

The Gospel of Mark

An Inductive Approach Using Literary Analysis

The Goals of this Study: Specific Introduction

This is what you can hope to gain from this study.

1. To understand why the disciples fail in Mark's Gospel, to have one's own students/readers better understand their own struggles, and to avoid those same failures.

Mark's disciples fail. Although they jump enthusiastically on Jesus' bandwagon in the early chapters, by the middle of Mark's narrative, they struggle to understand even the clearest words Jesus says. It is painfully apparent that Jesus is not who they expected, and they struggle simply to keep pace with him. Mark gives us the impression that even their level of understanding barely increases after chapter 5. We are immediately confronted with the question of how we as readers should relate to these disciples.

Are we slated to follow in the disciples' footsteps, to fumble around and continually be afraid and confused, yet having to pursue Jesus regardless? Is that what faith is? It seems unlikely: Surely Mark intends for us to have a better experience with Jesus than the original disciples did. Perhaps Mark uses the disciples as a bad example for our learning. In some sense, there is something they do that we should *not* do. Reasonable enough, but the question then is, "What must we do differently?" This question may go unanswered, or is typically answered in vague terms like, "Just have more faith than them."

I believe that the apparent lack of intimacy between the disciples and Jesus that pervades Mark's Gospel is something that not only needs to be addressed, but something Mark wants us to address through multiple readings of his narrative. Correspondingly, various issues and topics go seemingly unaddressed in Mark. To name a few:

- The baptism of the Holy Spirit is introduced in 1:15 and expected in relation to Jesus, but we have no example of any of the disciples interacting with the Holy Spirit. To what extent is this the cause of their failures? What is the consequence of trying to 'follow Jesus' without a clear understanding of our relationship with the Holy Spirit?
- The problem of the unclean, hardened human heart is illustrated with the scribes early on (3:5), attributed to the disciples soon afterwards (6:52), explicitly addressed by Jesus with no resolution in a major discourse (7:21-23), and diagnosed as a consequence of the fall with Israelite divorce as a tolerated symptom, *even under conditions of Israelite faith* when the Mosaic covenant was ratified (10:1-11). How is the human heart really changed? Does Mark answer that? And what kind of faith is required for people to aim for higher ethical standards (e.g. no divorce) than the Law of Moses?
- Likewise the disciples' intractable resistance to servanthood is not resolved.
- Mark does not offer us a clear definition of this mysterious kingdom of God secret being alluded to everywhere. How are we to penetrate this mystery and participate in its secret?

These issues and more require that we look more closely at Mark's story with some of these questions in mind.

2. To have a profound encounter with the risen Jesus, centered around and rooted in his Cross and Resurrection.

Because this study does not necessarily assume that Mark's Gospel was the earliest Gospel written (though we certainly allow for it), we are not committed to the popular but tenuous assumption often accompanying it, that Mark's Gospel is the least 'adorned,' 'embellished,' and 'developed' theologically. These assumptions have led interpreters to an embarrassingly shallow understanding of Mark's Cross and Resurrection account. By contrast, this

study finds significant and meaningful parallels between the Cross and Israel's Day of Atonement. In fact, we find that Mark has a very strong atonement theology, very similar to that of Hebrews and Paul in 2 Corinthians 3 – 5. We also find significant and meaningful parallels between Jesus' actions and Israel's new covenant prophecies, as well as persuasive explanations for why these parallels exist. Further, all of Mark's themes converge on the Cross and Resurrection, giving it enormous depth, much to the enjoyment of the reader. We find in Mark an emphasis which, in studies of Paul or John, is commonly called 'being in Jesus,' i.e. dying and rising with Jesus, and living in union with the risen Jesus by his Spirit. Mark does this in his own innovative way, and this from supposedly the 'earliest' Gospel.

3. To enjoy the story as an exciting, panoramic movie that viewers will want to watch over and over again.

In our cinema-drenched society, modern movie-goers have new terms and ways of thinking about stories. Good cinematography, screenplay, musical accompaniment, plot-twist, and surprise ending are some words and phrases used to describe our pleasure in watching a good story unfold. Recent literary scholars of the Bible have rediscovered the principles by which Hebrew narrative works, and many of those techniques are uncannily similar to the way we might express our enjoyment of a clever contemporary movie. This study attempts to take advantage of modern movie watching experiences in order to draw out Mark's story.

Our literary analysis suggests that Mark's narrative is meant to be taken first chronologically, then non-chronologically. This study assumes that one will have to comb through Mark's Gospel several times over to understand what Mark is about. Mark invites us into a parable, a story that can be studied from multiple angles and considered again and again. We hope to foster in our students and readers a sensitivity to and a delight in this story, not least because his subject, Jesus, is worthy of being considered again and again.

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The Techniques of this Study – Background

This set of questions draws heavily upon the techniques of literary analysis of Hebrew narrative pioneered by Robert Alter, Meir Sternberg, Frank Kermode, John Drury, Duane Garrett, John Sailhamer, and James Kugel. The fact that much of this scholarship comes from non-Christian Jewish circles (Alter, Sternberg, Kermode, Kugel, and others) is very significant. They cannot be said to have been biased by a concern to uphold Christian doctrine, yet their findings assist us greatly when dealing with the Gospels in particular. I believe that the church is still recovering from the Gentile anti-Semitism it espoused from its early years. Our ignorance of Hebrew narrative has been one dire consequence of that.

Since 1970, these scholars started to respond against the prevailing tendency to break up Old Testament and New Testament texts in an attempt to find supposedly disparate sources: J, E, P, and D schools; a J school made up of women; multiple Isaiahs; the Essene influence; a Jewish Petrine Christianity over against a Gentile Pauline Christianity, etc. Literary scholars of this new movement argue that each book should be evaluated as a finished piece in its entirety, and in fact, that each biblical narrative book demonstrates a formal unity in its entirety. Although there may have been historical sources, they were not nearly as opposed to each other as some might think. Besides that, literary structures, consistently used themes, repeated language, and stylistic considerations all testified to the extraordinary literary unity of biblical narrative works.

Looking for and enjoying those literary qualities are not as difficult as one might think. In fact, as we suggested above, reading and relishing biblical narrative bears remarkable resemblance to modern movie watching. This is particularly true, for various reasons which will become clear, with the Gospel of Mark.

This literary analysis of the Gospel of Mark is different from other styles of Bible study in that it does not try to draw many practical applications until the development of themes is fairly well understood. This requires us to make several changes in the way we do Bible study, namely:

1. Cover larger amounts of material at a time.
2. Trace the development of themes and motifs throughout the entire story.
3. Read the story again in smaller chunks to pick up the details.
4. Rearrange texts to note literary structures, and similarities and differences with other texts.
5. Be more careful and/or have a little more patience in drawing practical applications to our lives.

Traditional forms of Bible study or teaching, whether expository preaching, inductive manuscript study, or topical study, are analogous to viewing a slide show. A chunk of text (say, 20 verses) is selected and scrutinized, and conclusions are drawn. During the next session, the same thing happens with another chunk of text. Usually, the amount of text is about the same size, and one does not revisit material already covered. Hence the Bible study is like a slide show, freezing frames and isolating what one sees from the rest of the story.

The Techniques of this Study – Slide Show vs. Video Camera Paradigms

This Bible study utilizes a video camera paradigm. That is, you have the ability to do the following:

1. *Understand the story from the end: You can watch the movie once, and understand the movie from the end, then watch it again and again to piece together the clues anticipating the ending.*
2. *Tune in to the soundtrack/background music: You can pay special attention to the soundtrack playing in the background and setting the mood as opposed to only the scenes on screen. Often the Old Testament is the “soundtrack.”*
3. *Change the focus and speed: You can use a panoramic lens, normal lens, and zoom lens*
4. *Change the sequence of events: You can splice two sections next to each other and do instant replay*

The slide show paradigm is analogous to using a *zoom lens* at *regular speed*, with *no ability to do special viewing* (splicing, instant replay) and you get to watch the movie only *once so you can't connect it from the ending*.

Using familiar movie-watching techniques by video camera paradigm will invoke both emotional and analytical resources in your twenty-first century audience for the study of Mark's Gospel.

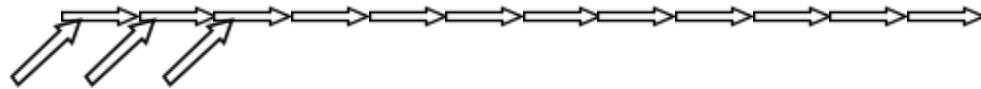
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Reader – Text Dynamics in Mark’s Gospel (in Microsoft Word, view in Page Layout View)

What this means for Bible study leaders is depicted by the following.

Usually we think of trying to “enter” every single story (every 20 verses or so) and engaging it in a personal way. In other words, we do Bible study like this:

Mark’s Story

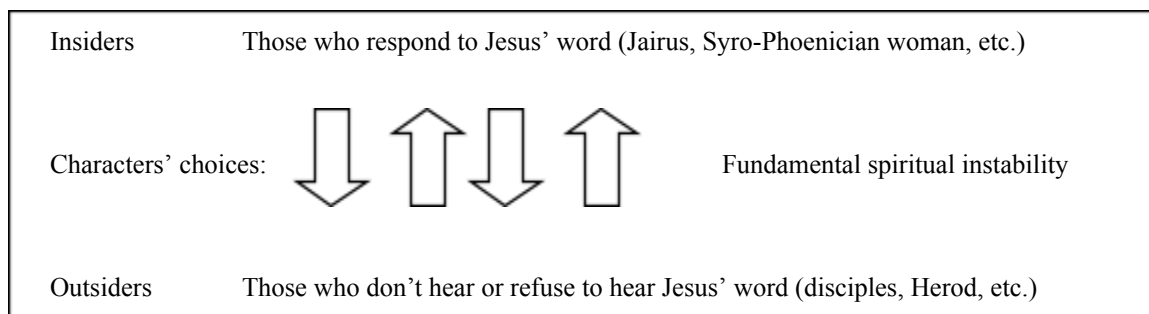


Mark’s story is broken up into pieces in the sense that not much continuity of the whole story is emphasized. Bible study participants are encouraged to draw ‘applications’ in every session from these small sub-stories. Of course this technique is advantageous where membership in the group is unstable, time is limited, and Bible study leaders are less experienced. And the conclusions drawn are often acceptable, but not always.

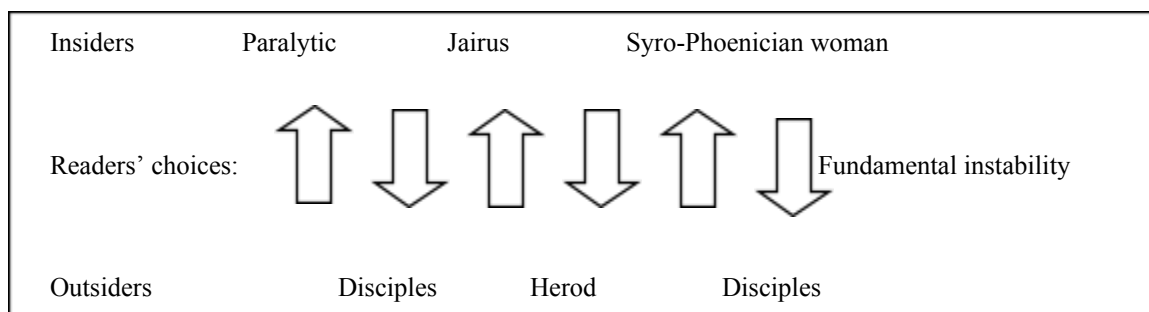
In all biblical narrative, but with Mark in particular, we must be very careful about our methodological approach to narrative, because it will determine or reinforce already existing spiritual assumptions about how to relate to Jesus.

View 1

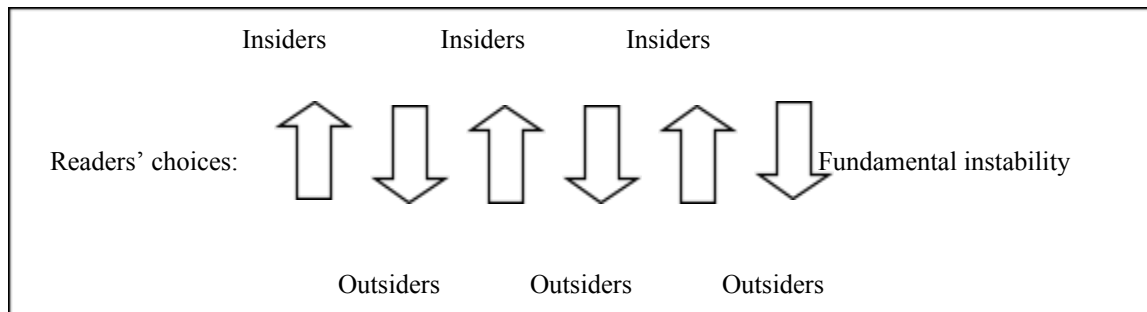
The dynamics between Jesus and the characters in the narrative are often assumed to follow this pattern:



This assumption shapes and/or reflects by methodological assumptions how we approach the text of Mark’s Gospel. Hence when readers “enter” each small sub-story, the overall effect would be something like this:



Thus, immediately trying to identify with all the characters (a methodological issue) in every sub-story gives readers a feeling of fundamental instability (a spiritual issue).



View 2

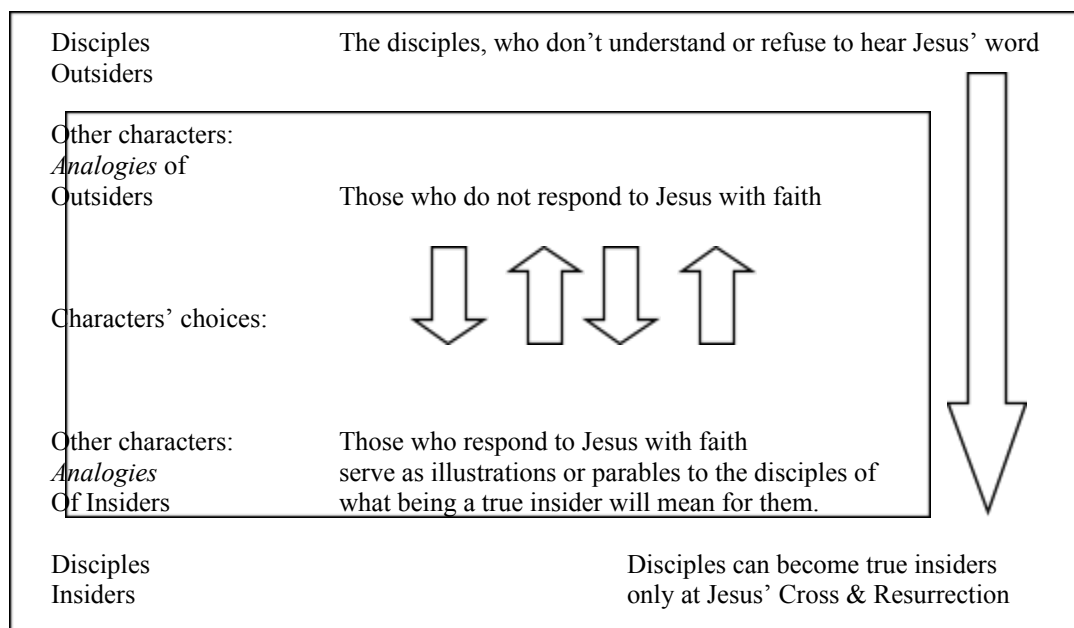
In trying to understand Mark's definitions of faith and salvation one inevitably asks the following question: If we identify ourselves with non-disciple characters, what happens? Were the non-disciples superior to the disciples? Did the leper (1:41-45), the paralytic (2:1-12), the Legion demoniac (5:1-20), the hemorrhaging woman, Jairus the synagogue leader (5:21-43), the Syro-Phoenician woman (7:24-30), and other non-disciple characters like the multitude of people who were healed or fed, or even the Roman centurion at the cross, become 'baptized in the Holy Spirit' by interacting with Jesus? Jesus pronounced some of them forgiven, but how and why? Did they become complete 'insiders' to the kingdom of God? Did their hearts become 'clean'? We would be hard-pressed to answer 'yes' to all of those questions.

Other ways of putting the question would be: Would the non-disciple characters have understood the miracles of the loaves? Would they have understood the transfiguration? Would they have been immune from the temptation to power the disciples fell into? Would they have embraced the fullness of Jesus' suffering servanthood, and fully embraced his predictions about dying and rising again?

We believe the answer to those questions is 'No.' The confession of the Roman centurion is of ironic value and is meant to be contrasted with Simon Peter's; it does not mean that the Roman centurion was 'saved' or had 'faith' as we understand it. The crowds and the multitudes surrounding Jesus are represented somewhat by the crowds in Jerusalem from the triumphal entry to the crucifixion. That is, they are definitely still clinging to the nationalistic, military interpretation of the Messianic role, and they too rejected Jesus in his final hour. Though we may chide the multitude for being whimsical, it is a matter of course that they would be thus: They never heard Jesus predicting his death and resurrection. Only the disciples did. Why then did Jesus predict his suffering, death, and resurrection only with the disciples?

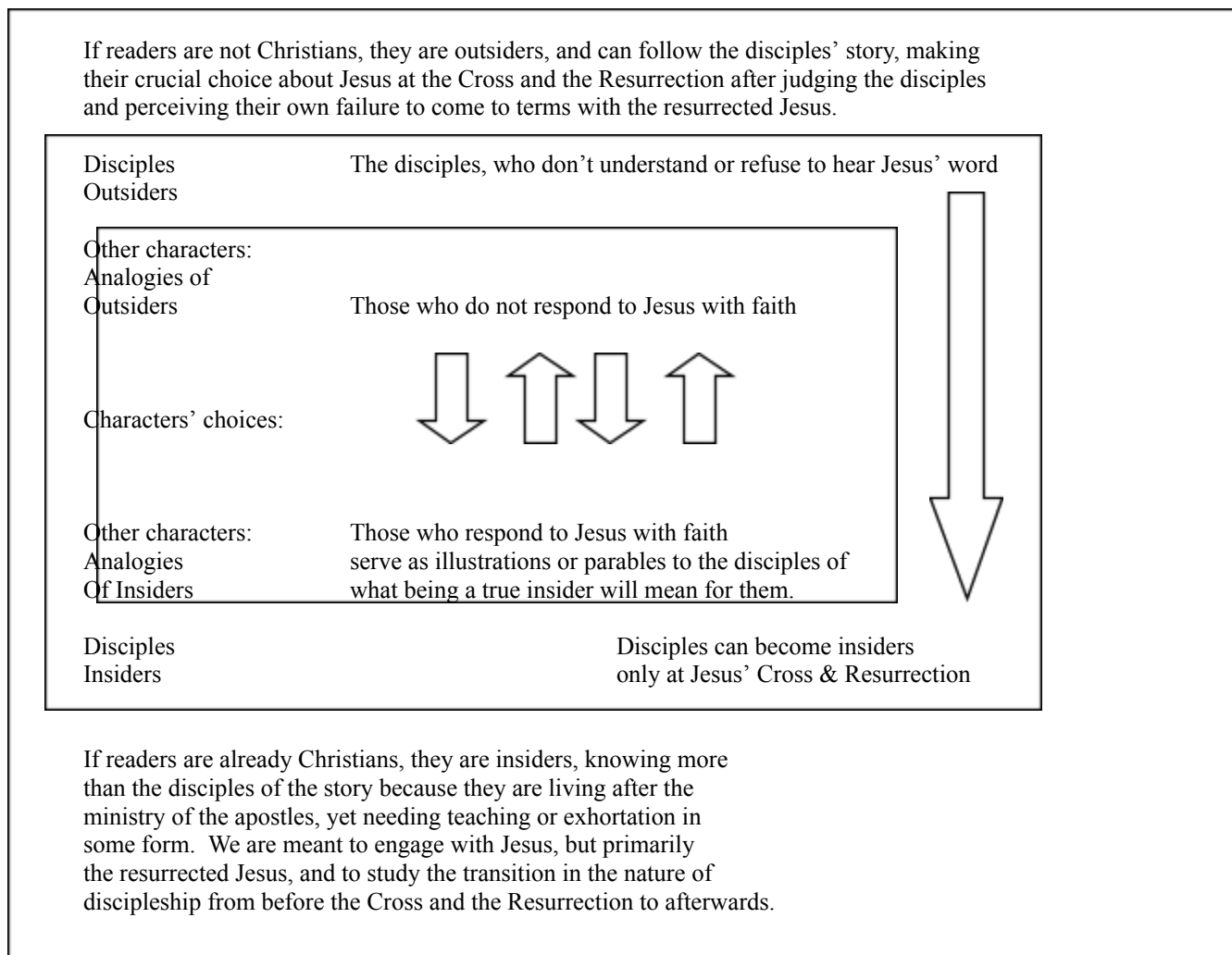
We cannot do away with the privileged status of the disciples vis-à-vis special information from Jesus. They were meant to understand more than all the others, and we are in some sense meant to identify with them, too. But once we start down this road, another set of questions arise. What difference was this special information supposed to make? What are we to make of Mark's commitment to minimizing the disciples' success, maximizing their failure, and withholding from us their internal dialogue which might have made us feel closer to them? What did this privileged position gain them? Is Mark saying that greater information just leads to greater condemnation? And what purpose did this portrayal serve when all Mark's readers knew the apostles as the courageous founders of the church? Some had probably actually known Simon Peter himself. They most certainly knew that the women disciples at the empty tomb eventually passed on word to the men disciples; how else could the church even exist?

Does Mark intend to keep us learning from but fundamentally disidentifying with the disciples while they were in this state? Is there some other way of relating to the disciples? If so, then we reach a different analysis of Mark's theology of discipleship. Something fundamental happened at the Resurrection that changed the nature of discipleship. And correspondingly, we would also require a different methodology to study Mark's text. That methodology is shown below:



Though space does not permit us to make a complete defense of this view here, it will be substantiated below in our analysis. This view suggests that Jesus interacted with the Legion demoniac, the hemorrhaging woman, etc. *for the benefit of the disciples*. These other characters' experiences were not full-orbed entrances into the mystery of the kingdom of God. Instead, they were acted parables, concrete images meant to make a lasting impression on the disciples. Once the inward spiritual reality fully arrived for them after the Resurrection, these healings and miracles served to give categories and words to the disciples so that they could better understand and explain Jesus' identity, his mission, his relation to the Old Testament prophecies and Jewish eschatological expectation, and their own personal transformation after Jesus' Cross and Resurrection.

Furthermore, our position as readers of Mark's text seems to be as follows:



Again, this view will be substantiated below, but it is valuable to state this early in the study using this visual aid. The results desired are as follows: By not immediately identifying with all the characters but by paying careful attention to the way Mark himself guides us in that (a methodological issue), we will create in our readers an understanding of the disciples' failure, deepen our appreciation for Jesus' Cross and Resurrection, increase our experience of and dependence on the risen Jesus, promote a higher level of confidence and urgency and power as we live out Mark's emphasis on servanthood and discipleship, and give readers a feeling of fundamental spiritual stability (reinforcement of their identity in the resurrected Christ) rather than instability. And of course, as mentioned before, we hope to give readers of Mark's Gospel reason to delight in this story many times over.

Returning to the question of what this means for Bible study leaders, we are arguing that effective narrative study is done *ideally* as follows:

Mark's Story



In this Bible study, conclusions are drawn at the end of reading the whole story. Perhaps a preliminary question focuses readers to look for only particular features or elements of Mark's text. A good first question would be,

“Why do the disciples fail?” A conclusion is drawn or a judgment is made at the end of the story, as if the Gospel were a movie that was meant to be watched in its entirety.

