mark 13:14-37

5. Mark 13:24-27 describes the coming of the Son of Man with great power and glory. How does this passage affect our faith in His return and what shall we do while we are waiting for Him?
6. Jesus warned of an unprecedented tribulation before His return, so severe that without divine intervention, no one would survive (vs. 19-20). How does this passage inspire faith in God, who will step in to alleviate His people's suffering? Have you encountered God's intervention in times of trouble? If so, please share your experience.
7. Only the Father knows when Jesus will return (v.32). Jesus tells us, His disciples, to stay watchful and prepared for His unexpected return (Matthew 24:36-39, 42-43; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3). Why do you think this readiness matters, and what should we do to be prepared for His return?
8. In Mark 13:34-37, Jesus speaks of the importance of the master finding his servants faithful when He returns. How can we be faithful stewards of the resources and responsibilities God has entrusted to us as we await His return?

Mark Series #10**Mark 14:1-11, 17-21**

1. Reflect on when you accepted Jesus as your Lord and Saviour. Has your passion for Christ dwindled? If so, how has the Lord challenged your heart this morning?
2. Read Mark 14:10-11. Judas spent approximately three and a half years in the company of Jesus witnessing His power and His love first-hand, similar to the other disciples. Why do you think Judas chose to betray Jesus in the end?
3. Have we considered the importance of starting well and ending well in our spiritual journey? How can we ensure that Christ remain as our first love?
4. Reflecting on Judas' disappointment in Jesus not meeting his Messianic expectations, how do we handle our own disappointments when God does not answer our prayers?
5. Considering the boiling frog analogy in the sermon, what subtle compromises or small sins might we be ignoring? How can we spot and deal with these minor lapses before they become major spiritual problems?
6. How can we ensure that our motive in following Jesus is not diluted with our own personal agenda?

Questions from Mentimeter that have not been addressed:

1. Jesus mentioned “the elects”, who are “the elects”?

Answer:

The term 'the elects' finds its origins in the Greek word '*eklegomai*.' This word, '*eklegomai*,' is parallel with the Greek word '*ekletos*,' meaning 'chosen,' which is often synonymous with the term 'church.' In 1 Peter 2:9, '*ekletos*' is employed to describe those chosen by God, commonly referred to as His chosen people or the church.

In other part of the Gospel, Jesus refers His disciples as chosen by His Father (Matthew 22:14; John 15:16, see also John 6:37-40).

Consequently, it is reasonable to assert that the term 'elect' is used to signify God's people or the church.

2. Mk 11:24 promises that with faith, we will receive what we ask for in prayer. But if we have trouble believing, how could we ask God to help us overcome our unbelief as in Mk 9:24?

Answer:

We continue asking God in prayer to help us to have faith in Him.

3. Mark 13:18 mentions to pray that the abomination of desolation will not happen in winter. What is the significance of winter?

Answer:

Jesus mentions winter because this would be an especially hard time for persons attempting to flee, since the cold and rain-swollen streams would present great hazard. (Holman NT Commentary).

4. What are the unexpected ways that we can develop when Jesus is coming?

Answer:

The question we should ask ourselves is how to prepare for Jesus' arrival, as emphasized in Mark 13:32, when the exact timing remains unknown. In response, Jesus provides clear guidance: His disciples should remain vigilant and stay alert (v.33, 36).

5. The end times also speaks about judgement and the separation of the sheep and the goat. How can we have assurance that we are the sheep and not the

Answer:

Perhaps to answer the first question, we can look at Mathew 25:35-39:

³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸ And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹ And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?'

The above does not refer to salvation by works. What this means is that true faith in Christ will be evidence through our love and care for others. We are transformed into the kind of people who serve our King through our actions.

Mark Series #11
Mark 14:26-15:15

1. How does the Gospel of Mark differ from the other three Gospels?
2. What are your experiences of failure towards God?
3. How does God restore you?
4. How can we grow in our devotional life in God?
5. Christ died for our sins. How do you feel about your salvation?

Questions from Mentimeter that have not been addressed:

1. In Mark 13:22, the caution on claiming signs and wonders is clear. Do we take with a pinch of salt any one pointing towards many signs and wonders are happening?