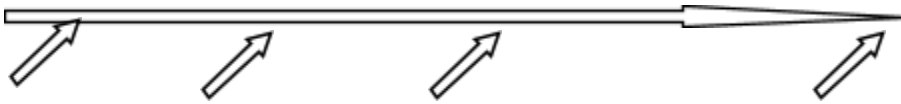
Then, readers enter the story for the second time with a different kind of question. A good second question would be, “Were the disciples insiders or outsiders?”

Mark’s Story



Another conclusion is drawn or a judgment is made at the end of the story. Then, readers enter the story for the third time with a different kind of question. A good third question would be, “How does one really become an insider?” This question starts to focus on and utilize multiple sub-stories. Thus, the readers’ engagement with the larger story is as follows

Mark’s Story



This type of study can probably only be done on a weekend retreat. In that context, membership is fixed, people can spend more time focusing on the story, and only one leader is absolutely necessary, depending on how one conducts the study.

Unfortunately, most Bible studies are done on a week to week basis and in small groups. This type of study is, at present, more difficult and requires leaders with more of an integrative mindset. It also requires more continuity of membership.

Thus, from a *pragmatic* standpoint, a more segmented but careful approach needs to be undertaken. It can be done by Bible study leaders who have been trained in the big picture of Mark. And it can be done by using the various techniques of the video camera paradigm (VC) and alternating with the traditional slide show paradigm (SS).

1. VC: Cover larger amounts of material at a time and trace the development of themes and motifs throughout the entire story. Also, follow the play of information and perspectives with different characters.
2. SS: Read some sub-stories in smaller chunks to pick up the details and enable others to relate more deeply with some characters. In Mark, this should be the non-disciple characters like the leper, the paralytic, the demoniac, Jairus and the hemorrhaging woman.
3. VC: Rearrange texts to note literary structures, and similarities and differences with other texts. And identify “echoes” from other biblical stories.
4. SS & VC: Be more careful and/or have a little more patience in drawing practical applications to our lives, especially from the disciples’ lives. Raise questions to be answered later in the narrative.

Hence the Bible study can proceed like this:

Session 1: Mark 1:1 – 40 allowing students to observe the text, get a feel for Mark's style, and interact as they are perhaps used to. Ultimately, the leader will raise questions about what is disclosed and what is not.



Session 2: Mark 1:40 – 45 (the leper) and 2:1 – 12 (the paralytic) observing Jesus' compassion and how we might be like the leper or the paralytic.



Session 3: Mark 1:1 – 4:34 raising explicit questions about being an insider or outsider and getting a feel for Mark's major theme.



And so on.

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The Techniques of this Study – A Short Step By Step Guide

An acronym: TEDS (Themes, Echoes, Disclosure, Structures)

For more information about this technique, see my paper, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, on InterVarsity's website RIO at <http://regions.ivcf.org/library/>.

A. **THEMES.** *The repetition of certain themes and patterns in the narrative determine the narrator's intention and message. In particular, the ending of each narrative is very important because it ties up various themes.*

1. Repetition of a Theme

An idea or scene which is made or developed in some recurrent pattern.

In the movie *Gladiator*, leadership is a powerful theme running through the story. One scene, the *salute to Maximus scene*, occurs three times. When Maximus is leading the Roman armies under Marcus Aurelius, the soldiers say, "General, General, General." When Maximus is leading the slave gladiators in the fighting pits, the men say, "Spaniard, Spaniard, Spaniard." And when Maximus is leading the gladiators in Rome, they say, "Maximus, Maximus, Maximus."

Trace the theme of being an insider or outsider in Mark. Are the disciples insiders or not?

Trace the theme of servanthood in Mark. Why do the disciples fail to be servants?

In Mark, "hardness of heart" is a theme that runs throughout the story. What is "hardness of heart"? How is it resolved or not resolved?

2. Repetition of Key/Parallel Motifs

Themes are often made up of motifs. A motif is a concrete image, sensory quality, action, or object recurs through a particular narrative which may be symbolic to that narrative.

In the movie *Mi Familia*, the owl means bad luck. Where it shows up, someone is meant to die.

Demons. What do demons seem to know that humans don't?

The blind. When does Jesus heal them? What relevance does it have to the story?

Jesus' parables. What are parables and why does Jesus use them?

In the crucifixion narrative (14:1ff), there is a motif of people going free

3. Repetition of Key/Parallel Events

a. Key/Parallel Events: Prophecy – Fulfillment

Jesus' predictions of his own death and resurrection

b. Key/Parallel Events: Events of Similar Significance

The two feedings of the multitudes: How are they similar? Different?

B. **ECHOES.** *Identify Historic and/or Literary Echoes which serve as the "Soundtrack" or "Background Music" to the Story. Parallels to previous biblical stories or events help reinforce expectations or provide emotional charge.*

During World War II, Winston Churchill referred to the battle of Thermopylae because of the historic parallels. Xerxes of Persia was campaigning against Greece. He had a massive army and navy, and the Greek city-states were not yet organized together. Thermopylae was the path into Greece, and 300 Spartan warriors took a heroic last stand and lost. But that battle needed to happen for the Greek city-states to rally together at the battle of Salamis and repel Persia. Churchill's reference to Thermopylae evoked heroism and courage in British soldiers because every British school boy had been educated in Greek history and made the parallel.

When the west coast rapper Notorious B.I.G. was killed, his friend, producer, and fellow rapper Puff Daddy wrote a song called *I'll Be Missing You*. He took an older song by The Police called *Every Breath You Take* and put his own layer on it. Puff Daddy's song was not about a stalker stalking his prey; obviously that's how the two songs were different. But by keeping the beat and melody of the earlier song, he captured the connotations already associated with *Every Breath You Take*, which were emotions of always thinking about someone, anticipating a future meeting. Puff Daddy reworked that theme so that his song communicated a new message: I'm always thinking about my slain friend, anticipating a future meeting. The biblical narrators used similar methods.

Similarly, in the musical version of *Les Miserables*, a melody from one song is re-used in another with a corresponding theme. For instance, after Jean Valjean experiences mercy at the hands of the bishop, he sings about the wonder and mystery of this forgiveness and the transforming effect this has on him in *Valjean Forgiven*. Later, when Inspector Javert experiences mercy at the hands of Jean Valjean, he sings in *Javert's Suicide* about the mystery of this forgiveness and the transforming effect this has on him *using the same melody*. Although there is a difference in the way the two men receive their respective pardons, since mercy gave Jean Valjean hope and new life, whereas it extinguished Javert's zeal for law and in fact Javert's own life, the fact that the same melody is used in both songs serves to underscore the dramatic transformation both men must experience when they are pardoned. Similar echoes occur in biblical narrative.

Compare Mark's stories of Jesus touching unclean people (Mk.1:40-45, 5:21-34) with what the Old Testament said would happen when you touched an unclean person or thing (Hag.2:11-13). What impresses you about Jesus now?

Compare the portrayal of Jesus as a king-in-exile (Mk.2:23-26, 6:30-44, 8:1-10) with David the king-in-exile (1 Sam.18). Who is Jesus implying that the Pharisees are?

Compare the cleansings of the unclean demoniac (Mk.5:1-20) and hemorrhaging woman (Mk.5:21-43) with the prophecy of the new covenant in Ezekiel 36 and 37.

Compare the claim of Jesus to be a king with Jeremiah's vision of the new covenant and the Davidic king (Jer. 23:1-6; 31:31-34)

Compare Mark's story of the cross (Mk.14:32-15:39) to the Day of Atonement (Lev.16:1-34)

- C. **DISCLOSURE.** *Sometimes biblical narrative is like a silent movie, where we don't hear the dialogue between characters or an internal dialogue within a character. As readers, our involvement with the text's meaning is affected by the narrator's intended interaction between the reader and the characters, suggested by the level of information shared by the narrator at any given moment.*

The movie *Entrapment* contains two important disclosures of information relating the characters and the audience. In the middle, we discover what Jen (Catherine Zeta-Jones) has known, that she was the thief who stole the painting. So we disassociate from Jen because we realize she's had the upper hand over us in terms of knowledge. Then Mac (Sean Connery) reveals that he was the one who retrieved the painting. Then we disassociate with Mac and associate with Jen because we are as surprised as she is. So our perspectives and feelings towards the characters radically flip-flop as we suddenly discover what the characters have known all along. In the end, we discover what Mac knows: that he's been working for the government trying to trap Jen.

Varying degrees of information leads to multiple perspectives in the story: one character's perspective, another character's perspective, God's perspective, and our perspective as readers. Biblical narratives contain strategically different levels of explicitness and uncertainty to evoke a desired response (or range of responses) from the reader. Biblical narrative also drives towards the convergence of multiple perspectives.

"Every Biblical narrator is of course omniscient, but in contrast, for example, to the narrator of the Homeric poems, who makes his characters beautifully perspicuous even (as in the *Iliad*) when he is dealing with the most darkly irrational impulses of the human heart, the ancient Hebrew narrator displays his omniscience with a drastic selectivity. He may on occasion choose to privilege us with the knowledge of what God thinks of a particular character or action – omniscient narration can go no higher – but as a rule, because of his understanding of the nature of his human subjects, he leads us through varying darknesses which are lit up by intense but narrow means, phantasmal glimmerings, sudden strobic flashes." (Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, p.126)

How does the author convey information regarding motives, attitudes, or the inner nature of someone's moral character? In ascending order of explicitness:

1. *Character hidden*

Sometimes when you might expect to get some glimpse of how a character feels or thinks, the biblical narrator withholds that information.

"And as he was going along by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net in the sea, for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, 'Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.' And they immediately left the nets and followed him." (Mark 1:16-17) We don't know why the disciples followed Jesus. It is hidden from us.

2. *Character revealed through actions, which can either meet or disappoint our expectations*

And a leper came to Jesus, beseeching him and falling on his knees before him, and saying, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." Moved with compassion, *Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him*, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed." (Mk.1:41-42)

3. *Character revealed through gestures, appearances, or costume*

John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist, and his diet was locusts and wild honey. (Mk.1:6)

4. *Character revealed through another character's comments regarding her/him/them*

And Jesus, seeing their [the four friends' and the paralytic's] faith... (Mk.2:5)

Immediately Jesus, aware in his spirit that they [the scribes] were reasoning that way within themselves, said to them, "Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts?" (Mk.2:8)

And he said to them, "Why are you [the disciples] so afraid? How is it that you have no faith?" (Mk.4:40)

5. *Character revealed through direct speech of the individual*

Saving Private Ryan contains an epiphanic insight into a character's life. During an episode where some soldiers are threatening to defect, Hanks suddenly shares about his identity as a schoolteacher. The sudden reminder or hope or glimmer of peacetime life in the midst of war done in the form of a personal self-disclosure is powerful because it is the first time we get an insight into the character's real self and inner life. It is from that point that we really understand

how Hanks' character interprets the war around him and the mission he's on and we sympathize with him more. (Steven Spielberg does this quite often in his movies)

And they became very much afraid and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (Mk.4:41)

The disciples are sarcastic and tired when they said to him, "Shall we go and spend two hundred denarii on bread and give them something to eat?" (Mk.6:37)

6. *Character revealed through inward speech*

But there were some of the scribes sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, "Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?"

7. *Character revealed by the narrator explicitly in statements about attitudes, motives, etc.*

Specific descriptions made by the narrator are so rare, they are very important whenever they occur.

And a leper came to Jesus, beseeching him and falling on his knees before him, and saying, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." *Moved with compassion*, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed." (Mk.1:41-42)

For they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but *their heart was hardened*. (Mk.6:52)

But they kept silent, for on the way *they had discussed with one another which of them was the greatest*. (Mk.9:34)

Though typical study of biblical narrative seeks to make the audience identify with the characters, this may not always be the narrator's intent. Sometimes the narrator forces us to simultaneously consider different alternatives about the characters' motivations, feelings, or levels of knowledge. Or sometimes the narrator forces us to disassociate with a certain character altogether. If strategic disclosure of certain characters is a device the narrator is using (Mark in particular), then our strategy for how readers and characters interact must change.

For the purpose of preaching and storytelling, this gives us a helpful tool. When a reader's perspective (level of information) coincides with the character's perspective (level of information), the reader is led to identify with the character. Conversely, when a reader's perspective is different from the character's perspective, the reader is led to dis-identify with the character. It is fun to engage other people on how much information they think they have at various points in the narrative and how close or distant they feel to the characters.

D. *STRUCTURE. The literary structure of the narrative often helps make the point.*

1. The Juxtaposition of Stories

The Scriptures are like a tapestry where the individual colors of each story create a meaningful picture as they are placed next to other stories. Often, significant comparisons can be made between two back-to-back narrative events. Also, an entire book can be studied at once, considering especially the beginning and the end. On every level one consistently asks two questions:

1. How is this material similar to what has come before?
2. How is this material different from what has come before?

In Mark, it is frequently on the sequence of smaller stories that the emphasis is made.

The healing of the blind man in two stages (Mk.8:22-26)
The disciples partially perceive Jesus, like the blind man partially healed (Mk.8:27-38)
The disciples do not perceive the meaning of the transfigured Jesus (Mk.9:1-13)

Mark also uses the sandwiched story, where one story is inserted in the middle of another. Jairus' daughter and the hemorrhaging woman is a good example of this. Mark does this because it literarily illustrates the insider-outsider theme. The inside story is truly the "inside story" and interprets the outside story.

2. *The Ending that Unveils a Secret in the Story*

At the end of the movie *The Sixth Sense*, you learn that Bruce Willis was really a ghost all the way through the movie, so you want to watch the movie again with the ending in mind. It helps you understand why his wife ignores him, why he can't open certain doors in his house, etc.

In the movie *The Usual Suspects*, not until the end do you realize that Roger "Verbal" Kint was Keyser Soze. Thus, you have to watch the movie again when you know the ending to see how all the clues stack up.

The *Blue, White, Red* movie series by Polish director: Understanding that there are themes of identity lost and identity regained (*Blue*), or captivity and manipulation (*White*), or fall and redemption (*Red*) woven throughout the movies that get resolved at the end makes you want to watch the movie again with the ending in mind. *Blue* is especially good in this way.

The Gospel of Mark shows that the disciples failed to follow Jesus because of what the ending reveals...

3. *The Unresolved Ending With a Boomeranging Judgment:*

Sometimes a biblical book or story ends without resolving the main tension in the story.

The movie *A Few Good Men* contains a disclosure that reverses the viewers' feelings and judgments. At first we side with Tom Cruise as the lawyer finding out the truth about the murdered Santiago. But after Jack Nicholson's disclosure, we have mixed feelings towards Cruise and his efforts. Furthermore, we have to judge ourselves for enjoying the benefits of military actions we judge.

The book *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding has a boomeranging judgment, where you as the reader detest the savagery of the boys stranded on the island. But then the boys are 'saved' by British sailors returning to their gunboats in wartime. We as readers thus recognize that the savagery of the boys on the island is parallel to the savagery of the men in the world. They are not 'saved' at all, and thus we judge ourselves.

Nathan's parable to King David in 2 Samuel 12 had a boomeranging judgment on David. David provides the ending to the story. But his judgment comes boomeranging back on him when Nathan says, "You are the man."

The book of Jonah gets us to side with God at Jonah's expense. We judge Jonah throughout the story, for disobeying God in sharing His mercy to his enemies. Our judgment comes back on us, however, when we recognize that we disobey God in sharing His mercy to our enemies.

Jesus' parable of the two lost sons in Luke 15:11-32 leaves the ending for the Pharisees to complete. The older son does not enter the celebration, disrespecting his father in public. This is just like the Pharisees are behaving. They are not entering the celebration around the table. They are disrespecting God the Father in public. Thus their judgment comes boomeranging back on them.

Luke's Acts of the Apostles cries out for an ending. Arguably it is to be provided by Caesar. The pattern of Paul going before rulers and authorities culminates at Rome. Thus, the desire to put an ending to the narrative based on the pattern leads to a judgment boomeranging on Caesar himself. The previous

interactions serve as a warning to Caesar, especially Herod, who claimed to be god and was eaten by worms.

The Gospel of Mark

Jesus, the Silent Movie Version

Foreground Action: Mark's Introduction

1:1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. 2 As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: 'Behold, I send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; 3 the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make ready the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.' 4 John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 And all the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. 6 John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist, and his diet was locusts and wild honey. 7 And he was preaching, and saying, "After me One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals. 8 I baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." 9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 Immediately coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him; 11 and a voice came out of the heavens: "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased." 12 Immediately the Spirit impelled Him to go out into the wilderness. 13 And he was in the wilderness forty days being tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts, and the angels were ministering to him. 14 Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

Questions

1. What do you notice about the first sentence?
2. What kind of a sentence is it? Not a sentence
3. What is it? it is a title "The Gospel According to Mark"--isn't that the title? Mark's title is different: "The beginning"? just the beginning, not the end; "good news"--not a history, not dispassionate; "Jesus Christ" = "anointed one" ; "Son of God"--don't have to wait for the punchline. But what does this mean? We expect to find out.
4. What happens first in this account of the good news?--John appears
5. What is John's job description?
6. Where do we see it?
7. What purpose does the Old Testament quote fill? Pronouns in the prophecy? Who is whom? (Mal 3:1, Isaiah 40:3) "I", "my messenger", "you", "your way"
8. How do you know who the messenger is? Messenger = John
9. crying in the wilderness, proclaiming in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord, John prepares for Jesus
10. If you were in the wilderness during this whole episode how would you feel about it?
11. What was John proclaiming? "baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins."
12. What does that mean? baptism = rite done for conversion to judaism; only Gentiles did this
13. This is like telling people born in this country that they need to become naturalized!
14. What is repentance? turning around, 180-degree change
15. Repent of what? We don't know.
16. What are their sins in v.4 and 5? We don't know.
17. Why do people come? We're not sure
18. What is odd about the description of John? Why does Mark give us the fashion report? (Read 2 Kings 1:8.)
19. Why did so many people come out to see John? (Read Mal 4:5-6, review the political situation of the day.)
20. Who did the OT prophecy tell them to expect? When?
21. What was Elijah's job supposed to be? To herald the king.
22. Why does John contrast the baptism he's offering and the baptism Jesus will offer? To contrast the power between himself and Jesus.
23. What is the baptism of water? We don't know exactly.
24. What is the baptism of the Holy Spirit? We know still less about this.
25. Examine the imagery of Jesus' baptism. The parallel image of the sky opening as the spirit descends as the waters open when Jesus comes up out of the water.
26. Who speaks? God

27. What is it like for the heavens to open suddenly? Like a curtain parting, a veil parting.
28. Who saw the heavens open? Jesus alone.
29. What does the Spirit do next? Drives Jesus into the wilderness.
30. How is the Holy Spirit depicted here? Pure, like a dove (since doves only land on living things, like Noah's dove), but with authority--it drives Jesus out into the wilderness.
31. Why the wilderness? We don't know.
32. What happened in the wilderness? Spirit in control, Jesus obedient; Jesus tempted by Satan
33. 40 days? Moses (Ex 24:18, 34:28), Elijah (I Kings 19:8), both fasted 40 days and encountered God. Spiritual leaders take forty days of fasting to enter into greater relationship with God; to learn dependence and be prepared for ministry.
34. But what can we really tell happened in the wilderness? Not much. Mark doesn't tell us.
35. What is Jesus doing? preaching the gospel
36. What is he preaching? "Time is fulfilled..."
37. What is "time is fulfilled"? [KAIROS=decisive moment] = "the moment we've all been waiting for..."
38. What is the response he's looking for? repent & believe in the good news
39. Repent of what? We don't know.
40. What is the good news? We don't know.
41. What does it mean, "The kingdom of God has come near"? It is ALMOST ready, it is ALMOST now
42. What does it take to have a Kingdom? King, subjects or realm
43. What does it mean, "K of G has come near"? God's king is near
44. Who is the King? Jesus
 - a. Look back at the baptism of Jesus. Why did John baptize people? repentance for forgiveness of sins
 - b. Why was Jesus baptized? Certainly not for his sins
 - c. What happened when Jesus was baptized? God confessed Jesus' sinlessness
 - d. Why was it necessary for Jesus to be baptized then?
 - e. What ceremony usually accompanies the beginning of a kingdom or reign of a king? Coronation
 - f. Read Psalm 2:6-7. Coronation Psalm, God declaring the sonship of the ruler of the people of Israel.
 - g. What happens when Jesus is baptized? God speaks, spirit descends
 - h. What is happening for Jesus? He is being crowned, instituted as God's Son, God's king, the King of the Kingdom of God.
45. What was John proclaiming? one coming after me, mightier
46. What was Jesus proclaiming? the king, himself.
47. People say that Jesus was a great teacher, he preached great precepts. But ultimately, Jesus preached himself, not a system of ethics.
48. But what kind of kingdom is this? We don't know yet.
 - a. What is the proper response to the message of the gospel? Repent and believe in God's king, Jesus
 - b. How is repentance a preparation for belief in Jesus? What does that look like for us, now? We don't know yet.
 - c. Who is the central figure of the kingdom of God? Jesus. What does that say in a pluralistic, relativistic society?

Mk.1:16 As he was going along by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen. 17 And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men." 18 Immediately they left their nets and followed him. 19 Going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were also in the boat mending the nets. 20 Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went away to follow him. 21 They went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and began to teach. 22 They were amazed at his teaching; for he was teaching them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. 23 Just then there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, 24 saying, "What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God!" 25 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" 26 Throwing him into convulsions, the unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice and came out of him. 27 They were all amazed, so that they debated among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." 28 Immediately the news about him spread everywhere into all the surrounding district of Galilee. 29 And immediately

after they came out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30 Now Simon's mother-in-law was lying sick with a fever; and immediately they spoke to Jesus about her. 31 And he came to her and raised her up, taking her by the hand, and the fever left her, and she waited on them. 32 When evening came, after the sun had set, they began bringing to him all who were ill and those who were demon-possessed. 33 And the whole city had gathered at the door. 34 And he healed many who were ill with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he was not permitting the demons to speak, because they knew who he was. 35 In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there. 36 Simon and his companions searched for him; 37 they found him, and said to him, "Everyone is looking for You." 38 He said to them, "Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby, so that I may preach there also; for that is what I came for." 39 And he went into their synagogues throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out the demons.

Questions

49. Why do the disciples follow Jesus? What made him so attractive? We don't know.
50. Why can't we see into their minds and hearts? Mark doesn't give us that info
51. What was his teaching about? We don't know.
52. Why was it so amazing? Well, his authority, but in terms of content, we're not sure.
53. What must people's faces have looked like when they heard Jesus? Amazement, wonder, awe.
54. What impresses you about Jesus? His authority, his ability to heal. What is the theme of this section of Mark, down through 1:39? Authority. Where do we see Jesus exercising authority?
 - a. Simon and Andrew: authority over jobs
 - Jesus makes his first prophecy: "I will make you fish ..."
 - Why did Jesus use "fish for people"? a phrase they'd understand; an image familiar to them
 - How would they understand this phrase? by seeing his model, he was fishing for men and caught them. They would eventually do what he is doing with them.
 - b. James and John: authority over family
 - What kind of family did J&J have? wealthy (hired men); Close: family business. Certainly Zebedee assumed his sons would take over his business.
 - What would it mean for them to leave their father et al? perhaps even a hardship for Zebedee, certainly a disappointment
 - c. teaching: authority over scripture, teaching
 - How did the scribes teach? How did Jesus?
 - like the difference between the TA and the professor-- quoting other sources versus being the expert. Jesus spoke of scripture as though he himself was the authority on what it meant. Jesus exercises authority through his word.
 - d. evil spirits: authority over the spiritual realm
 - How did the evil spirit know Jesus? We don't know
 - What does he know about Jesus? His identity, the Holy One of God, similar but different from the title according to Mark 1:1
 - Why doesn't he want the demons to speak about him?
 - Messianic secret: he didn't want people to know he was the messiah at this point: it's too politically hot. John was taken into custody. Perhaps Jesus was in danger, too.
 - Demons aren't the best character witnesses: Jesus probably wants the people to learn his identity from the disciples, not the demons
 - e. illness: Authority over physical illness, the physical realm
 - What do we learn about Simon here? Simon is married!
 - What happened at sundown? Why? they waited until the end of the sabbath, but they were excited by the healings and so Simon, Andrew, James and John brought their friends and neighbors to come see Jesus and to be healed. Their excitement was contagious and predictable given the exciting day they had had with Jesus in the synagogue and at home.
 - How do the people know about Jesus?
 - What did Jesus say to them when he called them? "I will make you fish for people"
 - What has happened for the disciples? they have begun fishing for people
 - Examine Jesus' authority as seen in the responses of people:
 - Jesus commands, people (demons, fever) obey, others are amazed
 - Jesus acts decisively, immediately

55. What is my identity? Being a student, my family, my future plans, my handicaps?
56. Are you prepared to let Jesus define you and be your identity? That is what we'll start to see unfold in the story.
57. When Jesus prays, what does Simon do?-- "hunts" for Jesus
58. Is this unreasonable, given what happened yesterday? No. Simon expects Jesus to do similar things today.
59. What is Simon's plan for the day?
60. Where did Simon get his sense of the day's agenda? from seeing all the needs around him
61. Simon has seen something true and good about Jesus, but it isn't the whole story. Jesus has a different agenda than Jesus does. How often do we get a partial picture of Jesus and his agenda and then want to go off half-cocked without being led by Jesus himself. Simon wasn't all wrong about Jesus--he just wasn't being led by him. *Jesus called Simon to follow him and fish for people; Simon was fishing for Jesus and following the crowds.*
62. Why does Jesus say, "Let us go on to ..."? Jesus told Simon to follow him, now he has learned that Jesus meant it literally.
63. Perhaps this is the first place that Simon learns that he is literally going to follow Jesus around Galilee. Simon didn't just leave his nets for the day, or for a few days, but Simon has left them for good. Simon becomes a full-time disciple, not a part-time interested observer. The stakes are raised for Simon when Jesus says "Let us go on to the next towns".
64. What does this suggest about knowing Jesus? That it might seem predictable at first, but Jesus sometimes defies our categories by which we try to make him predictable.

But let's take a step back.

65. What sins are people repenting of? Not sure.
66. What is the baptism of the Holy Spirit? We don't know.
67. What happened in the wilderness? We're not sure.
68. Why do the disciples follow Jesus? We don't know.
69. Do people in the story understand Jesus, and know him well? No. They exclaim, "Who is this?"
70. Who are the people contrasted to, in terms of knowing who Jesus is? The demons. They know who he is
71. How many times does Mark say the demons know who Jesus is? Twice. In v.24 and v.34.
72. How much do we overhear of Jesus prayer life? What is his prayer life like? We don't know.
73. How come we can't hear Jesus' teaching in v.21? Hmmm....Mark doesn't tell us.
74. How come we can't hear Jesus' preaching in v.39? Hmmm....
75. By the time Jesus says, "I came to preach," how many sentences have we heard him say? A whole THREE sentences.
76. What is Jesus preaching? We don't know.
 - a. Analogy: Is this like a silent movie? Where people are running around and we see their expressions and hear their reactions to Jesus, but we don't hear much from Jesus himself? It's like a veil or curtain lies between us and the story.
 - b. Analogy: Recall the movie Ben Hur, where we see Jesus, but only from behind. We never see his face. We only see people's reactions to him. Looks of wonder, amazement.
77. Why is this veil there? Hmmm....this will be answered as we get into the story
78. What have we learned about Jesus?
79. What questions do you have about Jesus? LOTS. Keep them in mind as we continue to learn.

The Gospel of Mark

What Jesus Really Heals

Foreground Action: The Leper

Mk.1:40 And a leper came to Jesus, beseeching him and falling on his knees before him, and saying, "If You are willing, you can make me clean." 41 Moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed." 42 Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed. 43 And he sternly warned him and immediately sent him away, 44 and he said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." 45 But he went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the news around, to such an extent that Jesus could no longer publicly enter a city, but stayed out in unpopulated areas; and they were coming to him from everywhere.

Ideas for an Introduction before the group studies the text:

1. Talk about a person who is an outcast, on the fringe, forced out of belonging. Someone who has fallen out of favor with the group, or with society/media, etc. How would Jesus treat that person?
2. When have you felt like an outsider? How can Jesus address some of our longings?

Questions

1. What are these two miracle stories (the leper and the paralytic) about? Healings of very painful diseases.
2. What is leprosy? How does it affect a person socially and physically?

Soundtrack/Background Music: Leprosy in Israel

- Lev.13:40 Now if a man loses the hair of his head, he is bald; he is clean. 41 And if his head becomes bald at the front and sides, he is bald on the forehead; he is clean. 42 But if on the bald head or the bald forehead the swelling of the infection is reddish-white on his bald head or on his bald forehead, like the appearance of leprosy in the skin of the body, 44 he is a leprous man, he is unclean. The priest shall surely pronounce him unclean; his infection is on his head. 45 As for the leper who has the infection, his clothes shall be torn, and the hair of his head shall be uncovered, and he shall cover his mustache and cry, "Unclean! Unclean!" 46 He shall remain unclean all the days during which he has the infection; his is unclean. He shall live alone, his dwelling shall be outside the camp.
3. Imagine what this leper's life has been like...For how many years? How many times has he cried out, 'Unclean, unclean!?' How alone has he felt? Has he wanted to be touched, to have someone shake his hand or hold his shoulder? Has he wanted to touch a woman? Was he married?
 4. So how much did leprosy affect you? It defined you. It defined your reality.
 5. If you hung out with lepers, how might you feel? Note: Here's one experience:

In addition to the children today on the roads near the ghats, lepers who had lost all their fingers had lined up to beg. Men and women with their stubs of hands and their decaying skin covered with filthy rags called out to Numada and Mitsuko in wailing voices.

"They're all human!" Numada could bear it no longer and cried out. "These people...they're all human like us."

Mitsuko did not want to reply. In her heart she could hear a voice saying, "Just what is it we tourists can do for them?" The cheap sympathy of Numada and the Sanjos irritated Mitsuko. She no longer wanted imitations of love. She wanted real love and nothing less.

(Shusaku Endo, *Deep River*, p.161)

6. What is the leper's request? To be made clean (a physical condition with a ceremonial and social aftermath)
7. What do you think about this leper? He has faith, is humble, yet bold
8. What do we see inside Jesus? Compassion.
9. When have we seen 'into' a person's motivations in Mark's Gospel before? Never. This is the first time.

10. Could we see past the 'veil' in Mark's Gospel before? Only when God and the demons said who Jesus was.
11. What do you think about what motivates Jesus? Mercy and compassion – Pretty cool.
12. Why did Jesus touch the man? Probably because he knew that he hadn't been touched in years.
13. Sometimes when we feel unclean or unworthy, do we want people to touch us?
14. Do we sometimes feel like our uncleanness or unworthiness will pollute someone else?
15. Do we sometimes think it's a noble thing to withdraw from others?
16. Do we sometimes think it's a tragic thing to withdraw from others?
17. How might Jesus' touch have felt? Painful, welcome, a relief, a surprise...
18. What usually happens when a person touches a leper?
19. Can uncleanness be spread? Can cleanness be spread?

Soundtrack/Background Music: Cleanness and Uncleanness

- Hag.2:11 “Thus says the LORD of hosts, “Ask now the priests for a ruling: 12 “If a man carries holy meat in the fold of his garment, and touches bread with this fold, or cooked food, wine, oil, or any other food, will it become holy?” And the priests answered, “No.” 13 Then Haggai said, “If one who is unclean from a corpse touches any of these, will the latter become unclean?” And the priests answered, “It will become unclean.”

20. How does this parallel how we sometimes feel like we don't want people to touch us?
21. What happened when Jesus touched the leper?
22. What does that mean about how clean Jesus is?
23. Why does Jesus send him to the priest?
24. What action of Jesus healed the man? touch or speak? both, at different levels...
25. On what levels does Jesus minister to this man?
 - physical: healing
 - emotional: Jesus' touch, spoken word
 - social: as a proof to the people
 - spiritual: show to priest, to be allowed to enter into temple life
26. On what levels do we need Jesus to minister to us?
27. Go on to the paralytic story, if possible.

Foreground Action: The Paralytic

Mk.2:1 When he had come back to Capernaum several days afterward, it was heard that he was at home. 2 And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room, not even near the door; and he was speaking the word to them. 3 And they came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four men. 4 Being unable to get to him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and when they had dug an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic was lying. 5 And Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” 6 But some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, 7 “Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?” 8 Immediately Jesus, aware in his spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves, said to them, “Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts? 9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, and pick up your pallet and walk’? 10 But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,” he said to the paralytic, 11 “I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home.” 12 And he got up and immediately picked up the pallet and went out in the sight of everyone, so that they were all amazed and were glorifying God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this.”

Introduction Questions

1. Either follow on to the healing of the leper study, above, or
2. Talk about someone who is stuck in guilt or shame
3. Talk about whether Private Ryan is actually free to live in the movie *Saving Private Ryan*. After so many people give their life for him, he trembles with remorse and uncertainty, not knowing whether he is forgiven, or whether he's lived up to the sacrifice. What is the difference between being saved without forgiveness and being saved with forgiveness?

Questions

1. Describe the scene: Where is Jesus sitting and teaching? Who else is there?
2. Why do the Pharisees and teachers of the law come from all around to Jesus?
3. What might the paralyzed man's life have been like?
4. In what ways has this man been defined by his affliction?
5. What else might the paralyzed man and his four friends have schemed together to get close to Jesus?
6. How many disciples has Jesus called so far? Four
7. Have they brought someone to Jesus? No.
8. What have the four friends done? They brought their friend to Jesus. They do what the disciples have not done. Point to let hang in the air: Which four men are we more like?
9. How does Jesus see their faith in v.5?
10. Why does Jesus not immediately heal the man, instead forgiving his sin?
11. What might the paralytic and his four friends have felt at that point? (Confusion) Was that what they came for? (No.)
12. What are the scribes and Pharisees feeling? (Confusion) Was that what they came for? (No.)
13. How does Jesus know what's going on inside them in v.8?
14. How do we know what's going on inside Jesus in v.8?
15. Note: Now Mark draws aside a curtain separating us from the inside of Jesus! We see INTO Jesus himself, into his spirit!
16. Why are they so surprised at Jesus?
17. Jesus responds, which is easier to say? "Your sins are forgiven" or "Get up and walk." "Your sins are forgiven." It's more metaphysical and invisible.
18. How did Jesus physically heal the man? By his word.
19. How is Jesus like God? God brings forth life by speaking. So Jesus gives new life by speaking.
20. Why does Jesus heal the paralytic? To prove that his word is credible. If what he says will happen in the visible realm happens, it follows that what he says will happen in the invisible realm also happens. (It could also be that this man's problem was guilt, and that he was paralyzed for psycho-somatic reasons, but it is unlikely given the way Luke tells the story – the physical healing takes place later and separately.)
21. How are the paralytic and his friends feeling? Joyous, astonished, fearful (in the sense of reverent)
22. How are the Pharisees and the scribes feeling? Perhaps angry, more confused.
23. Why would the Pharisees and scribes not want Jesus to be able to forgive sins?
24. If someone hurt you, or did something that really bothered you, of course you can forgive that person's action, but why would you prefer to be the one to fundamentally forgive sin from God's perspective?
25. How is fundamental forgiveness of sin a power issue?
26. What does it mean for Jesus to take that power onto himself?
27. That's not the only way Jesus displays divine authority. Notice – How did Jesus know what the scribes were thinking? And how could he see into the friends' faith? He can see the unseen, the heart.
28. How does that resonate with God's claims in the Old Testament?

Soundtrack/Background Music: Who Knows the Heart?

- Jer.17:9 The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it? 10 I, the LORD, search the heart. I test the mind.
29. If that is the song playing in the background of the story, what might Jesus be demonstrating?
 30. So what claims to God's authority is Jesus making? Abilities to forgive sin and know the heart
 31. When we add to this the story of the leper, what do we see? That Jesus reverses the clean-unclean dynamic by making the unclean clean.
 32. What are the manifestations of sin in our lives? Do we demonstrate shame and paralysis as a result of our separation from God?
 33. Can we handle the fact that, apart from Jesus, sin defines us?
 34. What kind of faith is Jesus calling us to? Faith in him, in his divine authority, in his deity, in his ability to forgive and restore us, in his ability to redefine who we are.

Mk.2:13 And he went out again by the seashore; and all the people were coming to him, and he was teaching them. 14 As he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting in the tax booth, and he said to him, Follow Me! And he got up and followed him. 15 And it happened that he was reclining at the table in his house, and many tax collectors and sinners were dining with Jesus and his disciples; for there were many of them, and they were following him. 16 When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that he was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they said to his disciples, “Why is he eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?” 17 And hearing this, Jesus said to them, “It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

Introduction Questions

1. Do you believe people can be put into a hierarchy based on their morality? Discuss.

Questions

1. Briefly recall the three episodes in Mk.1:40 – 2:12, the calling of Simon Peter, the healing of the leper, and the healing of the paralytic.
2. Who are the tax collectors? Why are they lumped into the same group as “sinners”?

Use the following table to show why the Pharisees and scribes didn’t like the tax collectors:

High Identification with Jewish culture	The Pharisees, lawyers and scribes defined Jewishness around aspects of the Mosaic Law, i.e. Sabbath-keeping, ritual and racial purity, and smaller aspects of the commandments. The Essenes in the Dead Sea region defined Jewishness around physical separateness and waiting for the Temple to be cleansed	The priests kept up the Jerusalem Temple’s sacrificial system but had to work the Roman system to do so.
	The sinners and prostitutes were not welcomed into the synagogue and mainstream Jewish society. The Samaritans were half-Jewish and were rejected by mainstream Jewish society as well. They could not worship in Jerusalem.	The Sadducees changed their beliefs about resurrection and made political alliances with Rome for land. The tax collectors became part of the Roman taxation machinery and were seen as traitors to the Jewish nation.
	Low Assimilation with Graeco-Roman culture	High Assimilation with Graeco-Roman culture

3. Often when you’re a beleaguered minority in a majority culture that is not your own, you feel spiteful towards people who are “sell-outs.” They seem like “betrayers” of your people or your cause. Are there ways in which this happens today, that you observe?
4. Who is Levi? How does Levi make money? How might Levi feel about his life?
5. What does the rest of the Jewish community think of Levi?
6. Why are there so many tax collectors in attendance at Levi’s reception?
7. Note: Jesus encounters people with no greater purpose than survival, and changes their identity and gives them purpose.
8. Imagine the lavishness of this banquet. Describe it in a few words.
9. Why do the Pharisees not like this scene? Why is eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners such a big deal? How is eating together an intimate matter?
10. Also, eating signified a major motif from the Old Testament:

- Gen.2:16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “From any tree of the garden, eating you will eat.”
- Ex.24:9 Then Moses went up with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, 10 and they saw the God of Israel, and under His feet there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself. 11 Yet He did not stretch out His hand against the nobles of the sons of Israel; and they beheld God, and they ate and drank.
- Ps.23:5 Thou dost prepare a table before me.
- Isa.55:1 Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. 2 Why do you spend your money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourself in abundance.

11. So when Jesus ate with people, what was he symbolically communicating?
12. When did that symbolic action become a reality? After the resurrection, after the Spirit’s coming, where all believers ingested (internalized) Jesus by the Spirit and shared table fellowship with each other.
13. What were the Pharisees communicating when they ate only among themselves?
14. Perhaps there is some of their attitude in us today. Who is not welcome to eat at your table? Who is not likely to be your dinner guest? Note that this was the controversial topic in Galatians 2.
15. Who would be hard for you to celebrate, if they turned towards Jesus?
16. Who has Jesus called up to this point in Mark? Simon, Andrew, John, James.
17. What is Jesus saying about the disciples? Jesus says that his disciples are sinners also.
18. How do you think the disciples feel about that?
19. Read v.17. What form of speech is that? A parable, an analogy.
20. What is the analogy, in classic SAT form? sick:physician::sinners:Jesus. Sick people need a doctor; what do sinners need? Jesus
21. What type of person? A savior. Jesus is saying that he is a savior.
22. Who are the “righteous”? Those who don’t know that they are sick, those who think they are righteous.
23. Who doesn’t go to a doctor? People who think they are well. So Jesus is a savior for all sinners who recognize their sin is a desperate illness.
24. Is it new for you to think of sin as a disease? What makes sin a disease?
25. What is Jesus here to heal? He prioritizes forgiveness of sinners. Miracles are physical pictures of forgiveness, but not the forgiveness itself. Jesus is building a community around himself. Jesus requires that people acknowledge their sin (separation from God that leads to unhealthy attitudes and lifestyles), that they are sick with a spiritual disease.
26. How does Jesus heal? We’ll get into this later.
27. Do I recognize that I am a sinner in need of a Savior--like the sick need a doctor? Have you acknowledge your need for healing? Have you experienced healing with Jesus?

The Gospel of Mark

The Controversy Around Jesus

Foreground Action: The Hostility Heats Up

Mk.2:13 And he went out again by the seashore; and all the people were coming to him, and he was teaching them. 14 As he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting in the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me!" And he got up and followed him. 15 And it happened that he was reclining at the table in his house, and many tax collectors and sinners were dining with Jesus and his disciples; for there were many of them, and they were following him. 16 When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that he was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they said to his disciples, "Why is he eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?" 17 And hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners." 18 John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and they came and said to him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" 19 And Jesus said to them, "While the bridegroom is with them, the attendants of the bridegroom cannot fast, can they? So long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. 20 But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day. 21 No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; otherwise the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear results. 22 No one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost and the skins as well; but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins." 23 And it happened that he was passing through the grainfields on the Sabbath, and his disciples began to make their way along while picking the heads of grain. 24 The Pharisees were saying to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" 25 And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he was in need and he and his companions became hungry; 26 how he entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the consecrated bread, which is not lawful for anyone to eat except the priests, and he also gave it to those who were with him?" 27 Jesus said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. 28 So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath." 3:1 He entered again into a synagogue; and a man was there whose hand was withered. 2 They were watching him to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. 3 He said to the man with the withered hand, "Get up and come forward!" 4 And he said to them, "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to kill?" But they kept silent. 5 After looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored. 6 The Pharisees went out and immediately began conspiring with the herodians against him, as to how they might destroy him. 7 Jesus withdrew to the sea with his disciples; and a great multitude from Galilee followed; and also from Judea, 8 and from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and beyond the Jordan, and the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon, a great number of people heard of all that he was doing and came to him. 9 And he told his disciples that a boat should stand ready for him because of the crowd, so that they would not crowd him; 10 for he had healed many, with the result that all those who had afflictions pressed around him in order to touch him. 11 Whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they would fall down before him and shout, "You are the Son of God!" 12 And he earnestly warned them not to tell who he was. 13 And he went up on the mountain and summoned those whom he himself wanted, and they came to him. 14 And he appointed twelve, so that they would be with him and that he could send them out to preach, 15 and to have authority to cast out the demons. 16 And he appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter), 17 and James, the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means, Sons of Thunder); 18 and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot; 19 and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. 20 And he came home, and the crowd gathered again, to such an extent that they could not even eat a meal. 21 When his own people heard of this, they went out to take custody of him; for they were saying, "He has lost his senses." 22 The scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, "He is possessed by Beelzebul, and he casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons." 23 And he called them to himself and began speaking to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? 24 If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 If a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. 26 If Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but he is finished! 27 But no one can enter the strong man's house and plunder his property unless he first binds the strong man, and then he will plunder his house. 28 Truly I say to you, all sins shall be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they utter; 29 but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin" – 30 because they were saying, "He has an unclean spirit."

Questions

1. Without going into all the details, survey the exchanges between Jesus and his opponents. Chart out how the accusations against Jesus go from questions to accusing statements.
 - a. 2:16 “Why is he eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?”
 - b. 2:18 “Why do John’s disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?”
 - c. 2:24 “Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?”
 - d. 3:6 The Pharisees went out and immediately began conspiring with the herodians against him, as to how they might destroy him.
 - e. 3:21 “He has lost his senses.”
 - f. 3:22 “He is possessed by Beelzebul, and he casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons.”
 - g. 3:30 “He has an unclean spirit.”
2. Previously, we saw that people were amazed at Jesus. Now we see hostility. Why is the opposition to Jesus increasing? From what sectors of Jewish society? What do they have invested that Jesus threatens?
3. Think about Jesus’ responses to his opponents in 2:17, 2:19-22, 2:25-26, and 3:23-30 all have in common? They’re all parables. That will become significant next time.
4. We looked at 2:13-17 last time. Look now at the controversy over fasting in 2:18-22
 - a. What is the purpose of fasting?
 - b. Why is fasting in Jesus’ presence not appropriate?
 - c. When Jesus’ disciples fast, what will they experience? Jesus’ death.
 - d. Is that clear to them at this point? No.
 - e. What is the old clothes, the old wine, and the old wineskin? It’s unclear at this point from the text alone.
 - f. What is the new clothes, the new wine, and the new wineskin? It’s unclear at this point from the text alone.
 - g. What is clear from Jesus’ parable? New things are incompatible with old things.
 - h. Why would some people dislike new things?
5. Look at the controversy over grain picking on the Sabbath in 2:23-27
 - a. The Pharisees get upset with Jesus and his disciples for picking grain on the Sabbath. Why?
 - b. What story does Jesus respond with?
 - c. Who was chasing David and his followers when they were hungry? King Saul. See 1 Sam.21.
 - d. Who is chasing Jesus and his disciples when they were hungry? Pharisees.
 - e. What was David’s role going to be, as promised by God? The true King of Israel.
 - f. What was Jesus’ role going to be, as promised by God? The true King of Israel.
 - g. So what does that make the Saul and his henchmen? False pretenders persecuting the true King
 - h. So what does that make the Pharisees? False pretenders persecuting the true King
 - i. Combined with what we could understand from the new clothes/new wine/new things parable, what is Jesus saying? He is the new king.
6. Look at the controversy about healing the man with the withered hand in 3:1-6.
 - a. How do the Pharisees interpret the Sabbath?
 - b. How does Jesus interpret the Sabbath?
 - c. How does Jesus see their ‘hardness of heart’?
 - d. What is ‘hardness of heart’? (it will be made clear later)
 - e. Why are the Pharisees so upset that they want to kill Jesus?
7. Meanwhile what are the demons saying about Jesus, in 3:11?
8. Why do you think Mark includes the demons’ statement? To remind us, to provide continuity from chapter 1, to contrast how humans don’t know who Jesus is.
9. Implication for Evangelism: We fear to bring Jesus up because we think that people will be uninterested or apathetic. But people introduced to Jesus react strongly one way or the other.
10. In the face of this rejection from Israel’s leadership, what does Jesus do? He names his twelve disciples.
11. What does this small group symbolize? The 12 tribes of Israel, a new Israel. Notice this fits in with the motif of newness. It’s also a group with Jesus as king, at least in theory.
12. Look at the Beelzebub controversy in 3:23-29
 - a. Why do the scribes suspect Jesus of being an agent of Beelzebub (an alternate name for Satan)?
 - b. Is Jesus personally offended by this? Not really.
 - c. What is Jesus’ logic in his response? That he is really freeing people for good from Satan’s dominion. That makes no sense, because Satan wants to dominate people.
 - d. What was Satan’s property, and house? Humanity, and the world.