Answer:

Approach miraculous reports cautiously, especially in the end times. Jesus warned us about false Christs and prophets performing miracles (Mark 13:22; Matthew 24:24-25).

Cultivating discernment (1 Corinthians 12:10) helps us stay vigilant. Since not everyone has this gift, Christians should firmly root themselves in God's Word and grow in their relationship with Christ to avoid being misled by teachings that don't align with the Word of God (Ephesians 4:14).

2. Mark 13:14, where is the present day Abomination of Desolation and what sits there today?

Answer:

Bible Scholars acknowledge that Mark 13:14 is one of the most difficult verses in Mark Gospel if not in the entire New Testament. The phrase abomination of desolation is derived from Daniel (Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11).

Bible commentators agree that abomination that cause desolation in Daniel is fulfilled multiple times.

First, in the time of Maccabean period in 167 BC. 1 Maccabees 1:54–59 records, “54 Now on the fifteenth day of Chislew, in the one hundred forty-fifth year, they erected a desolating sacrilege on the altar of burnt offering. They also built altars in the surrounding towns of Judah, 55 and offered incense at the doors of the houses and in the streets. 56 The books of the law that they found they tore to pieces and burned with fire.... 59 On the twenty-fifth day of the month they offered sacrifice on the altar that was on top of the altar of burnt offering.

Second, in the year of 70 AD when General Titus destroyed Jerusalem and the temple (Luke 21:20).

Third, in the end time by the Anti-Christ. 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, “³ Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,⁴ who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.

Are we living in the end time? Are we able to see 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 being fulfilled today? Certainly, we can see some signs of it where having faith in God

becomes a mockery and those who hold Biblical values in their life are being ridiculed.

3. When we pray to Jesus, how can we be sure it's God's speaking to us and it's not our own thoughts?

Answer:

The Bible serves as our guide for living and practicing our faith because it is the Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16). Any inner voice that contradicts God's Word does not originate from Him; it could be our own thoughts and desires, worldly philosophies, or even influence from the devil. If you're uncertain whether the voice you're hearing aligns with the Bible, it's advisable to seek guidance from your pastor.

4. Was Judas eternally lost from the very start?
5. Is Judas in hell now, even though he was crucial to God's plan for Jesus?
6. Jesus called him son of destruction, that Scripture might be fulfilled. - is Judas lost eternally or lost in the moment of betrayal?

Answer:

These questions (4, 5, and 6) are common and controversial topics that often lead to debates among Bible school students, theologians, and the wider Christian community.

While we can speculate about the answer for these questions, we can't conclude it for sure. The Bible offers limited information, except for a record that Judas took his own life due to deep regret. Suicide is a murder, which is strongly condemned by God (Exodus 20:13; 23:7; Deuteronomy 5:17; Romans 13:9; Revelation 21:8). Having mentioned the above verses, still we can't be sure in the case of Judas Iscariot.

7. What motivated Judas' tears of remorse?

Answer:

Mark does not record what happen to Judas after he betrayed Jesus. However, Matthew records a little information about him in that episode. Matthew 27:3-5. Verse 3 specifically mention, "Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders," and in verse 4, he recognized that he has betrayed an innocent man."

Perhaps Judas did not expect that Jesus would be condemned in such condemnation that led to his senses and changed his mind. Certainly, he regretted his action that led to his remorse.

8. In calling out the fact that He will be betrayed, did Jesus look for Judas to admit and repent of his action before it was too late?

Answer:

The Bible is silent about this and therefore we can only speculate and there is no a definite answer for this question.

9. God has a plan for redemption and part of that require a betrayer, if not Judas, could God have completed his plan through someone else?
10. Since Judas DID have a choice, if he hadn't betrayed God, how would have God's plan been fulfilled?
11. Did someone have to betray Jesus for him to be crucified? Could he have been arrested regardless?

Answer:

Questions 9, 10 and 11 are similar.

There are several Scriptures in the Old Testament that mention about the suffering Messiah which are fulfilled in Jesus. One of them is Isaiah 53 that describe the suffering that Jesus has to go through as the promised Messiah (Isaiah 53:1-12).