- e. Why does Jesus talk about blaspheming the Holy Spirit?
 - f. Who is he saying that he is an agent of? The Spirit.
 - g. What is the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit? Attributing Jesus' work of new life/new things to Satan, or someone other than the Holy Spirit of God.
 - h. What spirit is the Holy Spirit contrasted with?
 - i. Why is it inappropriate to say that an unclean spirit resides in or on Jesus?
13. What makes Jesus so scandalous, then and now?
14. What do we sometimes attribute the actions of Jesus to? Lunacy? Self-delusion? How is that misguided?

The Gospel of Mark

Insiders and Outsiders

Foreground Action: The Mysterious Parables

Mk.3:31 Then his mother and his brothers arrived, and standing outside they sent word to him and called him. 32 A crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, "Behold, your mother and your brothers are outside looking for you. 33 Answering them, he said, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" 34 Looking about at those who were sitting around him, he said, "Behold my mother and my brothers! 35 For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother." 4:1 He began to teach again by the sea. And such a very large crowd gathered to him that he got into a boat in the sea and sat down; and the whole crowd was by the sea on the land. 2 And he was teaching them many things in parables, and was saying to them in his teaching, 3 "Listen to this! Behold, the sower went out to sow; 4 as he was sowing, some seed fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate it up. 5 Other seed fell on the rocky ground where it did not have much soil; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of soil. 6 And after the sun had risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. 7 Other seed fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. 8 Other seeds fell into the good soil, and as they grew up and increased, they yielded a crop and produced thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold." 9 And he was saying, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." 10 As soon as he was alone, his followers, along with the twelve, began asking him about the parables. 11 And he was saying to them, "To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but those who are outside get everything in parables, 12 so that while seeing, they may see and not perceive, and while hearing, they may hear and not understand, otherwise they might return and be forgiven." 13 And he said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables? 14 The sower sows the word. 15 These are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them. 16 In a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; 17 and they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away. 18 And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, 19 but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. 20 And those are the ones on whom seed was sown on the good soil; and they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold." 21 And he was saying to them, "A lamp is not brought to be put under a basket, is it, or under a bed? Is it not brought to be put on the lampstand? 22 For nothing is hidden, except to be revealed; nor has anything been secret, but that it would come to light. 23 If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear." 24 And he was saying to them, "Take care what you listen to. By your standard of measure it will be measured to you; and more will be given you besides. 25 For whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him." 26 And he was saying, "The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil; and he goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts and grows-how, he himself does not know. 28 The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head. 29 But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come." 30 And he said, "How shall we picture the kingdom of God, or by what parable shall we present it? 31 It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the soil, though it is smaller than all the seeds that are upon the soil, 32 yet when it is sown, it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and forms large branches; so that the birds of the air can nest under its shade." 33 With many such parables he was speaking the word to them, so far as they were able to hear it; 34 and he did not speak to them without a parable; but he was explaining everything privately to his own disciples.

Questions

1. Describe the scene. How would you feel if you were Jesus' blood relatives? How would you feel if you were his disciples in the house? What's the main difference between the two groups? Those outside the house vs. Those inside the house.
2. How does Jesus define his family? What is Jesus suggesting about being an insider vs. being an outsider? Remember this symbolism.
3. What does it mean to 'do the will of God'? What is that? Being 'near' to Jesus? It's still unclear at this point.

4. Focus on 4:1-20. This is the first major block of teaching that we've heard from Jesus!!! Recall that everything in chapter 1 was 'veiled' from us. We didn't hear Jesus teaching and preaching. This is the first time we hear an extended teaching. Could this be what Jesus was proclaiming earlier?
5. What is your reaction to find parables here?
6. What basic question is Jesus asking using the parable of the soil? What is the state of our heart, yes. And it's important to point out that the Pharisees and scribes probably are not good soil. But also, this parable is about receiving the word of Jesus, the seed.
7. What is the word/seed? So Jesus gives us a teaching emphasizing the importance of receiving his teaching? What have we really learned here? Not much. It's a circular situation. Has Mark really disclosed anything? What is the word of Jesus? It remains to be heard.
8. Furthermore, Jesus explains why he gives parables in 4:11. What is his reason?
9. Think about Jesus' responses to his opponents in 2:17, 2:19-22, 2:25-26, and 3:23 all have in common? They're all parables. What does that mean for Jesus' opponents?
10. But what does that mean for us? What have we gotten up to this point. All parables. Are we outsiders? It feels like it, especially in 4:33-34 when we are shut out of Jesus' teaching and explanations. It's very ambiguous for us. What about the intimate disclosures into Jesus' insight?
11. What about the disciples? Are they outsiders or insiders? They get parables as well.
12. But they don't understand parables that well, and Jesus in v.13 says, "Do you not understand this parable?" What expression must have been on their faces between v.12 and v.13?
13. So do you think the disciples are getting it? Are they insiders? Becoming insiders? Still outsiders?
14. What is the real definition of being an insider or outsider? Is it 'being in the same room' as Jesus? Is it understanding the parables? Is it being able to ask questions and keep hearing things from Jesus? Is it getting to hear more than parables? It's unclear, but it seems to be being able to hear clear teaching from Jesus other than parables. Or some combination thereof.
15. But will it become clear? What hope might we have, from v.21-23, that Jesus will make it more clear for us? That light is meant to shine, a lamp is meant to give light. Things that are hidden will be brought to light.
16. Leave the other parables unexplained for now. You can guess at them, but let them stay unclear.
17. Are you curious now who's an insider and who's an outsider? Curious about the disciples? Curious about yourself? Does this resonate with the attractive claim of the X Files, "The truth – it's out there"?

The Gospel of Mark: Quick Overview

The Theme of Insiders and Outsiders and the Veil Between

From the outset, the most obvious pattern to observe is how many times Jesus' identity is proclaimed. Jesus is baptized and God proclaims his identity as His beloved Son. Then demons burst out with their own shock.

Heavenly people seem to know something about Jesus:

- "Thou art My Son, in Thee I am well pleased" (1:11)
- "I know who you are – you are the Holy One of God!" (1:24)
- The demons "knew who he was." (1:34)
- "You are the Son of God!" (3:11)
- "What do I have to do with you, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?" (5:7)

By contrast, human beings seem to be astonished and amazed, not knowing what to do about Jesus or how to place him:

- And they were amazed at his teaching (1:22)
- And they were all amazed (1:27)
- "What is this?" (1:27)

So there seems to be a Veil between heaven and earth. Heavenly people know who Jesus is, and the Veil is suddenly parted when they speak. But the Veil quickly closes again when they fall silent.

There also seems to be a second Veil between the world of the story and us as readers. When Mark refers to "the good news" or Jesus' "teaching," the content of that material is hidden from us. Likewise we do not overhear Jesus' prayers or even most of his dialogues. We only get strobic flashes into Jesus' identity by certain quick declarations here and there.

- Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." (1:14-15) But what is the kingdom? Repentance? The gospel?
- "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men." (1:17) We don't hear why the disciples chose to follow Jesus, their motives, their level of understanding, etc.
- "While it was still dark, he arose and went out and departed to a lonely place, and was praying there." (1:35) What was Jesus' prayer life like? We don't know.
- And he said to them, "Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby, in order that I may preach there also, for that is what I came out for." (1:38). At this point, Jesus has said a whole three sentences! Just what is he preaching? By contrast, Matthew puts the Sermon on the Mount up early, which means that a good deal of teaching and preaching has happened, but Mark filters it out.

It is as though we are watching a silent movie. We can see people's amazed reactions to Jesus and his teachings, but we can't hear what is actually being said! It's like watching a silent movie at times.

Suddenly, we as readers see things Jesus alone sees as the second Veil is occasionally torn. We can see into Jesus himself, and we know what he knows, even as he penetrates into other people's hearts.

- Jesus was "moved with compassion for him." (1:41) This is the very first time we are taken into someone, and it's Jesus himself. We see into Jesus' heart, and we know that he has compassion.
- He saw their faith (2:5) But how does one 'see' faith?
- And immediately Jesus, aware in his spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves, said to them, "Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts?" (2:8)
- And after looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart... (3:5) How does you look and 'see' hardness of heart?

The first Veil, that between the earthly characters and true knowledge of Jesus, is powerful. This lack of inside knowledge about him is especially obvious when Jesus scandalizes the Jewish leadership, 2:13-3:30, and his enemies make insulting questions and remarks about him, like:

- Why does this man speak this way? (2:7)

- Why is he eating and drinking with tax-gatherers and sinners? (2:16)
- Why do your disciples not fast? (2:18)
- Why are they doing what is not lawful on the sabbath? (2:24)
- He has lost his senses (3:21)
- He is possessed by Beelzebul (3:22)
- He casts out the demons by the ruler of demons (3:22)
- He has an unclean spirit. (3:30).

Jesus then selects the apostles, intending them to be his new family (3:13-35).

- But the disciples lack an understanding of the parables, and Jesus challenges them (4:10). The disciples feel the impact of the first Veil between their earth-bound existence and the heavenly identity of Jesus.
- Then, the disciples ask, “Who then is this?” (4:41) This makes us question whether they understood what they just heard. Are the disciples outsiders? They only know as much as ordinary people.
- And immediately they were completely astounded (5:42).

Meanwhile we feel the impact of the second Veil, that between the world of the story and us as readers especially in the discourse about the parables.

- In the discourse on parables, Jesus says that outsiders get parables (4:11), making us reflect on the fact that all we’ve gotten so far is parables (2:17; 2:19-22; 2:25-26): Are we outsiders? It certainly seems so. But what about our flashes of insight where we see into Jesus (1:41; 2:5-8)? Does that make us insiders? We don’t know what our status is.
- But this is the first major teaching section that Mark allows us to hear! However, Jesus’ first major teaching section is about receiving the ‘word’ and it’s in parables in Mk.4:1 – 34. But what ‘word’? It’s a teaching on...receiving the teaching!?! What teaching? This is a circular situation.
- Fortunately, we get some hope: Jesus says that nothing is permanently hidden that will not be revealed.
- Then, much to our frustration, Jesus “explains everything privately to his disciples” but we are not allowed to hear it (4:34). Nor do we know if the disciples got it.

Questions

1.

The Gospel of Mark

Parabolic Encounters, Part 1

This is an example of how you can go through the story twice: one time with the normal slide show method (chunks of text, average speed, not listening to background music), and one time with the video camera method after you've covered the whole Gospel.

1st time through: Focus on Jesus and the Healed Characters

Foreground Action: Going to the Other Side

Mk.4:35 On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." 36 And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. 37 A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. 38 But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" 39 He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. 40 He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Why do you have no faith?" 41 And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

Questions

1. How familiar are the disciples with the Sea of Galilee?
2. Why is the Sea of Galilee so windy and stormy? Because the mountains around it make it a natural wind tunnel. To be caught on the surface of the lake during a wind-storm is to throw your life away.
3. How can Jesus sleep through a wind-storm like this?
4. How sure is Jesus that they will all make it to the other side of the lake?
5. How sure are the disciples that they will survive?
6. To what extent is crying out for help an admission of reality, that most of life is actually out of your control?
7. If the disciples had just waited a while longer, would Jesus have woken up?
8. Would Jesus have rebuked the wind and waves without the disciples' request? Probably so.
9. How were the disciples mistaken? They thought Jesus didn't care about them, so instead of waking him up calmly and respectfully, they panicked.
10. So Jesus speaks. Who else spoke into wind and waves and created order and life? God in Genesis 1
11. What is Jesus doing here, by speaking and calming the chaotic creation? Saying that he has divine authority, that he is God, that his word is all powerful.
12. If we connect this thought to the previous section, the parable of the sower, which is about the word, what do we get? A portrayal of Jesus' word that is powerful enough to rescue from death, powerful enough to bring forth new life, as in a new creation.
13. Is that what the disciples should have known all along, that Jesus would get them to the other side?
14. Why do the disciples not see the symbolism? If this were a parable, would the disciples have understood it? No.
15. Jesus says to the disciples, "Why do you have no faith." In Matthew, he says, "You of little faith." In Luke he asks, "Where is your faith?" Why is Mark more severe? Do the disciples have faith at this point?
16. If we were continuing on the theme of being insiders or outsiders, would the disciples be insiders or outsiders? Outsiders – they don't understand the symbolism, they don't understand who Jesus is, they don't believe that Jesus cares about them.
17. How does this answer the question we had from chapter 4 about the disciples being insiders or outsiders? They're outsiders.
18. The Baptism motif
 - a. But would Jesus have gotten up by himself? Or could he have slept until the boat had gone under?
 - b. Could Jesus have expected the disciples to go under, or drown?
 - c. So could they have expected Jesus to let them go under, and then raise them out of the water?
 - d. The last time someone was immersed underwater, it was Jesus at his baptism in Mk.1. What does immersion baptism symbolize? A change. Dying and rising again.

- e. In Luke, Jesus says, "Let us go over to the other side of the lake." Matthew has no preface. Mark says simply, "Let us go over to the other side." The other side of what? Just the lake? Could this whole thing have been a parable? Could this have been the disciples' baptism experience?
 - f. Why are the disciples confused and amazed about who Jesus is at the end of the story?
 - g. If Jesus had let the disciples go under and then raised them out of the water, would this have felt any different?
 - h. What is the real lesson? That Jesus would get them safely across the stormy lake? Or that Jesus wanted them to go under and be raised up?
19. How often do we face storms in our lives that are beyond our control? Discuss a few.
 20. What do you assume about the purpose of those life storms? Does Jesus want to get you safely through them? Or does he want you to die (in some sense) in them and experience new life on the other side, i.e. emerging as a different person than who you were before?
 21. Why do we resist dying to our illusion of control? What are we most likely to believe we can control? Familiar things.
 22. Reflection: Sometimes we think we're in control of life, and life seems very familiar, until a storm hits. That shatters our illusion of control. Then we think that Jesus will control things for us, and we make Jesus a mechanism to control the things we really want to control. But at other times it becomes clear that Jesus will not wake up and act until we have gone under, and there is no way for us to fight on our own strength. At this time Jesus raises us up, new.

The Gospel of Mark

Parabolic Encounters, Part 2

Foreground Action: The Unclean Spirit

Mk.5:1 They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes. 2 And when he had stepped out of the boat, immediately a man out of the tombs with an unclean spirit met him. 3 He lived among the tombs; and no one could restrain him any more, even with a chain; 4 for he had often been restrained with shackles and chains, but the chains he wrenched apart, and the shackles he broke in pieces; and no one had the strength to subdue him. 5 Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always howling and bruising himself with stones. 6 When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and bowed down before him; 7 and he shouted at the top of his voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me." 8 For he had been saying to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" 9 And he was asking him, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Legion; for we are many." 10 He begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. 11 Now there on the hillside a great herd of swine was feeding; 12 and the unclean spirits begged him, "Send us into the swine; let us enter them." 13 So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the swine; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea, and were drowned in the sea. 14 The swineherds ran off and told it in the city and in the country. Then people came to see what it was that had happened. 15 They came to Jesus and saw the demoniac sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had had the legion; and they were afraid. 16 Those who had seen what had happened to the demoniac and to the swine reported it. 17 Then they began to beg Jesus to leave their neighborhood. 18 As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed by demons begged him that he might be with him. 19 But Jesus refused, and said to him, "Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and what mercy he has shown you." 20 And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed.

Introduction Questions:

1. Have you ever felt like you're torn apart by many different voices? How have you responded?
2. We live in a media-drenched world where we admire people for having all kinds of different faces. Do we value being a single integrated person anymore?
3. Tell any of the stories below, about Peter Sellers, Anne Frank, or James and Christine, and gather people's opinions about them.

Questions

1. Describe this man's internal life. How many voices does this man hear? What might these voices say to him?
2. Based on his own experience, what might this man think of anyone who tries to help him?
3. Why does he hurt himself by gashing and bruising himself?
4. Why does he say to Jesus, "Do not torment me?"
5. Who is speaking? The man or the demons? Notice that the text is unclear about it. It might be the demons, but notice that in v.10, the man is speaking, and he seems unwilling that demons go too far away.
6. If it's the man not willing to let go of the demons, why might he want to hold on to all those voices? Why do we want to hold onto all the voices we try to hold together inside of us?
7. What voices are those?
 - a. Peter Sellers was the famous British radio personality and actor who played Inspector Clouseau in the Pink Panther movies. Having played so many roles throughout his working life, he reached an identity crisis in his final days as he lay suffering with a terminal illness. During an interview, he was asked what his thoughts were about the many roles and many radio voices he had played during his storied career. His answer is haunting. He quietly said: "I only wish I knew which voice was my own." He didn't know who he was. He was legion.
 - b. When the diary of a Jewish girl named Anne Frank was discovered, her last entry, dated the day before she was taken, read: "I've already told you before that I have, as it were, a dual personality...My lighter superficial side will always be too quick for the deeper side of me and that's why it will always win. You can't imagine how often I've already tried to push this Anne away, to cripple her, to hide her, because after all, she's only half of what's called Anne: but it doesn't work and I know, too, why it doesn't work....I'm

awfully scared that everyone who knows me as I always am will discover that I have another side, a finer and better side. I'm afraid they'll laugh at me, think I'm ridiculous and sentimental, not take me seriously. I'm used to not like being taken seriously but it's only the "light-hearted" Anne that's used to it and can bear it; the "deeper" Anne is too frail for it...Therefore, the nice Anne is never present in company, has not appeared one single time so far, but almost always predominates when we're alone. I know exactly how I'd like to be, how I am too...inside. But, alas, I'm only like that for myself...I never utter my real feelings about anything and that's how I've acquired the name of chaser-after-boys, flirt, know-all, reader of love stories. The cheerful Anne laughs about it, gives cheeky answers, shrugs her shoulders indifferently, behaves as if she doesn't care, but oh dearie me, the quiet Anne's reactions are just the opposite. If I'm to be quite honest, then I must admit that it does hurt me, that I try terribly hard to change myself, but that I'm always fighting against a more powerful enemy....if I'm quiet and serious, everyone thinks it's a new comedy and then I have to get out of it by turning it into a joke, not to mention my own family, who are sure to think I'm ill, make me swallow pills for headaches and nerves, feel my neck and my head to see whether I'm running a temperature, or in a bad mood. I can't keep that up: if I'm watched to that extent, I start by getting snappy, then unhappy, and finally I twist my heart round again, so that the bad is on the outside and the good is on the inside and [I] keep on trying to find a way of becoming what I would so like to be, and what I could be, if ... there weren't any other people living in the world." Anne Frank was legion, because there's more than one of her.

- c. I want to illustrate for you how this affected two people I know. James and Christine dated for two years. During their senior year of college, they had trouble deciding what to do about their relationship. James felt that they could be together no matter what; it's just a matter of commitment. Christine felt more torn; she loved James but didn't know what it meant to be 'in love.' When their friends questioned them, they found disturbing things. James had never really made a hard choice that involved real tradeoffs. He double majored because he didn't want to choose between two options. He became easily overcommitted to things, like the students' association, tutoring, and ministry, especially because he was trying to be a good Christian. He had a hard time anytime he disappointed someone, in part because he was so capable, but in part because his parents demanded a lot of him and he was deeply afraid of failing others. His parents' voices rang in his head, "You've got to do more." This set the pattern for his approach to life. He had wrapped his heart up in fears while he successfully earned people's approval, and he was a victim of these voices. He thought if he tried hard enough, he could make nearly anything happen. It was no surprise James thought their relationship could last by strength of will. Meanwhile Christine wasn't sure if she knew herself well. While she and James were dating, she was attracted to another guy in a casual way. But she was attracted to him for the opposite reasons she liked James. Christine thought this other man was reckless, flirtatious, and even a bit superficial, but she had felt attracted nevertheless. The situation had resolved itself because this other guy started flirting with another woman, not because of any concrete decision on Christine's part. Christine was also unable and unwilling to take a stand in her inner conflict. In spite of the fact that Christine was a Christian and knew about certain Bible passages that challenged her, she never seriously questioned her parents' affluence, opinions about who she should marry, opinions about other people, or vision of her future lifestyle. Whenever she had questions about her future, she would eventually come back around to agree with her parents. Her individuality and individual relationship with God had never really developed because Christine had been sheltered and she feared the voice of rejection. She, too, had never made a hard tradeoff, like choosing to obey God when it meant disagreeing with her parents. So when their friends approached them and said, "We're not sure about your relationship, but what's clear to us is this other underlying issue," they recoiled. They avoided the subject, they tried to bring the conversation to an end, and basically they didn't want to face up to it. They were saying, "Don't torment me! This is the only way I've known how to live my life!"
- d. How does your world fragment you? It's not that all the voices are necessarily evil, but the way you deal with them is to let yourself be torn apart by all the voices you're trying to listen to. Maybe you've just gotten yourself into this place where you've got so many different images to maintain, you're not sure which one of them is really you. Maybe the voices of your parents say this: "You need to be successful!!" And you hear that voice if not playing in the background of your memory, then on the phone when you call home. If you're not white in America, sometimes you might feel like you have to listen to the voices of two different communities: You have to be white and black, or white and Asian, or white and Latino, and both sides tell you, you're not white enough, you're not black enough, you're not Asian enough.

8. Why is it attractive to live by so many voices?
9. How does it ultimately hurt us to live like that?

10. Why is it hard to live by one voice, Jesus' voice?
 - a. If you read the Old Testament, you find a pattern of sin leading to fragmentation and many voices. Genesis 1-11 begins with all Creation at rest, humanity at rest, and God's one voice. But it ends with sin, all humanity fragmented at Babel, and many voices. Then, the nation of Israel follows God's voice. But then, they sin by listening to the voices of fear or doubt or disbelief, and they become fragmented by civil war, they have two kings and countless false prophets. We've got a fragmented humanity, a fragmented nation, and finally here in Luke 8, we find a fragmented individual. This is the most intense point I see in the development of this pattern. Being legion is the result of not finding your identity in Christ. Sooner or later, it always happens. But now, we're going to see who can reverse it.
 - b. Who can reverse this pattern? Answer: The God of Israel, who said, "Hear O Israel, the Lord your God is ONE." And the Son of that God, who is ONE with the Father and who becomes ONE with us, to make us ONE.
11. The healing: What change happens to:
 - a. The demons? They cannot stay in Jesus' presence and go into a pack of pigs.
 - b. The man? The man is now sitting down as opposed to wildly crying out. He is clothed as opposed to naked. He is in his right mind as opposed to being raving mad.
 - c. The townspeople? From the city and the country, they come to see this Jesus. And they become frightened (phobeo). Literally, they were put to flight, they were terrified.
12. Let's flesh out these changes in more detail. The demons:
 - a. How would Jews have regarded swine flesh? As unclean.
 - b. What is the spirit called in v.8? Unclean.
 - c. Why might Jesus put unclean spirits into unclean flesh? So the situation would be poetic from a Jewish perspective. The unclean spirit takes on unclean flesh. Jesus makes what was invisible visible, just as he had done with the man, revealing what had been going on inside him. And he sets the situation aright. The pigs tumble down a steep hill and drown.
13. The man:
 - a. How many voices does the man listen to now? Jesus above all others.
 - b. What is attractive about this man's life now?
 - c. Illus: I love this picture because for most of my life, (in my teenage years) I listened to all kinds of voices. I had different groups of friends and I was proud of that. My high school was 70% Asian and with them I was intense and goal-oriented. But my swimming friends were entirely non-Asian, and with them I was laid back and a party-goer. By my senior year of high school, I was in student government with my friends thinking that we ran the school, so we thought of ourselves as having different faces: one face for the parents, one face for the administration, and one face to the students. We thought we were so sophisticated. Then I went to college, and right away I started hanging out with the Grateful Dead crowd because my roommate was a pot-smoking Grateful Dead fan. This type of thing went on until I had a dream one night. I dreamed that all my friends from my different worlds were suddenly getting together at my house. And I was paralyzed. I didn't know how to act! I woke up in a cold sweat. I asked God to peel back in my mind each of the layers of me, and I discovered after many layers being peeled, I was an onion! I had skins but no core. That drove me to Jesus. His voice defined me, he set me in my right mind, and now I don't have dreams like that anymore.
 - d. Let me go back to the story of James and Christine. Those two people had never gone through any identity-pruning struggles. In other words, they had never listened to Jesus' voice above everyone else's. While on the outside, they seemed like solid people, on the inside, they were fragmented and living by many voices. They avoided conflict with others and avoided making their own hard choices. So what happened to their relationship? It dragged on for a year after they graduated, and then they went through a confusing breakup. James learned fairly quickly after that that he had been listening to too many voices, and he needed to put Jesus' voice first. It wasn't until years later that Christine came to the same conclusion. She was engaged when she realized she didn't have consistent reasons for liking the guys she dated. They were all different because she didn't know who she was. Watching the movie Runaway Bride, about a woman who repeatedly runs from grooms at the altar, struck a chord. She realized she had just adapted herself to different voices and put on different personas each time. It was more important for her to be liked than to *be someone*.
 - e. Why didn't Jesus take the man? Jesus left the man healed as a witness, a sign. It was not yet time for Jesus' full ministry to the Gentiles. First he had to finish his mission to Israel, but one day he would return

- in the person of the Holy Spirit indwelling his apostles. And Jesus wanted this community to be ready for those apostles to come back and speak with the voice of God the Spirit.
- f. Likewise, why doesn't Jesus just take us to heaven? Jesus heals us and sends us into our communities, to tell the whole city of Boston what great things Jesus has done for us.
 - g. Is there any significance to the fact that the healed man left the tombs and proclaimed what "Jesus had done for him?"
 - h. How can we leave our tombs and proclaim what Jesus has done for us?
14. The townspeople:
- a. Why is their response "Go away! Depart!"
 - b. Don't they like what Jesus has done? No.
 - c. What do they recognize? That Jesus will punt and jettison everything unclean in them, all the other voices. They can sense his holiness and his authority, and they don't like it.
 - d. What is their request? They ask Jesus to leave.
 - e. Who else made a similar request? The demons, except the people are worse. They entreat Jesus, just like the demons did. They beg him. But whereas the demons asked permission to leave Jesus' presence, the people send Jesus away. That is how people reject Jesus today just as they did then.
15. This is how salvation looks. It means going from being multi-faced, listening to many voices, and being driven mad. To being single-focused on Jesus, and being in one's right mind. Apply this image to yourself or people you know.

Close: How many voices are we listening to? Are we listening first and foremost to God's voice? I want to close by telling you a story by Max Lucado called *The Wemmicks*. The Wemmicks were a wooden people that lived in their own town. They had all been made by Eli the Woodcutter. All day long, the Wemmicks gave each other stickers. If a Wemmick was tall, or good-looking, or jumped far, the other Wemmicks would gather round and give that Wemmick gold stars. But if a Wemmick had chipped wood, or fell down, or was clumsy, that Wemmick would get gray dots from the others. Well one of the Wemmicks was named Punchinello. He wasn't especially good looking so he got gray dots. He wasn't especially talented so he got more gray dots. In fact, the other Wemmicks gave him gray dots just because he had so many gray dots already. Punchinello felt rotten. Then he met a Wemmick named Lucia who had no stickers on her. Punchinello watched as other Wemmicks came up to her and tried to make a gold star stick on her, but it fell off. Others tried to make gray dots stick on her, but they fell off, too. Punchinello asked her, "What is it about you that these stickers don't stick?" Lucia replied, "I go to see Eli the Woodcutter, and I listen to him." Punchinello went to Eli's cottage on the edge of town, and he was greeted by a booming voice. "Hello, Punchinello!" "You know my name?" asked Punchinello. "Of course I do. I made you. I see you've been given a lot of gray dots by the others." Punchinello looked down and said, "Yes. I came because I met someone who had no marks. Why don't the stickers stay on her?" "Because she has decided that what I think is more important than what they think. They stickers only stick if you let them. And I think you're pretty special, Punchinello. I love you. The more you trust my love, the less you care about their stickers." And as Punchinello left Eli's cottage, a gray dot fell to the ground.

The Gospel of Mark

Parabolic Encounters, Part 3

Foreground Action: Who is the Unclean Woman?

Mk.5:21 When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. 22 Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet 23 and begged him repeatedly, “My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live.” 24 So he went with him. And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. 25 Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. 26 She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. 27 She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, 28 for she said, “If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.” 29 Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. 30 Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, “Who touched my clothes?” 31 And his disciples said to him, “You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, ‘Who touched me?’” 32 He looked all around to see who had done it. 33 But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. 34 He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.” 35 While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader’s house to say, “Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?” 36 But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, “Do not fear, only believe.” 37 He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. 38 When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. 39 When he had entered, he said to them, “Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping.” 40 And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child’s father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. 41 He took her by the hand and said to her, “Talitha cum,” which means, “Little girl, get up!” 42 And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. 43 He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

Introduction Questions:

1. Talk about a time where who you presented on the outside didn’t match up with who you were hiding on the inside.
2. Talk about feeling a sense of uncleanness or unworthiness on the inside, while trying to maintain an appearance of acceptability on the outside.
3. Discuss a song/movie character/book character that illustrates feelings in #2.
4. Discuss an issue like eating disorders, where your internal self-image is poor, and your outward appearance always feels fake and bad. How do these conditions build an awareness that something needs to change internally because external changes never suffice? Reference *People Magazine*, Oct.30, 2000 titled “Dying To Be Thin.”

Questions: Students can fill in the column(s) on the right.

How the hemorrhaging woman sees the situation

Issue	Hemorrhaging woman
The need for Jesus	<i>I have been suffering for years with a condition that is humiliating and limiting.</i>
Ability to approach Jesus	<i>I am unclean, so I can’t approach Jesus because he’s so holy, special, and popular. Other people will discourage me from approaching him.</i>
How she feels in approaching Jesus	<i>Timid, afraid, nervous, self-conscious</i>
How she feels that Jesus healed her	<i>Elated. She is cured of the disease she’s been afflicted with for 12 long years, which no doctor has been able to cure.</i>

How she feels that Jesus sought her out when she was healed	<i>Terrified, afraid, nervous, self-conscious</i>
Why does she become afraid?	<i>She is afraid what was hidden inside her will be revealed and known by all</i>
What does she do when Jesus waits for her to come forward?	<i>She comes forward, and tells him and everyone around the whole truth about herself.</i>
How she feels that Jesus spent time with her listening to her	<i>She told him the whole truth, and probably felt relieved that he accepted her and restored her to community.</i>

How Jairus sees the two women: Fill in the two columns on the right

Issue	My daughter	The hemorrhaging woman
How does Jairus know each woman?	<i>She is my daughter. I've loved her for 12 years.</i>	<i>I told her to keep her distance from my synagogue.</i>
Which woman is more worthy of being attended to?	<i>My daughter is clean.</i> <i>My daughter is an outstanding hope for Israel, having high status because she is part of the leading synagogue family.</i>	<i>This woman is unclean, and has been an unknown outcast for the past 12 years.</i> <i>She is an outsider in Israel because of her ceremonial uncleanness. She doesn't amount to anything, except that she should be avoided.</i>
Which woman is more needy? Which situation is truly urgent?	<i>My precious daughter is desperately needing help. She is dying and needs healing.</i>	<i>This woman can wait. Why is Jesus stalling with her?</i>
The gravity of the situation	<i>My daughter is 12 years old, not yet an adult. She hasn't had her bat-mitzvah. She has not yet truly begun to live in all of her 12 years</i>	<i>This woman has been 12 years sick, suffering with no cure. She has not truly lived in 12 years. But she can wait.</i>
View of the interruption.	<i>The hemorrhaging woman is an intrusion into the story of my daughter's healing</i>	<i>She is interfering and jeopardizing my daughter's life. She is not worth the risk.</i>
View of the healing of the hemorrhaging woman	<i>My daughter is more urgently in need than this woman. Why didn't Jesus put her off until later?</i>	<i>Maybe: That was an annoyance, and endangers my daughter</i> <i>Maybe: How can Jesus heal her uncleanness like that, and not become unclean himself?</i>
Why does Jairus become afraid?	<i>Because I know my precious daughter is dead and I doubt Jesus' ability to do anything at this point.</i>	
What does he do when Jesus asks him to believe?	<i>Maybe: He holds on to hope beyond hope.</i> <i>Maybe: He thinks about the hemorrhaging woman who was just healed miraculously, and hopes that it's possible for Jesus to raise her from the dead.</i>	

How Jesus sees the two situations

Issue	Jairus and his daughter	The hemorrhaging woman
How has each woman been affected?	<i>She is on the verge of death.</i>	<i>She has suffered 12 long years alone and in pain.</i>
Is each party clean or unclean?	<i>They are ceremonially clean on the outside, but unclean on the inside.</i>	<i>She is ceremonially unclean on the outside, and unclean on the inside.</i>
Which woman is more worthy of being attended to?	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>
Which woman is more needy? Which situation is truly urgent?	<i>Both are needy</i>	<i>Both are needy</i>
The gravity of the situation	<i>Serious, but of course the daughter can be raised</i>	<i>Serious, but the woman can be healed</i>

Questions

1. Why does Jesus stall with the hemorrhaging woman, for her sake?
2. Jairus calls his little girl, "Daughter." But who calls the hemorrhaging woman that? What does Jesus call her? Who does it make Jairus think of?
3. When the woman tells her whole life story about how she has been unclean for 12 years, what does the significance of the 12 years have on Jairus? Who does it make him think of?
4. Jairus is surely familiar with the Old Testament principle that uncleanness is transmitted, but cleanness is not. Haggai stated it concisely:

Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Ask now the priests for a ruling: "If a man carries holy meat in the fold of his garment, and touches bread with this fold, or cooked food, wine, oil, or any other food, will it become holy?" And the priests answered, "No." Then Haggai said, "If one who is unclean from a corpse touches any of these, will the latter become unclean?" And the priests answered, "It will become unclean." (Hag 2:11-13)

What might surprise Jairus about Jesus letting himself be touched by an unclean woman? About Jesus broadcasting news about the touch to the whole crowd? About the healing of the unclean hemorrhaging woman?

5. What might Jesus be wanting Jairus to see about this situation?

Motif	Jairus and his daughter	The hemorrhaging woman
Clean and Unclean	<i>Clean</i>	<i>Unclean</i>
Insider or Outsider in the community	<i>Insiders</i>	<i>Outsider</i>
Their similarities	<i>She is 12 years old, not yet an adult, not yet begun to truly live</i> <i>She is a daughter</i> <i>She is on the verge of death, and then dies</i>	<i>She's been 12 years sick, suffering with no cure, not able to truly live</i> <i>Jesus calls her daughter. Maybe to remind Jairus that God wants to make her a daughter? Maybe to make Jairus think about his own daughter in a new way?</i> <i>Uncleanness is a form of death</i>
Insider or Outsider in the narrative story	<i>Is the outside story of the narrative</i>	<i>Is the inside story that divides the outside story into two pieces and interprets it</i>

Jesus is inviting Jairus and others to interpret the raising of the daughter by the healing of the hemorrhaging woman. The unclean woman is the 'inside story' of the 'clean' woman. We are invited to see the two women as one woman. If we do this, this what we get:

Issue	The woman on the outside	The woman on the inside
Clean or Unclean	<i>Clean</i>	<i>Unclean</i>
Insider or Outsider in the community	<i>Insider</i>	<i>Outsider</i>
Cause for her sickness and death	<i>A sudden illness overtakes her when she is 12 years old, not yet an adult, not yet having started to truly live</i>	<i>Because she's been 12 years sick, suffering from a debilitating and painful internal condition with no cure, not able to truly live</i>
Daughterhood	<i>She is the daughter of a synagogue family</i>	<i>She must become a true daughter of God by faith in Jesus</i>

Who is this? Specifically, Israel. Generally, all of us. Jairus, a synagogue leader, should have known.

Although the daughter is ceremonially clean on the outside, she is unclean on the inside (spiritually dead). That is why she dies before she reaches her adulthood: She has not yet begun to live because of an internal sickness, an ailment which is incurable. Her internal healing, because it is so deep, must be accomplished by being raised back to life. Inner healing requires a resurrection!

NOTE: The first time through these stories, students can relate to the healed characters: the Legion demoniac and Jairus and the hemorrhaging woman. They can reflect on how they are fragmented by many voices (Legion), or how they are clean on the outside but unclean on the inside (Jairus and the hemorrhaging woman). But the second time through, they should be looking to understand the stories from the disciples' point of view. What should the disciples have picked up as they reflected on this? What purpose of Jesus should they have perceived behind these episodes?

The Gospel of Mark

The Theme of Servanthood

Part 1, Episode 1: Jesus Tries to Teach the Disciples Servanthood

Mk.6:1 Jesus went out from there and came into his hometown; and his disciples followed him. 2 When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue; and the many listeners were astonished, saying, Where did this man get these things, and what is this wisdom given to him, and such miracles as these performed by his hands? 3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not his sisters here with us? And they took offense at him. 4 Jesus said to them, A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his own relatives and in his own household. 5 And he could do no miracle there except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. 6 And he wondered at their unbelief. And he was going around the villages teaching. 7 And he summoned the twelve and began to send them out in pairs, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits; 8 and he instructed them that they should take nothing for their journey, except a mere staff-no bread, no bag, no money in their belt- 9 but to wear sandals; and he added, Do not put on two tunics. 10 And he said to them, Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave town. 11 Any place that does not receive you or listen to you, as you go out from there, shake the dust off the soles of your feet for a testimony against them. 12 They went out and preached that men should repent. 13 And they were casting out many demons and were anointing with oil many sick people and healing them. 14 And King herod heard of it, for his name had become well known; and people were saying, John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and that is why these miraculous powers are at work in him. 15 But others were saying, he is Elijah. And others were saying, he is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old. 16 But when herod heard of it, he kept saying, John, whom I beheaded, has risen! 17 For herod himself had sent and had John arrested and bound in prison on account of herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, because he had married her. 18 For John had been saying to herod, It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife. 19 herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death and could not do so; 20 for herod was afraid of John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. And when he heard him, he was very perplexed; but he used to enjoy listening to him. 21 A strategic day came when herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his lords and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee; 22 and when the daughter of herodias herself came in and danced, she pleased herod and his dinner guests; and the king said to the girl, Ask me for whatever you want and I will give it to you. 23 And he swore to her, Whatever you ask of me, I will give it to you; up to half of my kingdom. 24 And she went out and said to her mother, What shall I ask for? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. 25 Immediately she came in a hurry to the king and asked, saying, I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter. 26 And although the king was very sorry, yet because of his oaths and because of his dinner guests, he was unwilling to refuse her. 27 Immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded him to bring back his head. And he went and had him beheaded in the prison, 28 and brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother. 29 When his disciples heard about this, they came and took away his body and laid it in a tomb.

Summarize Mk.6:1 – 29 as background. Two main aspects: Herod killed John the Baptist and now wants to kill Jesus. And Jesus has sent out the disciples for a short term ministry to Israel.

Foreground Action: The First Feeding

Mk.6:30 The apostles gathered together with Jesus; and they reported to him all that they had done and taught. 31 And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while." (For there were many people coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.) 32 They went away in the boat to a secluded place by themselves. 33 The people saw them going, and many recognized them and ran there together on foot from all the cities, and got there ahead of them. 34 When Jesus went ashore, he saw a large crowd, and he felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things. 35 When it was already quite late, his disciples came to him and said, "This place is desolate and it is already quite late; 36 send them away so that they may go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." 37 But he answered them, "You give them something to eat!" And they said to him, "Shall we go and spend two hundred denarii on bread and give them something to eat?" 38 And he said to them, "How many loaves do you have? Go look!" And when they found out, they said, "Five, and two fish." 39 And he commanded them all to sit

down by groups on the green grass. 40 They sat down in groups of hundreds and of fifties. 41 And he took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, he blessed the food and broke the loaves and he kept giving them to the disciples to set before them; and he divided up the two fish among them all. 42 They all ate and were satisfied, 43 and they picked up twelve full baskets of the broken pieces, and also of the fish. 44 There were five thousand men who ate the loaves. 45 Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go ahead of him to the other side to Bethsaida, while he himself was sending the crowd away. 46 After bidding them farewell, he left for the mountain to pray. 47 When it was evening, the boat was in the middle of the sea, and he was alone on the land. 48 Seeing them straining at the oars, for the wind was against them, at about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea; and he intended to pass by them. 49 But when they saw him walking on the sea, they supposed that it was a ghost, and cried out; 50 for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke with them and said to them, “Take courage; it is I, do not be afraid.” 51 Then he got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped; and they were utterly astonished, 52 for they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened.

Questions for discussion the first time through the text:

1. What are the disciples expecting from Jesus? They returned from their short-term missions trip around Israel with good reports; they want to debrief and rest.
2. What does Jesus say to them? Come away and rest
3. What does the crowd do? follows them, ran there ahead of them, interrupts the time
4. How does Jesus feel about them? He had compassion on them, so he taught them. We are again permitted to see the heart of Jesus. On what other occasions do we see the internal thoughts and feelings of Jesus? The cleansing of the leper, the healing of the paralytic, the dispute with the scribes, etc.
5. Jesus taught them. Taught them what? We don't know. There's that veil again. It's immediately closed again.
6. Why do the disciples say send them away? Why does Jesus challenge them to serve? Ultimately, because this is a teachable moment. Serving people is sometimes unplanned and comes when we most want rest. When Jesus sent out the disciples, what were they to bring with them? A staff. Who uses a staff? Shepherds. What did Jesus want his disciples to understand? That they were shepherds, Jesus was training his disciples to be shepherds to the people.
7. If you were one of the disciples, and you see the 5000, how would you react? Sarcastically, defensively also.
8. What are the burning issues for the disciples at this point?
 - a. When are we going to get to rest?
 - b. When are we going to eat?
 - c. And most importantly, how are we going to find the resources to feed these people? It's very much like throwing a huge party and not knowing how you're going to feed your guests. What should his disciples have said in response to Jesus? “How are we supposed to feed them, Jesus?”
9. So what does Jesus do? He finds out what they have, organizes the crowd, delegates to his disciples to feed them and gather the leftovers. How are these leadership qualities?
10. What did the disciples experience as they distributed the food?
 - a. As each disciple picks up food from Jesus and delivers to a group of people, he comes back to Jesus and finds just as much food as before. What must their reaction be like? As they turn their heads and watch Jesus, what do they see? What strikes them?
 - b. Comment: I'm sure that while they distribute the bread and fish, they're getting hungrier, too. So they probably snack on what they're distributing, worrying less and less about whether their resources are going to be enough.
 - c. After everyone is finished eating, what is each disciple left with? As they see each other carrying a full basket, what might they be thinking? How are they feeling emotionally? (Answer: We once doubted that we'd have enough to give, but we had plenty for the crowd, and plenty left over for us.) What does this show us about experiencing Jesus' definition of servanthood? Of being a servant with Jesus' resources?
 - d. When we recognize an opportunity for us to serve in the power of Jesus, how are we afraid of running out of our own emotional or spiritual resources? How is this passage an encouragement and a challenge to us?
11. Why does Jesus send the disciple away so quickly and disperse the crowd by himself? Jesus wants the disciples to reflect on the experience together immediately. In John, it's also because the crowd wants to make him king, and Jesus wants the disciples to get away from this mob before they get influenced.
12. What does Jesus pray for? We're not sure. But it's probably for the disciples, for them to understand the lesson.
13. Why does Jesus want to pass by the disciples rowing in the boat?

- a. What did it mean for Jesus to walk on water? What Scriptures would that have made the disciples think about?
 - b. Who else in the Bible did God do a pass-by of? Moses, in the cleft of the rock. It's a divine epiphany, a revelation of glory.
14. But they didn't get it. Why were they utterly astounded?
 15. Now how does Mark explain it? How does that fit? What should they have understood about the loaves? That Jesus is fundamentally a servant. That he wants them to be servants. That he can provide for others through them, meeting their needs as well.
 16. What kind of soil are the disciples seem to be now? The kind that received the word with joy at first, but have no root. We'll see if they persevere as good soil. What sort of responses to Jesus have they given lately? In whose company does that put them?
 17. Who else had hard hearts? The scribes and Pharisees in Mk.3:5. Why? What couldn't the scribes accept about Jesus? What kind of Messiah were they expecting? What do the disciples seem to have difficulty accepting about Jesus? What kind of Messiah are they expecting?
 18. What is hardness of heart? (all questions to go unanswered for now – to be answered later) When will the disciple become 'good soil'? How does one have a heart that is 'good soil'?

The Gospel of Mark

The Theme of Servanthood

Part 1, Episode 2: An Examination of the Human Heart

Foreground Action: The Unclean Human Heart

Mk.6:53 When they had crossed over they came to land at Gennesaret, and moored to the shore. 54 When they got out of the boat, immediately the people recognized him, 55 and ran about that whole country and began to carry here and there on their pallets those who were sick, to the place they heard he was. 56 Wherever he entered villages, or cities, or countryside, they were laying the sick in the market places, and imploring him that they might just touch the fringe of his cloak; and as many as touched it were being cured. 7:1 The Pharisees and some of the scribes gathered around him when they had come from Jerusalem, 2 and had seen that some of his disciples were eating their bread with impure hands, that is, unwashed. 3 (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands, thus observing the traditions of the elders; 4 and when they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves; and there are many other things which they have received in order to observe, such as the washing of cups and pitchers and copper pots.) 5 The Pharisees and the scribes asked him, Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with impure hands? 6 And he said to them, Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far away from me. 7 But in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men." 8 Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men. 9 he was also saying to them, You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition. 10 For Moses said, "Honor your father and your mothers, and he who speaks evil of father and mother is to be put to death;" 11 but you say, "If a man says to his father or his mother, whatever I have that would help you is Corban (that is to say, given to God), 12 you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or his mother; 13 thus invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that." 14 After he called the crowd to him again, he began saying to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand: 15 there is nothing outside the man which can defile him if it goes into him; but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man. 16 [If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.]" 17 When he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples questioned him about the parable. 18 And he said to them, "Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him, 19 because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?" (Thus he declared all foods clean.) 20 And he was saying, "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. 21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, 22 deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. 23 All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."

Questions

- 1 When has Jesus been to the Gennesaret region before?
1. Why is he so popular now? Who's been spreading word about him?
2. Does 6:53-56 seem repetitious? Where have we seen those types of miracles before? What is different about the miracles this time? Who are Jesus' recipients now?
3. How do these crowds recognize Jesus? Who do they think he is?
4. Who has not been able to recognize Jesus recently?
5. Why are the Pharisees following him? What do they notice about Jesus?
6. How do they construct their case against Jesus? How does Jesus construct his case against them?
7. Compare the severity of their case against Jesus and Jesus' case against them.
8. Their case concerns what body part(s)? Jesus' case concerns what body part?
9. What body parts are contrasted in Isaiah's prophecy? What do those body parts reflect? (see also Isaiah 29:13)
10. What is the Pharisees' view of sin?
11. What is Jesus' view of sin?
12. What is the Pharisees' view of defilement?
13. What is Jesus' view of defilement?
14. Note: This is the second major discourse of Jesus in Mark, and it's not about parables or in parables. It's clear, about the heart! How do the disciples respond to Jesus' teaching?