What happened in the event of Jesus' crucifixion is the fulfilment of Isaiah 53:1-12. The following verses in the New Testament confirm that Isaiah 53 is fulfilled in Jesus (Matthew 8:14-17 – Isaiah 53:5; Luke 22:37 – Isaiah 53:12; 1 Peter 2:21-24 – Isaiah 53-5-7; Acts 8:26-35 – Isaiah 53:7-8).

So it does not matter whether Judas would betray Jesus or not, God's plan of salvation through the suffering Messiah will be accomplished. If not through Judas that led to His crucifixion, it may through someone else that led Jesus fulfilled what has been prophesied in the Old Testament.

12. Did Judas return the silver eventually?

Answer:

Matthew 27:3-5 (ESV)

³ Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, ⁴ saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." They said, "What is that to us? See to it yourself." ⁵ And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself.

Mark Series #12**Mark 15:16-16:8**

1. How do you prefer movie or book endings: happy, sad, or open to interpretation? Why?
2. How do you interpret the significance of the Gospel of Mark's ending, and what do you think it conveys about the message of the Gospel?
3. In what ways does the story of the resurrection of Jesus Christ impact your life today, and how does it influence your faith and hope as a believer?
4. How does the fulfilment of the prophecy regarding Jesus' suffering, resurrection, and events post-resurrection inspire trust in God's promises?
5. Can you identify specific promises from the Bible that provide you with hope and assurance in challenging times?
6. Does the idea of God forgiving and allowing a new beginning connect with your own experiences and beliefs? Can you share a time when you needed a fresh start or forgiveness?
7. How does the idea of Jesus coming back give you hope in a difficult world, and how does it affect how you live and think right now?

Questions from Mentimeter that have not been addressed:

1. What are the similarities and differences between the woman with the alabaster flask of expensive oil and Mary's expensive pound of ointment in John 12.

Answer:

In terms of similarities:

- The woman with the alabaster flask, as portrayed in Mark 14 and John 12, is unequivocally one and the same individual.
- This identical narrative is also documented in the Gospel of Matthew 26. According to the accounts provided by these three Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and John), these events transpired in Bethany, a locality in close proximity to Jerusalem.
- In these three Gospels mentioned above, the woman's action is met with criticism for wastage of the expensive oil worth 300 denarii (Mark 14:5; John 12:5) – a substantial sum, as highlighted in Matthew 26:9.
- In response to the criticism, Jesus declares that what the woman does is to prepare for His burial (Matthew 26:12-13; Mark 14:8-9, John 12:7).

In terms of differences:

- Notably, Matthew and Mark abstain from disclosing the identity of the woman, whereas John explicitly identifies her as Mary, potentially the same Mary who is the sister of Martha and Lazarus (John 12:2; Luke 10:38-42).

Additionally, it's essential to mention another account involving a different woman who anointed Jesus with an alabaster flask of oil, found in Luke 7:37. This distinct episode should not be confused with the accounts found in Matthew, Mark, and John.

2. Is the Seder meal also held here in church?

Answer:

The Seder meal is served during Passover by Jews, even today. "Seder," which means "order" in English, takes place at a table and involves dozens of traditions that represent various aspects of the Passover story.

The Passover itself is celebrated to commemorate Israel's deliverance from the bondage in Egypt. In that episode, God asked the Israelites living in Egypt as slaves to sacrifice a lamb. Every Israelite family had to slaughter a lamb and paint the lamb's blood on their doorframe. God then sent the angel of death, and any

house in Egypt that did not have the lamb's blood on its doorframe would have its first-born son killed by the angel of death (Read Exodus 12). Therefore, Jesus and His disciples, as Jews, celebrated Passover as well (Mark 14:12-21; Matthew 26:17-25; Luke 22:7-13; John 12).

The church does not observe Seder as the Jews do. However, we always commemorate the death of Jesus as the Lamb of God who redeems us from the bondage of sin on the cross during Holy Communion, as instituted by Jesus (read Luke 22:17-19).

Because of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God on the cross, we are spared from the punishment of our sins of eternal death. Instead, we are offered salvation by grace through Jesus Christ as our sacrificial Lamb.

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