15. Why didn't they understand? Perhaps because "for those outside, everything comes in parables" even if Jesus doesn't intend them to be parables. They are outsiders
16. Why would this lesson about the source of sin be especially important right now? What is the condition of the disciples' hearts?
17. What are we tempted to blame for the state of our lives? Externals – what we've touched, what rubbed us wrong, contacting certain people, etc. How do we feel that Jesus identifies our problem as our hearts?
18. How would a heart described in 7:21-23 feel about Jesus' summons to unselfish servanthood?
19. Is that why the disciples didn't want to serve back in 6:30-52?
20. What according to Jesus makes us unable to really love and serve others the way he summons us to?
21. How can we tell the state of our hearts?
22. What is the cure for a heart that is fundamentally unclean? If we are Christians already, what is the condition of our hearts? It's unclear. Jesus doesn't answer that here. Maybe it's coming up!

The Gospel of Mark

The Theme of Servanthood

Part 1, Episode 3: Jesus' Unexpected Servanthood

Foreground Action: The Second Feeding

7:24 Jesus got up and went away from there to the region of Tyre. And when he had entered a house, he wanted no one to know of it; yet he could not escape notice. 25 But after hearing of him, a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately came and fell at his feet. 26 Now the woman was a Gentile, of the Syrophenician race. And she kept asking him to cast the demon out of her daughter. 27 And he was saying to her, "Let the children be satisfied first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." 28 But she answered and said to him, "Yes, Lord, but even the dogs under the table feed on the children's crumbs." 29 And he said to her, "Because of this answer go; the demon has gone out of your daughter." 30 And going back to her home, she found the child lying on the bed, the demon having left. 31 Again he went out from the region of Tyre, and came through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, within the region of Decapolis. 32 They brought to him one who was deaf and spoke with difficulty, and they implored him to lay his hand on him. 33 Jesus took him aside from the crowd, by himself, and put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting, he touched his tongue with the saliva; 34 and looking up to heaven with a deep sigh, he said to him, "Ephphatha!" that is, "Be opened!" 35 And his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was removed, and he began speaking plainly. 36 And he gave them orders not to tell anyone; but the more he ordered them, the more widely they continued to proclaim it. 37 They were utterly astonished, saying, he has done all things well; he makes even the deaf to hear and the mute to speak. 8:1 In those days, when there was again a large crowd and they had nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples and said to them, 2 I feel compassion for the people because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat. 3 If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way; and some of them have come from a great distance. 4 And his disciples answered him, Where will anyone be able to find enough bread here in this desolate place to satisfy these people? 5 And he was asking them, how many loaves do you have? And they said, Seven. 6 And he directed the people to sit down on the ground; and taking the seven loaves, he gave thanks and broke them, and started giving them to his disciples to serve to them, and they served them to the people. 7 They also had a few small fish; and after he had blessed them, he ordered these to be served as well. 8 And they ate and were satisfied; and they picked up seven large baskets full of what was left over of the broken pieces. 9 About four thousand were there; and he sent them away. 10 And immediately he entered the boat with his disciples and came to the district of Dalmanutha. 11 The Pharisees came out and began to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven, to test him. 12 Sighing deeply in his spirit, he said, "Why does this generation seek for a sign? Truly I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation." 13 Leaving them, he again embarked and went away to the other side. 14 And they had forgotten to take bread, and did not have more than one loaf in the boat with them. 15 And he was giving orders to them, saying, "Watch out! Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." 16 They began to discuss with one another the fact that they had no bread. 17 And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you discuss the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet see or understand? Do you have a hardened heart? 18 Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember, 19 when I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces you picked up?" They said to him, "Twelve." 20 "When I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of broken pieces did you pick up?" And they said to him, "Seven." 21 And he was saying to them, "Do you not yet understand?"

Questions

1. Where are Tyre, Sidon, and the Decapolis? Would Jews have gone there?
2. Note that Jesus is popular in this region as well. Who wants to be in the house? Where have we seen the house setting before?
3. What is the woman's request? Cast out an unclean spirit. Where have we seen this request before?
4. Why does Jesus tell her a parable in response?
5. What is the woman's response? A parable! When was the last time we saw a parable? Jesus' statement to his disciples, which wasn't really a parable, yet they don't understand it. Here Jesus speaks in parables, and the woman understands and responds in kind.
6. How does her response reflect her faith?

7. What does she understand about Jesus' mission? It is not only to Jews; Gentiles will benefit too.
8. In Decapolis, Jesus heals a deaf man. Why does Jesus pull him away from the crowd? Do the disciples witness the miracle? Who has really been "deaf"?
9. Why does Jesus touch the man's ears? Where have we seen Jesus' touch be significant? The leper, the hemorrhaging woman, Jairus' daughter.
10. Why does he spit? Interestingly, what comes from Jesus' mouth cleanses and heals. What does that mean about Jesus' heart (what comes out from the heart through the mouth), according to what Jesus said in the preceding passage?

Mk.7:15 There is nothing outside the man which can defile him if it goes into him; but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man. 16 [If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.] 17 When he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples questioned him about the parable. 18 And he said to them, "Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him, 19 because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated."

What has physically come out of Jesus cleanses others physically. What if something spiritual were to come out of Jesus? And, it's a water motif, which echoes baptism.

11. Why record "Ephphatha," the Aramaic word Jesus used? Jesus' word is powerful and important.
12. Compare and contrast the second feeding with the first:

5000 Jews	4000 Gentiles
On the green grass	On the ground
Jesus organized the people	Jesus just had them sit down
5 loaves	7 loaves
12 basketfuls leftover	7 basketballs leftover
Jesus had compassion	Jesus says, "I have compassion"
Because they are like sheep without a shepherd	No mention of sheep and shepherding
The disciples are despairing and sarcastic	The disciples seem to respond well, "How?"
The disciples get into the boat alone	The disciples get into the boat with Jesus

13. Who knew Jesus would minister to Gentiles? The syrophenician woman; the woman's statement is all the more remarkable in its comprehension of Jesus' mission.
14. Why does Jesus do this a second time? 1) To serve Gentiles as well as Jews, and demonstrate his universal rule and offer of salvation. 2) To help the disciples get more practice at servanthood. 3) To let them experience again how he provides resources for servanthood superabundantly, and give them a chance to respond with more faith in him than before. This is a very important point, because servanthood is going to be a major issue three times in ch.9-11.
15. Likewise for us, Jesus is teaching us unselfishness, personal sacrifice for the sake of serving others. It will seem like we have nothing to offer, but he'll give abundant things through us. Who is the Lord Jesus putting on your heart now?
16. Why do the Pharisees come asking for a sign? What do they want Jesus to prove? They suspect that Jesus claims to be the Messiah, and they've already seen his miracles. What more do they want? What would they like to believe about Jesus? That he's the Messiah of their dreams, and that they can force him to act that way.
17. What is the leaven (yeast) of the Pharisees? Having a shallow understanding of sin and the human heart, refusing to believe that Jesus can forgive sin, having a righteousness they've defined themselves.
18. What is the leaven (yeast) of the Herodians? Unwillingness to bow to any other authority, especially God's authority. Ultimately he wants to kill anyone who speaks the word of God to him to challenge him.
19. Why do the disciples misunderstand the parable? They're outsiders, they're thinking about their hunger, their physical bodies.
20. What does Jesus ask them to recall? The loaves on these two occasions.
21. What is Jesus getting at? Is he saying (a), "If you're hungry, don't worry. I can multiply bread for you from this one loaf." Why then does he specifically call out how many basketfuls (12 and 7) were leftover?
22. Or is he saying (b) "There is something about the numbers 12 and 7 that has to do with why the Pharisees and Herodians are wrong." Do the numbers 12 and 7 symbolize here? We'll get into that in a later study.

23. What's the bottom line question? Are your hearts hardened? Are you good soil, or some other kind? Why don't the disciples respond here? How are their hearts? What is it about Jesus that is still hard to accept right now for them? That Jesus is about servanthood and calls them to it, too. How are they in danger of being influenced by the teaching of the Pharisees and the Herodians? By saying, "Servanthood shouldn't really stretch me or my limitations or transform my deep-rooted selfishness." (shallow view of sin and selfishness, like the Pharisees). And by saying, "I refuse to let God call the shots in my life." (refusal of Jesus'/God's lordship, like Herod).

Comment:

For the disciples, they thought it was hard to feed 5,000 Jews, people of their own kind, when it inconvenienced them or interfered with their schedule. Jesus made them do it anyway. Then he told them about the heart and upped the ante: he asked them to feed 4,000 Gentiles, people on the other side of the lake, foreigners who they probably didn't even like. They needed to be stretched some more. Often when we refuse to learn things about servanthood that Jesus is trying to teach us, he will bring us through it a second time (or more). Eventually we will reach a point where we realize that our own hearts are not enough – we need to understand how Jesus fundamentally and radically transforms our hearts because our sin and self-centeredness limit us so deeply. We cannot serve others effectively on our own strength, with our own selfish hearts. In the story, we are now therefore in the point of waiting to see how the disciples ever get their hearts right and begin to serve. When do they start to show servants' hearts?

The Gospel of Mark

The Disciples Partially Healed

Foreground Action: A Partial Healing

Mk.8:22 And they came to Bethsaida. And they brought a blind man to Jesus and implored him to touch him. 23 Taking the blind man by the hand, he brought him out of the village; and after spitting on his eyes and laying his hands on him, he asked him, "Do you see anything?" 24 And he looked up and said, "I see men, for I see them like trees, walking around." 25 Then again he laid his hands on his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and began to see everything clearly. 26 And he sent him to his home, saying, "Do not even enter the village." 27 Jesus went out, along with his disciples, to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he questioned his disciples, saying to them, "Who do people say that I am?" 28 They told him, saying, "John the Baptist; and others say Elijah; but others, one of the prophets." 29 And he continued by questioning them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered and said to him, "You are the Christ." 30 And he warned them to tell no one about him. 31 And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. 32 And he was stating the matter plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 33 But turning around and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's." 34 And he summoned the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. 35 For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. 36 For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? 37 For what will a man give in exchange for his soul? 38 For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." 9:1 And Jesus was saying to them, "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power." 2 Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and brought them up on a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them; 3 and his garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them. 4 Elijah appeared to them along with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus. 5 Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles, one for you, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." 6 For he did not know what to answer; for they became terrified. 7 Then a cloud formed, overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is My beloved Son, listen to him!" 8 All at once they looked around and saw no one with them anymore, except Jesus alone. 9 As they were coming down from the mountain, he gave them orders not to relate to anyone what they had seen, until the Son of Man rose from the dead. 10 They seized upon that statement, discussing with one another what rising from the dead meant. 11 They asked him, saying, "Why is it that the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" 12 And he said to them, "Elijah does first come and restore all things. And yet how is it written of the Son of Man that he will suffer many things and be treated with contempt? 13 But I say to you that Elijah has indeed come, and they did to him whatever they wished, just as it is written of him."

The Gospel of Mark

When Will Full Healing Come?

Foreground Action: The Healing of the Son

Mk.9:1 And Jesus was saying to them, “Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.” 2 Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and brought them up on a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them; 3 and his garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them. 4 Elijah appeared to them along with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus. 5 Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles, one for you, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” 6 For he did not know what to answer; for they became terrified. 7 Then a cloud formed, overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud, “This is My beloved Son, listen to him!” 8 All at once they looked around and saw no one with them anymore, except Jesus alone. 9 As they were coming down from the mountain, he gave them orders not to relate to anyone what they had seen, until the Son of Man rose from the dead. 10 They seized upon that statement, discussing with one another what rising from the dead meant. 11 They asked him, saying, “Why is it that the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” 12 And he said to them, “Elijah does first come and restore all things. And yet how is it written of the Son of Man that he will suffer many things and be treated with contempt? 13 But I say to you that Elijah has indeed come, and they did to him whatever they wished, just as it is written of him.” 14 When they came back to the disciples, they saw a large crowd around them, and some scribes arguing with them. 15 Immediately, when the entire crowd saw him, they were amazed and began running up to greet him. 16 And he asked them, “What are you discussing with them?” 17 And one of the crowd answered him, “Teacher, I brought You my son, possessed with a spirit which makes him mute; 18 and whenever it seizes him, it slams him to the ground and he foams at the mouth, and grinds his teeth and stiffens out. I told your disciples to cast it out, and they could not do it.” 19 And he answered them and said, “O unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him to me!” 20 They brought the boy to him. When he saw him, immediately the spirit threw him into a convulsion, and falling to the ground, he began rolling around and foaming at the mouth. 21 And he asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood. 22 It has often thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us!” 23 And Jesus said to him, “If you can? All things are possible to him who believes.” 24 Immediately the boy’s father cried out and said, “I do believe; help my unbelief.” 25 When Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “You deaf and mute spirit, I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again.” 26 After crying out and throwing him into terrible convulsions, it came out; and the boy became so much like a corpse that most of them said, “He is dead!” 27 But Jesus took him by the hand and raised him; and he got up. 28 When he came into the house, his disciples began questioning him privately, Why could we not drive it out? 29 And he said to them, “This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer.”

The Gospel of Mark: Quick Overview

The Theme of the Disciples' Failure

Foreground Action: The Story of the Disciples

In the early part of the story (1:16-20), the disciples' reasons for following Jesus are not clear. We do not get a glimpse into their motivations for joining Jesus or continuing to accompanying him. But it becomes more clear as we go through the story that something is wrong with them:

- Simon and the others seem to have their own agenda for Jesus (1:36-37).
- While four friends bring the paralytic to Jesus, the (then) four disciples aren't bringing people to Jesus (2:1-4).
- It seems like the disciples had a hard time understanding the parables. Jesus said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? And how will you understand all the parables?" (4:13) Mark then moves quickly along, giving us the distinct impression that they do not understand this parable. Compare with Matthew, where Jesus asks them after seven such parables, "Do you understand?" and they answer, "Yes."
- Jesus says on the stormy sea, "How is it you have no faith?" (4:40) Compare with Matthew, "You of little faith" and Luke, "Where is your faith?" Why is Mark so negative?
- Even the disciples ask in bewilderment, "Who then is this?" (4:41) They aren't sure who Jesus is. They know less than the demons and are confused about him like the scribes and Pharisees.
- The disciples' ministry to Israel is minimized to two verses. (6:12-13).
- They are very sarcastic and anxious during the first miracle of bread (6:30-44)
- But when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed that it was a ghost, and cried out; for they all saw him and were terrified...and they were utterly astonished, for they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened. (6:49-52). Compare this account to Luke's Gospel, where the disciples are well meaning, not sarcastic, and just unclear about where enough bread will come from.
- The disciples think that Jesus uses a parable in talking about the human heart (7:17) even though it wasn't a parable.
- After the second feeding, they still don't seem to understand Jesus' lessons about servanthood. Jesus says to them, "Do you not yet understand?" (8:21) Mark then leaves the story there. This is in contrast to Matthew's account, where they understand Jesus.

In the second half of the gospel, we have three predictions not only of the Cross, but the Resurrection. Mark 8:31, 9:31, 10:33-34. These predictions of the Cross and the Resurrection shape the narrative in the second half of the gospel. It becomes clear that the disciples do not understand what Jesus' mission is. Whenever Jesus talks about his own suffering and death, the disciples are struck with fear and confusion. Further, their motive becomes clear: they only wanted to be the greatest next to a nationalistic military Messiah. Now that Jesus makes clear he wants them to serve, their faulty motive becomes exposed.

Prediction	Confusion	Corrective Teaching on Servanthood
And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. 8:31	And he was stating the matter plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 8:32	But turning around and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter. And he summoned the multitude with his disciples and said, "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and follow me..." The Transfiguration, a foretaste of the resurrected Jesus, occurs, but the disciples are terrified rather than understanding. 8:33 – 9:13
He was teaching the disciples and telling them, "The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him, and when he has been killed, he will rise three days later." 9:31	But they did not understand this statement, and they were afraid to ask him. 9:32	And they came to Capernaum, and when he was in the house, he began to question them, "What were you discussing on the way?" But they kept silent, for on the way they had discussed with one another which of them was the greatest. And sitting down, he called the twelve and said to them, "If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all, and servant of all." And taking a child, he set him before them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever receives one child like this in my name receives me, and whoever receives me does not receive me, but Him who sent me." 9:33-37 (- v.50?)
And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking on	James and John, the two sons of Zebedee,	But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking for. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to

<p>ahead of them, and they were amazed, and those who followed were fearful. And again he took the twelve aside and began to tell them what was going to happen to him, saying, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and will deliver him to the Gentiles. And they will mock him and spit upon him and scourge him, and kill him, and three days later he will rise again." 10:32-34</p>	<p>came up to him, saying to him, "Teacher we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" And they said to him, "Grant that we might sit in your glory, one on your right, and one on your left." 10:35-37</p>	<p>be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" And they said to him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you shall drink, and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized. But to sit on my right or left, this is not mine to give; but it is for those for whom it has been prepared." And hearing this, the ten began to feel indignant with James and John. And calling them to himself, Jesus said to them, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them...but not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many." 10:38-45</p>
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- More observations can be made about the progression of these three sub-stories. The disciples' recalcitrance becomes gradually more clear. And their reason for resisting Jesus' servanthood also becomes more clear. In the third episode, they explicitly argue about being the greatest.
- The blind man healed in two stages reveals very poignantly what's going on with the disciples. They have only been healed halfway. They can recognize Jesus' Messiahship, but they don't understand his servanthood and call to servanthood.
- When they see the transfigured Jesus, they don't understand it. The emphasis in the second half of the book is on the insufficient and incomplete state of the disciples.
- The Cross brings out the most severe failure of the disciples, because it completely runs counter to their expectations: Though Peter kept saying insistently, "Even if I have to die with you, I will not deny you!" and they all were saying the same thing, too, (14:31) we know how successful they were at that.
- "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour?" (14:37)
- And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy, and they did not know what to answer him. (14:40)
- "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest?" (14:41)
- And they all left him and fled (14:50)
- But he denied it, saying, "I neither know nor understand what you are talking about." (14:68)
- But again he was denying it. (14:70)
- But he began to curse and swear, "I do not know this man you are talking about." (14:71)
- And the women disciples are proclaimers of the Resurrection...Not!
- And there were also some women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses, and Salome. (15:40)
- And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses were looking on to see where he was laid. (15:47)
- And when the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of Joses, and Salome, bought spices so that they might come and anoint him (16:1)
- They went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. (16:8)

Questions

1. Why do the disciples follow Jesus at first? We don't know.
2. How do they behave at first? They don't really understand Jesus; they move slowly to catch up to what Jesus is trying to do. They're continually off balance.
3. After being with Jesus for a while, and hearing some parables, do the disciples seem to understand what Jesus is saying?
4. Why does Jesus say, "Why do you have no faith?" on the stormy sea? Matthew and Luke are considerably less severe.
5. Why are the disciples so lame about servanthood?
6. What kind of Messiah are they expecting Jesus to be?
7. How do their inner thoughts and hopes become more clear through the narrative?
8. How come they can't understand Jesus' three predictions of his death and resurrection?
9. What causes them to really fall on their faces? The cross.
10. Why are the disciples so lame? To be answered as we go.

The Gospel of Mark: Quick Overview

Servanthood: Don't You Get It?

Foreground Action: Who's the Greatest?

Mk.9:30 From there they went out and began to go through Galilee, and he did not want anyone to know about it. 31 For he was teaching his disciples and telling them, The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him; and when he has been killed, he will rise three days later. 32 But they did not understand this statement, and they were afraid to ask him. 33 They came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house, he began to question them, What were you discussing on the way? 34 But they kept silent, for on the way they had discussed with one another which of them was the greatest. 35 Sitting down, he called the twelve and said to them, If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all. 36 Taking a child, he set him before them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, 37 Whoever receives one child like this in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me does not receive Me, but him who sent Me. 38 John said to him, Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we tried to prevent him because he was not following us. 39 But Jesus said, Do not hinder him, for there is no one who will perform a miracle in My name, and be able soon afterward to speak evil of Me. 40 For he who is not against us is for us. 41 For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because of your name as followers of Christ, truly I say to you, he will not lose his reward. 42 Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble, it would be better for him if, with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he had been cast into the sea. 43 If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life crippled, than, having your two hands, to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire, 44 [where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED.] 45 If your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame, than, having your two feet, to be cast into hell, 46 [where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED.] 47 If your eye causes you to stumble, throw it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell, 48 where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED. 49 For everyone will be salted with fire. 50 Salt is good; but if the salt becomes unsalty, with what will you make it salty again? have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.

The Gospel of Mark: Quick Overview

The Theme of the Hardened Human Heart: What's Up With It Anyway?

Foreground Action: Who's the Greatest?

10:1 Getting up, he went from there to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan; crowds gathered around him again, and, according to his custom, he once more began to teach them. 2 Some Pharisees came up to Jesus, testing him, and began to question him whether it was lawful for a man to divorce a wife. 3 And he answered and said to them, What did Moses command you? 4 They said, Moses permitted a man TO WRITE A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND SEND her AWAY. 5 But Jesus said to them, Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. 6 But from the beginning of creation, God MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE. 7 FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER, 8 AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH; so they are no longer two, but one flesh. 9 What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate. 10 In the house the disciples began questioning him about this again. 11 And he said to them, Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her; 12 and if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery.

Questions

1. What's going on here?
- 2.
- 3.

Recap the Problem of the Human Heart

Foreground Action: Hardness of Heart

This study attempts to start unraveling why the disciples failed.

Mk.2:5 And Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven." 6 But there were some of the scribes sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, 7 "Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?" 8 And immediately Jesus, aware in his spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves, said to them, "Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts?"

Mk.3:5 And after looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored.

Mk.6:51 And he got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped, and they were greatly astonished, 52 for they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened.

Mk.7:18 And he said to them, "Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him, 19 because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?" (Thus He declared all foods clean.) 20 And He was saying, "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. 21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, 22 deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. 23 All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."

Mk.10:2 And some of the Pharisees came up to him, testing him, and began to question him whether it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife. 3 And he answered and said to them, "What did Moses command you?" 4 And they said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away." 5 But Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. 6 But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. 7 For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, 8 and the two shall become one flesh. 9 What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."

Questions

1. Jesus can see into people's _____ (2:5-6)
2. The scribes and Pharisees hearts are _____ (3:5).
3. The disciples hearts are _____ (6:52)
4. Jesus says the human heart is _____ but gives no explicit solution in 7:18-23. Why not?
5. Israelites' (and all human) hearts have been hardened since the _____, thus divorce was permitted under the Mosaic Law. (10:1-8)
6. If Jesus is taking away divorce as an acceptable option for his people, that means he must somehow be taking away hardness of heart among his people. How? To be answered later.

An argument that the results of faith were different in Israel (before Jesus' resurrection) vs. in the church (afterwards).

Statement A: The Mosaic Law was a covenant with God entered into by faith

Statement B: If Moses allowed divorce in the Law

Statement C: Faith back then somehow didn't overcome hardness of heart.

Comment: Israel's historic hardness of heart reveals that this is not an individual condition that can be overcome with 'faith' in general. It is a universal condition that is variously but inevitably revealed at different moments of peoples' interaction with God/Jesus while they are 'outsiders.' For the scribes and Pharisees, their hardness of heart is revealed by their disbelief of Jesus' authority to forgive sin. For the disciples, their hardness of heart is revealed by their resistance to Jesus' teaching on servanthood since they don't want to serve. This was acute at the crucifixion.

Soundtrack/Background Music: The Unclean Heart

Moses

- Dt.10:16 So circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no longer.
- Dt.29:4 Yet to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear.
- Dt.30:6 Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live.

Jeremiah

- Jer.4:4 Circumcise yourselves to the LORD And remove the foreskins of your heart, Men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, or else My wrath will go forth like fire And burn with none to quench it, because of the evil of your deeds.
- Jer.5:23 But this people has a stubborn and rebellious heart; they have turned aside and departed.
- Jer.9:25-26 Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, that I will punish all who are circumcised and yet uncircumcised 26 Egypt and Judah, and Edom and the sons of Ammon, and Moab and all those inhabiting the desert who clip the hair on their temples; for all the nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised of heart.
- Jer.17:9 The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; Who can understand it?
- Jer.24:7 I will give them a heart to know Me, for I am the LORD; and they will be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with their whole heart.
- Jer.31:31-34 "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, 32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. 33 "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 "They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

Ezekiel

- Ezk.11:18-19 And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, 20 that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God.

- Ezk.18:31 Cast away from you all your transgressions which you have committed and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! For why will you die, O house of Israel?
- Ezk.36:22-29 Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD, “It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. 23 I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD,” declares the Lord GOD, “when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight. 24 For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. 25 Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 26 Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. 28 You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God. 29 Moreover, I will save you from all your uncleanness.

Questions

1. What patterns and repeated themes stand out when we consider all these passages together?
2. Although Moses, Jeremiah and Ezekiel called for Israel to un-harden their hearts in some sense, when did they foresee this ultimately and fundamentally happening?
3. So how can hardened hearts be transformed by Jesus now?

The Gospel of Mark

Who Are You: Helpless Child or a Self-Sufficient Adult?

Foreground Action: Who's the Greatest?

10:13 And they were bringing children to him so that he might touch them; but the disciples rebuked them. 14 But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 15 Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all. 16 And he took them in his arms and began blessing them, laying his hands on them. 17 As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to him and knelt before him, and asked him, Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? 18 And Jesus said to him, Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone. 19 You know the commandments, DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, Do not defraud, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.' 20 And he said to him, Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up. 21 Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me. 22 But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property. 23 And Jesus, looking around, said to his disciples, how hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God! 24 The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. 26 They were even more astonished and said to him, Then who can be saved? 27 Looking at them, Jesus said, With people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God. 28 Peter began to say to him, Behold, we have left everything and followed You. 29 Jesus said, Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, 30 but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life. 31 But many who are first will be last, and the last, first.

The Gospel of Mark

Servanthood Again?!?

Foreground Action: Serving to Be Great

10:32 They were on the road going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking on ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who followed were fearful. And again he took the twelve aside and began to tell them what was going to happen to him, 33 saying, Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles. 34 They will mock him and spit on him, and scourge him and kill him, and three days later he will rise again. 35 James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, came up to Jesus, saying, Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You. 36 And he said to them, What do you want Me to do for you? 37 They said to him, Grant that we may sit, one on Your right and one on Your left, in Your glory. 38 But Jesus said to them, You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized? 39 They said to him, We are able. And Jesus said to them, The cup that I drink you shall drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized. 40 But to sit on My right or on My left, this is not Mine to give; but it is for those for whom it has been prepared. 41 hearing this, the ten began to feel indignant with James and John. 42 Calling them to himself, Jesus said to them, You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. 43 But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; 44 and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. 45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many. 46 Then they came to Jericho. And as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a large crowd, a blind beggar named Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the road. 47 When he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out and say, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me! 48 Many were sternly telling him to be quiet, but he kept crying out all the more, Son of David, have mercy on me! 49 And Jesus stopped and said, Call him here. So they called the blind man, saying to him, Take courage, stand up! he is calling for you. 50 Throwing aside his cloak, he jumped up and came to Jesus. 51 And answering him, Jesus said, What do you want Me to do for you? And the blind man said to him, Rabboni, I want to regain my sight! 52 And Jesus said to him, Go; your faith has made you well. Immediately he regained his sight and began following him on the road.

The Gospel of Mark

The Authority of Jesus, Part 1

Foreground Action: The Triumphal Entry

11:1 As they approached Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, 2 and said to them, Go into the village opposite you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, on which no one yet has ever sat; untie it and bring it here. 3 If anyone says to you, Why are you doing this?' you say, The Lord has need of it'; and immediately he will send it back here. 4 They went away and found a colt tied at the door, outside in the street; and they untied it. 5 Some of the bystanders were saying to them, What are you doing, untying the colt? 6 They spoke to them just as Jesus had told them, and they gave them permission. 7 They brought the colt to Jesus and put their coats on it; and he sat on it. 8 And many spread their coats in the road, and others spread leafy branches which they had cut from the fields. 9 Those who went in front and those who followed were shouting: hosanna! BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; 10 Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David; hosanna in the highest! 11 Jesus entered Jerusalem and came into the temple; and after looking around at everything, he left for Bethany with the twelve, since it was already late. 12 On the next day, when they had left Bethany, he became hungry. 13 Seeing at a distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see if perhaps he would find anything on it; and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. 14 he said to it, May no one ever eat fruit from you again! And his disciples were listening. 15 Then they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves; 16 and he would not permit anyone to carry merchandise through the temple. 17 And he began to teach and say to them, Is it not written, MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL THE NATIONS'? But you have made it a ROBBERS' DEN. 18 The chief priests and the scribes heard this, and began seeking how to destroy him; for they were afraid of him, for the whole crowd was astonished at his teaching. 19 When evening came, they would go out of the city. 20 As they were passing by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots up. 21 Being reminded, Peter said to him, Rabbi, look, the fig tree which You cursed has withered. 22 And Jesus answered saying to them, have faith in God. 23 Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him. 24 Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you. 25 Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions. 26 [But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions.] 27 They came again to Jerusalem. And as he was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to him, 28 and began saying to him, By what authority are You doing these things, or who gave You this authority to do these things? 29 And Jesus said to them, I will ask you one question, and you answer Me, and then I will tell you by what authority I do these things. 30 Was the baptism of John from heaven, or from men? Answer Me. 31 They began reasoning among themselves, saying, If we say, From heaven,' he will say, Then why did you not believe him?' 32 But shall we say, From men'?-they were afraid of the people, for everyone considered John to have been a real prophet. 33 Answering Jesus, they said, We do not know. And Jesus said to them, Nor will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

The Gospel of Mark

The Authority of Jesus, Part 2

Foreground Action: Confrontation in Jerusalem

12:1 And he began to speak to them in parables: A man PLANTED A VINEYARD AND PUT A WALL AROUND IT, AND DUG A VAT UNDER THE WINE PRESS AND BUILT A TOWER, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey. 2 At the harvest time he sent a slave to the vine-growers, in order to receive some of the produce of the vineyard from the vine-growers. 3 They took him, and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. 4 Again he sent them another slave, and they wounded him in the head, and treated him shamefully. 5 And he sent another, and that one they killed; and so with many others, beating some and killing others. 6 he had one more to send, a beloved son; he sent him last of all to them, saying, They will respect my son.' 7 But those vine-growers said to one another, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours!' 8 They took him, and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard. 9 What will the owner of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the vine-growers, and will give the vineyard to others. 10 have you not even read this Scripture: THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone; 11 THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD, AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES'? 12 And they were seeking to seize him, and yet they feared the people, for they understood that he spoke the parable against them. And so they left him and went away. 13 Then they sent some of the Pharisees and herodians to him in order to trap him in a statement. 14 They came and said to him, Teacher, we know that You are truthful and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay a poll-tax to Caesar, or not? 15 Shall we pay or shall we not pay? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, Why are you testing Me? Bring Me a denarius to look at. 16 They brought one. And he said to them, Whose likeness and inscription is this? And they said to him, Caesar's. 17 And Jesus said to them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they were amazed at him. 18 Some Sadducees (who say that there is no resurrection) came to Jesus, and began questioning him, saying, 19 Teacher, Moses wrote for us that IF A MAN'S BROTHER DIES and leaves behind a wife AND LEAVES NO CHILD, his BROTHER SHOULD MARRY THE WIFE AND RAISE UP CHILDREN TO his BROTHER. 20 There were seven brothers; and the first took a wife, and died leaving no children. 21 The second one married her, and died leaving behind no children; and the third likewise; 22 and so all seven left no children. Last of all the woman died also. 23 In the resurrection, when they rise again, which one's wife will she be? For all seven had married her. 24 Jesus said to them, Is this not the reason you are mistaken, that you do not understand the Scriptures or the power of God? 25 For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. 26 But regarding the fact that the dead rise again, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the burning bush, how God spoke to him, saying, I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, and the God of Jacob'? 27 he is not the God of the dead, but of the living; you are greatly mistaken. 28 One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that he had answered them well, asked him, What commandment is the foremost of all? 29 Jesus answered, The foremost is, HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; 30 AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.' 31 The second is this, YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' There is no other commandment greater than these. 32 The scribe said to him, Right, Teacher; You have truly stated that HE IS ONE, AND THERE IS NO ONE ELSE BESIDES HIM; 33 AND TO LOVE HIM WITH ALL THE HEART AND WITH ALL THE UNDERSTANDING AND WITH ALL THE STRENGTH, AND TO LOVE ONE'S NEIGHBOR AS HIMSELF, is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices. 34 When Jesus saw that he had answered intelligently, he said to him, You are not far from the kingdom of God. After that, no one would venture to ask him any more questions. 35 And Jesus began to say, as he taught in the temple, how is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? 36 David himself said in the holy Spirit, THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET.' 37 David himself calls him Lord'; so in what sense is he his son? And the large crowd enjoyed listening to him. 38 In his teaching he was saying: Beware of the scribes who like to walk around in long robes, and like respectful greetings in the market places, 39 and chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets, 40 who devour widows' houses, and for appearance's sake offer long prayers; these will receive greater condemnation. 41 And he sat down opposite the treasury, and began observing how the people were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large sums. 42 A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent. 43 Calling his disciples to him,

he said to them, Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury; 44 for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on.

The Gospel of Mark

The Vindication of Jesus

Foreground Action: The Destruction of Jerusalem

13:1 As he was going out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, Teacher, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings! 2 And Jesus said to him, Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another which will not be torn down. 3 As he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew were questioning him privately, 4 Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled? 5 And Jesus began to say to them, See to it that no one misleads you. 6 Many will come in My name, saying, I am he! and will mislead many. 7 When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be frightened; those things must take place; but that is not yet the end. 8 For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will also be famines. These things are merely the beginning of birth pangs. 9 But be on your guard; for they will deliver you to the courts, and you will be flogged in the synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them. 10 The gospel must first be preached to all the nations. 11 When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit. 12 Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. 13 You will be hated by all because of My name, but the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. 14 But when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. 15 The one who is on the housetop must not go down, or go in to get anything out of his house; 16 and the one who is in the field must not turn back to get his coat. 17 But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 18 But pray that it may not happen in the winter. 19 For those days will be a time of tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never will. 20 Unless the Lord had shortened those days, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days. 21 And then if anyone says to you, Behold, here is the Christ'; or, Behold, he is there'; do not believe him; 22 for false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order to lead astray, if possible, the elect. 23 But take heed; behold, I have told you everything in advance. 24 But in those days, after that tribulation, THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, 25 AND THE STARS WILL BE FALLING from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. 26 Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN CLOUDS with great power and glory. 27 And then he will send forth the angels, and will gather together his elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven. 28 Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. 29 Even so, you too, when you see these things happening, recognize that he is near, right at the door. 30 Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. 31 heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. 32 But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. 33 Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the appointed time will come. 34 It is like a man away on a journey, who upon leaving his house and putting his slaves in charge, assigning to each one his task, also commanded the doorkeeper to stay on the alert. 35 Therefore, be on the alert-for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening, at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning- 36 in case he should come suddenly and find you asleep. 37 What I say to you I say to all, Be on the alert!

The Gospel of Mark

The Prediction of Death

Foreground Action: The Last Passover

14:1 Now the Passover and Unleavened Bread were two days away; and the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to seize him by stealth and kill him; 2 for they were saying, Not during the festival, otherwise there might be a riot of the people. 3 While he was in Bethany at the home of Simon the leper, and reclining at the table, there came a woman with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume of pure nard; and she broke the vial and poured it over his head. 4 But some were indignantly remarking to one another, Why has this perfume been wasted? 5 For this perfume might have been sold for over three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor. And they were scolding her. 6 But Jesus said, Let her alone; why do you bother her? She has done a good deed to Me. 7 For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you wish you can do good to them; but you do not always have Me. 8 She has done what she could; she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial. 9 Truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her. 10 Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went off to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. 11 They were glad when they heard this, and promised to give him money. And he began seeking how to betray him at an opportune time. 12 On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb was being sacrificed, his disciples said to him, Where do You want us to go and prepare for You to eat the Passover? 13 And he sent two of his disciples and said to them, Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him; 14 and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, The Teacher says, Where is My guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples? 15 And he himself will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; prepare for us there. 16 The disciples went out and came to the city, and found it just as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover. 17 When it was evening he came with the twelve. 18 As they were reclining at the table and eating, Jesus said, Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me—one who is eating with Me. 19 They began to be grieved and to say to him one by one, Surely not I? 20 And he said to them, It is one of the twelve, one who dips with Me in the bowl. 21 For the Son of Man is to go just as it is written of him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born. 22 While they were eating, he took some bread, and after a blessing he broke it, and gave it to them, and said, Take it; this is My body. 23 And when he had taken a cup and given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it. 24 And he said to them, This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. 25 Truly I say to you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God. 26 After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. 27 And Jesus said to them, You will all fall away, because it is written, I WILL STRIKE DOWN THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP SHALL BE SCATTERED. 28 But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.

The Gospel of Mark

The Cross and the Torn Veil

Foreground Action: The Road to Calvary

14:29 But Peter said to him, Even though all may fall away, yet I will not. 30 And Jesus said to him, Truly I say to you, that this very night, before a rooster crows twice, you yourself will deny Me three times. 31 But Peter kept saying insistently, Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You! And they all were saying the same thing also. 32 They came to a place named Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, Sit here until I have prayed. 33 And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be very distressed and troubled. 34 And he said to them, My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch. 35 And he went a little beyond them, and fell to the ground and began to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass him by. 36 And he was saying, Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will. 37 And he came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? 38 Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. 39 Again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. 40 And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to answer him. 41 And he came the third time, and said to them, Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough; the hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. 42 Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand! 43 Immediately while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, came up accompanied by a crowd with swords and clubs, who were from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. 44 Now he who was betraying him had given them a signal, saying, Whomever I kiss, he is the one; seize him and lead him away under guard. 45 After coming, Judas immediately went to him, saying, Rabbi! and kissed him. 46 They laid hands on him and seized him. 47 But one of those who stood by drew his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear. 48 And Jesus said to them, have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me, as you would against a robber? 49 Every day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize Me; but this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures. 50 And they all left him and fled. 51 A young man was following him, wearing nothing but a linen sheet over his naked body; and they seized him. 52 But he pulled free of the linen sheet and escaped naked. 53 They led Jesus away to the high priest; and all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes gathered together. 54 Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest; and he was sitting with the officers and warming himself at the fire. 55 Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain testimony against Jesus to put him to death, and they were not finding any. 56 For many were giving false testimony against him, but their testimony was not consistent. 57 Some stood up and began to give false testimony against him, saying, 58 We heard him say, I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.' 59 Not even in this respect was their testimony consistent. 60 The high priest stood up and came forward and questioned Jesus, saying, Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You? 61 But he kept silent and did not answer. Again the high priest was questioning him, and saying to him, Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One? 62 And Jesus said, I am; and you shall see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN. 63 Tearing his clothes, the high priest said, What further need do we have of witnesses? 64 You have heard the blasphemy; how does it seem to you? And they all condemned him to be deserving of death. 65 Some began to spit at him, and to blindfold him, and to beat him with their fists, and to say to him, Prophecy! And the officers received him with slaps in the face. 66 As Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came, 67 and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, You also were with Jesus the Nazarene. 68 But he denied it, saying, I neither know nor understand what you are talking about. And he went out onto the porch. 69 The servant-girl saw him, and began once more to say to the bystanders, This is one of them! 70 But again he denied it. And after a little while the bystanders were again saying to Peter, Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean too. 71 But he began to curse and swear, I do not know this man you are talking about! 72 Immediately a rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had made the remark to him, Before a rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times. And he began to weep. 15:1 Early in the morning the chief priests with the elders and scribes and the whole Council, immediately held a consultation; and binding Jesus, they led him away and delivered him to Pilate. 2 Pilate questioned him, Are You the King of the Jews? And he answered him, It is as you say. 3 The chief priests began to accuse him harshly. 4 Then Pilate questioned him again, saying, Do You not answer? See how many charges they bring against You! 5 But Jesus made no further answer; so Pilate was amazed. 6 Now at the feast he

used to release for them any one prisoner whom they requested. 7 The man named Barabbas had been imprisoned with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the insurrection. 8 The crowd went up and began asking him to do as he had been accustomed to do for them. 9 Pilate answered them, saying, Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews? 10 For he was aware that the chief priests had handed him over because of envy. 11 But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to ask him to release Barabbas for them instead. 12 Answering again, Pilate said to them, Then what shall I do with him whom you call the King of the Jews? 13 They shouted back, Crucify him! 14 But Pilate said to them, Why, what evil has he done? But they shouted all the more, Crucify him! 15 Wishing to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas for them, and after having Jesus scourged, he handed him over to be crucified.

15:16 The soldiers took him away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium), and they called together the whole Roman cohort. 17 They dressed him up in purple, and after twisting a crown of thorns, they put it on him; 18 and they began to acclaim him, hail, King of the Jews! 19 They kept beating his head with a reed, and spitting on him, and kneeling and bowing before him. 20 After they had mocked him, they took the purple robe off him and put his own garments on him. And they led him out to crucify him. 21 They pressed into service a passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene (the father of Alexander and Rufus), to bear his cross. 22 Then they brought him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull. 23 They tried to give him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it. 24 And they crucified him, and divided up his garments among themselves, casting lots for them to decide what each man should take. 25 It was the third hour when they crucified him. 26 The inscription of the charge against him read, THE KING OF THE JEWS. 27 They crucified two robbers with him, one on his right and one on his left. 28 [And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, And he was numbered with transgressors.] 29 Those passing by were hurling abuse at him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ha! You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, 30 save Yourself, and come down from the cross! 31 In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes, were mocking him among themselves and saying, he saved others; he cannot save himself. 32 Let this Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe! Those who were crucified with him were also insulting him. 33 When the sixth hour came, darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour. 34 At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, ELOI, ELOI, LAMA SABACHTHANI? which is translated, MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME? 35 When some of the bystanders heard it, they began saying, Behold, he is calling for Elijah. 36 Someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed, and gave him a drink, saying, Let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down. 37 And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed his last. 38 And the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. 39 When the centurion, who was standing right in front of him, saw the way he breathed his last, he said, 'Truly this man was the Son of God!'

15:40 There were also some women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses, and Salome. 41 When he was in Galilee, they used to follow him and minister to him; and there were many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem. 42 When evening had already come, because it was the preparation day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, 43 Joseph of Arimathea came, a prominent member of the Council, who himself was waiting for the kingdom of God; and he gathered up courage and went in before Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus. 44 Pilate wondered if he was dead by this time, and summoning the centurion, he questioned him as to whether he was already dead. 45 And ascertaining this from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph. 46 Joseph bought a linen cloth, took him down, wrapped him in the linen cloth and laid him in a tomb which had been hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. 47 Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses were looking on to see where he was laid. 16:1 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, so that they might come and anoint him. 2 Very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. 3 They were saying to one another, Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb? 4 Looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away, although it was extremely large. 5 Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed. 6 And he said to them, Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. he has risen; he is not here; behold, here is the place where they laid him. 7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter, he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.' 8 They went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

- Leviticus 16:1 The LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they drew near before the LORD and died. 2 The LORD said to Moses: Tell your brother Aaron not to come just at any time **into the sanctuary inside the curtain** before the mercy seat that is upon the ark, or he will die; for I appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat. 3 Thus shall Aaron come into the holy place: with a young bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. 4 He shall put on the holy **linen** tunic, and shall have the **linen** undergarments next to his body, fasten the **linen** sash, and wear the **linen** turban; these are the holy vestments... 7 He shall take the **two goats** and set them before the LORD at the entrance of the tent of meeting; 8 and Aaron shall cast lots on the **two goats**, one lot for the LORD and the other lot for Azazel. 9 **Aaron shall present the goat on which the lot fell for the LORD, and offer it as a sin offering; 10 but the goat on which the lot fell for Azazel shall be presented alive before the LORD to make atonement over it, that it may be sent away into the wilderness to Azazel.**...20 When he has finished atoning for the holy place and the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall present the live goat. 21 Then Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and sending it away into the wilderness by means of someone designated for the task. 22 The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a barren region; and the goat shall be set free in the wilderness. 23 Then Aaron shall enter the tent of meeting, and shall take off the linen vestments that he put on when he went into the holy place, and shall leave them there. 24 He shall bathe his body in water in a holy place, and put on his vestments; then he shall come out and offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people, making atonement for himself and for the people...29 This shall be a statute to you forever: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall deny yourselves, and shall do no work, neither the citizen nor the alien who resides among you. 30 **For on this day atonement shall be made for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins you shall be clean before the LORD.** 31 It is a sabbath of complete rest to you, and you shall deny yourselves; it is a statute forever. 32 The priest who is anointed and consecrated as priest in his father's place shall make atonement, wearing the linen vestments, the holy vestments. 33 He shall make atonement for the sanctuary, and he shall make atonement for the tent of meeting and for the altar, and he shall make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly. 34 This shall be an everlasting statute for you, to make atonement for the people of Israel once in the year for all their sins. And Moses did as the LORD had commanded him.

Foreground Action: *Mark 14:32 – 15:39*

As Jesus approaches the cross...	Motifs of Atonement appear
Jesus gets nearer to the cross at Gethsemane; the disciples fail (Mk.14:32-50)	
	Young man flees naked after leaving behind the linen garments (Mk.14:51-52), suggesting that Jesus is the sacrificial offering or that Jesus is the high priest; the specifics aren't important; the overall feel is.
Jesus gets nearer to the cross at the trial by the chief priests; Simon Peter fails (Mk.14:53-72)	
	Barabbas is released and goes free (Mk.15:1-15), suggesting again that Jesus is the sacrificial offering
Jesus crucified and forsaken by God; Jesus dies (Mk.15:16-37)	
	The curtain of the Temple torn in two; the way to God is open; cleansing available; Jesus proclaimed to be God's Son (Mk.15:38-39)

The closer Jesus gets to the Cross, the more echo there is with the Day of Atonement: the curtain of the sanctuary, the high priest's linen, one taken as a sin offering and one free to go, cleansing from sin and uncleanness available.

How Can Outsiders Become Insiders? Step Through the 'Torn Veil'

Return to the questions, "Why did the disciples fail? How can the unclean heart be cleansed? How can hardened hearts be transformed? What diagnosis is Mark offering?"

The disciples failed because they weren't 'insiders,' which we only understand at the end. It is similar to the movie *The Sixth Sense*, which connects the movie from the ending; it's not until we learn that Bruce Willis' character is a ghost that we can go back and re-think the movie to explain why things happened the way they did. This is a helpful paradigm because Mark also connects his Gospel from the ending. Mark's disciples failed because they weren't insiders, until after the Resurrection.

1. At the empty tomb, we once again hear a voice from another realm, that of the angel (16:5-7). But this time, the angel does not go away. Also, we are told the resurrected Jesus is available to meet with us. The way to the heavenly realm is now open, and is linked to meeting the resurrected Jesus.
2. We can now encounter the resurrected Jesus and hear his word of resurrection.
3. This is the way outsiders become insiders: by entering into the Cross (torn veil) and Resurrection of Jesus!

Remember the problem of the unclean, hardened human heart? The main person who had an internal problem healed was the hemorrhaging woman, who knew that she had been healed inside. Her story is a parable of the human heart being healed. And because she is linked to the raising of the twelve-year old girl, that suggests that curing internal problems require a raising from the dead. This is how our hearts are unhardened and can produce 'good fruit.' We need to be raised from the dead spiritually!

Likewise, our ability to experience being an insider depends on our understanding of the Resurrection, that we can pass through the veil and have our hearts transformed by entering the narrative at the Cross and Resurrection.

Questions:

1. Now that you are insiders, do you expect to encounter Jesus?
2. Do you expect to hear his voice?
3. Do you understand how your heart has been healed and can now produce good fruit?
4. Are you ready to go back through Mark and see new things?!?

The Gospel of Mark

The Theological Origin of Mark's Veil: Moses & the Old Covenant

Literary Structure: Chiasm

1. Primeval history dealing with all nations: Gen.1-11
2. Covenant inaugurated with Abraham, Blessings and Curses: Gen.12
God's Faithfulness to the Patriarchs: Gen.12-50
3. Enslavement and Deliverance from Egypt, Arrival at Sinai: Ex.1-18
4. Covenant Inaugurated, Broken, Re-Asserted: Ex.19:1-24:18
 - a. *God summons Israel to meet Him on the mountain on the third day: Ex.19:1-15*
 - b. *Israel's failure – to come up the mountain: Ex.19:16-23*
 - c. *God resumes with Moses and Aaron: Ex.19:24-25*
 - d. *God gives Israel the Ten Commandments: Ex.20:1-27*
 - e. *Israel's failure – Israel afraid of God's voice: Ex.20:18-20*
 - f. *God gives all Israel 49 laws (7x7): Ex.20:21-23:19*
 - g. *God and Israel agree to a covenant, and Moses, Aaron, and 70 elders see God, and eat and drink in His presence: Ex.23:2-24:11*
5. Tabernacle instructions given to house the **veiled** presence of God: Ex.24:12-31:11
6. God commands Israel to observe the Sabbath and the Covenant is documented on stone tablets: Ex.31:12-18
 7. Covenant broken; Israel worships Aaron's golden calves: Ex.32:1-29
 8. Moses mediates for Israel and restores the covenant: Ex.32:30-33:23
 - 7'. Covenant affirmed: Ex.34:1-17
- 6'. God commands Israel to observe three annual feasts and the Covenant is documented on stone tablets again; Moses **veils** his face as a sign of judgment, hiding God's glory from the nation: Ex.34:18-28
- 5'. Tabernacle built to instructions; presence of God comes **veiled**: Ex.35:1-40:38
- 4'. Covenant Mediation Inaugurated, Covenant Broken, Re-Asserted: Lev.1:1-27:34
 - a. *God gives Israel's priests a Priestly Code for sacrifices: Lev.1:1-9:xx*
 - b. *Priests' failure-two of Aaron's sons offer strange fire and are consumed: Lev.10:1-7*
 - c. *God resumes with Aaron's two others sons: Lev.10:8-20*
 - d. *God gives Israel's priests a Priestly Code for the community: Lev.11-16*
 - e. *Israel's failure – God addresses worship of goat idols: Lev.17:1-9 (cf. Acts 7:42-43)*
 - f. *God gives all Israel a Holiness Code: Lev.17:10-25:55*
 - g. *God and Israel agree to a covenant: Lev.26:1-27:34*
- 3'. Departure from Sinai, Punishment and Deliverance from Wilderness: Num.1:1-36:13
- 2'. God's Faithfulness forms the basis for Moses' Exhortation: Dt.1-28
Covenant offered to Israel, Blessings and Curses: Dt.27-28
- 1'. Future prophecies dealing with Israel and other nations: Dt.29-33

Comments

1. Moses' mediation allows for the presence of God to remain with Israel, but in a veiled way. They do not experience God 'face to face' as Moses did.
2. Correspondingly, the Tabernacle is erected as a way for God to remain with Israel, but in a veiled way. God's presence is housed in veils from the people.
3. The only time and place anyone could experience God 'face to face' was the Day of Atonement, when the high priest alone entered the Holy of Holies. He walked through the veils between God and the people on the basis of the atonement sacrifice.
4. In Mark's Gospel, when Jesus becomes the final atoning sacrifice, the veil in the Temple is rent from top to bottom. The Tabernacle-Temple system and its apparatus are done away with. The veil is gone.
5. Because of Jesus' Cross, we now can encounter God in a radically fuller way.

6. It is perfectly appropriate, therefore, for Mark to structure his Gospel and Cross narrative around the Day of Atonement theme.
7. Notice that in 2 Corinthians 3, Paul also understands the veil on Moses' face as an expression of God's judgment on the people. It stands in contrast to the bold openness of Paul as a minister of the new covenant. It also stands in contrast to the effects of the new covenant on the new covenant people: We behold the glory of God in each other's faces.
8. Thus, once we integrate Mark's evaluation of the veil and atonement into his other teaching about the new covenant, we find that we can only have transformed hearts when we become insiders and step through the veil between us and God. That veil was torn only at the Cross. It leads to a transformative encounter with the risen Jesus.
9. Mark's theology of the Cross and Resurrection, then, is identical to that of Paul. While it is true that the Cross is an example for believers in the lifestyle of servanthood and of dying to oneself, the Cross is fundamentally a doorway by which our transformation is effected. We emerge on the other side, at the Resurrection, with Jesus, transformed.
10. Transformation and entrance to 'insider' status should probably not be described as a 'process' at the most fundamental level. It is an 'event' defined around our participation in the Cross and the Resurrection and requires an encounter with the risen Jesus. It is true that there is a process of growth that follows. But the process of understanding more and learning more about Jesus thereafter should probably be understood as a more thorough appropriation of the original event by which God transformed us.
11. In Mark, transformation and 'insider' status means union with God. This is symbolized by the veil of the Temple being torn and actually effected by the Cross. The obstacle to our being one with God is taken away.
12. Mark and John therefore have the same understanding of what it means to be an insider. It means stepping into the 'in Christ' position and touching the risen Lord. The 'baptism of the Holy Spirit' which Mark leaves unexplained, John fully explains.

The Gospel of Mark: Quick Overview

The Theme of Uncleanness

Foreground Action: The Unclean Heart

Mk.7:18 “Are you so dull?” he asked. “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him unclean? 19 For it doesn’t go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body.” (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods “clean.”) 20 He went on: “What comes out of a man is what makes him unclean. 21 For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, 22 greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. 23 All these evils come from inside and make a man unclean.

Questions

1. What causes uncleanness? Where does it originate?
2. How does uncleanness come out of a person?
3. Why doesn’t Jesus give any immediate solution to the problem of the human heart?
4. Perhaps it is hinted at through other passages in Mark. Let’s look.

Foreground Action: Jesus Cleanses Unclean Skin

Mk.1:40 And a leper came to Jesus, beseeching Him and falling on his knees before Him, and saying, “If You are willing, You can make me clean.” 41 Moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out His hand and **touched** him, and said to him, “I am willing; be cleansed.” 42 Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed. 43 And He sternly warned him and immediately sent him away, 44 and He said to him, “See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.” 45 But he went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the news around, to such an extent that Jesus could no longer publicly enter a city, but stayed out in unpopulated areas; and they were coming to Him from everywhere.

Questions

1. What was the Jewish understanding of uncleanness?

Soundtrack/Background Music: Cleanness and Uncleanness

- Hag.2:11 “Thus says the LORD of hosts, “Ask now the priests for a ruling: 12 “If a man carries holy meat in the fold of his garment, and touches bread with this fold, or cooked food, wine, oil, or any other food, will it become holy?” And the priests answered, “No.” 13 Then Haggai said, “If one who is unclean from a corpse touches any of these, will the latter become unclean?” And the priests answered, “It will become unclean.”
2. In which direction can uncleanness be transferred?
 3. In which direction can cleanness be transferred?
 4. So how can our unclean hearts be transformed to clean? Is it hopeless?
 5. Here we have an example of a leper’s unclean skin being cleansed. Does that give us hope that Jesus can cleanse the deeper parts of us?
 6. Do we have examples of something unclean inside a person being cleansed? Let’s look.

Foreground Action: Jesus Cleanses Unclean Internals

Mk.5:24 And He went off with him; and a large crowd was following Him and pressing in on Him. 25 A woman who had had a hemorrhage for twelve years, 26 and had endured much at the hands of many physicians, and had spent all that she had and was not helped at all, but rather had grown worse 27 after hearing about Jesus, she came up in the crowd behind Him and **touched** His cloak [a symbol of his authority]. 28 For she thought, “If I just **touch** His garments, I will get well.” 29 Immediately the flow of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she

was healed of her affliction. 30 Immediately Jesus, perceiving in Himself that the power proceeding from Him had gone forth, turned around in the crowd and said, “Who **touched** My garments?” 31 And His disciples said to Him, “You see the crowd pressing in on You, and You say, ‘Who **touched** Me?’” 32 And He looked around to see the woman who had done this. 33 But the woman fearing and trembling, aware of what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth. 34 And He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your affliction.”

Questions

So if Jesus touched the leper and the hemorrhaging woman and made them ceremonially clean, perhaps this was an outward symbol of how Jesus can do a deeper work: somehow touch our hearts and make them really clean. But can we encounter him in this way?

The Gospel of Mark: Quick Overview

The Theme of Pressing Through Fear to a Deeper Encounter With Jesus

Splicing Theme Study: What Lies on the Other Side of Fear? A deeper encounter with Jesus.

1. The women disciples at the empty tomb are afraid and flee (16:8). Why do they not press through their fear?
2. For the characters in the narrative who are not the disciples, fear is an anticlimax, never a climax in Mark. Every time someone presses through their fear, they encounter Jesus in a new way or attain a new understanding about him.
 - a. When the hemorrhaging woman is afraid of Jesus, she presses on and is told that her faith has healed her inner condition.
 - b. When Jairus the synagogue official is afraid that his daughter is hopelessly dead, he presses on and is told to have faith and Jesus will raise her. 5:21 – 43.
3. But, for the disciples, they never seem to overcome their fears
 - a. When the disciples are afraid of the storm and then afraid of Jesus, they never seem to recover.
 - b. But Jesus revealed himself to them in the demoniac encounter (he is the ‘Son of the Most High God’ who gives life to those who live in the tombs) and in the Jairus’ daughter/hemorrhaging woman encounter (he can raise the dead). In spite of this, they do not seem to learn the deeper lesson.
 - c. After the first miracle of bread multiplication, the disciples are afraid of Jesus, not having recognized him in the epiphany pass-by, which was like God’s epiphany pass-by of Moses in the rock. But he revealed himself to them: 6:48 – 51
 - d. After Simon Peter’s confession, even though he didn’t understand Jesus’ suffering servanthood, Jesus reveals himself in his transfigured resurrection glory.
 - e. What’s so significant now about this potential encounter, post-resurrection? Because each time Jesus’ revelation of himself becomes greater and more meaningful.
 - f. In fact, Jesus seems to have deliberately set up encounters with other people so that the disciples could reflect on those encounters and glean deeper spiritual insights for themselves.
 - g. We expect them to now encounter the resurrected Jesus.
 - h. In fact, Simon Peter’s confession and the Roman centurion’s confession parallel each other. In Mark, they are the only two confessions by human beings (8:29; 15:39), as opposed to demons. The similarities and differences are as follows:

Simon Peter	Roman Centurion
Simon Peter’s confession of Jesus’ identity in the middle of the Gospel	Centurion’s confession of Jesus’ identity at the end of the Gospel
Simon Peter is a Jew	The centurion is a Gentile
Jesus’ suffering servanthood resisted	Jesus’ suffering servanthood accepted , though ironically (probably not in a deeply informed manner)
The disciples encounter Jesus transfigured in his resurrection glory and don’t understand	<i>Who encounters Jesus in his resurrection glory???</i> (Should be: Someone encounters the resurrected Jesus and understands)

So the disciples (or someone) can encounter the resurrected Jesus, if they only press through their fear and make the same confession as the Roman centurion..

But what about us? Can we encounter him? What are our fears? How do we let Jesus touch our hearts? Clearly the expectation is that our hearts would be cleansed. If we compare the ‘seed’ which falls in good soil and produces ‘good fruit,’ how can we resolve this with the human heart naturally producing ‘bad fruit?’ There must be some ‘word’ of Jesus that transforms the human heart, but what word is that? A word which is Jesus himself?

The Gospel of Mark

The Theme of the New Covenant

2nd time through: Focus on what Jesus might be revealing to the disciples (do this study after the 1st time through Mark)

Is Mark (Jesus) inviting us to connect the two episodes, the Legion demoniac and the two women? Listen to the background music:

Soundtrack/Background Music: The New Covenant Vision of Ezekiel

- Ezekiel 36:24 I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land. 25 I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. 26 A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27 I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances.
- Ezekiel 37:1 The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. 2 He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. 3 He said to me, “Mortal, can these bones live?” I answered, “O Lord GOD, you know.” 4 Then he said to me, “Prophesy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. 5 Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. 6 I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD.” 7 So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. 8 I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. 9 Then he said to me, “Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.” 10 I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude. 11 Then he said to me, “Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.’ 12 Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. 13 And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. 14 I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken and will act,” says the LORD.

Questions

1. These are the images and motifs Jews thought about when they thought about what the Messiah would do. What ‘graves’ is Ezekiel (Ezk.37:12-13) really speaking of? What kind of death?
2. When God gives a new heart and new spirit (Ezk.36:26), it’s portrayed in the next passage as a _____ (resurrection).
3. If these are the motifs of the ‘new covenant,’ how do you think Jesus would communicate to the disciples the fact that he was ushering in this ‘new covenant’? Perhaps by symbolically enacting healings having to do with a ‘heart’ and a spirit?
4. How could the disciples have recognized about the two healing episodes as referring to Ezekiel’s vision of the new covenant?

Motifs connecting the Legion demoniac to the two women

Motif	Legion demoniac	Jairus' daughter/hemorrhaging woman
Clean and Unclean	Unclean spirit	Unclean 'heart' (internal condition that makes 'her' unclean)
Jew and Gentile	Gentile	Jews
Revealing what is hidden	What is unclean within (unclean spirit) becomes visible outside (pigs – unclean flesh). The implication is that Gentiles are possessed by unclean spirits.	What is unclean on the inside (unclean hemorrhage) becomes visible outside. Also, Israel's uncleanness on the inside (even in a prominent synagogue family) becomes known on the outside.
Healing results in	Cleansed spirit Life out of the tombs	Cleansed 'heart' Life out of death
Proclamation?	Jesus commands him to spread the news. "Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how he had mercy on you"	Jesus commands everyone to not spread the news. "And he gave them strict orders that no one should know about this."
Why?	Jesus wants 1) the disciples to have an example of bold proclamation and 2) to spread the news of him in Gentile countries.	Jesus wants 1) the disciples to witness him raising the dead (a reference to the Old Testament hope of resurrection) but 2) to keep it secret so the nation Israel wouldn't go nuts prematurely.

Questions (as students fill in the right hand columns)

So if the disciples had a question about how they could get a new spirit and a new heart, what should they have thought of?

Motifs of baptism and death in the stormy sea story

Motif	Correspondence to Baptism
Jesus said to them, "Let us go across to the other side."	Simply the other side of the Sea of Galilee? Notice that Mark omits "of the Sea of Galilee" whereas Luke retains it. Is there something more general Mark is alluding to?
Water engulfs the boat, the disciples, and Jesus	Like the baptism, when Jesus was completely immersed
The disciples feel like they are going to die without reaching the other side	In baptism, one 'dies' in order to reach the other side.
Jesus is asleep	Sleep is a metaphor for death, throughout the OT and as Jesus himself says when he raises Jairus' dead daughter and says, "She is only asleep." This is also the meaning of the parable of the sower who sows seed (preaches the word), sleeps (dies) and gets up (resurrects) in Mk.4:26-29. Notice the tight clustering of the motifs of sleep and death in 4:26 – 5:43.
Jesus calms the storm, saying, "Peace, be still."	A Genesis creation-like motif, where God calms the raging chaos of the primordial waters. Also, Jesus coming up out of the waters in his baptism symbolizes new creation
The disciples ask, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"	This leaves the question open rhetorically for us to answer. Well, only God commands the winds and the waves, so who is this Jesus?

The flow of action in the three episodes reveals a parable for the disciples to connect:

1. The disciples are 'baptized' with Jesus, virtually 'dying' with him on the sea
2. In order to get 'to the other side'
3. On the other side they see an unclean spirit and an unclean 'heart' made clean

4. Associated directly with Jesus' power to bring life out of death
5. They were to look back on this and see how Jesus would bring them through the same process on a deeper level: They were to really die with Jesus on the cross, being baptized in his death in order to get to the other side, the resurrection. By personally experiencing his resurrection, they would receive clean spirits and clean hearts, and thus participate in the new covenant.

The flow of action in the three episodes reveals a parable for us:

1. Identification with Jesus in his death, baptism with him in his death
2. Moves us 'to the other side'
3. On the 'other side' lies the new covenant, consisting of a clean spirit and a clean heart
4. Brought about by our being raised from the dead

Point of Comparison

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be! How shall we who have died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ have been baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, certainly we shall be also of his resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin, for he who has died is freed from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again, death no longer is master over him. For the death he died, he died to sin once for all, but the life he lives, he lives to God. Even so consider yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. (Romans 6:1-11)

Questions

1. What happens at the Cross?
2. Who dies there?
3. Who rises in the Resurrection?
4. How is Paul's explicit understanding of the Cross and Resurrection similar to Mark's narrated understanding of the Cross and Resurrection?

The Gospel of Mark

The Theme of Servanthood

Part 2, Episode 1: The Messiah from David and His Shepherd – Servants

Questions

1. How did Jesus communicate that he was the Son of David, the ultimate King from David's line?
2. Where did Jesus refer himself using a story about David?

Mk.2:23 And it happened that he was passing through the grainfields on the Sabbath, and his disciples began to make their way along while picking the heads of grain. 24 The Pharisees were saying to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" 25 And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he was in need and he and his companions became hungry; 26 how he entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the consecrated bread, which is not lawful for anyone to eat except the priests, and he also gave it to those who were with him?"

3. What was this story about? Elements of the story:

David, the true king hunted in exile
Fleeing from Saul and his cronies who sought to kill him
Eating bread that was traditionally forbidden

Jesus invoked this story, and this is what he may have been intending to say:

The true king hunted in exile	David	Jesus
Fleeing from those who sought to kill him	Saul and his men	Pharisees
Eating bread that was traditionally forbidden	Eats 5 of the 12 loaves of bread of the presence in the tabernacle (1 Sam.21:3, Lev.24:5)	Grain in the field

This is a claim to be the Davidic king. And, it's a put-down of the Pharisees, a warning to them that they are placing themselves in the role of the notoriously, paranoid and pretentious King Saul.

4. Do the numbers 5 and 12 come up again somewhere? Yes! In the first multiplication of bread:

David (1 Sam.21)	12 loaves	Takes 5 loaves	Leaves 7 loaves
Jesus (Mk.6:30-44)	5 loaves	Takes 5 loaves	Leaves 12 basketfulls

If Jesus is alluding to the David story in order to say that he is the Davidic King, then he might be doing it in reverse to signify that he is greater than David. He supernaturally starts with 5 loaves, the number that David and his men ate, and ends with 12, the number of loaves David began with.

There is another potential meaning to the feeding of the 4,000.

David (1 Sam.21)	12 loaves	Takes 5 loaves	Leaves 7 loaves	
Jesus (Mk.6:30-44)	5 loaves	Takes 5 loaves	Leaves 12 baskets	Jews
Jesus (Mk.8:1-10)	7 loaves	Takes 7 loaves	Leaves 7 baskets	Gentiles

Here, Jesus starts with what David left over, 7 loaves. And he produces 7 basketfuls, a number symbolizing completion and reinforcing the motif of completion Jesus is drawing. Jesus is completing David (a) by abundantly replenishing what David depleted by going from 5 to 12, not 12 to 5; (b) by being King of the Gentiles also, not just of the Jews. Later, Jesus refers to himself as both David's son and David's Lord (Mk.12:35-37). This fits exactly the theme of Jesus as the ultimate Davidic King.

5. This gives a new depth of meaning to Jesus' statement,

Mk.8:18 "And do you not remember, 19 when I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces you picked up?" They said to him, "Twelve." 20 "When I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of broken pieces did you pick up?" And they said to him, "Seven." 21 And he was saying to them, "Do you not yet understand?"

Possibly Jesus was trying to get across to them in this statement that he was the Davidic King who will change the human heart, if they could only understand the symbols Jesus was using. This is not as unlikely as we might suspect. According to John, the crowds perceived something that made them immediately want to make him king (Jn.6:15). So it is likely that they perceived this Davidic symbolism, which is a good explanation for why Jesus makes the disciples get into a boat and away from the crowd – he didn't want them to be influenced by their mistaken ideas.

And, it is common for statesmen to quote from a source to add depth to their speeches. For instance, George W. Bush quoted from Jefferson ("an angel in the whirlwind") in his inauguration speech, which set analysts scampering to locate the original source. Likewise, if I were taking you on a trip to the White House, and along the way, I ran up to a big white house and shouted, "It's January 20th!" and put my right hand in the air, what would I be symbolically saying? That I'm really the President.

If Jesus knew he was hunted by the Pharisees and by Herod, he would have had a much more difficult program to run. He had to minister to the crowds he loved. He had to teach the disciples about servanthood. He had to teach the disciples that he was the Davidic King, though not in the way they expected it. He had to prevent the wider community from spreading the word that he was making the claim to be the Davidic King because he would immediately attract too much attention and get himself prematurely killed.

In essence, he would have had to use parables to say things about his identity, but refer constantly to the David story and the hope for a new Davidic King, but in unexpected ways.

Part 2, Episode 2: The Messiah from David and His Shepherd – Servants

After going through the above passages, we are ready to reintegrate them and see even more depth and unity to the material.

Questions

1. What is the soundtrack/background music playing as Jesus did the miracles of the bread?

Soundtrack/Background Music: The Davidic King and the New Covenant

- Jer.23:1 “Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of My pasture!” declares the LORD. 2 Therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel concerning the shepherds who are tending My people: “You have scattered My flock and driven them away, and have not attended to them; behold, I am about to attend to you for the evil of your deeds, declares the LORD. 3 Then I Myself will gather the remnant of My flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and bring them back to their pasture, and they will be fruitful and multiply. 4 I will also raise up shepherds over them and they will tend them; and they will not be afraid any longer, nor be terrified, nor will any be missing,” declares the LORD. 5 “Behold, the days are coming,” declares the LORD, “When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land. 6 In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely; and this is His name by which He will be called, ‘The LORD our righteousness.’”
 - Jer.31:31 “Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, 32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD. 33 “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”
2. What was the new covenant, the new era, supposed to be like? What was supposed to happen? (Two main things: A righteous and wise Davidic king would be restored, with shepherds under him, to shepherd the people. And the Law (God’s righteousness) would be internalized, written on each heart instead of stone tablets.)
 3. Recall how singing artists, bands, and musicians will take a melody that already exists and put another “layer” on it? How did Jesus do the same thing here? (Consider the basic sequence of events: shepherding the 5,000; teaching on the heart and its need for healing; shepherding the 4,000. What was Jesus symbolically saying?)
 4. How was Jesus preparing the disciples to be his under-shepherds (as in Jer.23:4)?
 5. What are some ways in which you still are tempted by ‘greatness’ like the disciples were?
 6. What are some indications that your hearts have been healed, that you have seen Jesus’ Spirit work in you so that you can better serve others?
 7. What are some ways in which you can serve others by yielding more fully to the healing of the heart that Jesus offers you?